



## LAND MATTERS PROJECT

Prince Edward Island's policy and  
legislative framework for land

February 2021





# Agenda

- PEI Potato Industry
- Sustainability Efforts by Farmers
- Land Challenges & Concerns
- Recommendations



# The PEI Potato Industry:

- **Potatoes are an economic engine on PEI\***
  - *The potato industry contributes over \$1.3 billion annually to the economy of Prince Edward Island, and is responsible for more than 5,000 full-time equivalent jobs, according to a new study prepared for the Department of Agriculture and Land.*

\*The Prince Edward Island Potato Sector: AN  
ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS, 2020



# Family Farms



**~180 Potato  
Farms**



**84,000 acres** in rotation with grain, oilseed, and forage crops.

Only 14% of Island fields grow potatoes in a given year



**~ 2.5 billion pounds potatoes per year**

Leading potato producing province in Canada



# PEI Potato Markets



- 60% Processing (fries, chips, granules)

- 30% Fresh Market



- 10% Seed



# Sustainability Efforts by Farmers

- Potato farmers continue to make significant efforts to improve environmental sustainability



- These efforts follow a **path of continual improvement**. Nothing happens overnight, and all human activity can impact the environment, so finding balance is required.



# Our Commitment to Sustainability:

- Island potato farmers use a variety of tools to improve environmental sustainability:
  - **Buffer Zones and Alternative Land Use (ALUS)**
  - **Nutrient Management & Environmental Farm Plans**
  - **Cover Cropping/Mulching**
  - **Terraces, Berms, and Grassed Waterways**
  - **Crop Rotation & Residue-Tillage Equipment**
  - **New, Lower Input Potato Varieties**
  - **Integrated Pest Management**



# Addressing Soil Health & Conservation

- Potato farmers take seriously the issue of soil health, soil conservation, and improving soil organic matter. Without a healthy, dynamic soil, it will be impossible to profitably grow crops in the future.
- Researchers, governments, agronomists, and farmers are all working together to improve soil OM and soil health. It takes research, education, new technology, and investment by government, industry, and the public in embracing sustainable practices.



# Soil Health/Conservation



# Soil Health/Conservation

- PEI Potato Board, individual farmers and research partners are actively investigating and promoting an array of BMPs for conserving soil and improving soil health:
  - **Fall Cover Crops**
  - **Residue Tillage Management**
  - **Soil-building forage/green manure crops**
  - **Biofumigant crops (ie. brown mustard)**
  - **Manure/Compost management**
  - **Reduced tillage land preparation practices**
  - **Longer rotations where possible**



# Soil Health/Conservation

## Winter cover crops plentiful, thanks to good fall weather

Potato farmer Melis Visser put in more plants than ever this fall

By Brian Higgins, CBC News | Posted: Dec 28, 2016 6:00 PM AT | Last Updated: Dec 28, 2016 6:00 PM AT



The soil in this field is protected for the winter with a cover crop of oats, planted this fall. (Brian Higgins/CBC)

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# Soil Health/Conservation

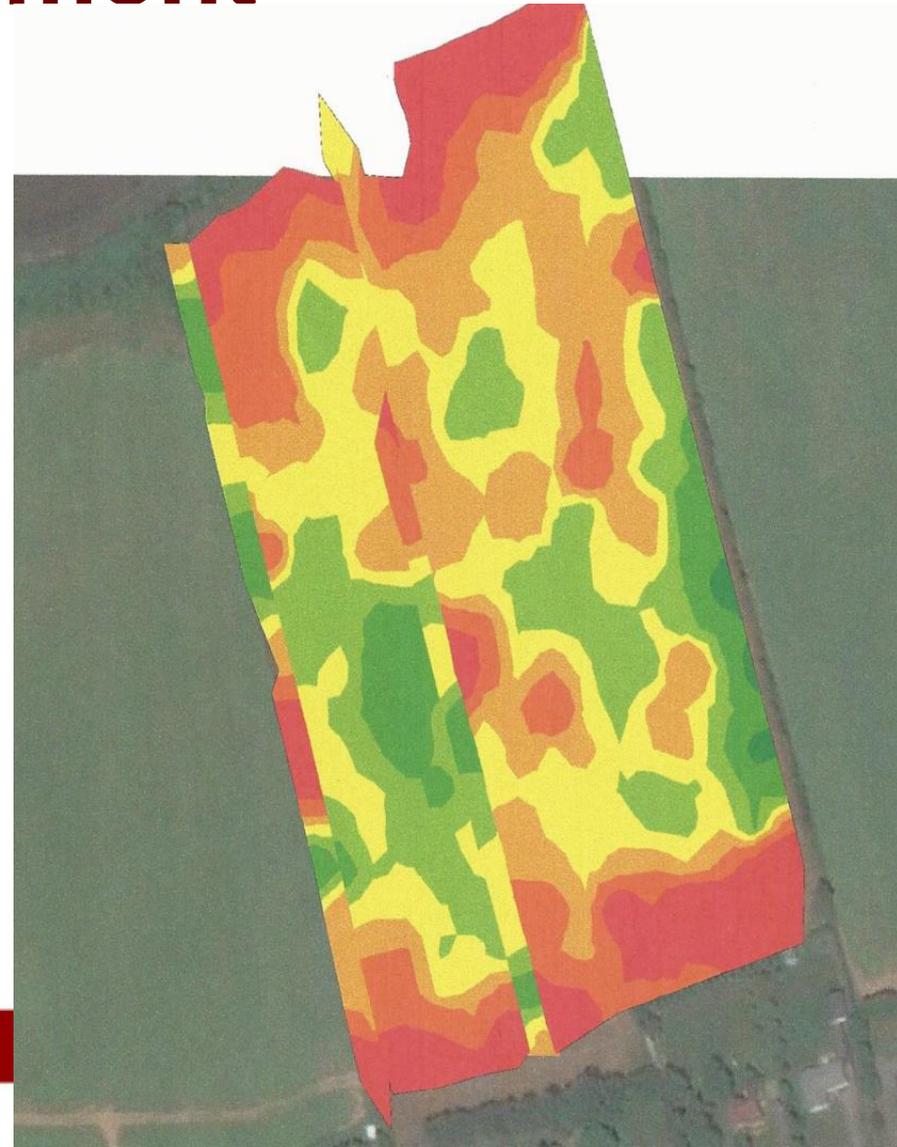


# Building Soil Organic Matter



# Site-Specific Nutrient Management

- Research with UPEI School of Sustainable Design Engineering on using Precision Agriculture tools, such as measuring **soil electroconductivity and yield mapping**, to create management zones within field for better application of nutrients.



# Nutrient Management

- PEI Potato Board is one of the founding partners of the 4R Memorandum in PEI, committed to improving the use of nutrients:

- Right Rate
- Right Time
- Right Place
- Right Source

## 4R Nutrient Stewardship in Prince Edward Island



**Economically, Environmentally, and Socially** Sustainable Crop Production.

The **4R Nutrient Stewardship** promotes best management practices to grow crops while minimizing field nutrient loss and maximizing crop uptake. A growing number of Island farmers are embracing principles of 4R Nutrient Stewardship, which are:

### RIGHT SOURCE



Matches fertilizer type to crop needs.

### RIGHT RATE



Matches amount of fertilizer to crop needs.

### RIGHT TIME



Makes nutrients available when crops need them.

### RIGHT PLACE



Keeps nutrients where crops can use them.



## Beneficial Management Practices

A major deliverable of the AgriWatershed Partnership has been the development of a list of Beneficial Management Practices, which would form the basis of a voluntary industry code of practice for agricultural cropping near watercourses and wetlands.

Shortly after the inaugural meeting of the AWP Steering Committee, a Technical Working Group was formed to compile a series of Beneficial Management Practices to reduce runoff from agricultural fields from impacting nearby watercourses and wetlands.

[BMP List](#)

## ***Best Management Practices for Agricultural Cropping within 200 metres of a watercourse***

- Utilize strategies to minimize runoff. This is critical to maintaining the health of the soil and preventing sedimentation in waterways. When soil conservation measures include erosion control structures, seek the advice of a Soil & Water Conservation Engineer
- Control runoff more effectively by maintaining soil conservation structures, natural grassed waterways, and filter strips in good working order.
- In fields that border on the 15-metre buffer zone, with significant overland flow, improve the protection provided by the buffer by increasing the width
- Permanently establishing grassed headlands to provide the best protection for end-of-row runoff in regulated crop fields.
- Consider removing from row crop production, areas identified as high risk despite significant investment in soil conservation structures or other BMP's.
- Take measures to minimize protective fungicide contact with exposed soil to reduce the risk of contamination to near-by watercourses.
- Utilize tillage systems that increase the percentage of crop residues left on the surface to protect the soil from the erosive effects of extreme rainfall events, improve soil moisture retention and soil health.
- Reduce runoff velocities and improve water infiltration by increasing surface roughness on row formed crops.
- Whenever possible, soil should have cover over the winter months.
- Utilize technologies to improve the timing and efficiency of pesticide applications aimed at reducing the number of pesticide sprays per season.
- Improve the structure and nature of existing hedgerows to increase biodiversity and protect soil from wind erosion.



# Land Challenges & Concerns



# Land Challenges & Concerns

- **Potato farmers favor the Lands Protection Act**
- **The primary concern is to ensure there is enough land that is not priced out of reach:**
  - To sustain current production
  - To improve crop rotation and / or crop diversification
  - In some cases to expand production
  - For the next generation



# Number of Potato Farms and Potato Acreage on PEI

Year	Farms	Acres harvested
1997	460	112,000
2007	295	96,000
2017	186	83,200

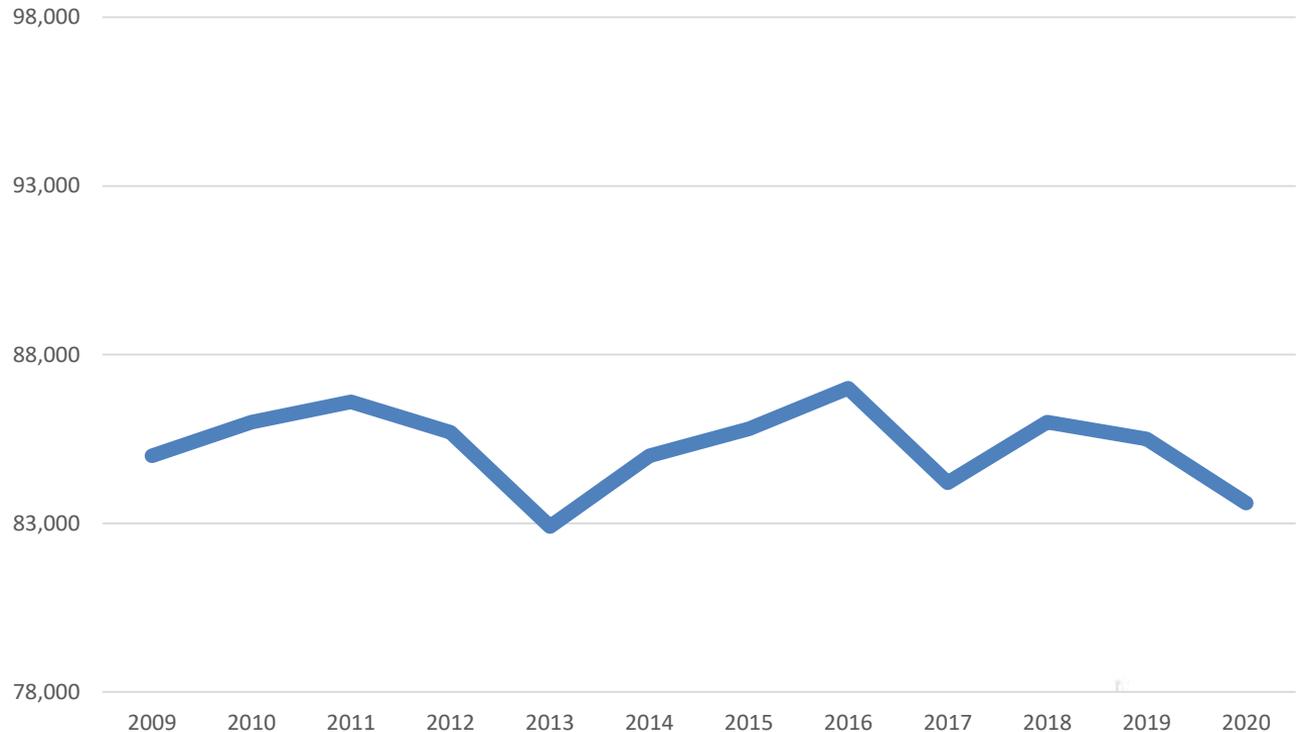
Source: Statistics Canada



# Potato Acreage on PEI

## Planted Potato Acreage on PEI

Year	Acres
2009	85,000
2010	86,000
2011	86,600
2012	85,700
2013	82,900
2014	85,000
2015	85,800
2016	87,000
2017	84,200
2018	86,000
2019	85,500
2020	83,600

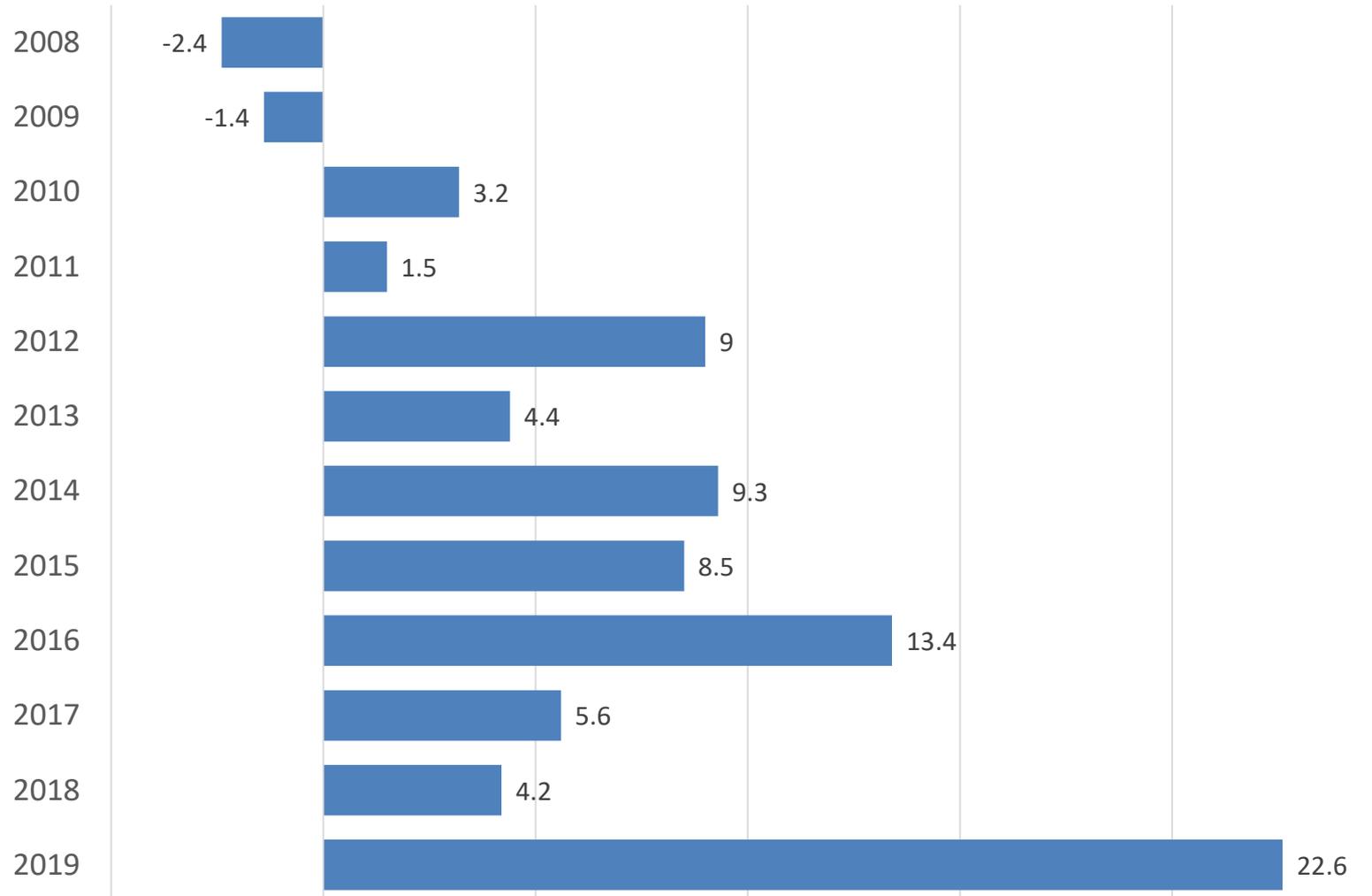


# Land Challenges & Concerns

- The value of cultivated farmland continues to increase in all areas of the province.
  - Much of the demand is in the potato sector
  - Evidence of increasing demand for land in the dairy sector
  - Purchasers from outside PEI continue to be active in acquiring farms and relocating to the province
- Despite steady land price increases, PEI farmland remains much less expensive than many other areas outside the province.



# PEI Annual % change in farmland values



Source: 2019 Farm Credit Canada Farmland Values Report

# Farmland value \$/acre)



Source: 2019 Farm Credit Canada Farmland Values Report



# Land Challenges & Concerns

- There is increasing concern by farmers over some land sales in recent years
- It appears that some sales **may not be aligned with the spirit, intent and laws of the Lands Protection Act.**
- Concern that some land purchases are occurring without meeting residency requirements or are exploiting loopholes to exceed land limits.
- Some lands may not have been publicly advertised before sales / reports of unethical realtor practices.
- Some sales have resulted in land being no longer available for agricultural use.



# Land Challenges & Concerns

- There are concerns that agricultural land may not be farmed.
  - PEI does not have province wide land use / zoning regulations.
- Some farms are constrained by current land limits.
  - Recent survey indicated half of our growers feel the current limits are not adequate.



# Land Challenges & Concerns

- There are concerns regarding draft amendments to the LPA specifically regarding ***land that is directly or indirectly controlled by the same person, corporation or group would be deemed as one corporation:***
  - How does this impact existing farms?
  - Could this be an impediment to young farmers purchasing land?



# Land Challenges & Concerns

- “Not for Profit” Organizations
  - No connections made between different “Not for Profits” so it seems possible that one organization could set up multiple “not for profits” organizations each with separate land holdings.



# Land Challenges & Concerns

- Often farms being sold have significant land holdings.
- Sellers often wish to sell as one parcel, which limits the number of potential buyers.
  - It is currently challenging for a farmer or a group of farmers to buy a block of land and then divide it out to multiple farms while abiding by LPA regulations.



# Land Challenges & Concerns

- What is the provincial government's vision for agriculture?
- **Prince Edward Island's land, it's rich soil and the generations of Island farmers are our most valuable resources. We need to protect them!**



# Recommendations

## 1. Strengthen the Lands Protection Act (LPA)

- The provincial government needs to better manage the LPA & its regulations that are in place:
  - Advertising land before selling to non-resident;
  - Unethical real estate practices contrary to the Act;
  - Adherence to Land holdings limits.
- Greater transparency by Executive Council with approval process including IRAC recommendations.
- **Government needs to adhere to the Spirit, Intent & Rules of the LPA.**



# Recommendations

## 1. Strengthen the LPA (continued)

- Close any loopholes.
- Ensure rules and regulations are the same for everyone (including not for profits).
- Provide clarification (i.e. clear definition and how implemented) on draft changes to LPA regarding direct and indirect control.
  - concern if this will negatively impact existing farms and prevent young farmers from securing financing to buy land.
- Develop a mechanism for selling large parcels of farm land (i.e. whole farm) to a group of farmers.



# Recommendations

## 2. Increase the Land Limits

- Increase the limit for an individual from 1,000 acres up to at least 1,250 acres and increase the limit for a corporation from 3,000 acres up to at least 3,750 acres (subject to closing loopholes).
- These recommendations assume the current provisions for leased in / out and non-arable land for individuals and corporations are retained.



# Recommendations

## 2. Increase the Land Limits (continued)

- Develop a mechanism (possibly by independent body) to evaluate land limits every 3 or 5 years.



# Recommendations

3. **PEI needs to develop a clear land use policy that will ensure agricultural land will remain in agriculture.**
  - Do not let agricultural land be sold to entities that will not allow it to continue in agricultural use.
  - Non-farmers who own arable land should be taxed at a higher rate if the land is not farmed by a Bona Fide farmer to encourage the rental / lease of that land to farmers.



# Recommendations

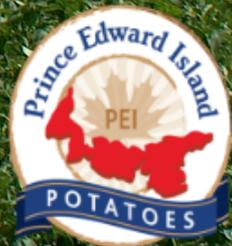
## 4. General

- Evaluate necessary resources (financial/human) for land conservation work.
- Review ALUS payment levels.
- Provide incentives such as carbon credits for reforestation efforts.





VALLEY



# Thank You!



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