



Crossroad Challenge

Ontario Sheep Farmers – Building From Strength For A Better Future

The future of our industry depends on the success of our member's businesses. The opportunity and responsibility as Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) is to enable the conditions for that success. When the OSF is successful, then:

- Sheep farmers understand the value of developing and nurturing key relationships and partnerships.
- Sheep farmers have the confidence to make informed decisions about the future of their business.
- Sheep farmers value, respect and contribute to the success of the industry as a whole.

Why Crossroads? Why Now?

The Crossroads Challenge was launched recognizing the changing dynamics in Ontario agriculture, the maturing of the sheep sector and the need to update the OSF strategic plan.

The OSF Board acknowledged that the sector, long recognized as unique in Ontario agriculture, was indeed at a crossroads. Active across Ontario and utilizing a range of genetics and production methods to produce a range of products, sheep farmers want to grow and prosper. Standardization of product and production is the traditional method of growing an industry, but is standardization the right approach for the Ontario sheep sector?

The OSF Board was also at a crossroads. After several years of working to promote professional discourse, it was time to take stock and ensure that the board was focusing on the issues and programs that would best serve sheep farmers.

The Board initiated the Crossroads Challenge and retained MK&A to provide a third party, unbiased view to help inform a new strategic plan for the sector. The board asked MK&A to listen to the plans and aspirations of sheep farmers, the barriers to fulfilling on those aspirations and the relevance of existing and potential OSF programs to the future of the sector.

What we learned

The key to Crossroads was listening. In surveys, townhalls and dozens of independent interviews sheep farmers spoke about their plans, the challenges to their farms and provided candid observations on OSF programs.

These conversations were enlightening. Ontario sheep farmers are passionate, direct and committed. Their aspirations and concerns are well-founded as are their expectations of OSF.

What are those expectations?

Ontario sheep farmers want to grow. They are aware of the limits of OSF to influence some key barriers to growth (price of buildings/land, market prices) but rely on OSF as a trusted source for information and training that provides essential skills and market research to inform their investments.

The focus for OSF is to support growth in the sector by providing market information, superior professional development and current relevant research. To be effective OSF must place a priority on effective communications with producers and the sheep production and marketing value chain.

What's the plan? Building From Strength.

The Crossroads recommendations on how OSF can best support a growing prosperous sheep sector are presented in three action bands – Prosperity, Public Trust/Public Policy, Professional Development – and two administrative bands – Investments and Operations.

Crossroads recommendations include areas for enhanced investment and skills development in programs and services that are already key strengths. Producers repeated told us that they value OSF professional development programs (notably the Master Shepherds program) and OSF is recognized as a mature, reliable advocate for the sector within government.

OSF can expand on these strengths, improving the supports for producers and expanding advocacy to include supply chain issues.

Vision	Enable Ontario sheep producers to be the supplier of premium lamb and sheep products.				
Mission	To educate, innovate and strategically advocate on behalf of its membership, while maintaining a high professional standard of conduct and leadership				
Values	Focused on adding value	Inclusive & Welcoming	Leadership & Collaboration	Relevant & Innovative	
Strategic Pillars	Community	Prosperity	Mastery	Invest	Operations
Objectives	Building public policy and public trust relationships as the trusted authority for the business of sheep farming	Building more dynamic market relationships with a focus on supply chain optimization	Building a more effective business support system with a focus on the professional development for sheep farming	Building a system that identifies and supports the Industry leadership we need now and into the future	Building the organizational talent and resources capacities to effectively support Ontario's sheep famers
Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance the industry advisory committee + report on processor & retail trends and challenges. - subscription based quarterly advocacy report. - Create an advocacy objectives priorities with consideration of partnerships and collaborations for implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a Market Report (Blue Pages) for sheep production available by subscription - consolidate market data currently hosted on OSF website, enhanced by eight-week sales trend data and market. - Provide support for processors/retailers in all channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish the Sheep Institute. - Investigate financial support for producers enrolled in Sheep Institute programs. - Design professional development short program streams and longer form, accreditation level programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish clear mandates for ad hoc and standing committees. - Establish districts as standing committees of the Board. - Expand the role of the advisory committee to full standing committee status supported by staff and reporting through the executive committee + consider reduction in board meetings with increased executive committee responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiate an effectiveness audit. - Explore opportunities to resource share on nonpriority issues with related parties. - Develop five-year budget options based on optimal implementation strategies and limited by existing revenue streams.
KPI's	Value in OSF membership		Value in the supply chain and with key stakeholders	Market and production performance	

Public Policy and Public Trust

OSF is recognized for being a strong voice for sheep farmers. Building on that reputation, OSF can do more to include the entire supply chain in our public policy and public trust efforts and keep Ontario producers informed on important public policy/trust initiatives.

Crossroads recommendations include working closer with the Industry Advisory Committee with a view to examining public trust/policy issues through the lens of processors and retailers and including the expanded scope of policy initiatives in our public policy efforts. In short, supply chain issues are our issues and our efforts for the entire sector will benefit Ontario producers.

Crossroads also recommends expanding the window on public policy/trust issues for Ontario producers. One way to achieve better awareness is a quarterly public policy/trust publication including in depth perspectives on current and future issues impacting the sector. Recognizing that these perspectives will be of interest and value for individuals and business beyond Ontario producers, Crossroads recommends a subscription be attached to the publication in order to provide a revenue stream to help offset costs currently born entirely by Ontario producers.

Market and Supply Chain

Market prices are a key concern for Ontario producers. OSF has devoted considerable energy to help producers anticipate and respond to market forces.

Crossroads recommends expanding OSF's capacity to map market trends, in part by developing improved market intelligence through relations with sector partners (processors and retailers) and large production provinces (principally Alberta and Quebec).

Developing useful market forecasts requires a significant expenditure of financial and human resources. Crossroads recommends developing a unique business platform (the Blue Pages) to provide in depth market information for producers. Crossroads anticipates partially recovering the costs associated with generating market information through a subscription for non-Ontario producers and advertising revenue from the platform.

Professional Development

Ontario producers value the professional development tools currently provided by OSF. Crossroads considered the next steps in providing professional development, sector specific accreditation and short course training.

Producers know the need for training and skills development and understand the value accreditation brings to the sector. Crossroads recommends developing a separate division for professional development, The Sheep Institute (aka Ewe U).

The Sheep Institute would allow OSF to work within the training sector with federal and provincial agencies. The Institute would be better positioned to offer professional

development to non-Ontario based producers as well as OSF members, to collaborate with training and education organizations and to seek student assistance from governments.

The Sheep Institute would provide Ontario producers with a solid base for the professional development the sector needs to grow and prosper.

Industry Leadership

OSF has invested in raising the professional standards of the Board, including an industry first External Board Advisor. Crossroads challenges us to go further in leadership on several levels.

Crossroads recommends improving the committee structure and providing increased support for our districts, including a more structured role for Directors in their districts and a District Presidents Council reporting through the Executive Committee.

As mentioned previously, Crossroads recommends placing increased attention on the Industry Advisory Committee as an important component in bringing a market focus to the sector. Importantly, Crossroads provides an in-depth look at national leadership and the importance of OSF identifying national issues and objectives.

Organization Capacity

Investing behind key growth and prosperity initiatives including enhanced market intelligence, expanded public policy/trust initiatives and a more robust professional development platform requires a reallocation of resources. Crossroads recommends an effectiveness survey with a focus on exploring alternate service delivery for non-priority issues and the development of business plans, including budget alternatives, for priority initiatives.

Implementing the Crossroad recommendations requires detailed work on long term budgets including the forecasting of revenues from subscriptions, advertising and tuitions not currently in the income stream. This work will require time to develop and consider implementation strategies, key performance indicators and skills development.

Performance Indicators

The Spectator ran an interesting story recently, "[How do we calculate the value of a painting?](#)" The article makes a profound point that:

There is... a paradox which business and technology needs to address... [that the] more use of data, quantification and comparison is always good in theory, it is not always good in practice. For one thing, too much data drives people towards analytical thinking — optimising the individual parts — rather than systems thinking, where you focus on the value of the whole... You may occasionally hear businesspeople quoting the phrase: 'What gets measured gets managed.' What they don't realise is it originated as a criticism. Expressed in full it reads: 'What gets measured gets managed — even when it's pointless to measure and manage it, and even if it harms the purpose of the organisation to do so.' Or, more succinctly: 'What gets mismeasured gets mismanaged.'

The challenge for OSF in implementing the Crossroad recommendations with the right combination of guidelines (performance indicators) while remaining sufficiently nimble to adjust plans and actions in response to learning and markets.

In other words, OSF must keep a careful watch on intended outcomes (growth and prosperity in the Ontario sheep sector) as opposed to simply checking off actions.

The most important indicator of outcome is the view from the farm gate. Reporting to OSF members and asking for and acting on their input is critical to staying on mission as the Crossroad recommendations are implemented.

The first step in the implementation strategy is the development of an implementation plan that can be shared with Ontario producers including budgets and timelines for each initiative. At regular stages in the implementation rollout OSF will seek input from producers and adjust the implementation plans accordingly.

Indicators	Measure	Current performance	Target	Timing
Clear value in OSF membership	Number of members	Quantitative Baseline	Static/+	Quarterly
	Demographics of membership	Quantitative Baseline	Static/+	
	Satisfaction and concerns	Qualitative baseline	+	Annual survey
Influence on public policy and the business climate	Value in the supply chain	baseline	Static/+	Annual survey
	Recognition with stakeholders	baseline	Static/+	

Indicators	Measure	Current performance	Target	Timing
Production and market performance	Market share			
	Production			
	Herd size			

Note: As data systems become more robust consider live and/or automated dashboard

The Action Plan

From Opportunity To Action	
Community Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance the industry advisory committee (processors and retailers) producing a regular (minimum monthly) report on processor/retail trends and challenges. - Initiate a subscription based quarterly Public Policy report with perspectives on producer, processor and retail issues including interviews with decision makers. - Provide support for processors/retailers in all channels. - Create a public trust/public policy objectives priority list including milestones and timelines. - Include processor/retail issues in public trust/public policy objectives.
Prosperity Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a “Blue Pages” for sheep production available by subscription (included in Ontario sheep producer’s registration). - Blue Pages consolidate market data currently hosted on OSF website, enhanced by eight-week sales trend data and market forecasts. - Blue Pages include expanded price profitability forecasts enhanced with internal/external supply data and retail forecasts including seasonal holiday volume predictions. - Develop appropriate advertiser revenue to offset costs of enhancing market data.
Mastery Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish the Sheep Institute. - Prepare a five-year Sheep institute business plan including a marketing plan and budget with appropriate milestones and timelines. - Investigate financial support for producers enrolled in Sheep Institute programs. - Design professional development short program streams and longer form, accreditation level programs. - Retain an appropriately qualified executive director for the Sheep Institute.
Investment Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish clear mandates for ad hoc and standing committees including objectives, timeframes and reporting criteria. - Establish districts as standing committees of the Board. The district representative will be charged with liaison duties with his/her district. Staff to provide support to district executive including training and leadership development as required. - Expand the role of the Industry Advisory Committee to full standing committee status supported by staff and reporting through the executive committee. - Explore a reduction in Board meetings and a corresponding increase in executive committee responsibilities to provide directors time for enhanced district engagement.
Operations Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiate an effectiveness audit. - Explore opportunities to resource share on nonpriority issues with related parties. - Develop five-year budget options based on optimal implementation strategies and limited by existing revenue streams. - Develop a revenue projection for the Sheep Institute and Blue Pages.