Homegrown Success
a 10-year plan for agriculture
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Message from the Minister

I am pleased to present *Homegrown Success*—a 10-year plan for agriculture.

The plan represents a forward thinking, careful and deliberate shift for government. As part of the recently released jobsHere strategy, the vision and objectives outlined in this document will pave the way towards greater economic prosperity for the agricultural industry. jobsHere is a plan for all areas of the province and for all sectors of the economy. Everyone has a part to play.

As the industry works to position itself to better seize the opportunities that come our way in this global and ever changing economy, both government and the agricultural industry have come to agree that a new approach will better support sustainability for the agricultural sector in Nova Scotia.

There are many factors that have prompted sectors within the agricultural industry to adapt over the years. A dynamic and innovative industry demands government provide the kind of genuine leadership the industry requires in order to grow forward.

There is still a lot of work ahead, but this plan sets out the future direction for government. It reflects our understanding of the complexities of the industry so that the programs and services we develop allow the industry to thrive. Government and industry share the same objectives: a profitable, competitive, innovative, self-reliant industry, valued for contributing to the economy, the environment, and vibrant rural communities.

As we move forward, we will make strategic investments in innovation and productivity to increase the competitiveness of our companies and create high-value jobs for Nova Scotians. I look forward to continued collaboration so that industry may pursue successful business models and work to ensure greater competitiveness and profitability for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.

Sincerely,

John MacDonell
Minister of Agriculture
Introduction

Context

Agriculture is undergoing rapid change—globally, nationally, and here in Nova Scotia. To be in the agriculture and agri-product industry today is to face trends, pressures, and opportunities that emerge and evolve rapidly. A relatively diversified, small-scaled sector built on commodity production models, Nova Scotia’s industry today functions in a dynamic business climate driven by global markets, rising fuel costs, population changes, new consumer demands, and consolidated distribution channels. And that’s just the start.

Good jobs and growth will come from the emergence of a truly competitive and profitable agriculture industry. They will come from building on those approaches that best serve the interests of Nova Scotians. Good jobs and growth will also come from setting our sights on innovation and moving into new areas that show promise. Already, we can point to ventures that have successfully tapped into opportunities for growth.

Government’s role is to point and support the way forward. We must focus on an environment in which Nova Scotia’s agriculture and agri-product industry can grow, create good jobs, and revitalize rural communities. Homegrown Success represents a focused and forward approach. It is a 10-year strategic plan intended to guide the priorities and policies of government in the coming years.

Worldwide, agriculture is undergoing major shifts characterized by the opening of global trade, strong connections between producers and consumers, and public desire for food safety, environmental protection and niche products.
**A changed landscape**

To plan where we are going, we must know where we have been. This plan is grounded in the recognition of agriculture’s valued and influential place in Nova Scotia’s history and development. It also acknowledges that agriculture has undergone important changes in the past century, the effects of which will continue to shape the industry into the future. Such changes include the trend toward consolidation and specialization, the growth of a non-farming population in rural areas, and the role of technology in the development of a global marketplace.

In 1921, Nova Scotia had some 47,000 small farms spread over 1.9 million hectares (4.7 million acres) of land. Individually, these farms produced a wide variety of goods—a little bit of everything. In fact, it may be safe to say that around the turn of the century most Nova Scotians outside metro Halifax would have been engaged in some form of farming. Over time, farms were either consolidated into larger operations or ceased operating.

Today, about 4,000 farms occupy close to 400 hectares (1 million acres) of land. Individually, these farms are larger than those of the past and generate higher yields per acre. While farms have gradually rationalized their production over time, Nova Scotia’s agricultural industry remains highly diversified by North American standards.

Another significant shift is the movement of non-farming residents into rural areas. This trend has climbed steadily since 1941, when the number of non-farmers first surpassed farmers in rural areas. Such developments have allowed communities, such as Truro, Wolfville, Kentville, and Antigonish and their surrounding areas, to grow and diversify their economies. In fact, these communities have become strategic hubs where rural and urban activities converge for mutual benefit.

Technology has helped revolutionize the business of farming over the past century. Improvements to animal and plant genetics, machinery used on farms and in processing plants, refrigeration, and transportation have not only changed the way we produce, store, and ship food, but have broadened our capacity to do so. This is a function of the expansion in fossil-fuel production, but it is also a result of international trade policies and changes in consumer lifestyle and taste. Nova Scotia farmers in 1921 were generally able to make a living selling their products to other Nova Scotians. Today, the world is our supermarket, and local suppliers—our farmers—need to focus on new emerging markets to stay competitive.
Agricultural Land in Nova Scotia

Farmland and land suitable for agriculture in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia farm revenues by county.

Revenue

- $270,595–1,812,319
- $1,812,320–9,007,234
- $9,007,235–25,002,702
- $25,002,703–56,659,950
- $56,659,951–170,651,350
**A new approach**

Government recognizes the impact of such changes on the profitability of our farming community and the reliance on income supports to compensate for the cyclical nature of commodity prices. Such supports, however, have proven ineffective over the long term.

We must chart a new course for agriculture while being careful with our increasingly scarce public finances. There can be no lasting remedies through direct subsidies and spending of taxpayers’ money in areas that do not correct problems or show a return on investment. Indeed, there are no quick fixes to the challenges facing agriculture. Nor will agreement on how to move forward be easy—but we must try.

The vision of a stronger Nova Scotia with vibrant rural economies is inextricably linked to an agricultural industry that sustains itself and sustains those things valued by Nova Scotians. It is an innovative industry able to compete in a dynamic marketplace and supported by strategic government investments that focus on growth and development.

Government is launching this plan, *Homegrown Success*, as a means of embarking on fundamental changes—changes to support an industry that seeks to prosper in the best interests of all Nova Scotians, today and into the future. It is part of government’s overall strategy to create jobs with a focus on the 3 priorities: growing the economy through innovation; helping businesses compete; and learning the right skills for good jobs.
**Trends**

Agriculture today comprises a range of operators and activities. The value chain for agri-products starts with researchers, then moves on to producers, processors, distributors, marketers, retailers, and finally consumers. All function in a complex, interconnected chain of production and marketing systems. The successful among them are those who continuously track and respond to many factors and events.

The major trends and their impacts on the industry can be summarized under three themes: economic, environmental, and social.

**Economic: Global trends**

When it comes to agriculture, Nova Scotia is not a large player on the global stage; however, global economic events have a ripple effect felt even in this small province. We are living in a marketplace where tons of food products are shipped to all parts of the world daily, where prices for the most common foods are influenced by agricultural operations that dwarf anything we have in Nova Scotia, and where consumer desires are connected to the lifestyle of a modern, fast-paced world. So, where is our agricultural industry in this global context?

Our agricultural community has what it takes to succeed in today’s dynamic and competitive marketplace, both globally and domestically. We must produce products that sidestep cost competition and appeal to consumers willing to pay for quality and distinctiveness.

While we are making gains in developing new consumer-friendly products, we can do more. We need to understand Nova Scotia’s unique attributes and brand our products locally and abroad more successfully. We not only need to grow the edible products of the land, but we also must produce the food supplements increasingly sought by consumers, the non-edibles such as renewable energy, and the ideas and know-how that come from innovation.
The public is becoming increasingly concerned with climate change and the degradation of water, land, air, and biodiversity. International accords on climate change are drawing a clear line—development cannot occur in isolation from environmental consideration. Recognizing that economic and societal well-being are linked to a healthy environment, Nova Scotia has put in place legislation and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expand renewable energy sources, and reduce the environmental footprint from development.

The agricultural industry is taking steps that can help government achieve these environmental goals. Many farms now have environmental farm plans, which consist of individualized assessments of on-farm environmental risks with recommendations, which include measures to control impacts on water, reduce soil erosion and maintain the integrity of soils.

Agriculture is contributing to the province’s climate change priorities. Operators are making structural improvements to increase energy efficiency and some are adapting solar and wind-powered systems to reduce energy consumption. The farming community can be a source of renewable energy as well, growing products that can be turned into fuel and transforming waste materials into combustibles for power stations.
These and other initiatives toward a ‘green’ agricultural industry make good business sense. Producers, who can appeal to consumer preferences for products that meet certain environmental standards, can develop niche market advantages. More broadly, our agricultural industry has an opportunity to profit from a strong image of environmental stewardship supported by policies that protect and enhance the environment.

**Social: Consumers and community**

Nutritious food is important for good health. As Nova Scotians struggle with significant health challenges, including high rates of obesity and diseases such as diabetes and cancer, they are making the link between locally produced foods and human health. Consumers are increasingly turning to alternative suppliers such as farmers’ markets for their food purchases, and many want to know more about how their food is produced. Nova Scotians can have confidence in locally produced foods, which are grown under quality conditions and are subject to one of the most stringent food safety systems in the country. Efforts by government and industry to promote local foods are producing positive results.

Many of our rural communities were founded, grew, and prospered around agriculture. It fueled the local economy of 1921, and it continues to fuel the local economy today, with more than 6,500 on-farm jobs and some 11,700 processing jobs in 2008. Agriculture also supports jobs in rural-based businesses that provide an array of goods and services. By buying local, more money stays in the province and contributes to the taxes used to build schools, hospitals, and roads throughout Nova Scotia. A thriving agricultural sector can help support local community organizations such as churches, charities, sports groups and volunteer fire departments. Nova Scotia’s farmers also provide a stabilizing influence through their commitment to maintaining the land, their communities and the rural lifestyle.

This attachment to community values underpins a rural lifestyle and culture that is part of the Nova Scotian image, enriching the province overall and capable of attracting people and industries seeking such qualities.
Opportunities Within

More than mere challenges, the trends occurring within the industry also represent opportunities to those willing to adapt practices and leverage Nova Scotia’s natural advantages. Tapping into such opportunities requires us to begin with what we already have. We can start by positioning and branding agriculture with our natural tendency toward diversity, our reputation for safe, nutritious foods, our tradition of environmental stewardship, and our appreciation of community values.

That said, we must do more to understand what makes Nova Scotia unique and build our competitive advantages on that knowledge. Nova Scotia has natural and developed attributes that should inform any consideration of competitive advantage as it relates to agriculture.

Natural features

Practically an island, Nova Scotia is surrounded by water—a feature that has shaped our history, culture, and economy. Many farms line our seacoast, and our historic dykelands continue to be rich farming areas. The many lakes, rivers, and streams that make up the watersheds are well fed thanks to a temperate climate that provides an abundance of rain and is suitable for a wide range of crops, including grasses prized for forage-fed
livestock. Given the presence of both salt and fresh water, Nova Scotia has an advantage in combining the bounty of the sea and land into a brand of culinary diversity and a food experience born of the water, soils, and climate unique to the province. This emerging cuisine is proving to have broad appeal for Nova Scotians and visitors to the province.

Our varied landscape, with different soil types and micro-climates, has helped create an industry that thrives on diversity both in terms of what is produced, and how it is done. Our soils are well suited to horticulture production, as demonstrated by the success of the blueberry, maple, apple, and vegetable sectors, and more recently a successful grape and wine sector.

**Location**

Nova Scotia’s proximity to the United States, particularly to the New England and New York markets, is a geographic advantage that, while not unique to us, can work in our favour. The fact that we share history and culture with our Eastern seaboard neighbours gives us an advantage in understanding their market preferences and building business relationships. It also gives Nova Scotia exporters a platform for dealing with other U.S. markets, particularly for building the networks and nurturing the relationships that are increasingly a regular part of doing business.

*Nova Scotia currently exports products such as blueberries, apples, fur, and high-end, value-added products to markets around the world.*
A well-developed transportation infrastructure, which includes our modern and centrally located international airport, is important for leveraging our advantageous location to U.S. markets and beyond. As well, Halifax’s ice-free port is part of an extensive network of shipping routes connecting North America to Europe and Asia. The province’s Gateway initiative strengthens this natural advantage, enhancing Nova Scotia’s place in the modern world economy.

**Intellectual, research and development**

The Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), located in Bible Hill, is a national leader in applied research and industrial partnerships in the agri-product sector. With mandates for teaching, extension, research, and commercialization, the agricultural college attracts the type of people needed to fuel innovation. NSAC researchers focus on issues with local, national, and international importance, from organic agriculture and biotechnology to specific production techniques. They also draw on the diverse network of academic and technical knowledge housed in Nova Scotia’s 10 degree-granting institutions and 13 community college campuses, as well as the Atlantic Veterinary College in Prince Edward Island. Such a rich research and development landscape provides a solid foundation for exploring and tapping into opportunities that can fuel growth in Nova Scotia’s agricultural industry.

NSAC plays a key role in attracting and forming the new agriculturists of today and tomorrow. An estimated 87 per cent of NSAC graduates choose to remain in Atlantic Canada and contribute to the region. This is an important asset, and we need to build on it to attract new entrants into the industry. New legislation passed in 2008 to revise the NSAC...
governance structure is targeted at advancing the responsiveness and competitiveness of the college and its services to industry. The change will position the college more effectively to attract and meet the needs of young people choosing agriculture as a profession.

**Being genuine**

For a small province like Nova Scotia, prosperity in agriculture is not about being big. It is about being better. It is about quality versus quantity, about being unique versus being common. It is about foods that are true to our roots—grown, harvested, processed, and sold in ways that reflect Nova Scotia’s reputation for honesty, integrity, and personalized services. It is about understanding who we are and selling the best of what we have to offer: our attachment to traditional values, family, and community and our attachment to the land and the sea and the bounties that have enriched our economy.

We must be better at embracing change. The challenge for our agriculture community is to keep pace with modernization without losing our identity and those attributes that best define us as Nova Scotians.

Organic food production is one area that has emerged in recent years as a good fit with our attribute of being genuine. This sector is suited to non-commodity and small-farm production. It generally targets consumers outside the mainstream—those seeking qualities that come with a higher price tag. This is an agricultural sector with an impressive performance record that shows no sign of slowing down, and it can complement conventional agricultural production. Another opportunity suited to the image of being close to our roots is the production of grass-fed and heritage breeds of livestock, including beef, lamb, hogs, and goats. Both discerning consumers and a growing local ethnic population can appreciate the availability of high-end and culturally-targeted products.
Nova Scotia’s food safety system is among the best in Canada and is recognized as such by the federal government and food industry organizations. In fact, other provinces and some U.S. states are using parts of our food safety systems models for their own programs.

Nova Scotia recognizes the shared responsibility of government, industry, and consumers for an effective food safety system. This interconnection is reflected in the province’s pasture-to-plate integrated model. It is a system that employs personnel with public health training and specialized inspection skills. The food safety specialists work directly with clients, responding to concerns and advising on corrective action. Operating under a code of ethics, the specialists adhere to high standards of integrity, which enables them to make independent assessments and take quick action in food safety matters.

This personalized, real-time service, for both business operators and consumers, is the hallmark of the Nova Scotian food safety team. The goal is confidence in the food we eat and, ultimately, peace of mind for consumers.

Traditional agriculture is evolving to pursue targeted markets and displace what was typically an import with a quality consumer-preferred local product.
Government’s Priority

Government understands the challenges facing the agriculture sector. We are committed to working with members of the industry as we undertake the changes necessary to ensure a competitive, profitable, and sustainable sector. But there should be no mistake: the changes are fundamental. We must develop a different approach to supporting the agri-industry.

*Homegrown Success* articulates government’s commitment to the future of the industry. The document sets out a vision for the future of agriculture in Nova Scotia and identifies the outcomes in achieving that vision. It is a call to think differently about agriculture and act accordingly.

The inherent challenge for all Nova Scotians—not only those in agriculture—is to see the value and benefit of a vibrant industry to our quality of life. The fit between agriculture and the well-being of Nova Scotians must be clear. More than about growing food, agriculture contributes to who we are, how we work, and how we live.

Beyond the jobs and other economic contributions to rural communities, we need to appreciate that agriculture can be one of our greatest allies in caring for the environment. It can also help us understand the link between food and health. In addition to such tangibles, agriculture has helped shaped our history and culture. Our urban and rural communities have developed in proximity to one another, and no matter where we live, we find pleasure in our rural landscapes. To appreciate agriculture is to understand that we all have a role in ensuring that the choices we make reflect the importance of the industry’s survival and success. Government cannot do it alone. Government can provide the necessary leadership to bring the industry to the next level.

*Homegrown companies are producing new consumer-driven products for domestic and export markets.*
Homegrown Success

Purpose of the Plan

At a practical level, Homegrown Success is an internal plan for government to guide policies and priorities in the development of a sustainable agriculture and agri-product industry for Nova Scotians.

More broadly viewed, Homegrown Success is an undertaking for the future. It seeks to define a new relationship between the agricultural community and the government, one in which farming may be unsubsidized but not unsupported.

Homegrown Success is also a means of focusing departmental activities in support of government’s overall vision for making life better for Nova Scotia families. The emphasis is on growing the agricultural economy, attracting and retaining rural youth, and ensuring equitable public services and infrastructure in rural regions. Success will take leadership and a determination to act wisely and decisively, particularly in balancing public investment with fiscal responsibility.

As we move into the next decade and toward a new vision for Nova Scotia and for agriculture, we must adapt to a changing environment. This work has started. We must maintain the momentum and ensure that what we do is in line with our vision. Homegrown Success will be a beacon to guide us in this continued effort and to ensure that agriculture is part of the government’s vision for Nova Scotia’s economic revival.

A Broader Industry Definition

A successful agriculture industry is a function of several key players—the primary producer, the processor, the wholesaler/distributor and the retailer—working together in an integrated value-chain focused on the consumer. For this to work, our development focus must cover all four key players.

Vision

We share a vision of an agriculture and agri-product industry that is diversified, market-focused, innovative, and profitable.

It is an industry recognized for its adaptable, collaborative business approach and its safe, exceptional quality products.
Moreover, it is an industry valued for contributing to the economy, the environment, and vibrant rural communities.

**Principles**

The following principles will guide government as we work with stakeholders and partners to implement this plan.

**Sustainability.** We improve our competitiveness through best practices without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In considering the impact of our decisions and actions, we give due weight to economic development, environmental stewardship, and social well-being.

**Collaboration.** We can be greater than the sum of our parts by improving connections and aligning our work with partners who share our goals, including the federal government. Integrating planning, investments, and services will lead to larger gains.

**A focus on growth.** Mindful of our valued traditions, we must be prepared to adapt to change in a way that will lead to growth and competitiveness by becoming more innovative, responsive to market signals, and entrepreneurial.

**Measurable improvement.** In a reality of limited resources, we ensure best value for our investments by measuring our progress. Determining success will require appropriate

*Nova Scotia is a new world wine region. With 15 grape and fruit wineries in the province today, wineries are attracting professionals into agri-business from a variety of backgrounds.*
benchmarking, regular tracking, accountability and a return on investment.

**Living within our means.** We manage our budget wisely and provide best value to taxpayers.

**Public interest.** We work for the benefit of all Nova Scotians. Agricultural development needs to contribute to the overall public interest.

**Innovative.** Today’s rapid rate of change requires a mindset and habit of looking beyond where we are to where we have to go. Collaboratively, we need to conduct research, track trends, plan strategically, and anticipate opportunities to remain competitive.

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**Objectives and Outcomes**

To achieve the stated vision, government will focus its work on three strategic objectives:

- Going forward
- Environmental stewardship
- Social well-being

These strategic objectives work together to competitive, profitable and sustainable industry. Sustainability can be defined as the capability to meet the needs of the present without diminishing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. How well we meet the three strategic objectives will be demonstrated by our progress in pursuing the associated outcomes that follow. We will measure that progress over the next decade and identify policies to guide the programming and services needed to achieve the vision.

Nova Scotia’s agriculture industry has a role to play in helping to address broader social priorities for clean energy and environmental sustainability.
Going forward

An economically viable agricultural industry is able to cover costs of production and be profitable without direct government payments. In Nova Scotia, the supply-managed structure—a cornerstone of our agricultural sector—has enabled nearly half of the industry to achieve a measure of stability in the face of market volatility, but even the supply-managed sectors have to focus on these outcomes. Other sectors will require different approaches. For economic viability, Nova Scotia will have to achieve the following:

• **diversification across the industry**

  Diversification allows an industry to lower risk and improve financial return, much like a healthy investment portfolio. This requires the province to focus on broadening the mix of products, markets, and marketing approaches, as well as the scale and geographic distribution of farms. Diversification also involves making better use of natural features, particularly our abundance of fresh water, various soil types, and micro-climates. Diversification should be balanced with scale— the size of an operation—to ensure a certain level of efficiency.

*Our location to major markets in Ontario, Quebec and the northeastern United States is a major advantage for Nova Scotia agri-businesses looking to add value and compete on a world stage.*
• **a focus on markets and opportunities**
  To gain and maintain a competitive edge, agri-businesses must acknowledge that the consumer is in the driver’s seat and that consumer preferences change, sometimes rapidly. This requires the use of modern marketing approaches and communication tools. All components of the market chain—from primary producer to retailer—need to know what is going on in the marketplace. In addition, they must work together—focused on the consumer—to adapt quickly to the changes and opportunities that arise.

• **a strong Nova Scotia brand**
  Nova Scotia products enjoy a reputation for quality, safety, and reliability. We are fortunate to have such assets to develop a unique brand. Certainly, Nova Scotia agri-food businesses are increasingly alert to the advantage of using image to position and market products. We must build on this momentum and strengthen the consumer brand for Nova Scotia agricultural products.

• **improved business skills and climate**
  Success in agriculture ultimately rests with the business decisions of the owner/operator. Successful entrepreneurs monitor their results, constantly adapt to achieve their goals and strive to find the best solution to any problem. While individual operators are ultimately responsible for their business decisions and the success of their operations, government can help by encouraging adaptation, providing technical and business advice, marketing intelligence, and assistance with new product development. Government can also foster a climate that supports an entrepreneurial approach through strategic investment of capital, development of tax policy and a regulatory environment that supports businesses.

• **a strong research and development culture**
  History reminds us that progress, in its many forms, is grounded in innovation. To be economically viable, agriculture must increase its capacity to be innovative and to explore new entrepreneurial ideas throughout the value chain. Research and development provide a strong foundation for forward-thinking and dynamic agri-businesses to explore and realize new business opportunities.
Environmental stewardship

Environmental stewardship in agriculture is aimed at ensuring that the quality of our soil, water, and air is maintained or improved over time. The industry manages soil nutrients to meet crop needs without compromising soil integrity. It uses water wisely and manages watersheds. It seeks to minimize emissions of harmful gasses into the atmosphere through innovative technology and energy conservation. To achieve environmental stewardship in the agriculture and agri-product industry, Nova Scotia needs to focus on some specific outcomes:

- **preservation and enhancement of agricultural resources**
  
  Preservation and enhancement of our air, water, soil, and biodiversity will ensure that future generations can benefit from these resources. The agriculture and agri-product industry plays an important role in helping the province achieve its objective of resource stewardship. As long-time and knowledgeable users, agriculturalists appreciate their caregiver role in ensuring that our natural resources are managed with care. They benefit, as do all Nova Scotians.

- **protection of agriculturally important land**
  
  Urbanization and other demands placed on rural lands require attention to ensure that adequate land remains available for agricultural uses. This is a complex issue with multiple stakeholders. It will require sound research and analysis, along with collaboration with other provincial departments, municipal governments, and Nova Scotians, to balance concerns and determine outcomes that are in the best public interest.
• **greening the economy**

Agriculture has a market opportunity in helping Nova Scotia expand production of renewable energy, reduce greenhouse gases, and develop a workforce for green jobs. Government and the energy sector are working with the agricultural industry to explore opportunities for producing energy from wind, sun, biomass, and agricultural waste. The industry is also actively engaged in energy conservation and other activities aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Industry can use this commitment to a greener Nova Scotia as a branding tool in the marketplace and as an incubator for modernizing its workforce.

**Social well-being**

Agriculture cannot be isolated from the values that define Nova Scotia as a people and a province. As a foundation industry, agriculture is an integral part of our history and development, and it has shaped the cultural heritage that we enjoy today. Social well-being means that Nova Scotians can appreciate the contribution agriculture makes to society and the broader societal benefits of rural communities. In this regard, Nova Scotia needs to achieve the following:

• **public appreciation of agriculture**

Agriculture has long been the economic and social backbone of many rural communities, but it also contributes in significant ways to the province overall. Emerging health and food-safety concerns are

*Halifax’s new Seaport Farmers’ Market opened in July 2010. The state-of-the-art market provides new opportunities for farmers to sell their products locally and gives consumers better access to fresh, high-quality and homegrown products.*
driving consumer interest in local foods. Increasingly, consumers are looking to purchase local products and to know more about how these foods are produced. The beauty of our rural landscape is a significant contributor to the tourism industry, generating wealth in rural communities. Nova Scotians also enjoy these agricultural landscapes, and the activities of a working farm are strong draws for schools and families alike. The broad contribution of agriculture should be better understood and appreciated by Nova Scotians.

**Building on a Solid Foundation**

Renewal of Nova Scotia’s agriculture and agri-product industry is already underway. This renewal is anchored in a vision of a competitive and profitable industry that is diversified, market-focused, adaptable, and collaborative. It is an industry recognized for exceptional and quality products and valued for its contribution to the public interest.

Achieving this vision will take a commitment to act wisely and decisively for the common good. It cannot be achieved alone; it will take the concerted effort of industry and Nova Scotians who care about the agricultural industry. Such a vision also demands a willingness to stay the course, despite challenges encountered along the way. Sustainability must remain in the forefront of our intentions to ensure that decisions made today benefit future generations.

*Agriculture has the potential to reinvigorate and re-energize rural communities throughout Nova Scotia. To do this, the industry needs to embrace new ideas and world perspectives, look at new ways of doing things and move forward with renewed entrepreneurial confidence.*
Already we are making progress in moving toward the stated vision. The Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), a centre of innovation excellence, prepares students for careers in agriculture, emphasizing engineering, science and business, and serves the research and developmental needs of agriculture in Atlantic Canada. It is in the process of becoming independent of government, which will give it a renewed mandate and greater flexibility to deliver its innovation agenda. The new Atlantic Centre for Agricultural Innovation, scheduled to open in 2011 at NSAC’s AgriTECH Park, will partner with industry to develop new commercial agricultural products.

Complementing this work is an effort to enhance research at the federal agricultural centre in Kentville. These and future investments in innovation will continue to attract private investment and yield opportunities for all players along the value chain, thereby contributing to government’s objective to grow jobs.

The department is also realigning its extension services to better serve the needs of the agricultural industry. The focus is on the value chain and ensuring appropriate linkages among the various players throughout this chain. It is a hands-on, client-oriented approach that defines and strengthens the department’s relationships with industry clients. The department has hired additional staff and will continue to work with AgraPoint to deliver technical extension services. This ongoing renewal effort will significantly strengthen the department’s capacity to deliver extension services to industry.

**Homegrown Success**—a 10-year plan for agriculture reflects a commitment to make life better for Nova Scotians. It embraces a future where our agricultural industry is valued for its contribution, not just to the economy, but also to the environment and society in general. It describes a future that recognizes agriculture as the life-blood of the rural communities that have shaped our identity as a province and as a people.
Homegrown Success
a 10-year plan for agriculture