Rocky View County

AGRICULTURE MASTER PLAN

PHASE 1

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

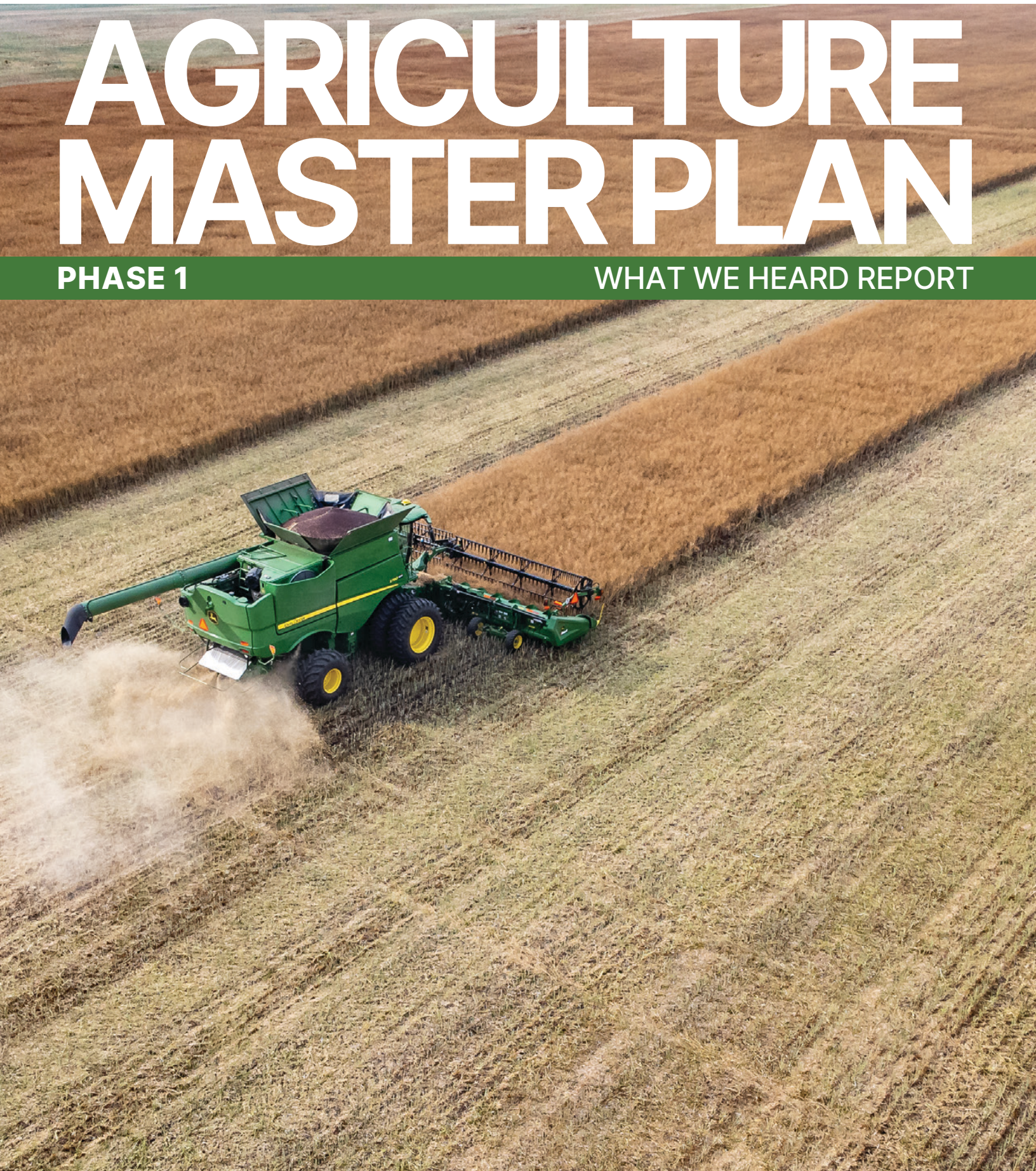


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ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

AGRICULTURE MASTER PLAN
PHASE 1 WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

PREPARED SUMMER 2024 BY:

intelligent futures

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Executive Summary

Rocky View County is updating its Agriculture Master Plan, a strategic guiding document that identifies the needs and priorities of the agricultural community, sets goals for future growth and innovation, and provides a roadmap for achieving objectives. The County is engaging with local farmers, agri-businesses, and residents to create a revised Agriculture Master Plan and invites you to join us in this work.

Rocky View County thanks all residents who participated in Phase 1 of public engagement and contributed their feedback on a revised Agriculture Master Plan. The following report highlights what local farmers, agri-businesses, and residents have had to say in response to our questions regarding support for our current agricultural goals, feedback on programs and services, and suggestions for additional goals or improvements to existing ones. Using a variety of engagement approaches, feedback was obtained on the following high level themes:

Protect agricultural land

Population growth pressure has led to residential development and the loss of productive agricultural lands in the County. Productive agricultural lands should be protected from development (country residential, commercial, industrial, etc.). Limiting subdivision to main contiguous sections of farmable land, and ensuring compatible land uses adjacent to agriculture operations are additional considerations.

Perception of agriculture

Residential and industrial development is seen as the priority in Rocky View, where large scale agriculture is not supported and agriculture businesses are on their own to survive. There is a perceived lack of understanding, respect, and support for the agriculture industry in Rocky View County, and acknowledgement for the value it brings to the region.

Governance and regulation

Red tape and bureaucratic processes are seen as a barrier to supporting agriculture business. Streamlining regulatory processes at the County would enable agricultural producers to focus on agriculture. Incentives and funding opportunities should be provided to support sustainable agriculture initiatives.

Accountability and implementation

Increased accountability by Rocky View County council, planners and administration knowledgeable about agriculture knowledge, and direction for action to ensure the AMP vision and goals are realized.

Flexibility of land use

Outside of agricultural land protection, reduced regulation and oversight from the County is desired to enable agriculture landowners to continue practicing agriculture and trusting their expertise to determine the best use of land. There is support for businesses to be allowed on agricultural parcels that directly and indirectly support agricultural operators and producers.

Farm succession

Ensuring the farming industry remains financially sustainable for the next generation, minimizing taxation and land speculation on agricultural lands, while supporting farm succession planning and education and outreach. There is high support for residential parcels that allow farmers to age in place and receive additional support from younger family members.

Environmental sustainability

Agricultural lands contribute to environmental sustainability and stewardship in the county. Considerations include native landscapes, invasive species removal, limiting aggregate operations, clean up and remediation. Sustainable management of water resources is also of critical importance to environmental sustainability.

Weed control

There is support for more weed control measures in the County to prevent the spread of invasive species and pests. Incentives, herbicide rebates, roadside weed control, increased pasture sprayer rental opportunities, and education were identified as opportunities to increase weed control.

Topsoil disposal

Regulation and monitoring is required when it comes to topsoil disposal in the County. Inspection, monitoring and testing of the topsoil use and potential effects should be required before approval of topsoil distribution to agricultural lands. There is opportunity for topsoil to be used for land reclamation in marginal lands.

Renewable energy development

There is low support for active solar farm and renewable energy development on productive agriculture lands. Large scale renewable energy development should be directed towards industrial areas, rooftops, and parking lots.

Road infrastructure improvements

Roads and bridges require widening to accommodate larger and heavier agricultural equipment. Access to roads are integral to agricultural operations, and limitations to access can have negative impacts on producers, particularly during the harvest season.

Marketing and promotion of existing agricultural services

Existing County programs, including ALUS, agriculture workshops, and agriculture tours would all benefit from increased marketing, promotion, and direct communication to residents and agricultural land owners.

Thank you to the agriculture community members in Rocky View County who shared their views, thoughts, and ideas to contribute to a revised Agriculture Master Plan. The County truly appreciates the quality and depth of discussions, comments, and views shared between participants and the project team.

This feedback will inform the revised Agriculture Master Plan (Spring 2025), ensuring the plan meets the needs of our agricultural community.



1.0 Introduction

Rocky View County is updating its Agriculture Master Plan, a strategic guiding document that outlines the long-term vision and policy framework for agriculture and land use planning for our agricultural community. It supports and promotes the agricultural industry by addressing key issues such as land use policy, economic development, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. The plan identifies the needs and priorities of the agricultural community, sets goals for future growth and innovation, and provides a roadmap for achieving these objectives.

Resident input led to not only the development of the last Master Plan but also:

- policy changes in the County Plan,
- led to Land Use Bylaw amendments,
- the development of the Agriculture Boundary Design Guidelines, and
- program enhancements in Agricultural and Environmental Service etc.

The last plan was written in 2011 and the time has come to renew it to ensure the current environment in Rocky View County is represented and direction is accurate. The County is engaging with local farmers, agri-businesses, and residents to create a revised Agriculture Master Plan and invites you to join us in this work. Your feedback is vital to ensuring the plan meets the needs of our agricultural community.

2.0 Process and Participation

From June 13 – July 21, 2024, a comprehensive public engagement was held to ensure local farmers, agri-businesses, and residents had the opportunity to share their insights and feedback on a revised Agriculture Master Plan. Throughout the public engagement process, more than 170 participants spent a collective 160 hours sharing feedback on the future and current state of agriculture in Rocky View County. The project team received more than 1000 comments from the participants.

Communication

The County extensively promoted the engagement through 2,000 direct letters to agricultural landowners, phone calls with agri-business members, road signs throughout the County, interviews with local media, and a digital media campaign.

Online Survey

An online project page was created to outline the details of the project, and a survey asked participants to evaluate the goals and vision of the previous master plan and provide feedback on current programs and services. The survey received 117 responses.

Workshops

During these sessions, participants filled out workbooks and collectively discussed generational planning, current and future land-use policies, renewable energy, and essential infrastructure, such as roads and water. When interested participants couldn't attend a workshop, members of the Agricultural Services team scheduled one-on-one conversations with them. Four workshops were held, engaging about 60 residents and agri-businesses.

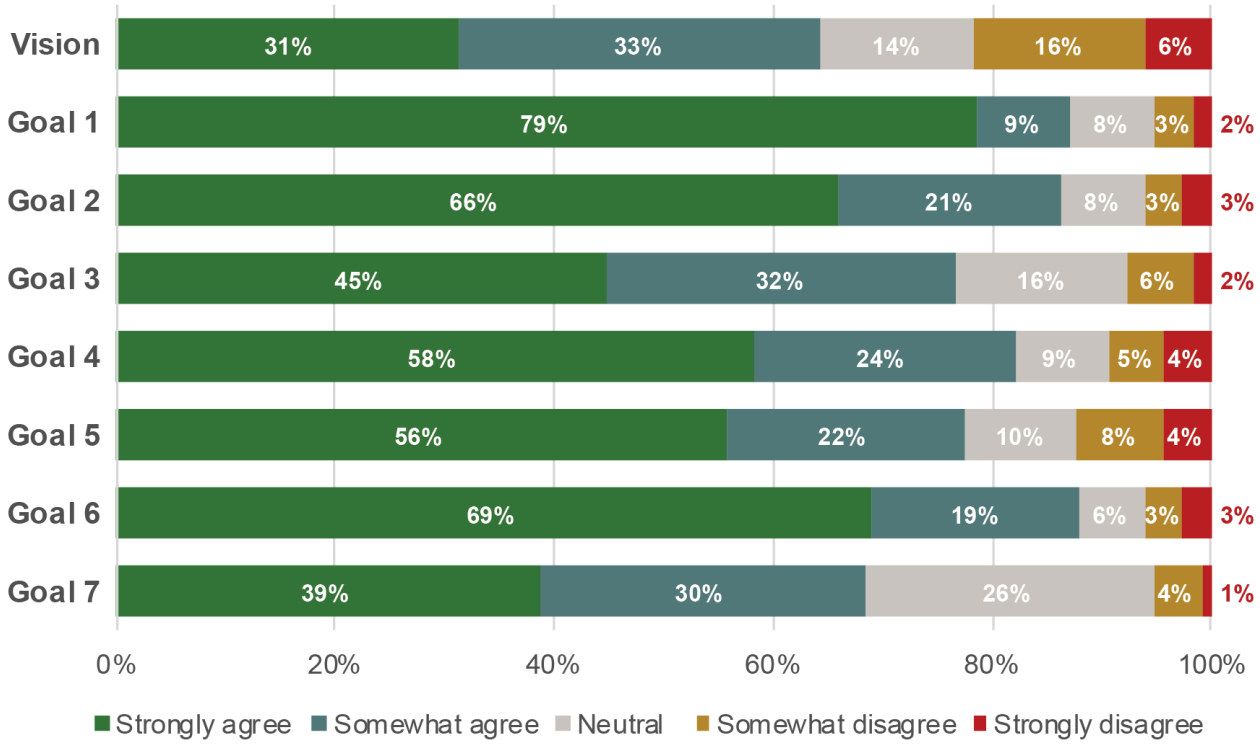
3.0 What We Heard

The following section shares the questions that were asked as part of the community engagement process paired with what was heard from participants in response to these prompts.

3.1 Online Survey

3.1.1 2011 Vision and Goals

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the 2011 Agriculture Master Plan vision and goals:



Please provide your feedback on any additional goals or improvements you believe are necessary. (38 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Protecting agricultural land (15): ● Goals to protected productive agricultural lands from development (country residential, commercial, industrial, and renewable energy)	*"Stop converting prime agricultural land into country residential or urbanization. Grow up, not out."* *"Less commercial and industrial development will protect the land and ground water and wells."*
Autonomy of farmers and ranchers (6): ● Outside of agricultural land protection, reduced regulation and oversight from the County to enable agriculture landowners to continue practicing agriculture and trusting their expertise to determine the best use of land.	*"Trusting the landowners as stewards of their land and working with them and listening to what they propose"* *"Owners of the land should have a say in decision making in the use of there own land. Work with the County hand in hand."*
Accountability and implementation (5): ● If agriculture is a priority for the County, accountability and implementation of goals is necessary to achieve the vision.	*"Focus on infrastructure that supports agriculture and determine where agriculture fits in the goals of Rocky View County. Is it a priority or not? If it is a priority then take the actions needed to make progress instead of just talking about it."*
Environmental stewardship (5): ● Protection of grasslands, wildlife corridors, contiguous tracts of land, and ground water through incentivisation and regulation to support the environmental sustainability of the region.	*"Provide producers with incentives to become more sustainable on their farms and through their ranches. This could be done through discounts on taxes with proof of sustainable practises"*

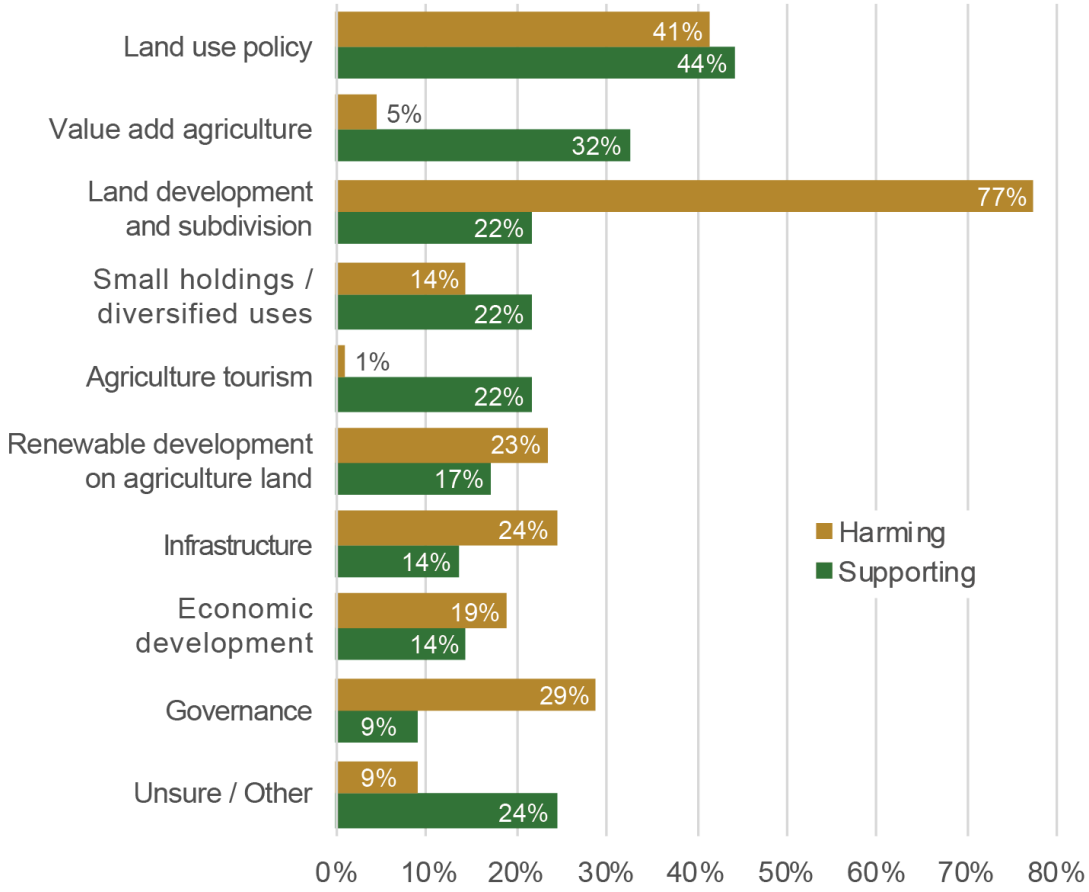
Is there anything else you would like considered in a revised vision for agriculture? (54 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Protecting agricultural land (31): ● In order for Rocky View County to be "a community where agriculture is valued and respected", agricultural land needs to be protected from residential, commercial, and industrial development. ● Ensuring compatible land uses adjacent to agriculture operations is also an important consideration to protect agriculture operations.	*"If you really believed agricultural land was valued and respected, the council wouldn't be approving aggregate removal and housing develpments on agricultural land near to the city."* *"The vision statement needs to be more concise in ensuring that Agriculture lands (Arable and Ranch/Pasture) Lands are protected against development."*

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Accountability, knowledge, and action (13): ● Supportive of the vision, but would like to see increased accountability by council, agriculture knowledge by planners and administration, and direction for action to ensure the vision is realized.	*"If the planners and most of the departments would follow the vision statement it would help immensely. The statement it's self is hopeful."* *"I think the vision statement sounds nice but has not been made real by the County and its past actions."*
Balancing innovation and diversification with traditional practices (11): ● Ensuring the language of "innovation and diversification" in the vision is balanced with support for traditional farming practices of ranching, hay pasture, and industrial scale agriculture.	*"Agriculture, especially cattle ranching that requires large spaces is not valued in Rockyview. It is time consuming and costly to do any intergenerational transfers."* *"Rocky View County is a community where agriculture is valued, respected, and protected. Agriculture flourishes in RVC where traditional farming prospers along with recognizing innovation and diversification as vital to the County's social, economic, and ecological integrity."*
Sustainability and viability of farming industry (9): ● Ensuring the farming industry remains financially sustainable for the next generation, minimizing taxation and land speculation on agricultural lands, while supporting farm succession planning and education and outreach.	*"Part of the vision statement needs to address the sustainability of farming in the county, as that is in danger of becoming unsustainable. IE getting out there and educating the public on the vital role of farm and ranching at events such as the Calgary Stampede."* *"Rockyview promotes and encourages young farm families as they begin their Agri business journey."*
Environmental sustainability (9): ● Agricultural lands contribute to environmental sustainability and stewardship in Rocky View. Considerations include native landscapes, invasive species removal, limiting aggregate operations, clean up and remediation.	*"Rockyview does not value or promote large ranching operations that save our provincial grass, provide clean water, and provide healthy habitat for many species."* *"We need to ensure that these lands have and maintain appropriate distribution of agricultural and country residential properties so that the integrity of our infrastructure, the integrity of our community and the integrity of our environment are respected, shared and utilized appropriately."*

3.1.2 Agriculture Businesses in Rocky View County

Choose up to three components that are currently supporting, up to three components that are currently harming, agriculture businesses in Rocky View County:



Tell us more about what may be supporting agriculture businesses in Rocky View County.
(52 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Agriculture is not supported (19): • Residential and industrial development is seen as the priority in Rocky View, where large scale agriculture is not supported and agriculture businesses are on their own to survive.	*"I m not sure that Rockyview County does support agriculture business. The county seems to be in favour of further development of acreage housing than preserving land and income for farmers and ranchers."* *"The current plan promotes and supports agriculture by allowing farm use on farm land. For example confined feeding operations."*
Multi generational farmers (6): • The long term farmers and farm families that have been working the land for generations.	*"Long term farmers actually working the land and producing cash crops, instead of paving over good farmland with concrete and building more environmentally damaging distribution centres"*

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Education and promotion (6): ● Education and promotional initiatives in Rocky View such as 4H, Olds College, Calgary Stampede, and informational sessions to promote agriculture and the next generation of farmers.	*"Ranching is prevalent and the Calgary Stampede assists with the promoting the life style"* *"4H and other programs including Olds college that involve and encourage the next generation of farming. Rocky View should lead the way in youth education and involvement in ag."*
Proximity to urban centers (3): ● Rocky View's proximity to Calgary, Cochrane, Airdrie, and other urban centers provides access to a large market, workforce, and demand for agricultural products.	*"Diversification is important but not just for small holdings. Rockyview is uniquely positioned close to major and growing urban centres. We need to leverage this using innovative production and targeted promotion."*
Irrigation / watersheds (3): ● Access to water for agriculture through irrigation canals and districts, as well as source water protection.	*"I think the goals of the master plan and integration with municipal plans are in the right direction and like the links between land and water in the plan. I also like the reference to source water protection and the New York City example where producers in the source watersheds are compensated with value added for using best practices"*
Agricultural Service Board (2)	*"ASB and staff are excellent at supporting the agricultural pursuits in Rocky View County including weed control, extension activities that help to educate small land owners on what is required to be a responsible land owner."*

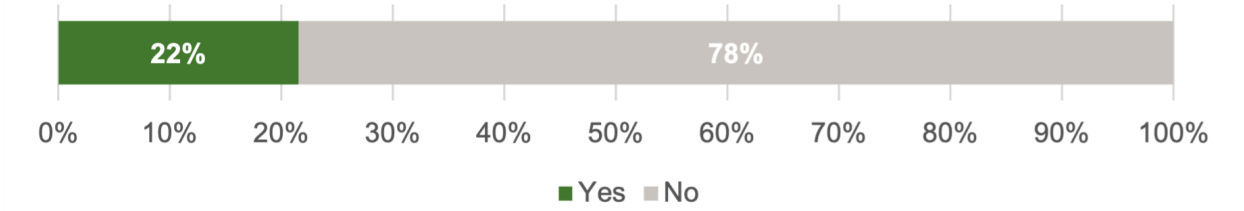
Tell us more about what may be affecting agricultural business in Rocky View County.
(54 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Development of agricultural lands (31): ● The development of productive agricultural lands is negatively impacting the viability of agricultural business. ● Subdivision, first parcel out, acreages, and incompatible land uses were additional issues raised.	*"Rocky View council and planning department have allowed ad hoc commercial and industrial development with no real plan or vision as to the impact on agricultural business and on residents. I think it is too late to reverse course and Rocky View is no longer an agricultural community."*
Governance / red tape (18): ● Red tape and bureaucratic processes are a barrier to supporting agriculture business. ● Difficulty of working with Council, who may not be prioritizing agriculture in the region.	*"Rocky View has a very onerous amount of red tape and bureaucracy to wade through before being able to start to plan a business let alone open a business. The website is not user friendly and is very frustrating to try to navigate. It really gives the appearance of Rocky View is not open for business and is even worse for anything ag related."*

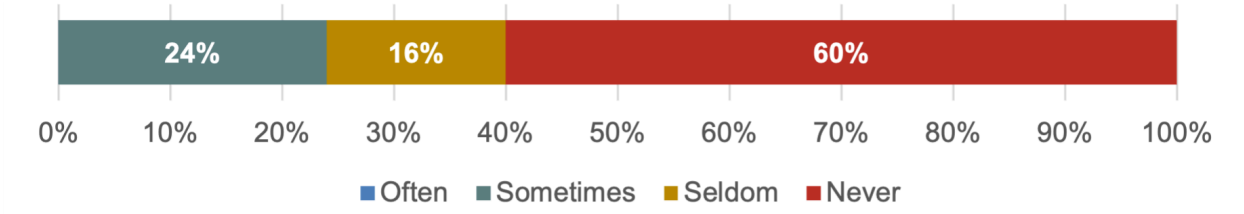
Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Lack of value and support for the agriculture industry (14): ● A perceived lack of understanding, respect, and support for the agriculture industry in Rocky View County, and acknowledgement for the value it brings to the region.	*"Lack of respect for Agriculture Culture and Value."* *"Acreage owners having more say in how the land is used rather than farmers who work and care for the land to benefit the county and province."* *"Farmers are getting pushed to the side because they are in the way, their animals smell, other people want the land, etc."*
Land management practices (13): ● Land management policies and practices that have contributed to environmental degredation, unsustainable use of water resources, and the spread of weeds and pests.	*"Policies that encourage land fragmentation at the expense of maintaining large contiguous areas that support sustainable environmental or ecosystem function."* *"Rocky View County needs to be more cognizant of the impacts of subdivision and pressure on ground water resources when they approve subdivision in primarily agriculture areas."*
Economic development (9): ● Economic development, including gravel pits, recreational facilities, oil and gas operations, and renewable energy are seen to negatively impact agriculture and ranching operations.	*"Economic development in the form of gravel pits that negatively impact waterways and native grasslands (as the Burnco pit west of Cochrane); economic development in the form of (proposed) recreational facilities in areas where residents could access hamlet and town facilities at considerably lower cost to taxpayers and also reduce sprawl."* *"Governace and economic development should also be ticked. As stated before, the tax base seems to be more of a concern than the people living in the acutal rural areas. Bearspaw, Springbank and Bragg Creek different needs than the rest of the county. "*
Infrastructure and roads (7): ● Inadequate infrastructure, including roads, and water, create issues for agriculture when paired with increasing residential development.	*"Simple thing, but road conditions are negatively affecting ag production. This spring has had some of the worst roads in memory"* *"Infrastructure could also be supported by allowing for farmers to price out and pay for water access or road widening/paving/oiling to reduce dust on roads from farm equipment."*
Farm succession (5): ● Farm succession is an increasing important issue for aging farmers looking to transition large land holdings, while enabling the next generation of farmers.	*"Farm succession is complex but made more difficult by land subdivision policies. A policy specific to farm families is needed so that young sons and daughters of aging farmers are able to create another home on the property."*

3.1.3 Agri-Environmental Incentive Program

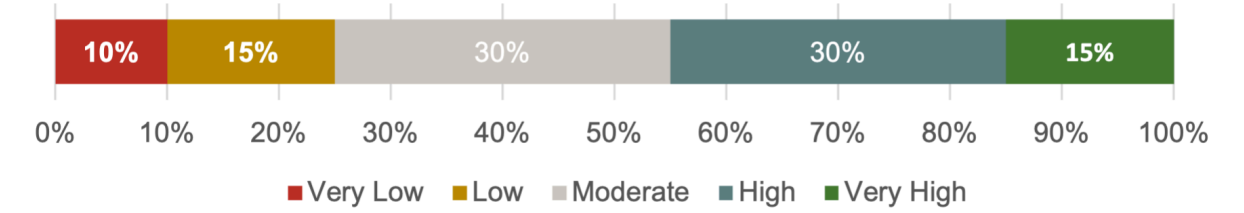
Are you aware the County offers the Agri-Environmental Incentive program? (116 responses)



How often have you used the Agri-Environmental Incentive program? (25 responses)



Please rate your satisfaction with the Agri-Environmental Incentive program on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. (20 responses)

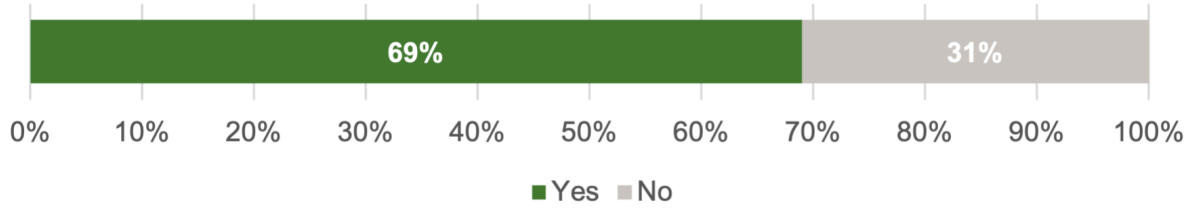


What could be improved about the Agri-Environmental Incentive program? (43 responses)

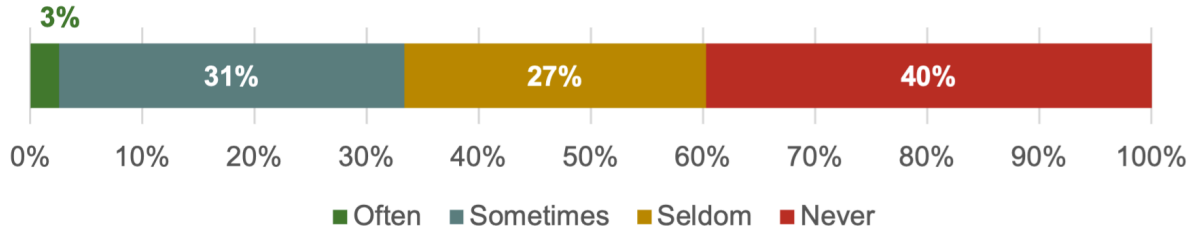
Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Marketing and communication to landowners (24): ● Increased marketing, promotion, and direct communication of County programs to residents and agricultural land owners.	*"Send any owners of farm land whether small or big this information."* *"Promote the programs more whenever there is an opportunity. Social media, news letter, news paper, and on the web site? People won't know to look for it on the website unless they know its there to look for."*
Increased funding (4): ● Increased financial supports to justify the time and expenses for farmers to apply and implement projects.	*"We got great information but support didn't prove to be enough to justify the expense"* *"There are too many hoops to go through for these programs and it's not even worth the time to do the paperwork for them. Ag Producers are busy people. You want to incentivize them for environment practices over and above what they already do, then pay them and make it easy to qualify for the programs."*
Increased diversity of project types (4): ● Updating the list of acceptable projects for funding to reflect modern farming practices and promising programs in the region (e.g., weed control, pasture management, fire smarting, well management, etc.)	*"These programs are outdated and interesting for large farms and mono cropping only. Focus should shift to regenerative farming, tree programs etc. I am not saying all existing initiatives and funding needs to go in there but a good amount should go into modern farming practices, shelter belts, perennial crops, small herds, etc."* *"I think there needs to be some new items added to the list. One item that could be added, Mountain View County has rebates on herbicide for hard to kill invasive weeds. Could something like that be considered in this program?"*
Unclear of funding sources (3): ● Lack of clarity around where the funding for this program comes from. A distrust for if the County is subsidizing farmers with tax payer dollars.	*"Why is the county providing financial assistance to farmers/ranchers? We aren't a bank."*

3.1.4 Agricultural Workshops

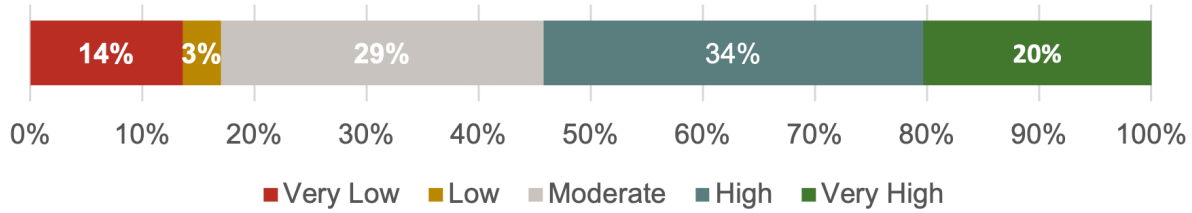
Are you aware the County offers agricultural workshops? (116 responses)



How often have you used agricultural workshops? (78 responses)



Please rate your satisfaction with workshops on a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. (59 responses)



What could be improved about workshops? (36 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
New topics (12): • *Presenting new topics through workshops, including: Living near agriculture operations for acreage owners, country residential, septic and wells, primary producers, grazing, culverts, sustainability, and bees.*	*"would suggest more workshops for acreage owners or people who reside close to large farming operations to educate them more about what ag producers do."*
Timing (9): • *Timing of workshops to align with when farmers and ranchers are available. Location and timing during the day and year are barriers to participation.*	*"need to do them when farmers and ranchers are not busy for example during harvest, calving seeding"*

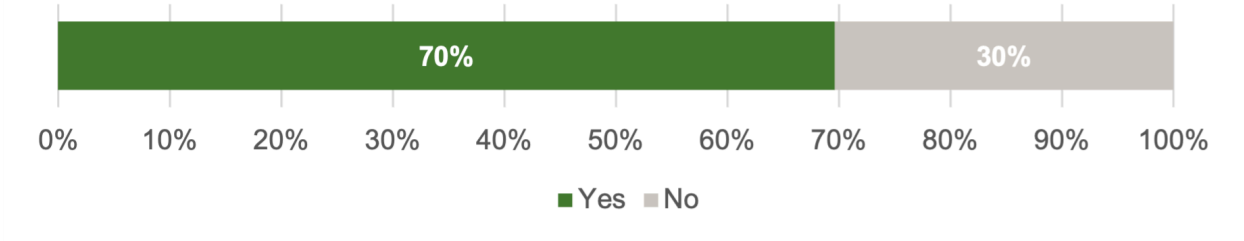
Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Marketing (8): ● *Promotion and advertising workshops to increase attendance.*	*"More advertising of their availability."*
Recorded webinars / virtual (6): ● *Offering virtual opportunities to attend, in addition to recordings of workshops to increase accessibility of workshop information,.*	*"I love the fact that they are offered, but I never have time to attend in person. Perhaps offer a live stream option that can be watched at a later time?"*

Are there topics not currently covered you would like to see offered in an upcoming workshop? (40 responses)

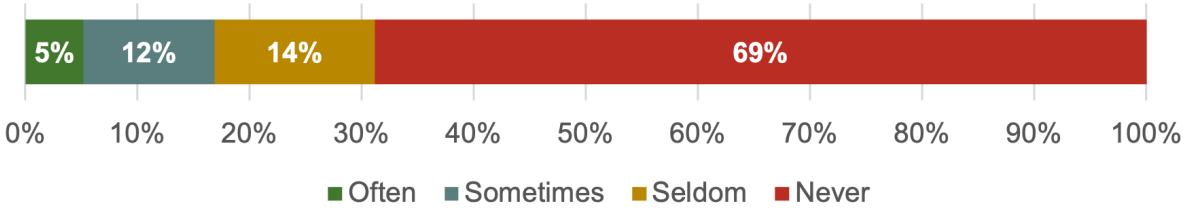
Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Farming practices (13): ● Teaching a diversity of agriculture techniques and practices, such as greenhouses and vegetables, tree care, fruit production, vertical gardening, grazing and pasture management, soil health, etc.	*"vertical gardening, hydroponics, micro green gardening, green housing for the amateur"* *"f the county wants to provide useful content for county agricultural producers, they should partner with organizations like the Foothills Forage and Grazing Association (www.foothillsforage.com)."*
Land management (10): ● Land management practices, including weed and pest control (gophers), fire smarting, shelterbelts, subdivision, and renewable energy development	*"More on grazing and pasture management, fence responsibilities, weed identification and control."* *"fire smart (a growing concern), drought preparation for trees/vegetation, gopher control, understanding your well, orientation for newbies"*
Farm business (7): ● Education related to running a successful farm business, including grants and financing, taxation, farm succession planning, and legal advice	*"Aging in place. Want to do a ranch succession - how to maneuver through Rockyview's system."* *"How taxes are designed, collected, and spent. With a key understanding of every tax levied and clear listing. Make sure people know exactly what is taken and how it is allocated."*
Acreages (6): ● Introduction to agriculture for new acreage owners, acreage landscaping, and awareness of living in a working agricultural area	*"Topics for small acreage owners; opportunities to discuss specific circumstances and ask one on one questions."* *"Education of our acreage neighbours about farm activities. They have moved into an industrial area - it is not a park. Slow equipment on the roads, livestock, noise, pest control, and dust are all part of living here. "*

3.1.5 Agricultural Tours

Are you aware the County offers an annual Agricultural Tour? (112 responses)



Have you participated in an annual Agricultural Tour as a guest or featured location? (77 responses)



What could be improved about the annual Agricultural Tour? (27 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Marketing (10): • Marketing and advertising tours, details, and registration to increase participation in tours (i.e. Rocky View Newsletter)	*"More marketing so that the farm services are more widely known and attending by those who are not familiar with what happens in agriculture."*
Timing (9): • Explore different timing and frequency opportunities for the tour to encourage greater participation.	*"early summer or early fall would be better times"* *"This is a great program - unfortunatelly it is often farmers that attend. How can more acreage owners be encouraged? More weekend acitivities? Evening information seminars?"*
Audience (7): • Market tours to urban residents within Rocky View and surrounding municipalities to increase awareness and support for agriculture.	*"Target city/town people for these tours, collaborate and educate them."*
It's great! (5)	*"Appreciate them being strongly agriculture based and not just a nice day in the country"*

3.1.6 Agriculture Master Plan

Are there any current pressures caused by local planning or policies you would like the County to reconsider when drafting an Agriculture Master Plan? (41 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Development pressure on productive agricultural lands (19): ● Population growth pressure which leads to residential development and the loss of productive agricultural lands. ● Protect agricultural land from renewable energy development (wind and solar)	*"I am always worried about urban sprawl. I am very worried that farmland is being taken over by cities and towns."* *"Consider land quality ahead of development permits. West of hwy 2 is generally more productive than eat of hwy 2. Residential and industrial development should go east rather than West"*
Subdivision of agricultural lands (11): ● Large agriculture parcels being subdivided into acreages and multiple residential properties.	*"Ongoing pressure for subdivision of agricultural land is detrimental for a healthy ag. Sector."* *"don't lose first parcel out for generational planning but with families greater than 1 kid need options too."* *"Lots of development and sub-divisions breaking up land and more acreages where people don't want big ag operating in the area."*
Land use changes (11): ● Fragmentation of agricultural land is detrimental to the agricultural industry ● Incompatible land uses negatively impacting agriculture operations ● Restrictions on land use types creates challenges (number of animals, resource extraction, etc.)	*"Yes subdivisions in primarily agriculture areas that cause ground water pressures and conflicts between agriculture activities and small residential land holders."* *"No redesignation of hay operations out of agricultural lands not available for redevelopment."*
Political environment (7): ● Pressures of taxation, regional politics, engagement with landowners and farmers, industrial and commercial tax bases, and land speculation.	*"More flexibility, work more with landowners, less red tape, and less conditions - permits, redesignations / Subdivisions."* *"Talk to us. We have lots to give as far as history. Business speculators have money but we do not. they buy land but we cannot."*
Natural environment (5) ● Pressures of watershed health, ecosystem services, carbon sequestration, and moving topsoil to agricultural lands	*"Fragmentation of agricultural land is detrimental to the agricultural industry as well as being detrimental to the health and function of our watersheds."* *"Topsoil, should not be moved to prime agriculture lands. Soil sampling and monitoring should be done prior to and after should topsoil be placed on lands."*

How can the County invest resources to improve agricultural productivity, services, and sustainability of this important resource sector? (29 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Local politics (9): ● Streamlining regulatory processes and cutting red tape to enable agricultural producers to focus on agriculture. Having planning staff and council knowledgeable about the agriculture industry. Ensuring reduced taxation rates on agricultural lands.	*"The best thing the County can do to assist agriculture is to basically stay out of our way. When decisions come up at the County, be on the side of the farmers, not the acreage owners and urban areas. Hire people with some knowledge and experience of agriculture to do the planning"*
Supports for farmers (9): ● Directly supporting farmers through financial initiatives, resources, and education to ensure they are sustainably able to continue farming the land.	*"Actually help the existing farmers, and those that want to succeed them. Services are too expensive for the profits we are making, if any."* *"Funding is a big part to this. Smaller funds for smaller farms that are either widely applicable or directed towards more sustainable solutions. Less paper work more support."*
Development controls (7): ● Protecting agricultural lands from development and urban sprawl, which introduce incompatible land uses and accompanying tensions to productive landscapes	*"Farmers will be ok in general provided their land is not taken away or in jeopardy. That is the promise we desire most of all."* *"I wish there was a way for the County to keep farmland priced for a farmer to purchase instead of a wealthy investor or developer."*
Environmental stewardship (3): ● Education, incentives, and recognition of environmental stewardship by farmers	*"More education on sustainability. Water shortage is a very real probability. New and creative ideas on how to use less water yet still produce a viable outcome."*
Roads (3): ● Maintaining gravel roads, and controlling speed to support movement of farm machinery. Controlling weeds and pest on transportation corridors and County land.	*"Most farmers would agree we don't need more paved roads and high speed traffic. Ditch weed control, making sure county land is not a pest or weed repository would be great - not to imply this is not being done, but it could be better."*

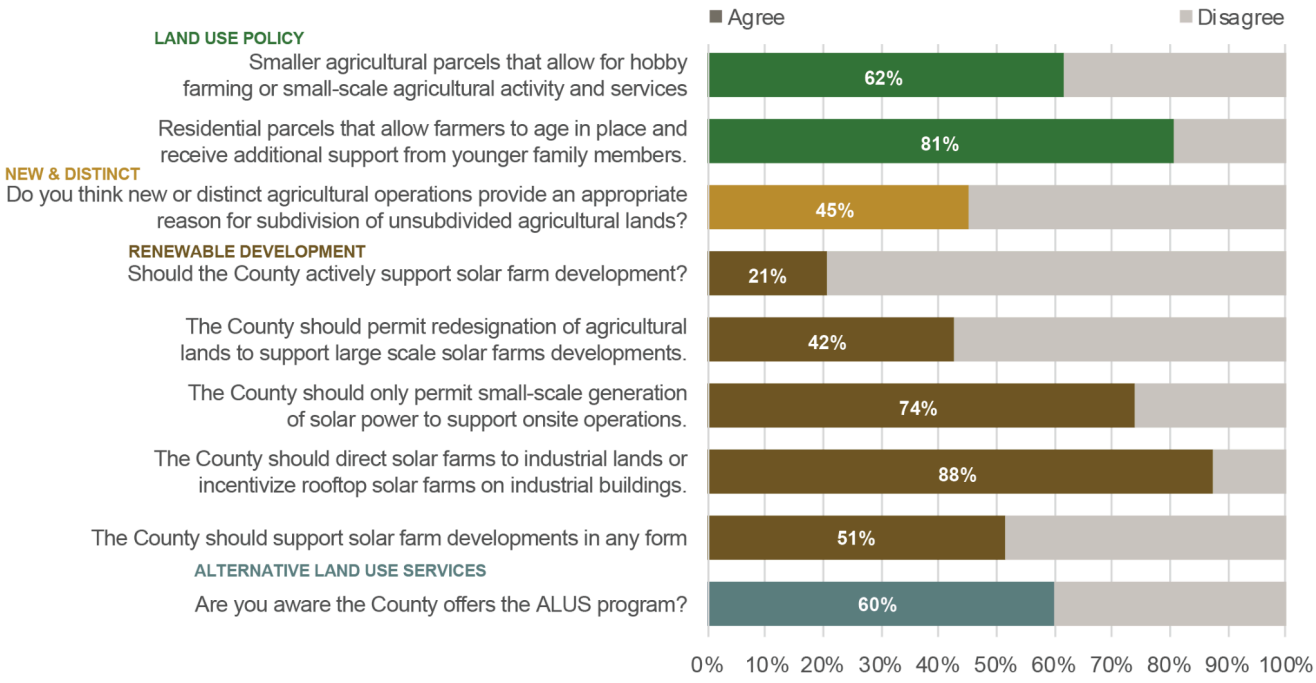
What are the opportunity areas for agriculture in Rocky View County, and are there any regional or local trends that should be considered in a revised Agriculture Master Plan? (30 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Protect agricultural lands (15): ● Protect productive agricultural lands from development (country residential, commercial, industrial). Limit subdivision to main contiguous sections of farmable land.	*"Farm transition is a big topic, and it's important that there be support for it so that farms/ranches can continue. One approach that is helpful both financially and for the protection of lands, is for landowners to enter into a conservation easement or land trust agreement. Support for this would be meaningful."*
Sustainable water usage (7): ● Sustainable management of water resources in the county between residential and agricultural uses.	*"Make sure ground water resources are considered in the master plan as they are very limited in areas of the county and livestock agriculture are dependent on these."*
Diversified agriculture production and processing(6): ● Recognizing the diversification of agriculture production and processing to include value add processing, greenhouses, and rented agricultural land.	*"Break agriculture down. The bee keeper or the green house requires a lot different regulations than the cattle ranches. Define ranch/farm by how the land owner makes the majority of their income according to their income tax."* *"Recognition of the increasing trend of rented agricultural land, often owned by retired farmers or developers. This splits responsibilities along a few lines - taxes, weeds control, use of land, fencing, etc."*
Ranching and livestock support (5): ● Resources, programs, and incentives to support ranching and livestock production.	*"A greater focus on livestock producers within the Agriculture master plan would be beneficial. Similar to the beef specialist from the provincial ag program of the past. An individual that can be contacted if you have pasture or water issues."*
Agritourism (4): ● Agritourism opportunities including farm to table, direct to consumer sales, and marketing opportunities.	*"There seems to be a trend of people wanting to purchase more local food. Sometimes its hard to provide local food such as beef to the public as there is a limited number of butchers or places to market the products."*
Renewable energy (3): ● Renewable energy development that is compatible with agriculture operations (i.e., grazing)	*"support for renewable development to supplement farm income"*

3.2 Workshop

3.2.1 Workshop Overview

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements / policy:



3.2.2 Environmental Sustainability

How might the County support the environmental sustainability of your operation? (26 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Weed control (8): ● Support more weed control measures.	*"Increase # of pasture sprayers."*
Education about programs available (5): ● More awareness needed about current programming.	*"Keep producers informed of all environmental programs, fed, prov, county."*
Water supply support (5): ● More water supply programs and services are desired.	*"Rentable offsite waterer for planting projects."*
Second sprayer / equipment rental (4): ● Sprayers and equipment rental to support the growing need.	*"Just finished using the pasture sprayer. I do think that you should charge for it. It wouldn't hurt to get a new pasture sprayer. It is a good little outfit."*
Incentives, funding and discounts (4): ● Information and access to increased funding opportunities, rebates, incentives and discounts	*"Continue assisting of EFPs and grant funding. Incentives for weed control (ie tall buttercup)."*
Native seed sourcing (3): ● Access and education related to native seeds.	*"Sourcing native seeds, shelter belt program, gopher control products."*

Are there additional environmentally focused projects the County should be considering funding? (18 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Environmental protection (4): ● Protection of wetland areas and other environmental resources.	*"I believe the west side of RVC with unique riparian area and montane grasslands are a precious resource. I would like to see further promotion of the need to conserve these areas."*
Incentives, funding and discounts (4): ● Cost offsetting and incentive programs for planting.	*"Funding for planting trees and shelter belts."*
Water supply support (3): ● Water supply and quality testing support is desired.	*"Water accessibility, support for wells, dugouts, testing & solar water projects."*
Shelter belts/ tree programs (3): ● Shelterbelt and tree planting programs should be considered.	*'Tree/shelterbelt programs"*

3.2.3 Transportation Infrastructure

How can Rocky View County manage transportation infrastructure as a shared resource by both the agricultural industry and those from outside the industry? (30 responses)

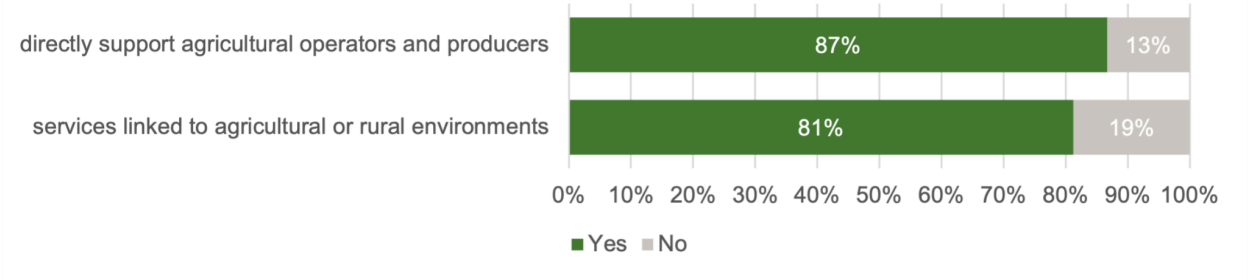
Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Gravel, Chip Seal and Pavement	
More graders (4): ● Grading supports ease of movement and road quality. **Wider roads/road shoulders (4):** ● Wider roads support movement of heavy machinery.	*"More graders & less permanent calcium-controlled roads, they just turn into potholes."* *"Wide enough for implements to travel down."*
Road Bans	
Road bans should be based on conditions, not season (8): ● The approach to road bans should be reconsidered to align with weather conditions. **Less restrictions for ag producers (7):** ● Producers would like more leniency for road bans during busy seasons **Accommodate heavier equipments (3):** ● Larger equipment needs better access to roadways. **Agricultural permits (3):** ● Positive sentiment about the current agricultural permit process.	*"Manage road bans to conditions, not the calendar."* *"Flexibility of ag bans during busy seasons."* *"New equipment is heavier, seasonal businesses need to move."* *"The 90% agriculture permit is a big plan and is appreciated."*
Bridges and Culverts	
Widen bridges (6): ● Bridges are too narrow to accommodate safe transportation. **Increase inspections and repairs (4):** ● Concerns that bridges and culverts are not getting enough maintenance. **Lower the guardrails (4):** ● The guardrails are too high to accommodate agricultural equipment.	*"Bridges are too narrow and the guardrails are too high. Our equipment can't fit over the guardrails so we end up taking your guardrails off."* *"More inspections on bridges and mainly culverts, seeing lots that are collapsed."*
Signage	
Increase setbacks for signage (9): ● Current signage is too close to the roadside and causes safety concerns. **Increase amount of signage (4):** ● More signs are desired to support awareness. **Larger signs (4)**	*"Keep signage back as far as possible. More signs out. 4 feet further in ditch."* *"Perhaps adding flashing signs during spring/harvest (not year round)."*

What other factors does the County need to consider when planning for and designing road infrastructure to facilitate the movement of agricultural equipment and goods? (59 responses)

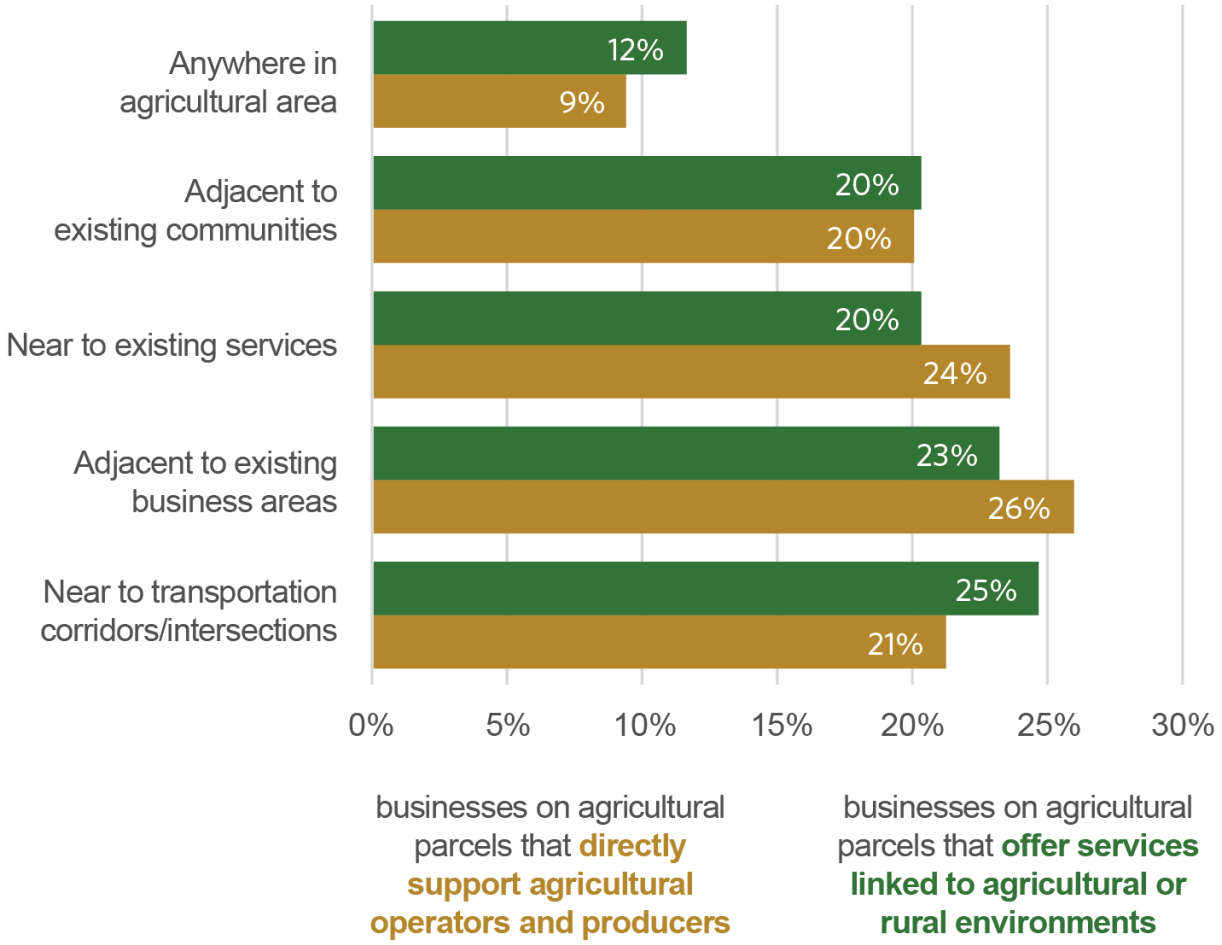
Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Widen roads (12): ● Roads are not wide enough to suit the needs of producers.	*"Wider roads with less things to hit."*
Accommodate heavier equipment (9): ● New equipment is larger and heavier, this requires wider roadways.	*"Require large enough medians on main ag equipment channels to accommodate the larger size of current ag equipment."*
Agriculture Traffic roads (8): ● It is difficult to follow road bans, agriculture traffic corridors would be helpful for producers.	*"I think having a couple of road options in each corridor that could be used (asking for ag traffic corridors)."*
Increase signage (6): ● More signage is needed to indicate the use of agricultural equipment on the roadways.	*"Signage where ag equipment faring left into farmsteads on busy roads reminding motorists to watch for farming equipment turning."*
More graders/gravel roads (5): ● Graders are a good way to support transportation.	*"More grading on the gravel roads during the busy ag season."*
General education and awareness (5): ● Awareness and education of the general public to help them understand the needs and operations in agricultural areas.	*"Awareness of general public to movement of ag equipment etc, especially during seasonal busy times."*
Stop selling road allowances (4): ● Keeping road allowances are a way to support transportation and movement.	*"Stop selling and/or closing road allowances the ag needs to use for more equipment between fields. Road allowances allow ag equipment to stay off of paved roads."*

3.2.4 Diversification

Should County policy support businesses on agricultural parcels that:
(30 responses)



Where should County policy support businesses on agricultural parcels?



If policy to support businesses on agricultural parcels that directly support agricultural operators and producers is supported, where should agri-business developments go? (25 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Marginal lands (10): ● Development should be directed to land with lower agricultural value.	*"We have many areas of marginal land that these facilities can be built in."*
Policy to support agriculture is needed (8): ● Ensuring that agri-business developments are supported by policy and specific criteria.	*"Council and staff need to follow up on some ventures to make certain that guidelines of operations are followed."*
Proximity to infrastructure (5): ● Near critical infrastructure such as roads and water access.	*"Near high traffic areas, consideration to scale, would need better roads to service agri business."*
Depends on the scale of development (3): ● Each case should be considered on an individual basis.	*"Consideration to scale. Different agribusiness will have different impacts. Home based businesses with smaller scale,. If it is one car a day, pick up drop off."*

If policy to support businesses on agricultural parcels that offer services linked to agricultural or rural environments is supported, where should agri-business developments go? (24 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Depends on the scale of development (9): ● Each case should be considered on an individual basis.	*"Criteria should exist to cooperate with operations of ag business."*
Policy to support agriculture is needed (8): ● Specific criteria or limitations to protect the agriculture sector are needed to guide new development.	*"If allowed needs consulting to the local neighbors. Needs rules and settings, liabilities, use smaller scales."*
Proximity to infrastructure (4): ● Near critical infrastructure such as roads and water access.	*"The roads and supporting services need to be there in order to support it."*
Tourism will benefit Rocky View County (4): ● Agricultural tourism can have positive economic benefits.	*"Ag tourism can help educate consumers on benefits/advantages of local food producers."*

3.2.5 Topsoil Disposal

To what extent do you feel Topsoil Disposal should be permitted? (38 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Regulation and monitoring needed (6): ● Topsoil should be regulated and inspected for admixing, rocks and other issues.	*"Definitely has its place, but monitored and permitted. County must police and have an inspector supervise the sampling to ensure quality control."*
Land reclamation (5): ● Topsoil can be used for land reclamation in marginal lands, feedlots etc.	*"Fill sloughs. Swap with clay, there are places that need topsoil."*
Strategic use where needed (5): ● Consider soil maps and development needs to limit overuse of topsoil.	*"Keep it limited to only areas that can truly improve the quality of the soil…"*
Good quality topsoil needed (5): ● There should be a minimum quality level for topsoil use in the county.	*"Minimum quality standard of what is topsoil"*
Weed control concerns (4): ● Low quality topsoil can encourage weed growth and invasive species	*"Weed plan in place for one year."*
General negative (4): ● General negative sentiment about topsoil use.	*"We don't like it. There is a lot of dust and a lot of trucks and we don't like it."*
Difficult to enforce (4): ● People take advantage of the opportunity to use topsoil and cut corners related to quality with no consequence.	*"Topsoil is an area where people are taking advantage of the rules."*

What measures need to be taken to ensure the quality of agricultural land is maintained in this context? (52 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Regulation and monitoring needed (11): ● There should be inspections and monitoring of the topsoil use and potential effects on the overall soil quality on agricultural lands.	*"It needs to be regulated to make sure it is done right. Otherwise you take the risk of a lot of problems being buried for the next generation to deal with."*
Require soil testing (10): ● Testing requirements should be met before approval of topsoil distribution to agricultural lands.	*"Keep soil analysis/restrictions high so that poor soil is not brought into or distributed in RVC."*
Stricter regulations (8): ● High standards and quality control measures must be in place if topsoil is allowed to be used.	*"Admix must be prevented, tested for quality, weeds, colour of topsoil-brown or black, disease...."*
Not on agricultural lands (8): ● Protect the quality of agricultural land by prohibiting topsoil use.	*"Agricultural land is a precious resource under pressure from invasive species and development. The measures RVC should undertake are measures that conserve this resource."*
Developers should be responsible for associated costs (6): ● Developers should have to pay for soil testing, road repairs and inspection costs for topsoil in agricultural lands.	*"Soil testing, separating of soil so that the layers remain intact, holding developers accountable."*
Penalize misuse (5): ● Enforcement of the rules for topsoil use should be done with fines and other accountability measures.	*"More patrolling-enforcement (illegal dumping)"*

3.2.6 Renewable Energy Development

What should the County consider when regulating solar farm developments? (55 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Only on unproductive lands (19): ● Solar farms should only be permitted on land that doesn't have agricultural value.	*"Solar farms should only be allowed on rooftops/ or industrial areas. Solar farms should never be allowed on any type of farm or ranch land."*
Roofs and parking lots (11): ● Parking lots and roofs are the areas that are best suited for solar energy farming.	*"Put it on parking lots or the top of buildings, Encourage partnerships (enbridge and amazon)."*
Industrial and Commercial areas (6): ● Industrial and commercial areas are well suited for solar energy farming.	*"Solar could/should be on every one of these large warehouses being built."*
Clean up obligations (3): ● The clean-up of debris as a result of hail storms and other weather events must be enforced.	*"Consider hail. We are in a huge hail corridor. Practicality in this area, what does it look like to clean it up and sustain that with the weather we have."*
Weather concerns [hail] (3): ● Hail and weather related events are a concern due to flying debris and property damage.	*"Clean up at the end of the lifespan or in the event of inclement weather (hail) or company bankruptcy."*

3.2.7 Opportunities

What are the opportunity areas for agriculture in Rocky View County, and are there any regional or local trends that should be considered in a revised Agriculture Master Plan? (20 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
More awareness of opportunities (4): ● Sharing more information about opportunities through advertising and marketing.	*"Ways to help distribute local products/educate on how much we have local."*
More education about good agricultural practices (4): ● Teaching residents about agricultural practices and sharing resources.	*"Highlighting good ag production practices and raising the profile of good practices happening in the county."* *"Separation-demand on traffic. Keep industrial north of 22x."*

How can the County invest resources to improve agricultural productivity, services and sustainability of this important resource sector? (22 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
More awareness of opportunities (5): ● Sharing more information about opportunities for collaboration, investment, workshops etc.	*"Continued educational services and research facilities are the best defense for agriculture."*
Funding for producers (3): ● Incentives and funding to reduce agriculture-related costs.	*"Continue assisting with producer funding & assisting with grants."*
Limit land use redesignation (3): ● Concerns about changing land-use in the agricultural zones.	*"Land use. Careful on what gets redesignated."*
Wildlife/pest control (3): ● Ensuring adequate services to control wildlife and pests.	*"Control of wildlife, examples: grizzly bear, black bears, cougars, wolves, coyotes, elk herds and deer."*

Are there any current pressures caused by local planning or policies you would like the County to reconsider? (34 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Water supply management (3): ● Concerns about negative impacts of development to water supply.	*"Have we considered what the long term impacts [are] of developing low lying areas on our aquifer?"*
Subdivision concerns (3): ● Concerns of higher costs for producers due to development pressures in the county.	*"Subdivision pressure needs to be reduced/controlled."*
Stop regulating producers (3): ● Farmers would like more freedom to exercise their best judgment on their own land.	*"There are too many rules."*
Road deterioration (3): ● Roads require more maintenance due to increased traffic & heavy trucks using them more frequently.	*"County roads can't handle traffic."* *"Upgrading roads ie Twp Rd 250."*
Clear policies/guidelines (3): ● Clarifying the rules and guidelines for all types of changes to the land use.	*"We don't know the rules you play by."*

3.2.8 New and Distinct Agricultural Operations

To what extent do you feel subdivision of unsubdivided agricultural lands for new or distinct agricultural operations should be permitted? (45 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
No subdivisions (6): ● Subdividing the land shouldn't be permitted.	*"Should not be permitted, subdivision isn't required for ag uses."*
Succession planning (5): ● Development should be focused on creating opportunities for the next generation of producers.	*"I think that the county should allow young producers to be able to diversify on family owned land that they can either build or develop their own farm based businesses."*
Policy and restrictions needed (4): ● Restrictions and limits are required to discourage abuse of subdivisions.	*"Should not unless verification. Currently many apps are not following what is submitted."*
Less fragmentation of land (4): ● Keeping large parcels of farmland today is important for agricultural productivity.	*"There are a lot of areas that are very fragmented. We definitely don't want it fragmented into small parcels."*
Case by case decisions (3): ● Approvals for subdivision should be determined on an individual basis.	*"Application to Rocky View on a case by case basis."*
Land use changes over time - concern (3): ● Concerns that land will not revert back to an agricultural use if it is redesignated, but the owner does not keep the property long-term.	*"Careful - the first subdivision may start an ag operation but this parcel may not remain ag and would be sold."*

How do producers diversify their operations without redesignation or subdivision? (21 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
General negative (5): ● Negative sentiment	*"Hard to diversify because of cost and risk. Easier to finance a small parcel to get a mortgage and not to lose the entire farm if this diversified operation goes broke."*
Infrastructure removal (3): ● New infrastructure should be temporary to ensure flexibility of the land for future agricultural use if necessary.	*"They can rut a portion of the lands for new ag purpose. Should go back to the main title if in the future the new operator does not remain."*

3.2.9 Land Use Policy and Development

Should County policy provide the opportunity for these types of subdivision (smaller agricultural parcels and residential parcels) to be approved? What criteria or impacts should the County consider? (65 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Policy needs to set limits (13): ● Policies with clear regulations should be in place to manage misuse of land use changes.	*"I think the first parcel out is still a good policy, however there should be rules that land and property should be upkept and maintained for the environment and sustainability."*
Preserve agricultural land (10): ● The value of agricultural land should be protected by policies.	*"County policy should strive to keep remaining agricultural land intact."*
Only in high density areas (6): ● The level of population density should be a part of the approval process for subdivision.	*"Subdivisions should be limited to zones of higher densities, closer to urban areas to act as a buffer."*
Ensure adequate infrastructure (5): ● Roads, water supply and other infrastructure are important to consider when considering a new subdivision application.	*"Ground water availability and waste water disposal, can these support the growth?"* *"Infrastructure - water, roads, access impact to neighbours."*

How many homestead or residential parcels do you feel is appropriate in each quarter section? (29 responses)

Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Flexibility (9): ● Landowners should be able to make their own decisions about additional residential parcels. Succession planning will require subdivision based on the number of next generation farmers in each family.	*"One parcel out per quarter is overly restrictive, farm family makeup/intergenerational transfer requires more flexibility."*
Up to two parcels (8): ● One or two parcels are appropriate.	*"1 plus 1 (aging parents; taking over farm)."*
One parcel (5): ● One parcel is appropriate.	*"Max 1. This is a very loaded questions. 1 is good use of subdivision for succession planning."*

Is there a maximum size or number of parcels that should be permitted? (36 responses)

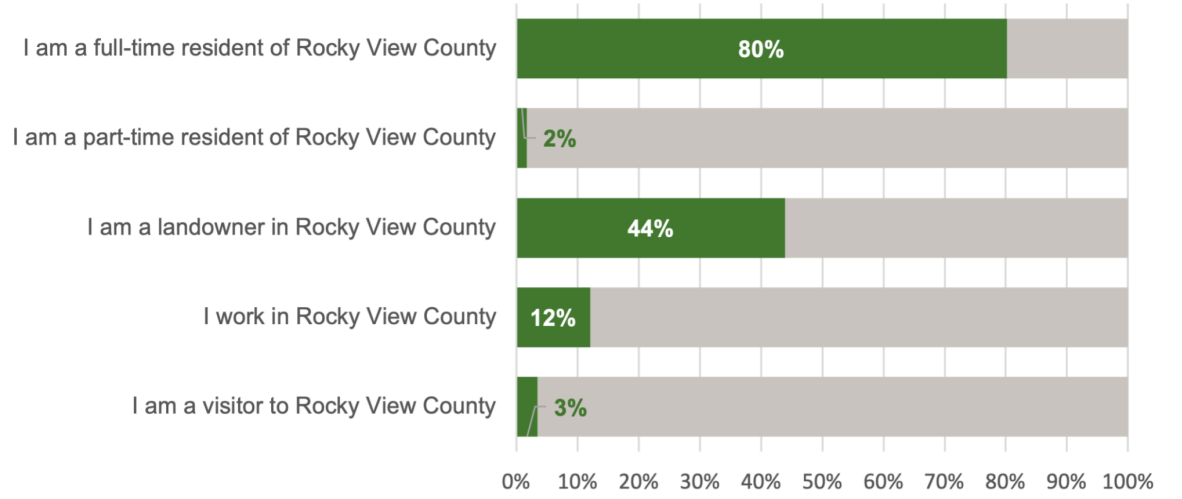
Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Case by case decision (6): ● Every application for subdivision is unique and should be reviewed case by case.	*"Each application needs to be reviewed and decisions made for each unique application."*
Policy needs to set limits (4): ● The county will need to have parameters that set out limits for subdivision of land.	*"It is important that the county sets parameters."*
First parcel out - positive (4): ● The current first parcel out allowance is satisfactory.	*"1 parcel out. Size needed to isolate farmstead."*
40 acres (4): ● 40 acres should be the maximum permitted.	*"Max 40 acres and 2 parcels within the parcel."*
20 acres (3): ● 20 acres should be the maximum permitted.	*"If had to, not in favour of doing more than 20."*
5 acres (3): ● 5 acres should be the maximum permitted.	*"3-5 acres if ag parcels on quarter (for each kid)."*

How do we plan for and accommodate future generations wanting to return to the farm? (38 responses)

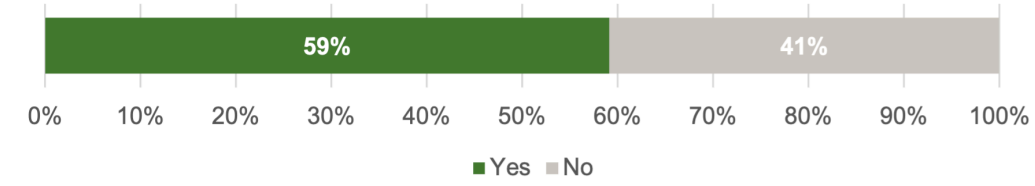
Theme (# of occurrences)	Indicative Quotes
Flexibility (11): ● Exemptions for subdivision to facilitate succession of family farms are desired.	*"Allow for future generations to build on family homestead without having to subdivide."*
Less County involvement in landowner rights (4): ● Landowners prefer to have minimal regulations related to how they conduct business on their farms.	*"I don't [think] the County should be planning for life choices of future generations. Family succession planning is a family matter. The County effort to keep agriculture viable is a sufficient anchor…"* *"Wishes of farmers/owners"*
Tax breaks (3): ● Landowners want to be eligible for tax reductions and exemptions.	*"Less rules, less tax."*

3.3 Survey Demographics

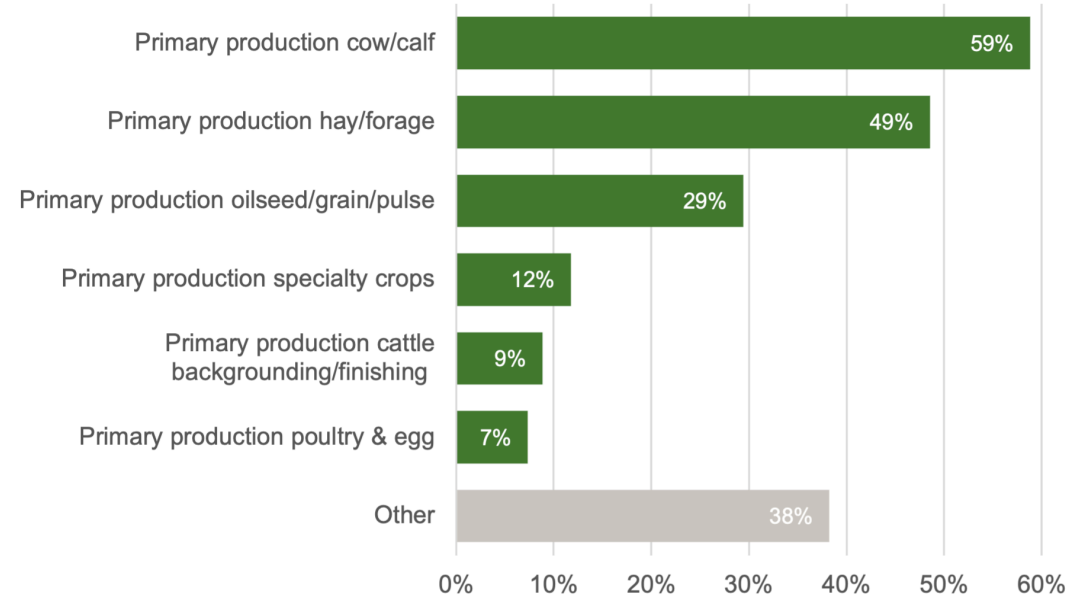
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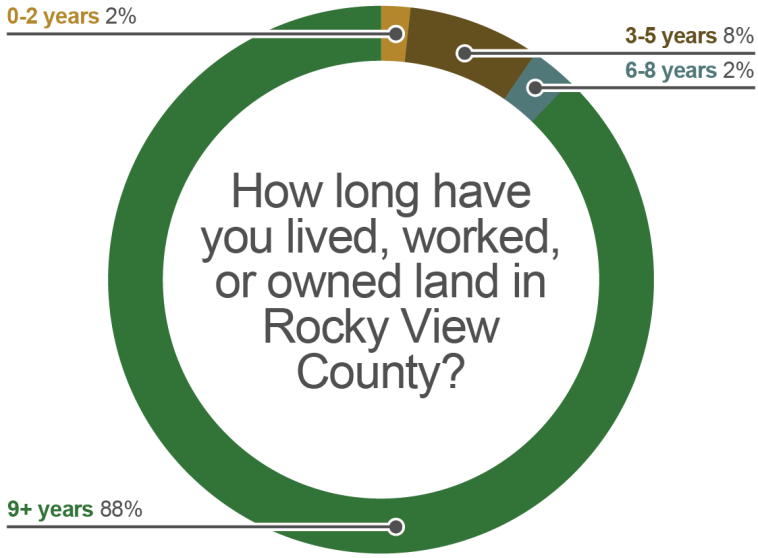
Are you actively involved in work within the agricultural sector?



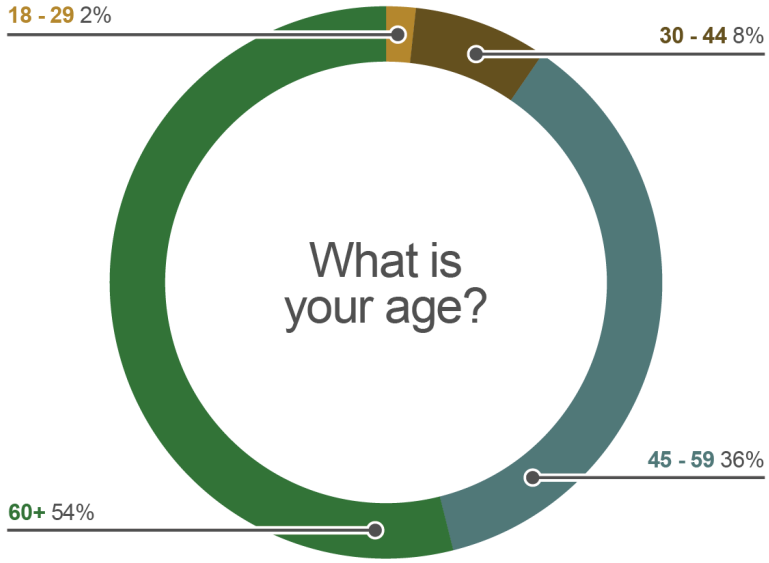
Please specify the category of agriculture you are involved in:



How long have you lived, worked, or owned land in Rocky View County?



What is your age range?



4.0 Next Steps

Thank you to the agriculture community members in Rocky View County who shared their views, thoughts, and ideas to contribute to a revised Agriculture Master Plan. The County truly appreciates the quality and depth of discussions, comments, and views shared between participants and the project team.

In November of 2024, we will share the draft Agriculture Master Plan and "What We Heard" report with all engagement participants and the public. During this phase, we will invite additional comments and reviews to ensure the plan reflects the community's needs and perspectives.

For more information on the project and to stay in touch with the process, please visit:
www.rockyview.ca/agriculture-master-plan