



RAINY RIVER  
FUTURE  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION

## RAINY RIVER FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE 2009

UPDATE | RRFDC

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....3**

**INTRODUCTION .....4**

**2005 STRATEGIC DIRECTION .....5**

**UPDATE TO ACTIVITIES IN THE AGRICULTURE COMMUNITY ..... 15**

**POTENTIAL PHASE II RURAL AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES..... 18**

**NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS ..... 20**

**SUMMARY ..... 26**

## Executive Summary

In 2005 the Rainy River Federation of Agriculture (RRFA) completed a strategic plan for the Agriculture Sector in the Rainy River District. The goal at that time was to capture a picture of the farming activities in the District and to identify ideas, initiatives and concerns in the community that the RRFA could assist with, encourage and/or facilitate change. Through this process many issues, barriers and opportunities were made apparent to those participating and by this means, became the goals and objectives of the RRFA.

When developing a vision many organizations keep in mind the fundamental aspects of a vision:

- It must be a clear, guiding picture of what you want to accomplish;
- Be so concrete that you can see it in detail;
- Must be big enough to capture the goal;
- Must include changed attitudes towards change;
- Can be the glue that holds everyone together;
- Must include the power each individual brings to the table to achieve that change;
- Can set in motion the energy needed to achieve the ends.

The participants came away with a consolidated vision for the District agriculture sector.

***“A diverse, vibrant and sustainable agriculture sector contributing as an important economic driver in the District over the long term.”***

Using the strategic plan as a guiding tool, the RRFA directors and its commodity group representatives would work towards achieving many of the opportunities and action items that they identified during the two day planning process. As a federation the directors would continue to review the plan annually and to brainstorm further directions for laying the ground work for success for their partners in agriculture.

It is important to document briefly the findings of the RRFA strategic planning process and what the process identified as District Strengths and Weaknesses in 2005 and the action items for the future. Through this process we will also be able to recognize how the agriculture sector in the Rainy River District has moved forward on many of its goals and objectives.

## Introduction

As the District and indeed the country moves toward an increase in food localism, producers should be allowed to supply local markets by selling vegetables, meat, eggs and milk both at the farm gate and through local retail grocery stores. Local food systems will result in a safer food supply, fresher products, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, better environmental stewardship and increased farm incomes. Through this increased activity, the agriculture sector will experience more job creation and the youth will remain in the area thereby encouraging a healthy sustainable population.

When realizing that we are losing the ability to feed ourselves, as the food we eat is increasingly imported, it quickly becomes clear we are at a crossroads in the history of our food production and distribution systems.

A food system that is sustainable will be financially viable for all stakeholders, primarily local and regional. It will be ecologically responsible in its operations and socially responsive. A likely scenario is that grants and assistance programs should go toward supporting and building infrastructure that will stabilize the agriculture sector.

Legislation surrounding nutritional labelling is too expensive for small farming operations and small scale local food processors. These business operations cannot afford these large costs, putting local food producers at a disadvantage and small processors out of business.

There is a need to promote Local Food as well as work toward increasing the supply. It is essential that the agriculture producers begin to work towards possible solutions and a plan for sustainability. As the cost of energy continues to rise, there is a need to encourage local food initiatives, so that the sector is not so energy dependent. If energy prices continue to increase, change may occur in the distribution of food. This will require the agriculture community to plan to sustain food for the hinterland and become regionally more self reliant. This will allow the people in the District, and the region, to have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life.

The Rainy River District agriculture community must continue to strive towards becoming more diverse in its production of not only food but move towards more value added crops that are effective in creating heat, energy and fuel.

The opportunities are out there to begin to compete in the global market by producing its own food, and by creating its own energy and heating supply to sustain the District and the region. So the question that is paramount is how will the Rainy River District accomplish these goals?

The process is long and arduous and will take planning and contemplation, making sure that each step taken will be a positive accomplishment with the end product resulting in additional financial success for the agriculture community.

## **2005 Strategic Findings and Directions**

### ***Strengths***

Existing Infrastructure:

- Border Inspection Station
- Rainy River Cattlemen's Association Cattle Sales Barn
- University of Guelph Emo Agriculture Research Station
- Port of Entry to the United States and the Province of Manitoba
- Clover Valley Farmers' Market Co-Op
- Seed Cleaning Facility
- Bulk Fertilizer
- Community Pasture Program

### ***Local and Regional Strengths***

- The region as a "pristine environment" that has an economic/marketing appeal;
- Grass feeding of cattle is economical and possible in the Rainy River District. Grass fed beef has become an emerging/high value market;
- Land prices are still economically viable for agriculture uses;
- There is a very strong commitment to farming – local values;
- The region is small enough to organize, plan and work together at a grass roots level;
- The region is a destination, a gateway and a transportation hub;
- The relative isolation of the region allows varied crops to be grown (i.e. crop separation is not as large an issue as elsewhere);
- There are a number of alternative products being produced in the region (i.e. elk, bison, sheep, goat and wild boar);
- Local organizations are diverse and continue to strive to work together.

***District Weaknesses***

- Too many onerous rules and regulations from government and marketing boards;
- High input costs with no local control or options;
- Increasing competitive pressures and world markets;
- District land is being purchased for use other than agriculture ( i.e. hunting, woodlots and residential);
- Lack of active support in the agriculture community for those trying to succeed;
- There needs to be an active and unified voice from farmers;
- If the District and the region plan to brand and market itself, it needs to address how it will look to others – particularly tourists;
- No local options for processing cattle (Abattoir);
- Local markets are relatively small;
- Farmers are forced to work off the farm to make a living;
- Not enough farmers involved in value added products or controlling their products further along the sales/market chain;
- National issues – BSE, US Border closed to cattle, and depressed cattle prices.

***Issues and Opportunities***

- Pursue alternative crops;
- Import farmers who have experience;
- Added value – expand local markets – quality of life could be added to product promotion- community operated feedlot – abattoir;
- Rainy River Agriculture Website;
- Change the public perception of the farmer (not just about handouts from the Government);
- There is a disconnect between the farmer and the consumer;
- Decreasing activity and role of the OMAFRA office;

- Volunteer burnout;
- OMAFRA expertise;
- Intern position for research projects;
- Partnership with First Nations;
- Conventional thinking, affluence and complacency will hamper efforts;
- Area is diversified;

***Policy and Political Issues***

- Need farmer friendly regulations;
- Consistent enforcement of regulations;
- Costs of regulations must be passed onto the consumer;
- Need interprovincial barriers for products removed; (products provincially inspected cannot move between provinces) (Federal inspected plants are not the answer just an alignment between provinces)
- Municipal drainage Act;
- Educate politicians about agriculture issues;
- Ensure stable funding for the Emo Agriculture Research Station;
- Poor roads (i.e. Hwy 600 series);
- No Government financial support for the animal inspection station. This is the only privately owned and operated inspection station;
- Transportation in and out;
- Agriculture has been cut from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation.

**Action and initiatives and Project Development**

When developing actions for change, the following were listed as important considerations

- We need success stories;
- Don't overlook the small things;

- Get a return on our efforts (Dollars are needed at the end of the line for farmers);
- Many of the weaknesses are country wide problems;
- Consider research and building enthusiasm to develop an opportunity;
- Economic opportunities;
- Communication and policy.

Three main categories were identified:

- Added value;
- Alternative crops;
- Communication plan.

Actions:

- Attend conferences and visit places to gain firsthand knowledge;
- Various producer and marketing venues;
- Prepare information packages that include:
  - Market structure;
  - Distribution;
  - Research for the various alternative crops;
  - The various target market and their standards;
  - Economics both globally and locally for specific opportunities such as market garden on the excess heat of Cloverleaf store location and the mill in Fort Frances;
  - Production information.

#### **Added Value Actions**

- Vertically integrate the meat business;
- Identify new products;
- Bench mark products and businesses that are adding value;
- Quality assurance program;

- Rainy River Website;
- Branding;
- Experts in Agriculture speakers;
- Farm gate brand;
- Education and extension (trips and extension);
- FedNor Booth at the Royal Winter Fair showcasing the District products;
- Ontario Marketing Inc.;
- Abattoir;
- Feedlot;
- Communication plan;
- Reconnect the consumer;
- Rainy River Rural Agriculture marketing campaign;
- Reach and development studies;

To many, these areas of improvement and opportunities seem arduous and even unattainable. The list is long, and dreams and visions are many from the District agriculture community. It should be known that at the time of this planning session many agriculture groups had already initiated their own processes that fell within these strategic directions.

- The onset of the Rainy River District Regional Abattoir Committee (instrumental in the development process of the new abattoir staged to begin operating in February 2010);
- Clover Valley Farmers' Market began the feasibility of cooperative distribution of local products and individuals interested in adding value to their production;
- The Rainy River District Soil & Crop Improvement Association were successful in bringing on a research internship to work on the research indicated by this planning session;
- The RRFDC began posting RRFA minutes and information on agriculture in the District on their website to facilitate information sharing.

This report has briefly captured the essence of the 2005 Rainy River Federation of Agriculture 2005 Strategic Plan to give one a better understanding of why the agriculture community is in the position it is

today and how the community has embraced their plan and followed through with many of its action items. What follows is a synopsis of that success.

**The Rainy River Federation of Agriculture is a subsidiary of the Provincial Ontario Federation of Agriculture Lobbying Group.**

**2007 Rainy River Federation of Agriculture (RRFA) Directors Visioning Session**

The RRFA wanted to set some priorities that they might work on in the coming year and beyond. The exercise was to try to identify some issues/projects. The directors first identified problems affecting agriculture, both within and outside the district. It was felt this may give them some direction on what needed to be worked on. They then identified specific issues and how they might tackle them.

Following are the identified issues (in no particular order).

**ISSUES**

1. Inter-provincial trade barriers, especially to the movement of beef.
2. Food labelling, e.g. Product of Canada when it is not really from Canada
3. Local food, promotion and use of (abattoir, farmers market, food box program)
4. Lack of sharing of (agricultural) information across the district, e.g. Town & Country, Ag Days
5. Regionalization, we should be doing more work with neighbouring regions
6. Promotion of farming.

Following are the identified problems (in no particular order).

**PROBLEMS**

1. Very little diversification in farms in the Rainy River District.
2. The (agriculture) community is not “pulling’ together.
3. Unwillingness by many producers to accept new ideas.
4. Lack of a large animal veterinarian.
5. There is a profitability problem on farms which leads to lack of interest by younger farmers.
6. Need for off-farm income to survive.
7. Not thinking of farming broadly. It is not only food production, e.g. solar, wind, trees – all renewable.
8. Too many committees and people are spread too thin.
9. We are not involving the ‘whole community’ in farm and environmental projects and issues, e.g. schools.
10. Farmers don’t ‘enjoy’ what they are doing.
11. Many new farmers are not participating – isolated.
12. Bureaucracy.

The group then looked at the identified issues and problems; how they might overlap, and how they might address some of them. Some of the problems affected more than one of the issues while others were completely separate concerns.

### ISSUES

1. Inter-provincial trade barriers, especially to the movement of beef.
  - **this could be addressed through lobbying/resolutions**
2. Food labelling, e.g. Product of Canada when it is not really from Canada
  - **this could be addressed through lobbying/resolutions**
3. Local food, promotion and use of
  - very little diversification of farms
  - profitability is a problem on farms
  - lack of young farmers
4. Lack of sharing of (agricultural) information across the district, e.g. Town & Country, Ag Days
  - very little diversification of farms
  - community not pulling together
5. Regionalization, we should be doing more work with neighbouring regions
  - **some of this is being done with regional Federation meetings**
6. Promotion of farming
  - not thinking of farming beyond food production
  - lack of young farmers

Items that remained as standalone problems were:

- an unwillingness to accept new ideas
- lack of a large animal veterinarian (**will continue to support this**)
- need for off-farm income
- too many committees
- not involving whole community in farm projects and issues
- farmers don't enjoy what they do
- many new farmers not participating
- bureaucracy (**may be nothing that can be done**)

### **2008 Ideas Meeting**

Prior to the meeting, members were asked to come up with at least one idea of what they would like to see in agriculture (in the District) in the next 5 years.

Following the identifying of ideas the group went through the list to determine which ones they could realistically have an effect upon (ACTIONABLE) and which ones they could likely only support or lobby for (LOBBY).

Following is a brief summary of the comments.

### IDEAS

**1. Employment (LOBBY)**

- Not just farm employment, e.g. forestry layoffs;
- This can affect agriculture (don't buy local, buy where it is cheap);
- Has a ripple effect on the local economy;
- Want to create jobs, not just in agriculture.

**2. Not requiring two jobs in order to keep farming (LOBBY)**

- Relates to employment above;
- If you lose your mill job do you keep the farm??;
- Farming should be more profitable;
- Cost of Production increases at a higher rate than the price the farmer receives;
- Want agriculture to be able to compete globally.

**3. Educating farmers to make the farm more profitable (ACTIONABLE)**

- Don't keep doing the same old thing, the same old way;
- Get off the farm and see it being done differently somewhere else;
- Examples are Grow Your Opportunities and Grow Your Farm Profits;
- RRFA to become involved in sponsoring tours.

**4. Get more young people involved in agriculture (ACTIONABLE)**

- Improve farm "wages";
- Get "city" people involved (e.g. canning demos, gardening workshops);
- Get non-rural people interested/aware of agriculture in the area.

**5. More advertising of the products we have (ACTIONABLE)**

- Get producers to market their product more (e.g. beef);
- Have a local "marketer" who could market for the farming community;
- Develop regionally branded product(s).

**6. Have a working abattoir within 2 years (LOBBY/ACTIONABLE)**

**7. Institute a workable online community calendar (ACTIONABLE)**

- List upcoming community events on a website;
- Have an “events editor”;
- Possibly set this up on the Rainy River Ag Forum website;
- Possibly set this up through the RRFDC website.

**8. Establish a local food processing facility (ACTIONABLE)**

- Have a location (registered facility/kitchen) in a centrally located area to process/can food for sale;
- Would be available for anyone wanting to use it;
- People would go to this one location to process their food.

**9. Develop stronger agricultural ties to tourism in the area (ACTIONABLE)**

- Get local food into tourist operations (e.g. meat and vegetables);
- Make it possible for tourists to visit local farms;
- Also have course/workshops available for tourists (e.g. mushroom course this past fall).

**Update to Activities in the Rainy River Agriculture Community**

To begin this process, this document will show how many of the action items and opportunities mentioned in the 2005 strategic plan have either been addressed or are in the process of development. Although a variety of actions were supported by the rural agriculture initiative through the Rainy River Future Development Corporation, support was also given to its directions by the District agriculture communities.

**Communication Plan**

- Participation at Ontario Farm Shows and the Royal Winter Fair;
- District Life Styles Agriculture Opportunities Marketing Panels;
- It Makes CENTS to Buy Food Grown in the Rainy River District marketing booth background;
- Rural Agriculture Website: [www.rainyrivervalley.ca](http://www.rainyrivervalley.ca);

- Multiple advertisements and awareness marketing using all methods of media;
- Farm Land and Businesses for Sale brochures/flyer;
- Multiple local food dinners and barbeque events;
- Public rural agriculture update luncheons;
- Multiple consumer surveys on local food desires and food consumption trends;
- Quarterly Municipal Association Rural Ag updates;
- RRFDC quarterly newsletter;
- RRD Cattlemen's newsletter;
- Marketing flyers and brochures.

### **Community Partnering and Networking**

- Network development to the District and Region Health Units and Health Promotion of the advantages to buying local food (i.e. nutritional value);
- Rainy River District Food for all Committee;
- Networking with regional First Nations communities through the Local Food Box Program;
- Networking with the Healthy Communities Coalitions on Community Garden development;

This assists in the promotion and awareness of the benefits of buying local food and establishes community interest in local food consumption.

### **Diversification in Farming**

The opportunities for diversification in farming are truly vast. In order to become more diverse in ones farming or business practices, one has to have a passion or desire to seek change or to diversify their current farming or business. The following will showcase the activities many of the organizations or agriculture groups have pursued over the last three years.

#### Soil and Crop

- Mycrozzia Project;
- Watershed Program;

- Green Cover Project;
- Nutrient Planning;
- Pasture Project;
- Northern Ontario Agriculture Research and Innovation Network development;
- Environmental Farm Plan Program.

Rainy River Cattlemen's Association

- Massive Sales Barn Upgrade Project;
- Diversify District Marketing Options and establish the District Beef Identity;
- Pre-sort Sale Component for cattle sales;
- Vaccination Protocol;
- Rainy River Raised Cattle Ear Tags;
- Quality Starts Here Training for members;
- Rainy River Raised Trademark and logo registration;
- Developing a Branded Beef Program.

Rainy River District Regional Abattoir Committee

- Development and Construction of the new abattoir set to open early in 2010;
- Opening up more opportunities for gate to plate and retail sales options;
- Opening up opportunities for more production and supply of beef, pork, elk, bison, sheep and goat products for the region.

**Encouraging Alternative Crop Production**

To begin to turn to alternative crops, the first step is to trial what may grow well in the Rainy River District. There are a number of alternative crop trials currently underway in the District.

- Rainy River District Bio Energy Trial with AbitibiBowater, the RRFDC, the Emo Agriculture Research Station and the Rainy River Soil and Crop Improvement Association;
- Rainy River Soil and Crop Trials encompassing a trio of energy crop varieties.

- Bio Energy Commercial Agriculture Pellet Project
- Rainy River Federation of Agriculture Vegetable Trials

### **Research**

- Emo Agriculture Research Station (District connection to Guelph University and specialist in the industry)
  - Vegetable trials
  - Green Manure Project
  - Gypsum on Canola
  - Miscanthus Grass
  - Forage Trials
  - Bio Energy Trials
- The Rainy River Federation of Agriculture Economic Impact Study
- University of Waterloo Rainy River District Economic Viability Paper
- BECAPP Pellet Project Phase I Study
- Soil and Crop, RRFA and Clover Valley Farmers' Market internship programs

### **Business Development Training**

- OMAFRA & RRFDC supported Growing your Opportunities-Quest for New Farm Value 2 day workshops;
- RRFDC and RRD Cattlemen's Pasture Specialist Presentation;
- RRFDC and Soil and Crop Organic Farming Specialist meeting;
- Ontario Soil & Crop-Grow Your Farm Profits Workshops.

The Rainy River District has been without a large animal vet for over 5 years. This presents a huge barrier to farming and also meat production in the area. Through the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, Northern communities are able to access the Vet Assistance Program. This program

provides communities with funding to assist with the travel of large animal vets to remote areas. This has allowed for locum vets to visit the area and provide services every four weeks. This is not an ideal solution but better than no services at all. Through working with the vet services committee the RRFDC supported the following recruitment efforts:

- Vet Recruitment Brochure and Information packages;
- Advertisement in Vet Magazines;
- Brochure sent to all Canadian Veterinarian Schools.

### **Regionalization in Agriculture**

- Regional Direct Marketing at Farmer's Markets;
- Establishing a relationship with other agriculture producers;
- Taking the Regional Agriculture producers products to the Royal Winter Fair.

### **Adding Value to Products**

- Clover Valley Winter Market Store;
- Clover Valley Farmers' Market Healthy Food Box Program;
- Rainy River District Gift Boxes.

As is evident from the above mentioned activities, the Rainy River Agriculture sector continues to bring forward research, trials and added value opportunities in an endeavour to seek change and increase on-farm profits.

**The Stage II Proposal for the Rural Agriculture Initiative submitted by the Rainy River Future Development Corporation will work to continue, but not be limited to, the following projects:**

- The Rainy River District Bio Energy Trial
- The Clover Valley Farmers' Market Healthy Food Box
- The Federation of Agriculture vegetable trial and establishing the potential market for more locally grown produce
- The Bio Energy Commercial Agriculture Pellet Project phases I and II study

- The Rainy River Cattlemen’s vaccine and pre-sort sale brochure
- A locally owned dairy processing operation for butter, cheese and ice-cream will be pursued
- Encouraging local living economies projects such as a 10% shift to buying local
- Non-Profit Community Owned Commercial Kitchen
- Immigration to our rural community through video boards in the GTA promoting our District both for farming and business development
- The effort on large animal veterinary recruitment and the suggestion of a community owned veterinary practice and clinic
- The Rainy River Cattlemen’s cattle tag/brand, “Rainy River Raised”. We are now beginning to work on a feeding protocol in preparation for designing and marketing a beef product for the retail market across the region
- Continue to Market the District through shows, events and the development of rural and agriculture tours to attract more immigration and retention of farmers to the area
- Bringing Northwestern produced products to the Royal Winter Fair 2010
- Continue to promote food localism across the region
- Bring in food branding workshops and advanced level business planning workshops
- Work with the abattoir committee in marketing and sponsorship

## **New Strategic Directions**

Letters of invitation went out to all of the agriculture commodity groups asking them to send two or more representatives to participate in a planning session to update the Rainy River Federation of Agriculture Strategic Plan.

On October 22, 2009, these groups came together to review the 2005 plan and its current activities. They then broke into four groups to brainstorm what the next steps for the future of agriculture in the District would be. The following are the results of that planning session.

### **The District Abattoir:**

- More meat processing will be necessary as will alliances developed with area businesses;
- Beef sales coordinator;
- 10% being local;
- Pursue a chicken abattoir;
- Marketing products – beef, lamb, elk, bison, goat and boar;
- Website;
- Production protocols.

**Marketing:** Needs to become more coordinated to develop one stop shopping.

**Branding within the District and the Region:** Develop quality assurance programs, keep them simple and achievable.

### **Food Distribution:**

- Develop partnership with Clover Valley Farmers' Market with their food box program;
- Diversify the program – smaller boxes – more often within the month;
- Develop cold storage facility, and;
- A non-profit commercial kitchen.

**Encourage:** Cross marketing and Agri-tourism and cash crop development.

### **Lobbying Groups:**

- Travel issues;
- Embrace technology ;

- Video conferencing ;
- Vet services (gap) explore community-owned vet clinic;
- Regional self-sufficiency regulations needed;
- Better drainage.

**CO-Op vs Business Approach** – Barrier of 100 mile diet – definition of Local (legislation)

**Farm Operations:**

- Increase in farms and herd size;
- More producers;
- Land-utilize idle land.

**Local Food:**

- Northwestern Ontario;
- Need more producers – vegetables-fruit;
- More vegetable trials;

**Local Education:**

- Junior farmers;
- Skills development – vet (local person);
- Recruit vets from other countries.

**Co-Op's:**

- Increasing need for (equipment, cattle hauling);
- Contact with Government and Agriculture groups;
- More research into this in NWO;
- Land claims – First Nations purchasing land – partner to keep the land productive

**Benchmark other communities' success:**

- Examine what has been done in other places and what the barriers were;
- Encourage more producers to take interest in an agriculture lottery program;
- Promote Dairy Operations;
- Support NOARIN concept;
- Land Marketing – new strategy needed;
- Encourage new bee keepers;
- Work with partners to iron out the wood ash issues – OMAFRA-Industry;
- More coordination between farm groups.

**Barriers to These Directions**

1. Abattoir: viability – numbers of cattle – current economy;
2. Dairy/Beef – Lack of new blood/young farmers;
3. Local Food – capacity to produce;
4. Lack of Storage Facility;
5. Retail Grocery Stores selling local product;
6. Education – very little in schools surrounding agriculture (should be part of the curriculum);
7. No Large Animal Vet – isolation – regulations;
8. Co-Op – most have a bad taste for this – Get over it;
9. Coordinator – Services and Continuity;
10. First Nations - land claims – historical and political;
11. Regional self-sufficiency – who leads – who does the work – volunteer burnout;
12. Lack of funding – rural agriculture coordinator;
13. Wood Ash – MOE – Re-classification;
14. Transport – Hazardous Goods Certification needed;

15. Land for sale marketing – Who – Cost – Will it be funded;
16. NOARIN – how to fund this initiative;
17. Encourage new dairy farms – Who markets – high cost of start up;
18. Bee Keepers – How to info needed – lack of mentoring;
19. Local foods – who can provide the funding needed – business model – Co-Op or Private;
20. Vegetable trials – who/plan/structure/funding;
21. Drainage – who will fund this;
22. Bio energy crops – do not know best varieties;
23. Cash Crop – apathy – huge cost of production;
24. Time for planning - \$\$\$;
25. Society – Big Box Change;
26. Children are leaving the area;
27. Government hurdles – Vet situation;
28. Education and awareness – urban demand for products;
29. Work together – communicate with each other;
30. North West Link – tool to use;
31. Other unknown barriers;
32. Ag groups involvement with Government;
33. Partnering with Municipalities – un-used opportunity;
34. Lobby for funding;
35. Community Kitchen (non-profit or commercial).

**ESTABLISH THE ELEMENTS AND THE ACTIONS ITEMS NEEDED TO BEGIN TO IMPLEMENT**

<b>ESTABLISH ELEMENTS</b>	<b>ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT</b>
Lack of funding	FedNor –NOHFC-OMAFRA and more
Wood Ash	MOE-coordinate groups to lobby
Land Marketing	Coordinator – list-website-find specialized realtor
NOARIN	Producers get involved. Wide spread industry support
New Dairy Farms	Regionalized Allocation Lottery to promote
High Cost of Start up	Lobby to get funds to start new operations, incentive programs
Local Food to Region/Storage	Develop business model – feasibility study
Clientele	Marketing plan and funding
Vegetable Trials	U of Guelph/Lake head U
Economic Impact Study	Use the results to seek funding
Drainage	
Bio Energy	More testing of crop varieties
Cash Crops	Available information – local inventory- info sharing and education
Lack of Equipment	More dealers, research – project funding
Abattoir - viability	Increased promotion, publications – market to the region – good management
Local Food Capacity	Trials create awareness, community kitchen, off season availability of product
Education	Promote community gardens concept, apply

Rainy River Federation of Agriculture Strategic Plan Update 2009

	to funding mechanisms for infrastructure funding-bring in experts – learn from best practices
Who does the work	Import farmers
Government and lobby	Same package, same message, produce articles
Children	Promote good jobs/career- Partner with trades, colleges and universities
Rural Focus	Manitoba’s example – build alliances
Provincial Border Barriers	Municipal and Regional government
The need for buyers and consumers	Keep cultivating – pursue more commodity angled opportunities
	Think more broadly – services needed – business opportunities
Pricing	Beef pricing – local food prices comparable to competitors - “big Box” – cost and market pricing – affordable for the consumer
Availability	Offers in stores – local to compare
Cattle as a viable continued commodity in the District and Region	Sales Barn – washroom facilities – internet access
	Pursue a tannery as a business opportunity

## Summary

*It was clear to the participants that this strategic updating to opportunities in agriculture is clearly something that could take three to five years at a minimum to implement. When people work on a plan for direction it can be a daunting task to begin to develop and implement plans for success.*

*It is clear from many of their actions for implementation that funding support mechanisms, and someone to assist with coordination, is crucial to moving forward on the plan. The future is viable for farming, as is evident in the Rainy River District Agriculture Economic Impact Study. It will only take time and perseverance to complete the plan, something that farmers are famous for.*

### **The SUN TIMES-Young farmers see Ontario as best market**

When two of the youngest beef farmers in the room stood up Monday to talk about the future of their troubled business, they saw salvation just down the road.

Unlike the other participants in the Farmers Week panel discussion who discussed global issues clobbering Canadian beef producers, Grey County feedlot operator Chris Pallister and Dobbinton-area cow-calf farmer Curtis Calhoun spoke about the importance of selling their product close to home.

"I don't know where the industry is going on the world stage or on the grand stage," Calhoun told a crowd of more than 120. "I'm just focussed on what we're doing here in Ontario."

"We need to clamp down on producing the best quality product we can produce and one of the best ways we can do that in Ontario is to brand an Ontario product," he said.

"We have a huge market only a couple of hours away and we're not taking advantage of it. If we had an Ontario product, our consumers would stand by us."

Even the younger farmers have no doubts there are problems in beef. "This recent fall has definitely been the most discouraging that I've witnessed," Pallister said of rising costs and declining prices. "At least with BSE there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Today there's no telling how long this dollar is going to be at these levels."

While Ontario farmers face a variety of disadvantages because of lower farm subsidies compared with competing jurisdictions, like Calhoun, Pallister figures the answers are close to home.