



EFAO
ECOLOGICAL FARMERS
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

2022
ANNUAL
REPORT



About EFAO

Established in 1979 by farmers for farmers, the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) is a membership organization that focuses on farmer-led education, research and community building. EFAO brings farmers together so they can learn from each other and improve the health of their soils, crops, livestock and the environment, while running profitable farm businesses.

Vision

We envision an Ontario where thriving ecological farms are the foundation of our food system, and where agriculture protects our resources, increases biodiversity, mitigates climate change, and cultivates resilient, diverse, equitable communities.

Mission

EFAO supports farmers to build resilient ecological farms and grow a strong knowledge sharing community.

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Dear Members and Friends,

For many farmers, 2022 was a challenging year, with increased input costs, drought conditions, and land prices growing even further out of reach. At the same time, it has also been a year of celebration and coming together, with in-person gatherings resuming after several years of pause.



For EFAO 2022 was a year of steady growth and development as we built upon existing programs and activities thanks to leadership and engagement from our members and strong organizational partnerships. Significant milestones included the return to field days and in-person regional gatherings as part of our annual conference; securing four years of funding from the Weston Family Foundation to continue the Small Grains Program; and welcoming a host of wonderful new board members.

We continued to collaborate with Ignatius Farm, Everdale and National Farmers Union - Ontario on new farmer programming. We were thrilled to launch a Seed Demonstration Garden in partnership with the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, and to support a series of field days offered through the Toronto Farmers Network. And we were inspired by the work that EFAO farmer-researchers led through the Living Lab - Ontario initiative, a partnership with the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and a host of other farm groups.

Farmers for Climate Solutions (FCS) continues to be a model for what can be accomplished through partnership and collaboration. Now a coalition of 27 organizations from across Canada, FCS made significant inroads into influencing climate-friendly policy and programs in 2022, with the creation of the federal government's On-Farm Climate Action Fund and the launch of the Farm Resilience Mentorship Program (FaRM). Both Ali and Brent participated on the FCS board of directors over the past year.

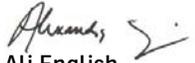
Membership continued to grow this year, and with 982 members we have almost reached our 2025 goal of doubling membership to 1000. Particularly notable is the continued growth of the BIPOC Farmer Network, which now has 150 members, and has been a catalyst for new relationships and collaborations, and which constitutes a tangible outcome for Black, Indigenous and other farmers of colour as a result of EFAO's anti-racism, equity and belonging work over the past few years.

The EFAO staff team remained stable with 10 year-round team members and two additional members coming on in the fall to support conference planning. EFAO is very fortunate to have such a dedicated and skilled team-oriented group of people facilitating our work.

We hope you take a moment to read through this annual report to learn more about the results of our different programs and activities this past year. We are very grateful and proud of all the farmer-led education, research and community building that has taken place this year thanks to your engagement and support.

With much appreciation,

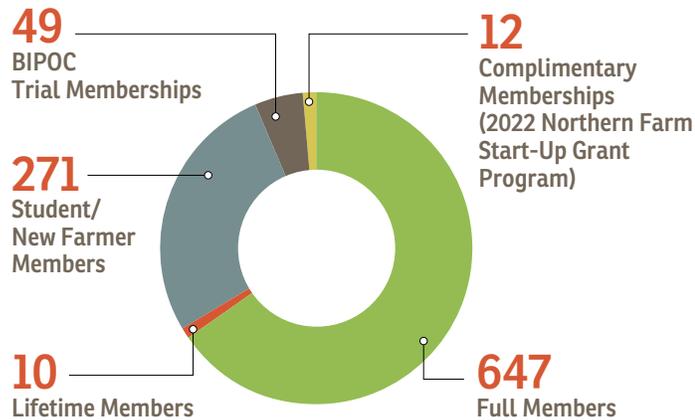

Brent Preston,
Board President


Ali English,
Executive Director

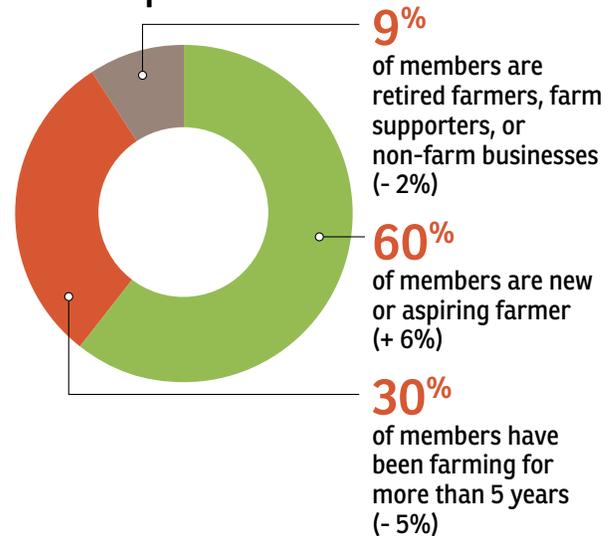
A Growing Membership

2022 was another record-breaking year for EFAO membership. In 2019, EFAO set a strategic goal of doubling membership by 2025 – we are just 58 members away from reaching that goal!

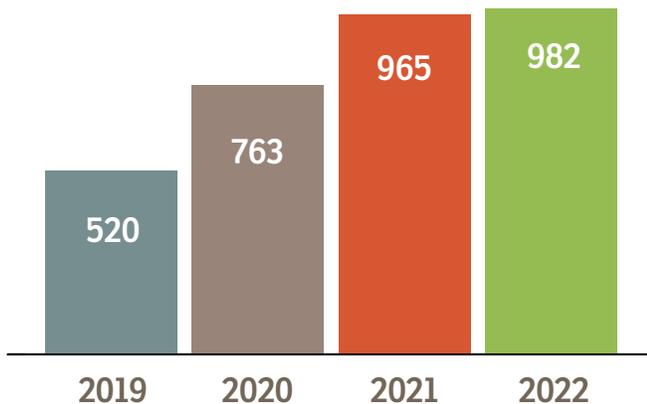
982 Members Across Ontario + 2% from 2021



Member Experience



Membership Growth 2019 - 2022



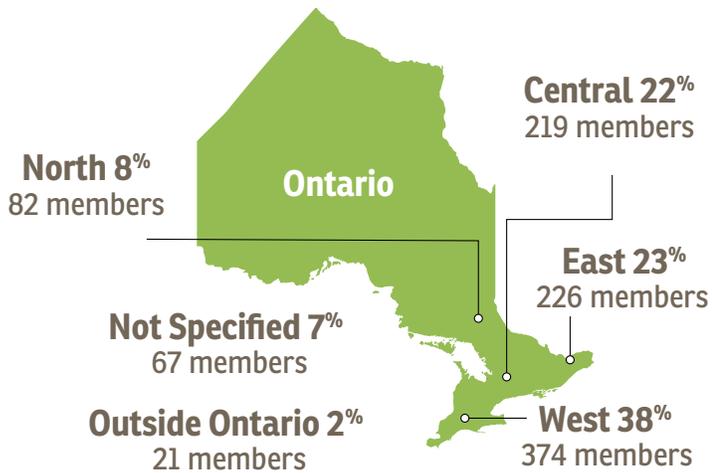
13% of EFAO members are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and other people of colour).

12% of EFAO members are 2SLGBTQIA+ (two spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual).

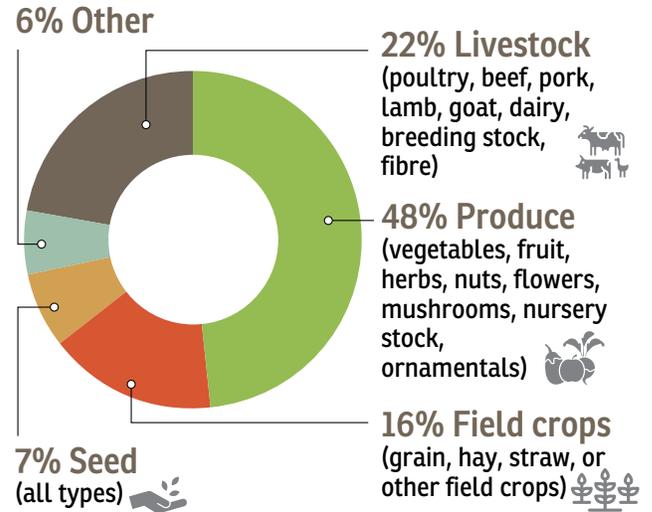
4% of EFAO members are people with a disability.

Farmers of all scales, production types and levels of experience are members of EFAO. This includes ecological and organic farmers, conventional farmers looking to learn more about ecological farming methods, and new farmers who are just starting out. EFAO has also been working to better meet the needs and interests of equity-deserving farmers including Black farmers, Indigenous farmers and land stewards, and other farmers of colour.

2022 Regional Distribution of Membership



Membership by Primary Type of Production



Production Practices

90% of farmer members use ecological practices on their farms.

6% of farmer members use a mix of ecological and conventional practices on their farms.

3% of farmer members use conventional practices on their farms.

EFAO member farms steward 76,846 acres of land in Ontario.

EFAO member farms have a median size of 50 acres.

51% of EFAO farmer members have 5 - 100 acres under ecological production.

38% of EFAO farmer members have less than 5 acres under ecological production.

10% of EFAO farmer members have 100 - 500 acres under ecological production.

1% of EFAO farmer members have over 500 acres under ecological production.



2022 Annual Member Survey

18% of the EFAO membership filled out the Annual Member Survey in October – November 2022.

The focus of this year's Annual Member Survey was on better understanding the diversity of our membership, as well as allowing members to opt in to our new, searchable **Member Map** and update their information. The Member Map will be a great opportunity to connect both with other EFAO members and with potential customers.

62% of EFAO farmer members are currently featured on the Member Map.

Would you like to be added to the map? Opt-in when you renew your membership or by using the Member Map form which can be found by logging in to your member account!

Farmers were also surveyed on their use of and experience with the On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF), which

provides cost-share funding to farmers to support the implementation of best management practices to tackle climate change through reducing emissions of GHGs and supporting increased carbon sequestration. EFAO worked in collaboration with the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), which is delivering OFCAF in Ontario, to provide constructive feedback around how the program can best support a diversity of farmers across Ontario.

Key Findings on Farm Viability:

One of the biggest takeaways from the 2022 Annual Member Survey was the decrease in farm viability that respondents reported this year compared to 2021.

48% of respondents said their farm's RESILIENCE had increased over the past year (down from 52% in 2021).

"Our efforts to make the farm more resilient . . . in the face of climate change (which here looks like year over year worsening droughts and depleting water table) have not been enough to overcome the soil and water issues. Although we've significantly improved soil surface water infiltration, year over year we have had less precipitation to the extent that by this December, our wells have not yet recovered. It is difficult to imagine how we might survive another year or two, let alone turn this thing around."

"Inflation is killing us by attrition."

44% said their farm's PRODUCTIVITY had increased (down from 55% in 2021).

"[I'm] seeing real effects of climate change (drought this year, winter flash flood in 2020). Unsure of specific long term impacts on resiliency and viability especially as so much of the property is in a semi-wild state."

"Very dry year with low yields in corn and soya. Good prices for organic crops."

"This could have been a good year for growth, however labour shortages left us just keeping things the same as last year."

"Hiring staff has hugely increased our productivity and improved quality of life."

33% said their farm's FINANCIAL VIABILITY had increased (down from 41% in 2021).

"Challenging weather, no summer rains, made for our worst cropping year in 2022. Also decrease in sales and visitor traffic this year, post-pandemic, compared to the last two booming pandemic sales years. Less grant and government program support for farms and small business this year compared to the pandemic years. Skyrocketing labour costs, higher input costs (i.e. fertilizer and tariffs), rising interest rates and inflation are soaking us with much higher costs of doing business and shrinking profit margins this year and doesn't seem to be getting any better; makes future viability look pretty bleak."

Supporting Community — Online and In Person

Farmer-to-farmer education and relationship building

1,749 people attended

70 events in 2022.

49 speakers were Black, Indigenous, or people of colour.

In 2022, EFAO organized or facilitated:

20 webinars

2 courses

21 field days

23 online meet-ups

3 EFAO Conference regional gatherings

1 online EFAO Conference

EFAO has worked with some amazing partners to deliver outstanding events and reach new audiences. Partners include:

- The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security
- Ignatius Farm
- Everdale
- National Farmers Union – Ontario
- Farmers for Climate Solutions
- Toronto Urban Farmers
- Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association
- Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario
- Local Food and Farm Co-operatives (LFFC)

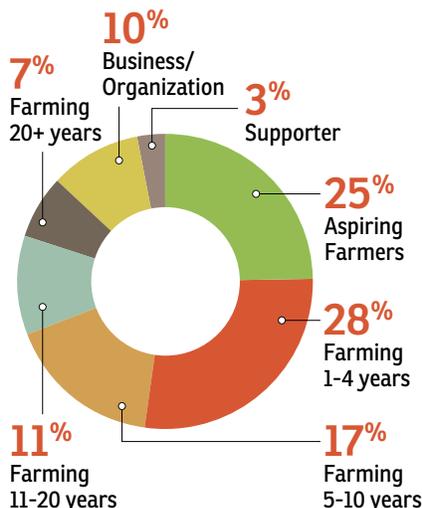
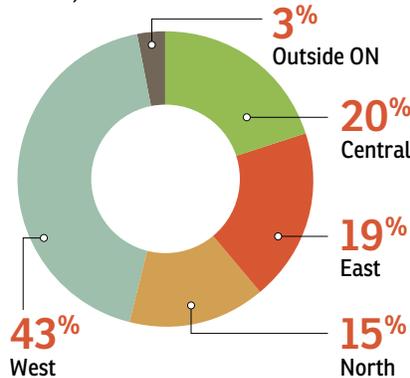
Who attended events in 2022?

The past two years have made clear the importance of offering both in-person and virtual learning experiences that support farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing and community building, and EFAO will continue to deliver learning opportunities using both formats in 2023.

220 EFAO members and other program participants gave suggestions for topics and speakers in 2022! A big thank you to members of the Livestock Advisory Committee and Market Garden Advisory Committee for sharing their ideas around educational offerings.



In 2022, those who attended events were...



“Really enjoyed the content and Fianna’s spirit in delivering it - appreciated that technical info was covered but wasn’t overly technical/scientific in the delivery, it was more like learning/hearing from a friend geek out which works with my learning style a lot better and is less daunting as someone who is still learning! Learned a ton and helped solidify some existing knowledge. Thanks to EFAO & Fianna :)”

“Great presentation. Practical, thorough and thoughtful. Helped me piece together our season long plan, and relax back from going all out in year one of big no till changes.”

Field Days

EFAO celebrated a return to in-person field days in 2022 by hosting a wide variety of well-attended events across the province, including topics such as reduced tillage, small grains, silvopasture, rotational grazing, seed demonstration gardens, and much more.

438 participants attended 21 field days in 2022

11 field days were held in Western Ontario, 5 in Central Ontario, 3 in Northern Ontario and 2 in Eastern Ontario.

- Living-Lab Ontario: No Till Garlic Field Day at Orchard Hill Farm
- Living Fences, Silvopasture, and Sheep Products at ALL Sorts Acres
- Creative Ways to Grow Small Grains Ecologically at Woodleigh Farms
- Haskap Production at La Belle Vie Farm
- Rooftop Farming, Soil Health & Food Justice at Toronto Metropolitan University
- Heritage Grains Field Day at Ironwood Organics
- Toronto Farmers Network Farm Tour – Rooftop Garden at Toronto Metropolitan University
- Living-Lab Ontario: No Till Soybeans & Alfalfa-Fueled Corn at 3Gen Organics
- Toronto Farmers Network Farm Tour – Burnhamthorpe Collegiate Institute Farm
- Organic Seed Farm Tour and Seed Cleaning Equipment Demonstration at Hawthorn Farm Organic Seeds
- Superior Seed Producers Farm Tour in Northwestern Ontario at Urban Organics, Roots Community Food Centre & Root Cellar Gardens
- Seed Demonstration Garden Tour & Local Varieties Tasting at Fertile Ground Farm
- Field Day on Manitoulin: Three Forks Farm & Our Garden Products
- From Veggie CSA to Pastured Sheep: Farming for the Long Haul at Black Sheep Farm
- Living-Lab Ontario: No Till Potatoes at Orchard Hill Farm
- Holistic Management Planned Grazing at Meeting Place Organic Farm



- Ecological Health Through Pasture Management at VG Meats
- Saving Spectacular Seeds: Seed Conservation at the Regional Seed Demonstration Gardens at Fertile Ground Farm
- Toronto Farmers Network Farm Tour at Crooked Farmz
- Toronto Farmers Network Farm Tour at Sundance Harvest



“I enjoyed the tour and the balance between learning and networking/support during the event. I appreciate very much a BIPOC space.”

“I love what you do and think the field days you’ve been offering this season are great! I’ve just been so busy farming that it’s hard to attend them. I really enjoyed the event that I did take a day off to go to though, and would 100% recommend it. Thanks again for offering and organizing!”

Networking Meet-ups

Online meet-ups continued to be a great way to connect farmers across the province around topics of interest.

11 Seed Growers meet-ups with an average of 15 participants.

- Monthly meetups offer a chance to discuss questions and ideas about seedkeeping and seed production, a place to share seed production knowledge, and a chance to hear about upcoming seed events. The goal is to encourage each other to grow a great diversity of high quality seeds in the quantities growers need.
- Growers of all experience levels and at all points in the process of seed saving and production are welcome.
- Watch for Monthly Meetups on the [EFAO events page](#) or [sign up for the EFAO Seed Enews](#).



4 Small Grains Network meet-ups with an average of 36 participants.

- Folks interested in small grains can [join the network](#) to receive monthly e-newsletters with updates on EFAO's Small Grains Program, informational resources, and event announcements.



2 Silvopasture meet-ups with an average of 25 participants.

- EFAO members can join the Silvopasture Network by emailing laura@efao.ca to share silvopasture related information and resources
- Silvopasture Meet-ups are open to all (free for EFAO members, \$5 for non-members)

3 No-Till meet-ups for experienced growers were held in 2022 with an average of 18 participants each.

- Watch for more meet-ups in 2023!

6 BIPOC Farmer Network meet-ups with an average of 20 participants.

- Meetups are a mix of online / in-person field days at BIPOC-led farms, every two months. 2022 in-person field days topics included: Soil health, rooftop farming, Urban Ag community building, growing cultural crops + seeds, Indigenous food justice, running a veggie CSA, regenerative sheep farming, rotational grazing.

- 2022 participants shared appreciation for this BIPOC-only farming space, meeting BIPOC farmer peers, sharing ancestral crop knowledge and seeds, nourishing and courageous discussions, sharing technical knowledge, and mutual support.
- BIPOC folks interested in joining the network can email angel@efao.ca or visit the EFAO BIPOC Farmers [Google Group page](#) and click on **Ask to Join Group**.

The first Queer Farmers meet-up was held at the 2022 Online Conference, with 24 people attending.

- Participants expressed appreciation for a safe and supportive space to discuss the intersections of queerness and farming and to build community.
- Watch for more meet-ups and opportunities for resource sharing and community building in 2023!

2022 Courses

Courses provide in-depth learning opportunities for newer and more advanced farmers alike.

Silvopasture Intensive with Steve Gabriel

26 people attended this 4 week intensive course with Steve Gabriel in January and February. The course covered key points for converting woodlands and pasture to silvopasture systems, discussing when a given piece of land is appropriate (and not), and the approach and tools needed to succeed. Participants were given access to a library of silvopasture resources and tools to start planning their own silvopasture between sessions.

Online Farm Planning Course

50 people took part in the 2022 Online Farm Planning Course offered in partnership between Everdale Farm and EFAO, which took place over 10 weekly sessions between January and March.

See the New Farmer Programs section on page 10 for information.

“There was lots of great detailed information on both the specifics of silvopasture, as well some of the philosophy behind it. Working through several silvopasture projects as a class was a good way to see this information and philosophy in action.”

Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program

1392 people registered for the 2022 Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program offered in partnership between Ignatius Farm, EFAO, Everdale and National Farmers Union Ontario and attended 45 sessions held over 4 terms from April – November.

See the New Farmer Programs section on page 10 for information.

“The best part of the course was getting into content that I’d already been exposed to with a group of other people, knowing that we are all wanting to dig in and learn together.”

Other Education

Farm Resilience Mentorship Program (FaRM)

FaRM was launched across the country by Farmers for Climate Solutions in 2022. The program includes a free learning hub offering online resources, access to experienced farmer mentors, and a network of farmers in each region to help participants adopt practices that reduce emissions and build resilience. In 2022 EFAO and the Ontario Soil Network collaborated to be the implementation partners for FaRM in Ontario. In this role, we recruited 5 farmer-mentors and delivered a number of webinars and in-person events on cover cropping, rotational grazing and nitrogen management.

EFAO’s Online Forum

288 users engaged in 30 discussions
When asked in the 2022 Annual Member Survey, 40% of respondents said they had never used the Online Forum, but would like to.

- 41% found the Online Forum somewhat or very useful
- 5% found the Online Forum not useful
- 13% had never used the Online Forum and were not interested in using it



EFAO's First Hybrid Conference

9th Annual Ecological Farmers of Ontario Conference: "Regrowth"

Nov 12 - Dec 8, 2022, in-person and online

- Approximately **300** people participated in the online program, which included 12 workshops, 2 keynotes, 9 community meet-ups, and the annual Research Symposium.
- Approximately **200** participants (including speakers and exhibitors) attended the three Regional Gatherings in southwestern, eastern, and northeastern Ontario.
- Over all conference events there were a total of **98** speakers (some repeated), **37** of whom were BIPOC (38%).
- A total of roughly **500** participants makes this the best attended EFAO conference to date.
- 64% of Online Conference registrants were EFAO members, 36% were non-members.
- 43% were new or aspiring farmers, 46% had been farming for more than 5 years.
- 32% were attending the EFAO Conference for the first time, 58% had previously attended the EFAO Conference.
- 95% reported a moderate to large change in knowledge from Conference sessions.
- The combined Regional Gathering and Online Program schedules are [available online](#).



"I could tell a lot of care and consideration went into making the online experience warm, engaging and vibrant."

"I really appreciated how there was an in-person AND online sessions. I think it really respects people's comfort levels and abilities to travel, participate etc. There was a good mix of panels, sessions and meet-ups."

"Good diversity in topics, lots of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ presenters. Thanks for addressing climate changes issue too."



Supporting New Farmers

60% of EFAO members are either aspiring farmers, or are within their first 1-4 years of farming. In 2022, EFAO supported new and aspiring farmers with high-quality webinars, field days, regional gatherings and the EFAO Conference Online Program, as well as through courses run in partnership with incredible organizations, and start-up grants in Northern Ontario.

Northern Farm Start-up Grant Program

With generous funding support from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, EFAO was able to support new and beginning farmers with both mentorship and grant funding to help build resilient, ecological farms in the north.

12 new and beginning farmers in Northern Ontario received \$74,442 (some of which was paid in 2023) in funding at 50% cost-share for start-up equipment.

52% of grant funding was distributed to BIPOC farmers (\$38,718).

50+ mentorship meetings between start-up grant applicants and farmer mentors took place.

100% of start-up grant recipients shared that the Northern Farm Start-Up Grant Program helped increase their farm's productivity.

88% of start-up grant recipients shared that the Northern Farmer Start-Up Grant Program helped increase the financial viability of their farm.



“Having the opportunity to speak with someone who has walked in our shoes really helped clarify uncertainties and work out the best approach to achieve our project goals. Having an open dialogue to network with other like minded industry practitioners is a breath of fresh air and reassurance when we might feel as if we are doing this alone.”



“The funding program has permitted our farm to set up core infrastructure and purchase the necessary equipment to maintain it. In turn allowing us to focus our efforts on other parts of the farm and being more productive.”

Thank you to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario for providing funding support for the Northern Farm Start-up Grant Program.



Federal Economic Development
Agency for Northern Ontario

Agence fédérale de développement
économique pour le Nord de l'Ontario

Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program

EFAO partnered once again with Ignatius Farm, the National Farmers Union – Ontario and Everdale to host the 2022 Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program. With funding assistance from the Canadian Government and the Ontario Government through Employment Ontario, registration for the 2022 program was free, resulting in a record-breaking number of participants.

1,392 people registered for the 2022 Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program.

45 sessions were held over 4 terms from April – November.

“Overall the course felt very welcoming, and Lisa was a fantastic instructor who ensured the content was practical, engaging, informative and based on lived-experiences. The guest facilitators added a great deal of diversity of thought and knowledge to the course content, and were a great way to learn about surrounding farms and farmers. (A special shout-out to Brenda Hsueh of Black Sheep Farm who was so incredibly engaging that she sparked my new-found interest in working on a sheep farm.)”

Registration for the 2023 Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program is once again free and registration is now open at: efao.ca/ifnftp. Term 1 began April 11th, 2023, but people are welcome to register at any point, and all sessions are recorded and available to registrants on the Moodle Course Platform.



Online Farm Planning Course

In 2022, 50 people took part in the Online Farm Planning Course, offered in partnership by EFAO and Everdale. This annual ten week, comprehensive course helps participants write a detailed farm plan, and features webinars, online farmer panels, worksheets, case studies and resource links each week (January – March).

11 presenters shared their experiences with course participants, 27% of presenters were BIPOC farmers.

7 participants received free, supported registration for this course.

88% said the Online Farm Planning Course helped them write a farm plan.

100% said the course increased their confidence to start-up (or continue to run) a viable farm business.

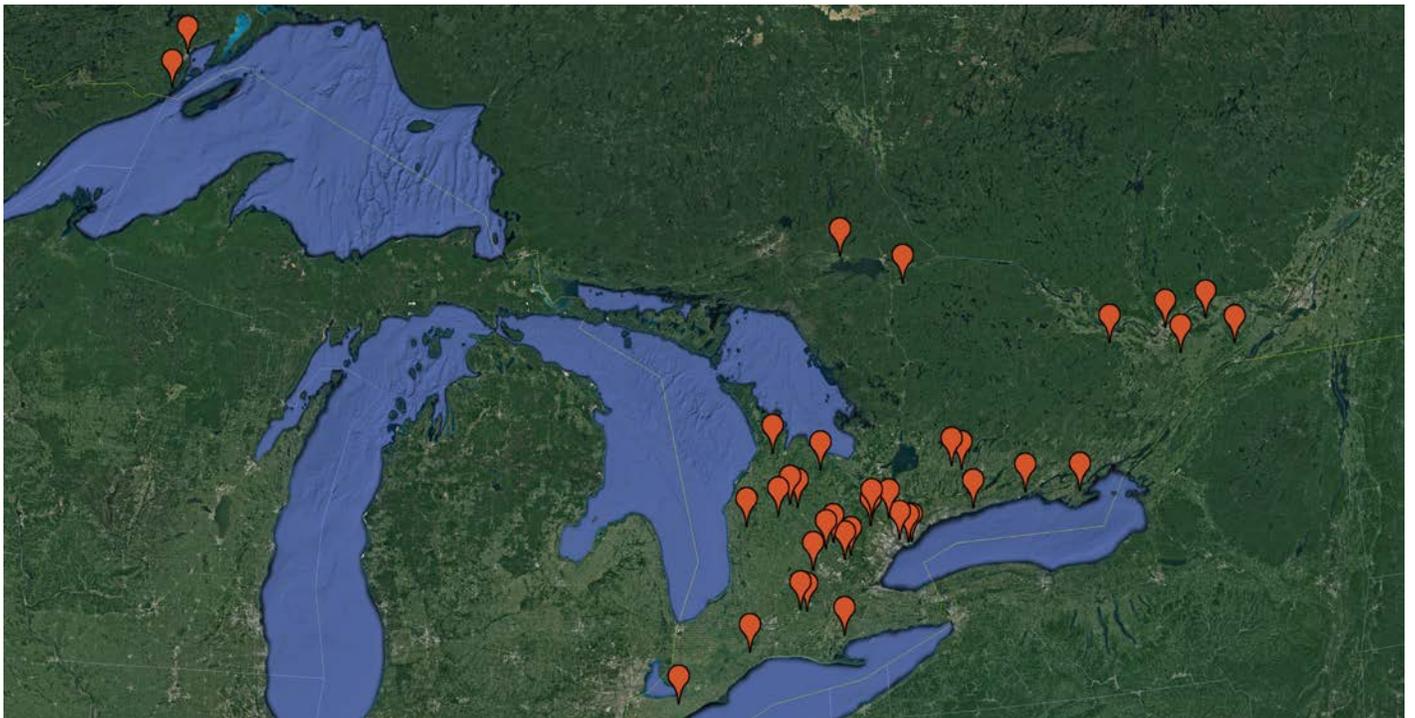
“We have a better understanding of the questions we have to ask and answer to ensure we farm successfully as a business. The practical advice and ideas we got are helping us develop our own plans that are right for us. The breadth and scope of the presenters also helped us develop a broader perspective on the variety of solutions and models out there.”

“Connecting me with a like minded community has been very inspiring - I don't have a farming background and have had one season working on a medium scale organic vegetable farm. It's so cool to learn from different farmers and explore all the other methods, practices and possibilities. The business information [was] very helpful, to put dreams into perspective and see what it actually takes to develop a business.”

Research

Farmer-Led Research

EFAO's research program empowers farmers to channel their curiosity to generate and share knowledge about ecological farming through relevant and practical on-farm research. Together, farmers and EFAO scientists design experiments, analyze and interpret the data, and publish the findings in reports made available on the EFAO website.



40 farmers participated in

42 on-farm research trials.

THE ARRELL FAMILY
FOUNDATION

**Brian and
Joannah Lawson
Family
Foundation**

86% of farmer-researchers reported that their involvement with EFAO helped them make a beneficial change to their farming practices or farm management.

75% of farmer-researchers have confidence to keep a current practice or adopt a new practice or variety as a result of their research.

95% of farmer-researchers have a new idea to explore as a result of their engagement with EFAO.

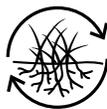
From many others, the “sense of community and support from other farmers and EFAO” stood out from their experiences with farmer-led research, along with the “feeling that our contributions are being valued.” Dean Orr, who participated in the second year of his quinoa trial, said he enjoyed “contributing to the ag community and providing potential new opportunities for other growers.”

2022 Farmer-Led Research Projects



Disease and Pest Control

Beetle banks
Fianna Dirks



Pasture Regeneration

Cool vs warm season diverse pasture mixes
Tony McQuail and Jon Hustis



Seed Production, Varietal Selection and Breeding

Fava bean variety trial
Micheline Lalonde, Michelle Dang, Leslie Moskovits, Martina Schaefer

Iceberg lettuce variety trial
Kristine Hammel, Evalisa McIlffaterick, Sarah Judd

Okra variety trial
Rav Singh, Nikola Barsoum, Jessica Tong, Rashel Tremblay, Orlando Martin Lopes Gomez in Ontario; and Nasser Boumenna, Paterne Mirindi, Hamidou Maïga in Québec

Pepper variety trial
Mike Smith, Nikola Barsoum, Karlo Bobinac, Matthew Brearley, Anne Dockendorff

Quinoa variety trial V2
Dean Orr

Hulless squash project
Theo Wiederkehr

Argonaut squash dehybridization project, with results in 2023
Rob Read

Watermelon landrace breeding project
Evalisa McIlffaterick, Manish Kushwaha, Jordan Lee



Soil Health

Alternatives to traditional peat-moss starter mixes
Hans Ning

Regenerating degraded soil, continuation from 2020
Eric Barnhorst

Season extension variety trial for northern Ontario
Ryan Spence and Isabelle Spence-Legault

Plant available nitrogen from cover crops
Jesse Way and Meghan Brandenburg

No-till potatoes with wood chips and mulches
Matt Jones and Karlo Bobinac, Patti Charbonneau, Rick Cornelissen, Andre Houle, Eleanor McGrath, Rob McKay



Weed Control

Three- vs four-row beet spacing
Ann Slater

Effect of spacing on basket willow (Salix spp.) crop production, continued from 2021
Andrea Matrosovs

Visit EFAO's Research Library to read research protocols and reports at efao.ca/research-library.

Through surveys and interviews in 2019-2021, Dr. Erin Nelson and her research team at the University of Guelph looked at the impact of EFAO's Farmer-Led Research. They found farmer-led research:

- Facilitates effective **communication** about the benefits of ecological farming practices to a wide range of audiences;
- Fosters a feeling of **community** amongst knowledge generators and users and across broader farmer-research networks;
- Enhances the **quality** and **reliability** of on-farm data collection;
- Enables farmers to make **evidence-based decisions** on their farms;
- Instills a strong sense of **pride** in participating farmer-researchers.

EVALUATING THE ECOLOGICAL FARMERS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO'S FARMER-LED RESEARCH PROGRAM

Summary of 2020-2021 Research Results



Read the full report at:
<https://efao.ca/evaluating-the-efaos-farmer-led-research-program/>

Of her first on-farm research experience working on the multi-farm no-till potato trial, Eleanor McGrath said "all the steps were great experiences...from the group calls and documentingto harvest...and it is cool to think you are doing something you love and possibly helping future farming practices."

Living Lab – Ontario

EFAO continued to partner on the [Living Lab – Ontario project](#) focused on continuous cover across various farming systems. Led by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), Living Lab – Ontario wrapped up its final year of research in 2022. Project collaborators included farmers, agricultural and conservation organizations, and scientists.

Living Lab – Ontario Partners

Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Essex Region Conservation Authority
- Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario
- Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority
- Ontario Soil Network
- Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

As part of this project, EFAO supported two farm sites focused on **reduced tillage and continuous cover for organic field crop production and organic vegetable production.**

Brett Israel of 3Gen Organics near Wallenstein

To reduce whole system tillage in organic field crop rotations, 3Gen Organics focused on double cropping soybeans after winter barley, double-cropping soybeans after forage rye; and “alfalfa-fuelled corn”. With these approaches, they have found:



- Solid seeding organic soybeans is possible with reduced tillage to manage weeds, which increases the scalability of organic soybean production by improving the labour efficiency and economic impact of this crop. They reported record yields with the forage rye-soybean system and sustainable yields with the winter barley-soybean system.
- “Alfalfa-fueled corn”—using an alfalfa stand as the sole nitrogen source for growing corn—to reduce nitrogen and other nutrient pollution while improving grain corn yields works! They reported record yields with this system.

Ken Laing of Orchard Hill Farm near St Thomas

To reduce tillage in organic vegetable systems, Ken trialed a total of 13 vegetable crops no-till planted or transplanted into nine cover crop combinations. The most promising no-till planting strategies that produced good weed control and good yields were not continuous no-till systems, since digging root crops is a major tillage event and establishing cover crops to plant into required tillage. They included:



- Organic garlic no-till planted into a mown cover crop of sorghum sudangrass without any tillage for weed control
- Organic potatoes no-till planted into mown cover crop of rye/hairy vetch without any hilling or tillage for weed control
- Winter squash transplanted no-till into rolled hairy vetch and deep compost mulch without any tillage for weed control

Soil Health Benchmark Program

As a follow-up to EFAO's 2019 Soil Health Benchmark Program, nine growers conducted soil health re-sampling in the fall of 2022. EFAO provided them with an individualized report to update their 2019 benchmark values for organic matter, active carbon, and other indicators to help participants evaluate changes in soil health on their farms.



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Canada

Small Grains Program

EFAO continued the Small Grains Program to help farmers diversify their rotation by growing a spring small grain, such as spring wheat, oats, or barley, followed by a legume cover crop like red clover, alfalfa, and vetch.

Why small grains? Scientific research and farmer observations show that adding small grains has agronomic, ecological, and economic benefits.

In 2022:

22 farmers enrolled

\$60,693 was paid to farmers for implementing these practices.

993 acres planted of spring small grains followed by a legume cover crop.



79% of participants said they would continue to diversify their rotations with small grains and cover crops after the program had ended.

Small Grains Network

In addition to the payment program, EFAO hosts a Small Grains Network. Open to all, the network supports beginner to advanced small grain growers across Ontario, with free monthly meet-ups, e-newsletters, and community-building around growing small grains.

Looking forward

In December 2022, EFAO received funding from the Weston Family Foundation to continue the Small Grains Program through 2026. Over this time, the program will include seven intakes for farmers to bid for financial support to grow new acres of small grains, as well as a network approach to education, training, and outreach. **For more information, visit efao.ca/small-grains.**

The Small Grains Program

“provided some income and provided a reason to do something I have long thought about doing.”

“Truly, I would not have taken this on without the support... and the incentive payment definitely influenced me to participate and it has been a great eye-opener to the world of grain farming.”

About the Weston Family Foundation

At the Weston Family Foundation (formerly The W. Garfield Weston Foundation), more than 60 years of philanthropy has taught us that there's a relationship between healthy landscapes and healthy people. That's why we champion world-class health research and innovation with the same passion that we support initiatives to protect and restore biodiversity on our unique landscapes.

We take a collaborative approach to philanthropy, working alongside forward-thinking partners to advance Canada and create lasting impacts. We aspire to do more than provide funding, to enable others to find transformational ways to improve the well-being of Canadians.



Weston Family Foundation

Seed Program

Supporting the growing and development of seed varieties that are regionally adapted is foundational to ecological agriculture.

In 2022:

34 Seed events were held in Ontario.

8 National Seed Events were offered to Ontario growers.

1,103 people participated in Seed Events in Ontario.

504 Ontarians participated in National Seed Events.

From showcase garden tours to online meet-ups, seeds brought us together this year to continue to grow a seed community in the following ways.

Ontario's Seed Demonstration Gardens

These sites, established in 2022, created a space for exploring and showcasing 80 different crop varieties best suited for regional seed production. Also included were varieties for conservation in partnership with [Seeds of Diversity Canada](#), and Farmer-Led Research variety trials of okra, red pepper, and carrot, in collaboration with farmers across the province.

Three field days were held at the gardens, including a *Seed Demonstration Garden Tour & Local Varieties Tasting* (with 30 participants, plus EFAO staff, Farmer hosts, and a local chef!) and *Saving Spectacular Seeds: Seed Conservation at the Regional Seed Demonstration Gardens* (with 40 participants), and *The Care in Carrots: Urban Agriculture and Crop Breeding: Presentation and Tasting Event at University of Toronto Scarborough* (15 participants).



EFAO continues to be the Ontario host organization for the [The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security](#) (the Bauta Initiative). This national initiative supports farmers to participate in on-farm research such as variety trialing and plant breeding, and facilitates farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing opportunities.

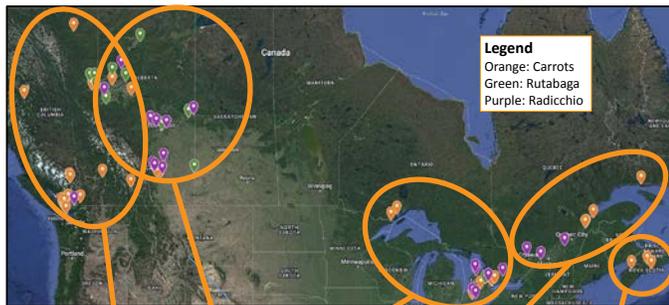


Canadian Organic Vegetable Crop Improvement (CANOVI) Program



In 2022, EFAO facilitated 12 farms to participate in these organic crop variety trials in Ontario. This year the trials focused on radicchio, orange carrots, and red carrots. In August, Dr. Solveig Hanson, former coordinator of the CANOVI program, travelled to Ontario to meet with some of the farmer-researchers involved in this project. The *CANOVI Carrot Tasting: Back to the Roots of Flavour* event was also held at the Southwestern Gathering with over 40 individuals providing feedback on the varieties.

Full results of the 2022 CANOVI trials can be found [on the EFAO website](#).



Monthly Seed Grower Meet-Ups

Seed Meetups continue to be held monthly, attended by 5 to 25 EFAO members each month.

Community Seed Grow Outs

70 growers in Ontario participated in the Community Seed Grow Outs program in collaboration with Seeds of Diversity Canada. Participants grew beans and tomatoes for the Seed Library (our local gene bank!) and also participated in a community ground cherry breeding project.

Seed Mentorship Program



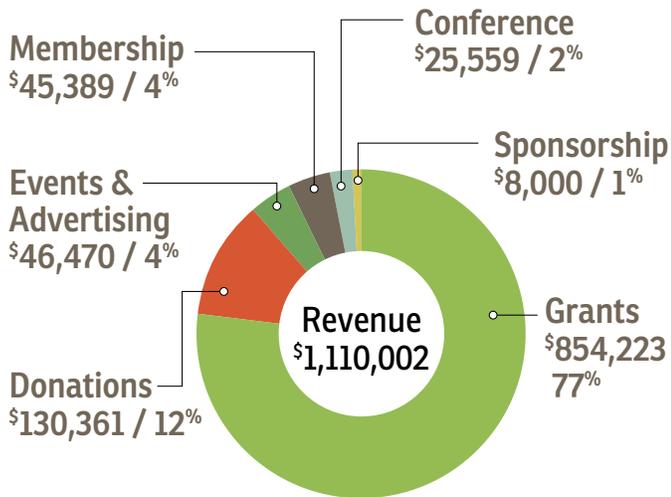
One mentor and one mentee participated in our first Seed Mentorship program in its pilot year. These participants also joined three national meetups with other Seed mentees in other regions of the country. This program will be expanded slowly in future years, capacity and funding permitting.

Additional EFAO and Bauta Initiative Seed Work

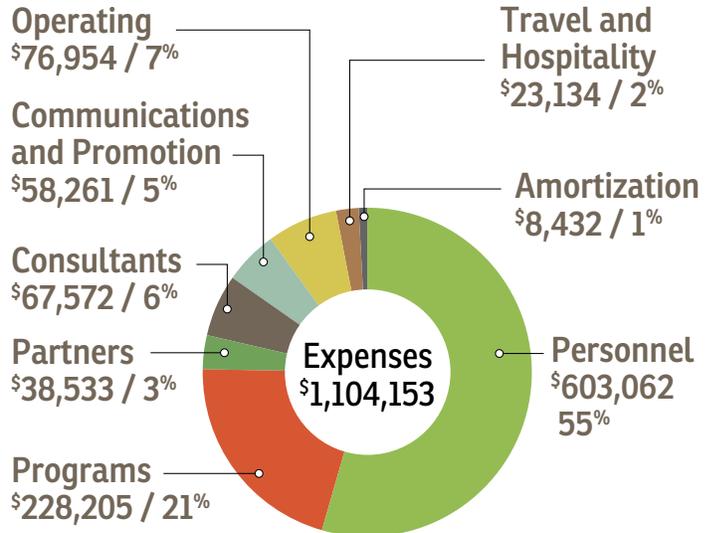
- 475 participants attended six national webinars that were hosted by the Bauta Initiative team on a variety of seed topics, including one on Flower Seed Production which had 206 participants join live!
- Inspiring and important seed stories continued to be featured as part of a third season of the [SeedHeads Podcast](#).
- 9 breeding and variety trials were carried out as part of EFAO's Farmer-Led Research Program (listed on "2022 Farmer-Led Research Projects" on page 13).
- There were over 60 participants in each of the two seed sessions held at the 2022 EFAO Conference Online Program.
- 64 people attended our Seed Program Consultation Session at the EFAO Online Conference.
- Seed sessions and seed swaps were included in all three EFAO Conference Regional Gatherings

2022 Financial Report

Revenue:



Expenses:



Total Revenue:	\$1,110,002
Total Expenses:	\$1,104,153
Net Revenue :	\$5,849

Unrestricted Net Assets = \$162,685

In 2022, EFAO's operating budget increased by 27%, corresponding to an increase in program expenditures and activities.

In 2022 EFAO's Unrestricted Net Assets increased by \$5,849. Unrestricted Net Assets allow EFAO to cash flow grants that work by reimbursement and provide a safety net for potential future shortfalls.

Payments to Farmers in 2022 = \$242,555

- \$85,337 for farmer-led research fees and expenses
- \$64,162 for northern start-up grants
- \$60,693 for small grains + cover crop payments
- \$32,363 for speaker fees and mentorship



Advocating for Climate-Friendly Policy

The majority of EFAO's policy and advocacy work to date has been through [Farmers for Climate Solutions \(FCS\)](#). In 2019, EFAO became a founding member of the FCS coalition, which now brings together 27 farm organizations from across Canada to advocate for stronger climate policy at both the federal and provincial levels.



**FARMERS
FOR CLIMATE
SOLUTIONS**

- **FEB 17:** FCS launches a Provincial Government Relations Working Group in preparation for advocacy work related to the next Agricultural Policy Framework.
- **FEB 21:** FCS releases [Grounded in Resilience: Adapting Business Risk Management Programs to Reward Climate-Friendly Agriculture](#), a set of recommendations for updates to Business Risk Management programs in the next Agricultural Policy Framework, which was being negotiated in 2022.
- **FEB 22:** The On-Farm Climate Action Fund, a funding mechanism created as a result of FCS's 2021 budget campaign, is launched.
- **JUNE 20:** FCS releases [Rooted in Climate Action: An ambitious roadmap for emissions reduction and resilience in the next Agricultural Policy Framework](#), highlighting five categories of best management practices that could result in a total agricultural GHG reduction of 14%.
- **JUNE 22:** A national advocacy and media campaign and countdown to the Federal-Provincial-Territorial ministers meeting is launched.
- **JULY 12:** Canada releases its [2030 Emissions Reduction Plan](#).
- **JULY 22:** Federal, provincial and territorial governments in Canada announce a new partnership agreement called the [Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership](#) at their Annual Meeting in Saskatoon.
- **JULY 25:** [FCS responds](#) to the partnership agreement, noting that while there were some positive commitments made in the agreement, more specific targets and changes are needed related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, if the agreement is to meet the commitments made in the [Guelph Statement](#) in 2021.
- **OCT 3:** FCS's Executive Director Karen Ross returns from parental leave.
- **DEC 7:** EFAO's Executive Director, [Ali English](#), and Board President, Brent Preston, are elected to the board of the newly independent FCS (formerly a project of SeedChange).
- **DEC 12:** Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada launches the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy. FCS, National Farmers Union, and Canadian Organic Growers are appointed to the advisory committee.



Outreach



Digital Reach



3,226
E-Newsletter
Subscribers
+9.7%



7,714
Instagram
Followers
+29.7%



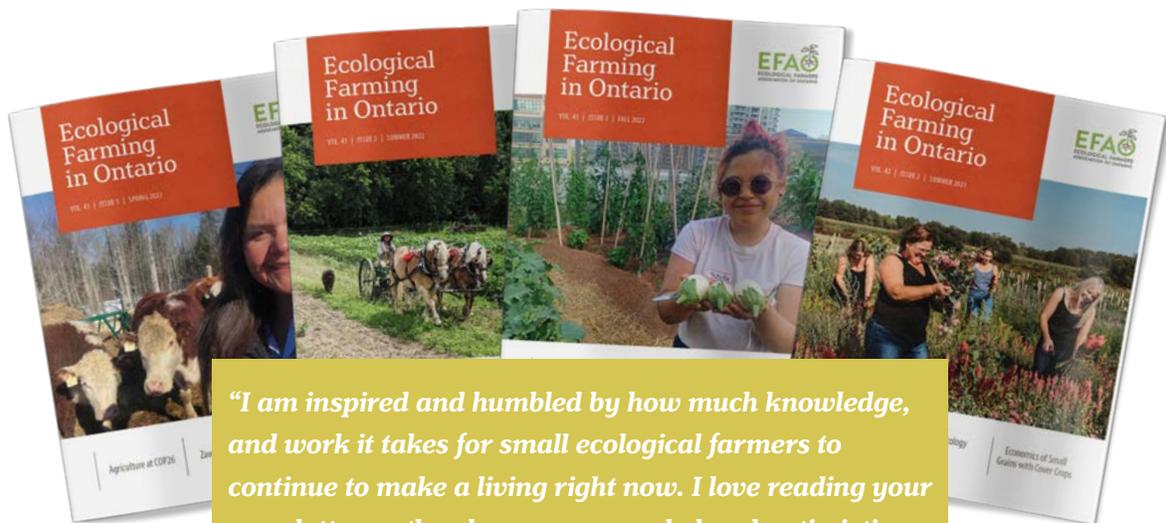
1,863
Twitter
Followers
+2.5%



56,168
Facebook
Page Reach
+47.2%

Ecological Farming in Ontario

In 2022, EFAO mailed over 2,154 copies of our **magazine** to full members, and shared thousands of digital copies with new and young farmer and trial members.



"I am inspired and humbled by how much knowledge, and work it takes for small ecological farmers to continue to make a living right now. I love reading your newsletters – they keep me grounded and optimistic about the future. You are doing amazing work!"
An EFAO Member

17 members wrote articles and **26 members** were featured in the magazine.

Get Involved

Join or Renew Your Membership



EFAO is a community of like-minded people with shared goals. And in 2023, we are slated to surpass our membership record for the third year in a row! If your membership has lapsed or membership isn't something you have considered, check our membership page for more information.

Stay Connected
With Us!



[instagram.com/efao2/](https://www.instagram.com/efao2/)



[facebook.com/efao2/](https://www.facebook.com/efao2/)



twitter.com/EFAO2/

Attend EFAO Events



In-person summer field days and a very exciting in-person 2023 EFAO Conference are on their way! And online events continue to make EFAO community events and conversations more accessible to all. Please join in the fun — the more the merrier!

Join a Farmer Network

Joining an email discussion group or mailing list is one of the simplest ways to stay connected to the EFAO community. You can start by signing up for the [EFAO e-newsletter!](#)

BIPOC Farmer Network

The goal of EFAO's BIPOC Farmer Network is to connect Ontario BIPOC growers, ranchers, and traditional land stewards, nurture solidarity, and collectively share resources and knowledge, in a warm, welcoming and supportive community. Over 140 Black, Indigenous and people of colour have joined the network, a mix of new, experienced and aspiring farmers.

Small Grains Network

The Small Grains Network is free for anyone to sign up and get involved. You'll receive a monthly e-newsletter with Small Grains Program updates, informational resources, and access to events featuring small grains run by EFAO and other organizations. Get connected to others on their small grains journeys!

Seed Network

EFAO's Seed Program works to increase the quality, quantity, and diversity of ecologically produced, regionally-adapted seed through its work with The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security as well as

partnerships with other seedy organizations. Join the Seed mailing list to keep up with what's going on in the Seed world both in Ontario and across Canada.

Silvopasture Network

The Silvopasture Network is a place where members can share silvopasture-related updates, questions, and ideas and seek group input from other EFAO members who are passionate about incorporating silviculture into their pastures, or animals into treed areas where they can contribute to the regeneration of healthy forests.



Visit efao.ca/member-networks to join!

Donate

\$25

Provide a bursary to allow another farmer to attend an EFAO event.

\$200

Compensate an event speaker or magazine contributor for their valuable time and energy.

\$1,000

Give to EFAO's General Operating Fund to ensure that we have unallocated funds to support day-to-day operations.

\$5,000

Support a farmer-led research project and help farmers develop on-farm innovations in ecological agriculture.



Ways to Donate:

Online

The easiest way to donate to EFAO is by credit card via [CanadaHelps](#), a secure online system. We accept Visa, MasterCard and Discover, and CanadaHelps will automatically send you a charitable tax receipt.

By Mail

You can [mail a cheque](#) to:

Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, 5420 Hwy 6 North, Guelph, ON, N1H 6J2

We provide a charitable donation receipt for gifts of \$25 or more.

Funding Partners

Thank you to our funding partners for making it possible for EFAO to offer a variety of innovative farmer-led programs and initiatives in ecological agriculture.

THE ARRELL FAMILY
FOUNDATION

 Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario Agence fédérale de développement économique pour le Nord de l'Ontario



Robert and Moira Sansom
Ideas Foundation

A fund within the



LONDON
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



Canada

Emerald Foundation



Brian and
Joannah Lawson
Family
Foundation



Weston Family
Foundation



Zita and Mark Bernstein
Family Foundation

Organizational Partnerships

- Anishinabek Nation
- Canadian Organic Growers
- Everdale
- Farmers for Climate Solutions
- Ignatius Farm (Ignatius Jesuit Centre)
- Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario
- Local Food and Farm Co-ops
- National Farmers Union – Ontario
- Northern Farm Innovation Alliance
- Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association
- Ontario Soil Network
- Organic Council of Ontario
- Practical Farmers of Iowa
- Regeneration Canada
- Rural Agri-Innovation Network
- SeedChange
- The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security
- Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy
- Toronto Farmer Network
- University of Guelph

Thank You

Dear EFAO Members,

You are the heart and soul of this organization. You may not realize it, but each time you attend an event you are helping to create a community where ecological farmers can learn and grow together. Every time you like a social media post, donate produce for an event or items for a silent auction, every time you respond to a survey, and especially when you renew your membership, you're making a difference. You make it possible for EFAO to exist, and in turn the EFAO team works to fulfill our shared purpose.



Thank you.



Together, we are building resilient ecological farms and growing a strong knowledge-sharing community.