



ONFARM Stakeholder Engagement Working Group: Outreach & Engagement Strategy



Table of Contents

<i>The Project</i>	<i>2</i>
SEWG Membership	2
<i>Goals of This Strategy.....</i>	<i>3</i>
Our Target Audience	4
Outreach Partners and Collaborators.....	5
Building on Existing Relationships.....	5
Selection of Pilot Sites	6
<i>Outreach and Engagement Strategy Activities.....</i>	<i>7</i>
Logic Model	10
<i>Measuring Success.....</i>	<i>11</i>
Short Term.....	11
Medium Term	11
Long Term.....	11
<i>Next Steps</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Appendices</i>	<i>13</i>
Appendix A	13

The Project

The On-Farm Applied Research and Monitoring (ONFARM) program is a four-year, applied research initiative delivered by OSCIA on behalf of OMAFRA to support soil health and water quality research across farms in Ontario. This program is funded by the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

ONFARM has three primary objectives:

1. Stakeholder engagement
2. Water quality monitoring, modelling and Best Management Practice (BMP) assessments within the PSP areas
3. Paired on-farm trials using soil health BMPs at farms throughout Ontario

The ONFARM Stakeholder Engagement Working Group (SEWG) has been brought together to enhance collaboration amongst Ontario's agriculture sector organizations that are involved in on-farm applied research, monitoring and demonstration initiatives that relate to agri-environmental stewardship, focused on water quality and soil health. The SEWG will direct the development and implementation of engagement and communication activities, including building industry support for the establishment of a network of long-term applied research demonstration sites.

SEWG Membership

Jo-Anne Rzadki [Vice Chair], Business Development & Partnerships, Conservation Ontario

Karen Thompson [Chair], Assistant Professor, Trent University

Aaron Breimer, CCA and General Manager, Veritas Farm Management

Brian Dickson, Agricultural Engineer, OMAFRA

Cameron Ogilvie, Outreach and Communications Coordinator, Soils at Guelph

Gerard Grubb, GerMar Farms

Jennifer Doelman, BDS Farms

Katherine Fox, Manager of Policy & Issues, Beef Farmers of Ontario

Marty Vermey, Senior Agronomist, Grain Farmers of Ontario

McKenzie Smith, Director of Stewardship & Regulatory Affairs, Fertilizer Canada

Ron Campbell, Operations & Member Service Manager, Ontario Agribusiness Association

Sarah Hargreaves, Research Director, Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario

Woody Van Arkel, Van Arkel Farms

OSCIA is administering the ONFARM Stakeholder Engagement Working Group. Members can contact Micah Shearer-Kudel, Programs Analyst (mshearerkudel@ontariosoilcrop.org) or Angela Straathof, Program Director (astraathof@ontariosoilcrop.org) with questions or concerns.

Goals of This Strategy

The goals are derived from the short, medium, and long-term outcomes of the strategy (P.10). The outreach and engagement strategy activities focus on:

1. Sharing evidence-based and practical solutions to advance farmers' awareness of, and interest in, innovative best management practices for soil health across the province. Information should be accessible to encourage adoption.
2. Sharing the successes and challenges of soil health trailblazers in an environment where other farmers can gain knowledge and become comfortable trying new practices.
3. Improving collaboration between farmers, crop advisors, researchers, and other non-traditional partners to build strong and effective working relationships which facilitate additional access to information and support for farmers making decisions that affect soil health and water quality.
4. Elevating the profile of ONFARM to generate opportunities for long-term soil health and water quality BMP research via external funding opportunities.



Our Target Audience

The target audience refers to those stakeholders that the activities below are aimed to engage.



Farmers

Why: Farmers will be of utmost importance. Specifically, decision-makers or on-farm influencers will be an important target audience of the activities below. Farmers and other stakeholders who are interested in learning about what other farmers are doing should also be able to engage with the ONFARM project in an accessible way. Additionally, farmers who do not actively go beyond the farm gate but are innovating in new ways should be able to engage with the project.

How: While not all farmers are engaged on social media, it can still be a valuable tool to reach those who are. Other peer to peer learning opportunities, plain language knowledge transfer activities, conferences, and farm shows will help engage those who are not active on social media.



Government and Conservation Authorities

Why: Government and conservation authority audiences must also be engaged. This will be a key step in terms of ensuring the success of the ONFARM project by creating positive outcomes through effective knowledge transfer to the public sector, who has the capacity to keep the project viable beyond its funding agreement. Conservation Authorities also have an ongoing interest in soil health and water quality research. These groups can help drive interest on a regional and watershed level.

How: Personal interactions with Farmers and ONFARM Stakeholders through events. Plain language materials and stories to demonstrate why soil health and water quality is important and what farmers are doing. Social media engagement will also be used.



Agri-food, Agribusiness, Related Organizations, and Non-Traditional Partners

Why: Some organizations have already been engaged through membership on the SEWG, and additional organizations should be engaged to complement ONFARM and leverage existing networks to engage the broader farming sector. Related organizations might include agricultural retailers, seed and fertilizer input suppliers, who have a vested interest in soil quality, but whose business is adjacent to it. Non-traditional partners might include financial institutions or sustainability initiatives. These organizations, while somewhat related to the project, might have an interest in supporting the ONFARM project. This will increase the reach of engagement activities for effective knowledge mobilization across the sector.

How: Tailored small group demonstrations and plain language case studies will allow organizations to engage with the project. On-farm events and conferences will also provide an opportunity to engage these groups.

Outreach Partners and Collaborators

There are several groups that the ONFARM project will collaborate with to strengthen the reach of the project and build strong partnerships to advance common goals.

These groups may include:

- Innovative Farmers of Ontario
- Academic institutions
- Other jurisdictions with similar programming such as the Midwest Cover Crops Council, Cornell University, Practical Farmers of Iowa, and Vermont Healthy Soils Coalition, University of Wisconsin (Wisconsin Discovery Farm Model)
- Industry groups (i.e. Those interested in precision agriculture such as Farms.com)
- Stakeholders for various watersheds impacted by the ONFARM project (conservation authorities, other stewardship groups)
- Other provincial soil health and water quality initiatives (such as GFO applied research activities, EFAO farmer-led research program, ALUS, etc.)

Building on Existing Relationships

The ONFARM Project has successfully engaged the following organizations through participation on the SEWG. This is an important strength, as these organizations have existing networks that can be leveraged for engagement.

- Ontario Soil Network
- Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario
- Conservation Ontario
- Fertilizer Canada
- Academic institutions (including Soils at Guelph, Trent University)
- Ontario CCA Association
- Ontario Agribusiness Association
- Beef Farmers of Ontario
- Grain Farmers of Ontario

Selection of Pilot Sites

Four pilot sites will be selected by the Stakeholder Engagement Working Group in collaboration with the Technical Working Group. Sites will be selected from among paired soil health trial or edge of field stations, which have been predetermined as research sites by the Technical Working Group. These sites will have a focus of collaborative investment to encourage industry sponsorship and enhance knowledge transfer and engagement activities. The target leveraged investment for these pilot sites is at least 15% (in-kind and financial) from Ontario agriculture and adjacent organizations and at least four contributing partners from Ontario agriculture sector organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, farmers, agriculture retailers, etc. Direction on leveraged investment opportunities and partnership collaboration at these sites will be provided by the Stakeholder Engagement Working Group and OSCIA. Each site will host a minimum of one demonstration event and produce one knowledge transfer medium annually. These knowledge transfer items and events will be planned and developed by OSCIA in conjunction with the farmer and with input from the Stakeholder Engagement Working Group. Farmer and industry engagement at these pilot sites will be surveyed to ensure participants at pilot site events benefit from knowledge transfer methods, are interested and able to apply learnings from events and to determine interest and opportunities for collaboration. The Stakeholder Engagement Working Group collaborated on the criteria for pilot sites, which were:

- Diversity of farm type and region
- Innovative equipment and soil health practices
- Practical experience with the BMP's in the context of their own farm

Providing the Technical Working Group with these criteria allows them to select a range of sites that could be used for engagement activities and generate awareness of the program and interest in long-term collaboration and leveraged investment. This iterative process ensures that the pilot sites that are selected have the qualities necessary to properly represent the ONFARM project, while giving the Stakeholder Engagement Working Group the ability to select which sites are best for engagement purposes.

Outreach and Engagement Strategy Activities

The following list of activities will help to engage stakeholders across Ontario to achieve the goals of this strategy. The SEWG will work with OSCIA to contribute to these activities and their outcomes. The activities are sorted by target audience, highlighted in green.

Activity	Description	Timeline
Farmers		
Cover Cropping in Ontario: Finding a Recipe that Works on Your Farm	Simple, plain language examples of how farmers can make cover crops work on their farm. This can be shared on social media, news articles, and journals, and should be housed on the ONFARM website.	Within year 2
Champion Videos	Share personalized stories to demonstrate success and failures to encourage adoption of soil health practices. These should be short, informational videos that can be shared via social media (Appendix A). Each pilot site will produce two with the goal of sharing through the farmer's network. Additionally, videos can build off existing videos of champions, if possible, to highlight early adopters and existing work.	Within year 2
Evaluation Survey	A survey following ONFARM engagement events will be shared with attendees. The survey will serve to report on ONFARM engagement outcomes and improve outreach and engagement activities and how information is shared	Ongoing, following ONFARM engagement events
Sector Questionnaire (Optional)	There is an opportunity to engage beyond the funding agreement evaluation survey (described above) and conduct a sector-wide questionnaire to understand knowledge gaps and opportunities to increase uptake of soil health and water quality BMPs on Ontario farms. This would need to be done in collaboration with other stakeholders working towards similar outcomes as the ONFARM project.	To be determined

Tailored/Mixed Audience		
"Tail-gate" Tours	These tours will provide a space for farmers to share with peers in small groups on Cooperator sites. Tours should be tailored to an audience of farmers, local government officials, and agri-food and agribusiness stakeholders. Tours will follow all necessary COVID-19 safety protocols.	4 total per year, alternating sites.
ONFARM Forum	The forum will bring together a variety of stakeholders for knowledge sharing. The goals of the forum will be to (1) share successes of the ONFARM project from its inception to March 2021 and (2) share a call-to-action to generate interest in collaboration for the future viability of the ONFARM work beyond its current funding cycle. The event will either be a hybrid event of online and in-person or solely virtual.	Annual beginning March 2021
Soil Health Meetings/Conferences	Speak at 4-6 soil health meetings or conferences to provide updates and results of project activities, with plain language presentations that allow audiences to understand the benefits of ONFARM. These meetings/conferences can include various AGMs, SWAC, Latornell, FarmSmart, and others.	2 per year, across all years
Social Media Posts	Using the social media guidelines (Appendix A), farmers can regularly post to their social media accounts to provide updates, results, and progress of their projects. Farmers may use these posts as opportunities to direct followers to the ONFARM website, which will house resources on the program and projects. The SEWG will help facilitate this activity by creating posts (See Appendix A) and engaging or commenting on ONFARM social media.	Ongoing

Government/CAs		
Online case studies	Publish a series of plain language case studies (6-10) documenting successes and challenges of farmers participating in ONFARM. Case studies can be shared via the ONFARM website, through the mapping portal.	Within year 3
Research/Academia		
Walk-the-Farm Research Days	These events will give researchers an opportunity to participate in small groups to learn about farm practices and outcomes. These events will engage researchers not involved in ONFARM. Events will follow all necessary COVID-19 safety protocols.	2 total per year, alternating sites

Logic Model

This logic model is meant to help understand how the activities listed in the Outreach and Engagement Strategy will help achieve the goals of the Strategy through short term, medium term, and long-term outcomes. It will also help to evaluate the strategy as it is being implemented, using the success indicators under the outcomes. The logic model also allows the SEWG to understand how to deal with external factors that might affect the engagement strategy.

INPUTS	OUTPUTS	
	Activities	Target Audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEWG time and collaboration • Photo/video equipment • Knowledge • Pilot site time and collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online case studies • Champion videos • Tail-gate tours • Cover Cropping in Ontario: Finding a Recipe that Works on Your Farm • Walk-the-farm research days • ONFARM Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers • Academic institutions • Conservation authorities • Local government • Agri-food and agribusiness associations



OUTCOMES		
Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation at events • Engagement on Social media • Access to information on soil health BMPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active interest from partners/farmers • Increased awareness and implementation of soil health and water quality BMPs • Collaboration between agricultural organizations, conservation authorities, academia, government, and non-traditional partners (retailers, seed suppliers, etc.) • Funding for long-term research on soil health and water quality BMPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurably improved soil health and water quality on farms across the province

Measuring Success

Success indicators are separated into short, medium, and long-term timeframes.

Short Term

Short-term measures of success will look mostly at participation in engagement activities. These measures include:

- Four events per year, with a minimum of 15 participants at each event
- 80-100 participants at the annual Forum
- Increased engagement online (Twitter, Facebook, ONFARM website)

Medium Term

Medium-term success will look beyond participation in the ONFARM engagement activities and focus more on awareness and uptake of BMPs. Measures include:

- 4-8 contributing partners across all pilot sites
- Increased interaction from new demographics (i.e. landowners)
- Increased percentage of farmers who indicate intention to adopt soil health and water quality BMP strategies (measured by evaluation survey)
- Number of farmers reporting increased acreage of soil health and water quality BMPs

Long Term

Measuring long-term success can be more difficult without proper baseline metrics. While long-term success may not be directly attributed to the ONFARM project, it is important to include larger goals for the project to work towards, including:

- Increased total acreage of soil health and water quality BMPs across the province
- Improved soil health and water quality on farms across the province, resulting in improved environmental outcomes

Next Steps

Beyond the engagement activities for this project, the Stakeholder Engagement Working Group will be responsible for exploring 2-3 governance models to advance the project through its timeline (during year 2). This will include transitioning both the Stakeholder Engagement Working Group and the Technical Working group into a steering committee (during year 3). This committee will be dedicated to enhancing agricultural sector collaboration for advancing ONFARM soil health and water quality stewardship (beyond current project funding period).

It will also be important for the Stakeholder Engagement Working Group to explore various funding opportunities to continue the project beyond the funding agreement. This may take place at Working Group meetings, where members can brainstorm opportunities for further funding (ongoing, starting no later than year 2). Ultimately, engaging non-traditional organizations, government, and research institutions will help foster opportunities for long-term funding.



Social Media Tip Sheet

Promoting the ONFARM Program



ONFARM Background

ONFARM is a 4-year, Canadian Agricultural Partnership-funded applied research initiative delivered by OSCIA on behalf of OMAFRA to support soil health and water quality research on farms across Ontario. One of ONFARM's main objectives is outreach and engagement. As a participant in this initiative, you can help share your experiences with other farmers, researchers, and your neighbours by using social media.



Follow the tips below to engage the agricultural community and beyond, and communicate the unique results, stories, lessons learned, and successes from ONFARM project activities.

Consider Your Audience

Not everyone will understand the technical aspects of ONFARM projects, so it is important to structure your message accordingly. Talk about the work you're doing, successes and challenges you've experienced and what the project means for your farm, community and region. Use the social media platform you are most comfortable with to start and consider using a mix of social media platforms to engage more people.



Consider Your Platforms



Instagram

- Mostly photos and videos
- Supports live videos for immediate sharing

Facebook

- Posts without word limits
- Photos and videos (under 30 seconds) to help tell a story
- Live video sharing via Facebook Live

Twitter

- Informative posts (280 characters max) for short project updates
- Photos and short videos help the reader to understand

Use these hashtags to reach a broader audience than just your followers:

#ONFARM (For all ONFARM posts)

#OntAg
#SoilHealth
#4R
#SustainableAg
#LetsTalkSoil
#CdnAg

#WaterQuality
#CdnAgPartnership
#LakeErie
#Farm365
#Phosphorous

Use these Handles to link relevant organizations to your post:

@OntarioSoilCrop (For all ONFARM posts)

@ConOnt
@OMAFRA
@OMAFRAEnviro
@UTRCmarketing
@UTRCsoilwater
@GrainFarmers
@BeefFarmers
@EFAO2

@LandWaterNews
@LTVCA
@essexRegionCA
@Maitlandvalley
@MaitlandStwdsp
@SoilsAtGuelph
@FertilizerCA

