



YUKON
AGRICULTURAL
ASSOCIATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 - 2027



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Who are we?

The Yukon Agricultural Association evolved from the Yukon Livestock and Agriculture Association that was established over four decades ago. The Association has continuously represented the agriculture industry in dealings with governments and other organizations over that period. It provides cross-commodity support in fostering agricultural development in the Yukon. In 1997, the Association reorganized and adopted a new constitution. In 2015, YAA amended its by-laws and policies.

What is our Mission?

To foster and promote sustainable Yukon agriculture and agri-food for the benefit of both private and commercial producers and consumers through education, infrastructure development, and liaison with government agencies and with nongovernment organizations.

To achieve its mission, the Yukon Agricultural Association will:

- promote agriculture and agri-food as an industry that is sustainable and essential to the economic and social well-being of the Territory;
- develop collective unified positions to address issues of the agricultural sector;
- maintain communications to inform members, producers, and the Yukoners;
- encourage inclusion of Yukon agriculture in education curriculum;
- be guided by membership through effective organization and communication;
- promote industry infrastructure to meet the goals and aspirations of members;
- advocate government to achieve the requirements of a healthy industry;
- effective engagement with government agencies which affect agriculture;
- require accountability on the part of government(s) and their agencies;
- recruit, maintain and service an expanding membership;
- foster the involvement of Yukon First Nations in agriculture; and,
- foster the involvement of industries related to agriculture in agriculture issues.

What is our Vision?

Our vision is to help Yukon food producers and processors develop a way of life and an industry that provides the Yukon's needs for those agricultural goods and services that can be produced in the Yukon.

The Association's vision for agriculture sector incorporates the following ideals:

- a self-sustaining industry (economically, socially, and environmentally);
- an industry that is part of, and an asset to, the social fabric of the Yukon;
- a commercially competitive and attractive industry;
- a viable industry based on private ownership and management of holdings;
- an infrastructure capable of practices and technology appropriate to the Yukon;
- a respect and credibility to and from other sectors, government and Yukoners;
- an inclusive industry in which future generations can, and wish to, participate.

The Planning Process

This strategic plan was prepared at the request of and with the participation of the Yukon Agricultural Association Board of Directors. Facilitation and strategic visioning exercises were led by Lyn Hartley and supported by Carl Burgess, YAA's Executive Director. The participation and time commitment of each board member greatly enhanced the outcome of each planning session, and the association is grateful for the commitment of the Board to this process.

STRATEGIC GOALS + PRIORITIES

This plan is organized into five primary goals with priorities:

Goal 1: Infrastructure + Equipment

Goal 2: Advocate for Policies + Programs Related to Agriculture

Goal 3: Communication + Education

Goal 4: Membership Recruitment + Retention

Goal 5: Effective Board Governance + Administration

Current Trends Impacting Agriculture in the Yukon

As society and the economy adjust from the subsiding COVID-19 pandemic, the Board discussed the critical trends currently impacting the agricultural industry in the Yukon:

Significant market demand and growth trajectory: the past five years have experienced a notable growth in the activity and capacity of both producers and processors, doubling or more the production of select products. This positive trend for Yukon products is growing rapidly and is expected to continue.

Higher Costs + Inflation: people are watching their dollars with higher costs and inflation. The high transportation, operation, insurance, and input costs are disrupting the food sector in Canada. These situations may be beneficial and create new opportunities to local producers.

Supply Chain: there are global challenges and reduced availability of key feedstock and products for the agriculture industry (i.e. feed, fuel, fertilizer). The Yukon agri-food sector will be affected.

Labour Shortage: it is increasingly difficult to attract and retain skilled labour. The cost of employment is increasing. Many younger people may not be interested in agriculture as a career.

Climate Change: the impacts of climate change throughout the Yukon are evident including shifts in the growing season, weather norms, flooding, forest fires, stress on infrastructure.

Viability of Agriculture Businesses: while there is increased interest in local production of food, it is expensive to operate in the North. It is a challenge to achieve long-term viability for agri-food businesses. This is particularly the case for newer business requiring significant start-up investment and effort.

Barriers in the Agri-Food System: the Board is interested in identifying the “pinch-points” or barrier within the sector which require attention. It is critical that YAA maintains broad industry awareness and works to advocate for strong linkages and interdependencies as the sector grows.

The Best Role for the Organization

The Board is interested in providing a united voice for the agriculture industry and finding ways for the different parties to work together to find common solutions.

As an organization:

- We are an organized network of **farmers and agri-food professionals and practitioners** intent to help the sector.
- We strive to **represent and support all of agriculture** in the Yukon – producers, processors, and distributors.
- We strive to **work in partnership** with other organizations.
- We keep **relevant to emerging** issues of the sector.
- We **provide benefits** and represent interests of members.
- We provide **support to new farmers** for viable businesses.
- We encourage **sustainable industry growth**.
- We **work with all governments** in the Yukon and beyond including municipal, federal, territorial, provincial, First Nations.
- We provide a forum to **bring together divergent perspectives** and interests to discuss agriculture issues.
- We **educate** on key issues and encourage **applied research**.
- We welcome **engaged consumers** that are interested in food systems and understand the true costs of the sector.
- The Association, Board, and staff to assume the role of a **bridgebuilder** between different parties to work through differences.
- We thrive with an **active Board of diverse perspectives** working together to make good decisions.

Goal 1:

Infrastructure and Equipment

Guiding Principles: YAA avoids competing with services that can be provided through the private sector. YAA invests in major infrastructure only if there is a long-term maintenance plan and addresses clear sector need and growth potential.

Priority 1 – Equipment Rental.

The YAA owns five farm implements can be rented by members. This service has quite helpful and of assistance for many farms in the greater Whitehorse area.

Actions:

1. Maintain and examine data and usage reports to determine if YAA should continue to be involved with rental program(s).
2. Examine emergent equipment needs may require YAA program assistance.
3. Explore programming options for regional agricultural sector clusters.

Priority 2 – Land Parcel + Community Fairgrounds.

In 2012, the Yukon Agricultural Association signed a 30-year lease agreement with the Government of Yukon for a 65-hectare parcel of land on the Mayo Road. At the May 2018 AGM, YAA members approved a motion stating that YAA's 65-hectare parcel would be the future site of Yukon's Agricultural Community Centre, starting with the development of fairgrounds. In the summer of 2019, YAA developed a livestock arena as the first step in the development of a community fairgrounds facility with fencing and areas cleared for event parking. Since then, YAA hosted Farm Fairs on this site, and other events have been held at the fairgrounds. In 2020, bleachers and a perimeter pathway were added to the livestock arena. A community use building was constructed near public and trailer parking lots. In Highway signs have been recently installed on the North Klondike Highway.

Actions:

1. Invest in the Fairgrounds as an important meeting place for agricultural groups, as well as a where the public can celebrate Yukon's farming community.
2. Continue to develop the fairgrounds following the 2020 Conceptual Plan.
3. Develop building strategy - research a power strategy to support a building. Plan the clearing for the next stages of development.
4. Investigate storage needs- there may be a need for storage of equipment and/or materials.
5. Landscape – make the property attractive to rent and comfortable to use.

6. Event Rental – rent the space to organizations to hold events that promote the agricultural sector and provide a revenue stream for YAA.
7. Evacuation Equipment and Shelter – develop the capacity to shelter for livestock on the property in the event of crisis or emergency. Pursue funding to secure emergency equipment and establish a redundant property access.
8. Generate a business plan revenue strategy to support a caretaker/manager.
9. Support regional discussions regarding critical infrastructure and equipment.
10. Prepare ground and secure permanent location for YAA’s sea-can storage.
11. Establish YAA events for appropriate fundraising and community well-being.

Goal 2:

Advocate and Influence Key Policies and Programs

Guiding Principles:

- Maintain board rigour to represent membership in decision making.
- Promote, encourage, and advocate for innovative solutions to issues.
- Focus on broad-based agricultural issues and will assist with commodity or sector specific issues.
- Avoid the influence of partisan politics on agricultural issues.
- Work cooperatively with government to achieve its mission.
- Represent the interests of farmers and producers throughout the Yukon.
- Involve industry representatives in advisory committees and working groups.
- Utilize cooperative and effective discussion, resolution, and decision making through round table discussion mediation, ad hoc groups.

Priority 1 –Represent Agriculture interest in the following forums:

Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee(s) - The Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee meets two to five times a year chaired by the Yukon Director of Agriculture. YAA has two voting representatives on this committee and the YAA Executive Director participates *ex officio*. This committee and its sub-committees are ongoing forums for Yukon’s agriculture industry.

Elk Management on Agriculture Lands - YAA continues to work with farmers whose fields and farms have been impacted by the introduced free range elk herd(s). Elk impact includes breaking fences, digging up pasture, eating crops, harass/injure livestock, and destroy fields with winter bedding. Mitigation, compensation, and management efforts continue to evolve and require ongoing attention.

Canadian Agricultural Partnership - YAA has an appointed representative on the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Soon called Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership "SCAP") project evaluation committee. This committee reviews all applications except research projects. YAA will continue to participate in such an opportunity within new funding program framework.

Yukon Agricultural Research Committee - evaluates and approves research and innovation project applications submitted for CAP funding. YAA participates on this committee and will encourage the development on a refined research strategy to align priorities to sector-based challenges and opportunities.

Sheep and Goat Management - The Government of Yukon's Sheep and Goat Control Order came into effect on January 1, 2020. During the implementation period (January to December 2019), YAA worked with sheep and goat owners to monitor the Control Order's impact on the industry. YAA will support efforts to prepare for engagement when renewed.

Other groups as needed.

Priority 2: Identify Areas to Improve Regulatory Efficiency for Yukon Government.

There has been much change and growth in the agriculture production capacity, market, and governance structure within Yukon over the past decades. Several elements of the sector have been developing at different paces and rates; this includes the public regulatory and support. YAA has opportunity to advocate for a review and update Yukon Government program service delivery and regulatory processes to best support a sustainable, prosperous, and expanding agricultural and agri-food sector.

Priority 3: Bring a Strong, Unified YAA Voice When Participating in Policy and Program Development.

Work to maintain and grow government commitment to the Yukon's Agriculture Industry. Many of the topics of interest to YAA members are scattered throughout Yukon Government departments. YAA will advocate and support agriculture issues to avoid confusion between departments with divergent mandates.

Actions:

1. Maintain credible and forward-thinking relations with government and regulators.
2. Serve membership through the promotion and maintenance of a welcoming and positive outreach posture and action.

Current areas for influence:

Yukon Government's Multi-Year Plan for Agriculture – In 2022, Yukon Government is conducting a survey to understand the current situation for agriculture in the Yukon. The survey results will be shared with YAA and this will provide a snapshot of current issues. YAA will try to align forces with GY to increase impact in areas of mutual concern.

Agricultural Land for Future Development - Given the increased interest in agriculture as a strategic industry, YAA will continue to work with GY to find ways to meet the growing demand for land. YAA would like to see productive agricultural land close to all Yukon communities.

Supply Management - YAA will facilitate a discussion and examination of supply management opportunities and challenges toward a broad understanding and examination of the major governance and market tool in pursuit of the best solution to support Yukon production and economy(s).

Land Act Review - The Government of Yukon is modernizing public land is managed through a reviewed and renewed *Yukon Public Lands Act* to replace two existing pieces of legislation, the *Lands Act* and the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*. The Yukon is over 482,000 km² with approximately 0.06% under private title. Growth in the agriculture production sector is land dependent. YAA will engage in the process toward a renewed *Yukon Public Lands Act*.

Wetland Policy - As part of the implementation of the Yukon Water Strategy, the Government of Yukon has developed a draft policy for managing Yukon wetlands. YAA will ensure that agricultural concerns are heard so that there is maximum flexibility for private agricultural land.

Critical infrastructure survey and strategic action - Identify critical infrastructure needs and work to reduce blockages in the agricultural system. A robust agri-food sector will have a breadth and diversity of adequate processing infrastructure (e.g., abattoir) as well as needed skilled labour.

Training and Labour Development - The agriculture sector needs to be continually developing a pool of skilled labour in a competitive marketplace. YAA will advocate for local training through Yukon University (e.g. butchering).

Yukon Agricultural Research Committee – YAA will encourage the development of an Agricultural Research and Innovation Strategy that is broad-based and accessible to membership to guide and support priorities for engagement with aligned research projects and partners.

Animal Health and Regulatory Processes - YAA supports comprehensive animal husbandry and efficient monitoring and testing processes. Currently there are concerns with the accuracy of testing processes. YAA supports efficient and thorough processes to maintain quality and consistency of Yukon agricultural products.

Yukon Government Services and Permitting - Currently, to access services and permitting for agricultural activities, members must engage with numerous different departments of the Yukon Government. YAA is interested in a streamlined process that consolidates and/or coordinates all the regulated services toward a 'one-stop-shop' or enabling service for Agricultural activity.

Retail Grocery Products - YAA will investigate ways to support farms in the development of products that can transition from gates sales to retail stores and markets. Each farm and agricultural area will have unique issues in getting products into different markets and onto local shelves.

Elk Management Hunt and Compensation - Elk management continues to be a contentious issue for the agriculture community. YAA will stay engaged with Yukon Government to find practical solutions.

Climate Change - The changing climate impacts Yukon Agriculture. YAA will endeavour to remain engaged and support alignment to the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of the sector.

Food Security + Sovereignty – YAA will work with other agencies and nonprofits with an interest in increasing local food production, access and distribution.

Goal 3:

Communication and Education

Guiding Principle: Because information and knowledge are required for generating wise solutions to issues, YAA will ensure an appropriate level of communication exists among its members and others involved in the sector.

Priority 1: Up-To-Date Information Available to Members and Public.

- Ensure that the information is evidence-based and well researched.
- Keep up-to-date information on the agriculture and agri-food sector in Yukon and beyond.

Priority 2: Host Annual Fall Fair to showcase the work and membership of YAA.

- Through a committee of members, plan and deliver an annual fall fair.

Priority 3: Increase YAA's visibility through social media.

- All social media streams will remain active and relevant to inform and connect the agriculture community and sector.

Priority 4: Education and Promotion of Yukon Agriculture

- Continue to utilize and develop YAA's brand recognition to promote Yukon Agriculture. The purpose of this promotion is to establish and maintain accurate awareness of the industry sector as well as to encourage Yukoners to trust and support local agriculture and increase their purchases.

Actions:

1. Continue to nurture a robust and effective relationship with senior officials and leadership in municipal, federal, territorial, and First Nation governments.
2. Explore and support promotion and sales venues.
3. Participate in Yukon Food Network deliberations.
4. Activate agricultural workshops on an as needed basis.
5. Engage with Yukon Agriculture to update the application and delivery of "Yukon Grown" and "Product of Yukon" promotional program.
6. Pursue and activate an awareness and promotion campaign to ensure a broad awareness and understanding of the growing agriculture and agri-food industry.

Goal 4:

Membership Recruitment, Retention and Outreach

Guiding Principle: The benefits of its activities accrue to all who are involved in agriculture. In turn, YAA will seek to have the cost of its operations shared by all Yukon farmers through membership dues. It will also seek financial or other contributions from associated and benefiting industries.

Priority 1: Further Establish Regional YAA Chapters

- Continued support in Dawson City area and explore further interests and needs.
- Continue to outreach and support the agriculture sector throughout Yukon.

Priority 2: Increase and Sustain YAA Membership

- Assess the current membership. Currently, anyone can be a member upon registration and \$10 annual fee. We have very broad interests – from the individual to the large-scale agri-food producers.

Priority 3: Provide Impactful Benefits to Members

- Explore membership benefits that provide savings (e.g. bulk fuel, insurance).

Priority 4: Provide pathfinding support

- Pathfinding through government processes for specific members or groups when having issues.

Actions:

1. Investigate the potential of different levels of membership.
2. Define specific needs and targeted support to the different niches within YAA.
3. Continue to recruit members.

Goal 5:

Effective Board Governance and Administration

Priority 1: Evidence Based Discussions and Decisions

Guiding Principle: Yukon's food sector is complex across a broad array of agricultural interests and approaches. YAA positions and decisions effect the continued development and growth of the agri-food and agricultural sector. Clear, accurate, timely information is key to support effective discussions and decisions.

Action:

1. Strive to ensure the YAA Board, Committees, and Membership have adequate support material and opportunity to engage in evidence-based discussions.

Priority 2: Streamline Administrative Procedures

Guiding Principle: Business practices of the YAA will be based on the goal to remain ready and resourced to provide ongoing benefits to those involved in Yukon agriculture. Practices will be effective, efficient, and responsive.

Actions:

1. Modernize finance with use of electronic banking and QuickBooks.
2. Hire part-time administrative support.
3. Executive Director workplan based on this strategic plan.

Priority 3: Board Continuity and Succession Planning

Guiding Principle: The YAA Board of Directors and membership will be bound by its Board Policy Manual. A strong board with a unified vision is an effective board.

Actions:

1. Continue to provide orientation to incoming board members.
2. Hold board members accountable for participation and decisions.
3. Bringing people to the table and talk constructively.

Priority 4: Funding Opportunities

Guiding Principle: As needed, YAA will seek public funding for core business activities without compromising independence through arrangement.

Actions:

1. Investigate the possibility of hiring a proposal writer.
2. Increase core funding through linking YAA’s work to the multi-year plan.

Priority 5: Regional Chapters Representation on Board

Guiding Principle: Food production and activity has increased throughout Yukon. YAA is interested to support all Yukon agriculture. As regional centres or “clusters” of farms grow, regional committees and groups play a key role within YAA membership, governance (e.g., Klondike Famers Forum) and association activities.

Actions:

1. Continue and establish outreach efforts to maintain YAA profile, awareness and utility for producers and processors throughout Yukon.
2. Establish a representative Klondike Abattoir Committee to support deliberations and actions for producers in the Dawson region and north Yukon.

Priority 6: Strengthen Relationships with Committees

Guiding Principle: For focused or extended issues

Actions: Assess the utility and relationships with the current committees such as:

Executive Committee	Governance Committee	Outreach Committee
Equipment Committee	Land Development	Livestock Grazing
Klondike Farmers Forum	Sheep + Goat Committee	Elk Committee
<i>Ad Hoc Committees as needed.</i>		

