

Growing

the Beef Industry in Nova Scotia

THE NOVA SCOTIA BEEF INITIATIVE







Minister's Message

As Minister of Agriculture, I'm excited about the future of beef in Nova Scotia.

Less than a year ago, we brought together representatives throughout the beef industry to talk about their experiences working in the beef sector in Nova Scotia. Through this process, a collaborative approach and vision was created -- to grow the Nova Scotia beef industry by working together to take on new opportunities and ongoing challenges.

Our inaugural Steering Committee for the Nova Scotia Beef Initiative brings together industry and producer expertise from the Nova Scotia Cattle

Producers Association, the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board, and Perennia, combined with a dedicated team of Department of Agriculture staff members. Their shared goal is to bring forward new programs, services and training opportunities that will strengthen and sustain the beef sector in our province.

It's a good time to be a beef producer in Nova Scotia. Beef prices are trending upward because of consumer demand for high-quality local products.

We have an abundance of natural grasslands and producers who have a progressive attitude toward innovation in the sector.

In the coming months, I look forward to the opportunities this initiative will create and to the benefits it will bring to Nova Scotians. At the core of this collaboration is a desire to build awareness and increase consumption of the high-quality, nutritious beef we produce right here at home. At the same time, we'll drive prosperity for beef producers and the communities they live, work, and invest in.

Greg Morrow

Minister of Agriculture

The Vision

Through this Nova Scotia Beef Initiative, the vision is to grow and strengthen the industry so more Nova Scotians can enjoy the benefits of eating local beef.

We're collaborating with producers, workforce development, academic, marketing and investment and government partners to pilot new programs and services, support training and skills development, create new markets for local beef and help the industry plan for climate change.



Project Origins and Partners

The **Nova Scotia Beef Initiative** is a dynamic collaboration initiated by the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. This collaboration speaks to the Minister of Agriculture's mandate to support and encourage local food consumption and is informed by the vital insights from key industry players.

In May 2023, the Department of Agriculture brought together producers, researchers, beef industry associations, supply chain representatives, and departmental and Perennia staff for a two-day *Beef Forum*. The ideas generated at this event culminated in the forming of a *Beef Initiative Steering Committee* dedicated toward:

- Supporting new learning opportunities and research
- Piloting new programs and services that benefit beef producers
- Supporting training and skills development for abattoirs and meat processing facilities
- Involving the beef sector in climate change adaptation planning
- Diversifying and developing new markets for beef in Nova Scotia



Inaugural Beef Initiative Steering Committee Members

Willy Versteeg, Industry Adviser

Larry Weatherby, Cattle Producer and Nova Scotia Cattle Producers Association Chair

Jacy McInnis, Cattle Producer and Maritime Beef Station Operator

Jonathan Wort, Manager of Livestock and Field Crops, Perennia

Michelle Crosby, Marketing Manager, NSDA

Sarah Turner, Director, Agriculture Inspection Services Division, NSDA

Ron Young, Project Coordinator, Nova Scotia Beef Initiative, NSDA

Wayne Oulton, Producer



OUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES IN BEEF

Nova Scotia has unique competitive advantages when it comes to raising cattle. Our province enjoys abundant grassland and a network of provincially owned Community Pastures that stretch from Cape Breton to Southern Nova Scotia to encompass more than 6,500 acres.

Progressive research into forage and beef production is a mainstay at Dalhousie Agricultural College, Perennia and the Nappan Research Centre. Through the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Perennia, and organizations like the Nova Scotia Cattle Producers Association and the Maritime Beef Council, emerging and established producers have access to shared learning opportunities, market development advice, and herd health initiatives.

Nova Scotia has a network of 11 provincially inspected abattoirs that serve the beef industry and 86 licensed meat processing facilities. Within Atlantic Canada, Atlantic Beef Products offers Nova Scotia producers a gateway to major retail outlets through its plant in Borden, PEI.

In the coming decade, our greatest competitive advantage will be the increasing willingness of Nova Scotia producers to be innovative and progressive. The Nova Scotia Beef Initiative celebrates their ingenuity and provides new resources to build on their success.



FOCUS AREAS FOR GROWTH

Piloting New Extension Programs

In partnership with the Crown Agency Perennia, an up-to-the-minute *Industry Overview* of future opportunities, gaps, and challenges in the beef sector is being created to provide a benchmark for growth. This industry overview will bring a wealth of producer knowledge and primary research data under one umbrella -- to create an accurate picture of beef producers in Nova Scotia, the markets they serve, and the potential for providing more local beef to Nova Scotians.

Currently, many of the cattle in Nova Scotia are shipped out of the province as weanlings to be raised at feedlots in Eastern Canada. The potential exists to raise more cattle here, and to grow Nova Scotia's beef industry producers need to know the optimal diet and cost of production for raising and finishing cattle in Nova Scotia. To answer this need, Perennia will create an updated *Forage Guide* while bringing international guest speakers to the region to share their insights on building a competitive industry.

As a result of these activities, momentum will be created for a *Feedlot Pilot Program* that will encourage producers to finish a portion of their cattle here to increase the amount of locally produced, high-quality beef available to Nova Scotia consumers.

Pilot participants will be actively engaged in effective feedlot management and will have the chance to reach new audiences and consumers with their products.

Creating New Investment Programs

The Nova Scotia Beef Initiative has already opened the doorway to increased investment in the Nova Scotia Cattle Producers Elite Sire program, an initiative that encourages registered beef producers to stay competitive by purchasing sires with enhanced genetics.

As we move forward, new program initiatives will be explored by the Beef Initiative Steering Committee

to support herd health, increased production of local beef, and market development and Buy Local promotion opportunities.

The Department of Agriculture's recently announced *Plant Your Roots* program offers first-time cattle producers, and those wishing to invest in a family-owned business, the opportunity for up to \$100,000 in interest-free support. Beef producers and meat processors are also taking advantage of the equipment purchase, production assistance, and climate change readiness programs available through the federal-provincial *Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership*, which is now entering its second year of providing resources to the agricultural community.

Supporting Training and Skills Development

Industry surveys have consistently highlighted the need for new training opportunities to meet the demand for skilled workers at our abattoirs and meat processing facilities. In response, we're working with industry post-secondary partners like Dalhousie Agricultural College, Nova Scotia Community College, and Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency to address the short, medium, and long-term training needs for Nova Scotia meat processors.

Working in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and provincial immigration and workforce development representatives, the Department of Agriculture will also highlight the opportunities for attracting new entrants to the beef sector.

Preparing the Beef Sector for Climate Change

The Department of Agriculture has already worked collaboratively with the beef industry and the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change to create a detailed *Climate Adaptation*

Strategy for Cattle and Sheep. This strategy has created a roadmap for cattle producers to adopt new management practices and on-farm innovations that will prepare the industry for climate change. Recently, a new three-year provincial funding agreement was announced with the Agri-Commodity Management Association (ACMA) to hire a coordinator to implement the strategy.

Climate change adaptation is also a key pillar of the *Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership*, a five-year federal-provincial funding agreement that began in April 2023. Under the agreement, cattle producers can apply for climate-related support ranging from on-farm technologies to energy-efficient equipment and farm management resources.

Diversifying and Developing New Markets

A key element of the Nova Scotia Beef Initiative will be to create new retail, institutional and speciality markets for beef. The Department of Agriculture's Marketing division recently supported a *CTV Fields to Forks* promotion of Nova Scotia beef producers. This promotional series focuses on the Maritime farming industry and places a spotlight on the farmers, manufacturers and distributors who are responsible for the food we feed our families.

The *Fields to Forks* beef campaign ran for a six-week period beginning in September 2023 and included province-wide coverage through television, radio, online and airport advertising. Profiles were created on how beef is farmed in Nova Scotia and where to find local butcher shops and retailers that feature local beef.

As we build out on Buy Local activities, beef will increasingly be a part of new pilot projects and consumer awareness campaigns that highlight the affordability and value of consuming healthy local beef. From exquisitely prepared grassfed beef at fine dining establishments, to high-quality local beef offerings at farmers markets, to specialty meat shops dotting the provincial landscape, beef is taking centre stage as an enticing local food option. Our goal is to make Nova Scotia beef an accessible "first choice" for consumers so that rural and urban communities can share in the economic and social benefits of supporting the beef industry.

Continuing to Strengthen our Community Pasture and Meat Processing Network

Access to provincially owned community pastures is important to established and emerging cattle producers alike. Throughout the province, regional teams are working with local cooperatives to ensure they have the governance and operational resources to continue managing our community pastures. And through recent investments made by the Nova Scotia Farm Loan, the Cape John pasture has expanded in size, and a long dormant pasture in Manchester, Guysborough County, has been revitalized.

In 2022, a second round of the federal-provincial Abattoir Efficiency Program built on the investments made during COVID to strengthen the capacity of meat processors to provide local food to Nova Scotians. Strategic investment in the meat processing industry is needed and coincides with efforts to strengthen our meat inspection, slaughter, and processing capacity now that Meat Inspection Services have returned to the Department of Agriculture.



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