



ONTARIO PORK

ONTARIO PORK RESEARCH COMMITTEE

PRIORITY SETTING REPORT

APRIL 18, 2018

Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Process 2

Objectives 2

Value of the Research Priorities and Outcomes Document 2

Overview of Funded Research Topics since 2013 3

Supporting and Maximizing Research Efforts..... 4

Conclusion..... 5

Appendix 6

 Appendix 1 7

 Appendix 2 7

Introduction

In January 2018, the Board of Directors discussed the timeliness of convening the research priorities setting process to ensure that these priorities are in step with Ontario Pork's evolving strategic plan that was renewed in 2017. With the new 2018-2021 strategic plan, it was deemed to be beneficial to determine additional specific objectives or applicable areas of focus under each priority. The Board instructed the research committee to conduct the in-house review of Ontario Pork's research priorities.

Process

On April 18, 2018, the Ontario Pork research committee, tasked with the priority setting, held a face-to-face meeting facilitated by Kathy Zurbrigg and Susan Fitzgerald. The draft priority setting document will be submitted to producers for comment.

In this work the committee was guided by Ontario Pork's principles for research:

- Align with the strategic plan
- Support needs-driven research
- Set research priorities
- Maximize dollars for research value
- Minimize overlap, duplication, and administration
- Ensure knowledge transfer
- Demand accountability

Objectives

The objectives for the day were to:

- identify the priority research topics for the Ontario pork sector
- confirm or refine existing research pillars
- consider opportunities to maximize research efforts

Value of the Research Priorities and Outcomes Document

The committee agreed that the value of identifying and documenting research priorities may include:

- guiding researchers towards specific topics identified as important by the pork sector;
- providing the research committee with an evaluation tool to assist with elimination or selection of letter of intent (LOIs); and
- identifying research priority categories that could be weighted to ensure a certain proportion of research in a year being allocated under each category

Broad research categories essentially allow any proposed subject to fall within the scope of topics. Specific priorities may provide more guidance to researchers and support a rationale for rejecting research deemed of lower importance. However, a more narrow scope might also limit new or innovative topics which were not conceptualized by the committee when setting the priorities.

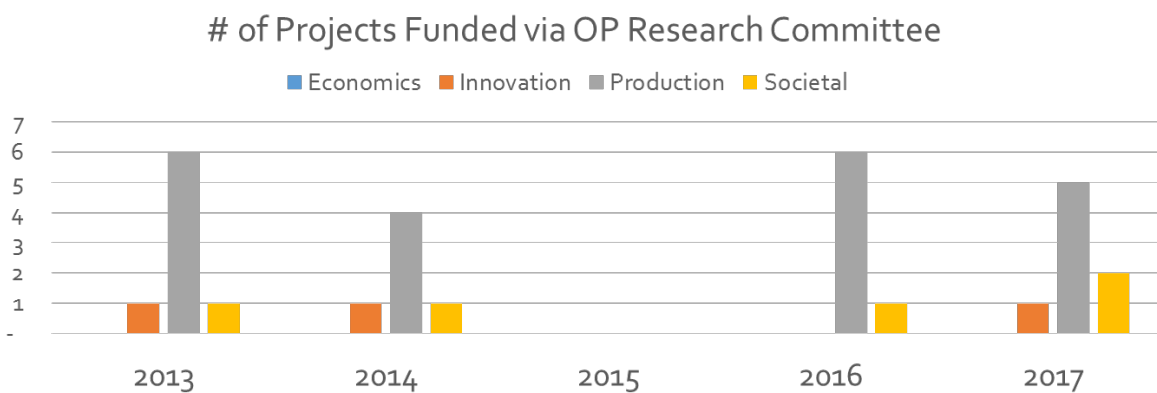
Overview of Funded Research Topics since 2013

In the 2013 research strategy, four research pillars were identified that encompassed at least 12 priority areas as noted below.

- **Production** – herd health, nutrition, environment and reproduction
- **Economics** – competitiveness and business sustainability, industry (market) trends
- **Societal trends and perceptions** – animal welfare, consumer perception
- **Innovation** – product and process development, health benefits and other attributes of pork

As **Figure 1** illustrates, the majority of funded research since 2013 could be categorized under the production pillar. Few funded projects have been categorized under the economic pillar, due to a lack of submission and the tendency for these type of projects to be funded from the operational budget.

Figure 1



The committee recommended implementing **five key initiatives** to address Ontario Pork research priorities:

1. Evolve the Ontario Pork research priorities to focus on a single overarching research objective and move away from designated research pillars and priorities.
2. Develop guiding principles to strengthen project components, e.g. return on investment, supporting grad students, other cash and in-kind, multi-species applicability, research is in good standing with past or active OP projects, etc. These evaluation criteria would be provided to the researchers at the time of the research call.
3. Establish a timeline and protocol for ensuring a list of Ontario Pork's targeted topics in research are received by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) for inclusion in their research calls is needed. This will determine when the Research Committee should conduct its annual review of the Ontario Pork targeted topics.
4. Specific or targeted research calls or topics within a call could be utilized for emerging issues or problem topics (e.g. the emergence of PED in Ontario)

5. Gather input on what the annual research targeted topics are of interest from OP advisory committees/working groups, AGM resolutions, and county or regional meetings.

Proposed Ontario Pork Research Focus

The committee identified an overarching research objective:

“Test potential improvements to swine industry practices”

All research projects that align with this overarching objective will be considered, including, but not limited to, swine health, swine welfare, swine nutrition, swine husbandry, swine reproduction, barn design and management, employee health and safety, meat quality and safety, marketing and consumer trends and environmental and economic sustainability.

Targeted topics

Each year, with input from swine producers and industry, a short list of timely, targeted topics could be generated and added to a research call. These targeted topics would only be implemented on an as-needed basis and would include emerging issues in the Ontario swine industry (e.g. the emergence of Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus [PEDv] in Ontario).

Project evaluation criteria

Projects must align with the overarching research objective but will also be evaluated by the research committee on a list of specific criteria. Evaluation criteria will be posted on the Ontario Pork Research website and sent out with notice for a call for research. In this manner researchers can fully understand and strive to meet the expectations of the Ontario Pork research committee. The evaluation criteria include:

- Demonstrated economic return to the Ontario industry, e.g. specific calculations on savings are required.
- Impact to the sector – a cost: benefit analyses outside of economic impact, e.g. productivity, resiliency, increased market share, etc.
- Demonstrated collaboration between academia and industry (does not have to be financial, discussions of feasibility, practicality, letters of support from those the research would impact)
- Investing in human resources for the Ontario swine industry, e.g. grad students
- Other cash and in-kind, leveraging Ontario Pork’s research funding
- Link to societal concerns and issues
- Past performance record of the research team
- Knowledge translation and transfer (KTT) and a communication plan
- Multi-species applicability
- Innovation component

Supporting and Maximizing Research Efforts

The committee recommended the following key initiatives to supporting and maximizing Ontario Pork research:

- Improved connection to other pork Boards and coordination of research with other groups outside of Ontario to reduce the potential for duplication. There is an importance of replication in research, but knowing what is or has been completed elsewhere increases the chance of collaboration or improved practices on subsequent projects.
- Provide an annual summary of pork research being conducted elsewhere in Canada. The summary would be discussed during the annual research committee priority-setting meeting.
- Add comments to the initial Ontario Pork call for research notice to clarify the general funding range and time frames of projects that have been funded in the past to guide researchers regarding a reasonable scope. No caps on funding or timelines should be initiated.
- Improve accountability of researchers on receipt of interim and final reports. As researchers set their own timelines and milestones for projects, it is expected that they created achievable timelines. Ontario Pork's staff will draft an accountability proposal for funded research projects.
- Outreach for the call for research notice is not to expand from the current level. All researchers who have submitted projects in the past to Ontario Pork, receive a notice for upcoming calls for research in addition to the Office of Research at all Canadian and swine-focused American Universities and Ontario industry members that will assist with communicating the opportunity (e.g. Ontario Pork Industry Council [OPIC], veterinary clinics, and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs [OMAFRA]).
- Investigate the concept of a small research project category for producer-conducted, on-farm research similar in style to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario Entrepreneur Support project.

Conclusion

The recommendations in this report will allow a comprehensive selection of research proposal topics to be submitted to Ontario Pork, but puts the responsibility on the researcher, who seeks a funding, to meet the stringent evaluation criteria. Detailed evaluation criteria will allow researchers to fully understand the expectations of the research committee and maintain an objective selection process. Suggestions to maximize research will strengthen the Ontario Pork research program by providing new opportunities, increased levels of accountability and improve knowledge transfer with producers and other livestock research stakeholders.

Appendix

Ontario Pork Research Priority Setting Meeting April 18, 2018

Raw Notes

- Would a research project evaluation checklist be of value? E.g. include an evaluation for economics as a component
- More specific direction to researchers regarding expected components of research
- More targeting of specific researchers at a wider range of universities and research departments?
- Encourage an economic component/assessment of their project – link back to the farm

Challenges

- Is there a connection to OMAFRA New Directions and other research themes?
- Research priorities are forwarded to LRIC and then onto OMAFRA
- All pork production systems projects come back to Ontario Pork for review
- Need clarity around how New Directions priorities are set
- How to solicit proposals from a broader range of researchers
- Projects with applicability to multi-species are a challenge and also an opportunity, i.e. researcher should not just be soliciting funds from Ontario Pork but from multiple commodity groups
- Need a better connection to other pork Boards
- Coordination of research with other groups outside of Ontario
- Getting researchers to focus on industry needs versus their research bias
- Health attributes of pork would fall under consumer attributes/trends
- Funding – limited number of organizations that provide seed money
- Challenge – enough money to fund good projects – only limited number can be funded
- Encourage researchers to involve post-grad students; currently state PhD but could lower to MSc
- Are Ontario Pork funds “industry funding”? If it is the right project, is it reasonable to only fund a percentage of the project?
- Encourage researchers to leverage funds – look for other cash and in-kind
- Follow up on research results – are we getting good results?
- Also, what are other research entities getting from their projects?
- KTT to other pork groups and to Ontario producers, use in newsletter
- Don't discount importance of replication, i.e. even if research has been conducted before, it may be valuable to fund a similar project
- Every project is assessed on its applicability to the farm in five years – should this be scored higher?
- Increase information transfer to producers (research results)
- Have researchers come in more often to speak to committee on progress/results?
- Better dialogue between committee and the University of Guelph researchers (and others)

Research Priority Topics

- Production is currently top
- Animal welfare could be included under both animal health and societal trends
- Feed costs
- Nutrition
- What percentage of budgets goes to students/training?
- Try to solve problems that don't currently exist

- Product or process development – could be a pork product (consumer product) or product used by industry
- Test potential improvements to production practices
- Preference to researchers who don't have outstanding projects
- Leave broad categories but build in guiding principles, e.g. return on investment, grad students, other cash and in-kind, etc.
- Utilize specific calls around "problem" topics

Supporting and Maximizing Research

- Funnel priorities from other committees, AGM resolutions, District meetings to the Research Committee to help identify potential research topics
- Could use regional and zone meetings to garner input from producers and also have researchers report on some of the funded projects
- Targeted calls are reactive, too late – don't want to restrict researchers
- Annually put out a list of priority topics for the year but still solicit broad projects as well
- Email producers for input
- Already ask for a KTT piece but don't follow up to ensure it is done – U of G now has a person who will follow up
- Develop evaluation criteria and provide that to the researchers upfront – social responsibility, human resource development (students); innovation, KTT of previous research, etc.
- Strive to arrive at three to five priority topics each year – conduct a yearly review
- These priorities should feed into LRIC and, from there, to OMAFRA for their research priority setting
- Need to know what swine projects are currently underway – OMAFRA, SIP, etc. Could this be an action item for LRIC? It would add value to the yearly review
- Production systems and emerging issues start in November – What is the timing for Ontario Pork annual review to feed into OMAFRA? June/July
- Evaluation criteria components
 - Economic return to the Ontario industry
 - Investing in HR – post-grads
 - Other cash and in-kind – how are they leveraging dollars
 - Social license (societal issues)
 - Multi-species applicability?
 - Past performance record
 - KTT/information transfer piece
- Cap on length of project and dollar amount?
 - Keep expectations reasonable
 - Might inflate costs to cap
 - Restricts project scope
- Could say that, in general, we are funding projects in the range of \$ to \$ and general length of time (\$7,700 to \$135,510, average is \$60,400)
- Include a reference to impact to sector, cost:benefit analysis not just dollars – The wording AAC has used is: *"Outline how the project will provide benefit to the Ontario agriculture, agri-food and agri-products industry. This can include, but is not limited to: ensuring outcomes are shared broadly; engaging industry associations in the project; and, providing economic benefit for Ontario (contribution to GDP, increased*

investment, productivity and quality jobs, increased exports, revenues, and the presence of highly competitive and resilient agri-food supply chains in our province)."

- Increase mechanism for accountability
 - Change 40-40-20?
 - Stop – go milestones?
 - How late is too late for submission of final reports?
- Researchers set their own timelines in the project outline so it is reasonable to assume the dates are achievable
- Put a penalty in place for late reports
- Action Item: Ontario Pork to draft an accountability proposal.
- Keep in mind what qualifies as research for tax purposes
- Animal welfare fits under multiple categories – where to put it?
- Stop scoring on a five-year return?
- Target under-funded areas? Limit to funds so not unless there are surplus funds
- Need to increase outreach to researchers?
 - Meetings, calls to specific researchers, webinars, university visits?
 - Requests for proposal currently goes to generic office of research
 - Committee consensus, targeted outreach only for a specific need or topic
- Currently 3:1 leveraging
- Unless more research dollars are available, no point in targeting
- Revisit every year and more thorough review every three years to link with Ontario Pork Strategic Plan

Concept of Producer Conducted Research

- Allocate a certain portion of annual budget to producer proposals?
- Focus on innovations
- 50% cost-share
- Committee could provide research protocols
- CAP does have a category that would capture some topics
- Develop a small project category, on-farm research, specify topic, outcomes, short written report, producer report/presentation at meetings
- Dairy Farmers of Ontario has something similar, they stipulate what the funds are used toward, and set research category, i.e. product development



**Ontario Pork
Research Priority Setting Meeting
Wednesday, April 18, 2018
Feedback Sheet Summary**

Six completed feedback sheets were received.

1. How useful did you find the meeting in refining Ontario Pork's research priorities and setting a path forward?

Poor - 0 Fair - 0 Good - 3 Very Good - 2 Excellent - 1

Comments:

- Great discussions.

2. The time given to each agenda item was enough time for thorough discussion.

Strongly Agree - 1 Agree - 5 Ambivalent - 0 Disagree - 0 Strongly Disagree - 0

Comments:

- There could be some clarity on which discussion area we are at (some flowed into each other).

3. There was an opportunity for all participants to state their views and have their perspective heard.

Strongly Agree - 4 Agree - 2 Ambivalent - 0 Disagree - 0 Strongly Disagree - 0

Comments:

- Very open to discussion.
- Whole group input.

4. Were there other areas that should have been included in the presentation and discussion that were not included?

Yes - 2 No - 4

If yes, please specify

- Employee management – retaining, training, etc.
- Dollars available to research.

5. Additional comments:

- Well done facilitation.

-
- I am happy with direction and review.
 - Should have a discussion how to stretch dollars and free up money within Ontario Pork or increase funding for research.

DRAFT