PROGRAM GUIDES

AGRICULTURAL STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE

LARGER-SCALE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS

Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership

Generated on November 19, 2026

Not Accepting Applications

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PROGRAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association

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View Program Online →

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

For producers seeking to implement one of the recommended energy efficiency improvements identified through a previously **completed** energy audit (similar to the Detailed Energy Audit (Level 2) or equivalent) that results in a reduction in the use of electrical energy or fossil fuels that supports enhanced on-farm energy use efficiency.

Energy efficiency improvements must demonstrate an overall energy savings:

- Reduction in electricity use (lower annual kWh usage); **and/or**
- Reduction in fossil fuel use (lower annual fuel usage; shown as kWh equivalent).

Eligible projects are limited to those that replace current activities/technologies/materials that result in reduced energy usage. The program does not provide financial support for equipment purchases related to expansions that result in an overall increased energy use.

Eligible activities are limited to those that are directly related to farm production and excludes energy efficiency measures for homes/residences (permanent or temporary) or non-agricultural activities on the farm property.

Applications must be supported by a previously completed energy audit that meets the minimum requirements as outlined for a Detailed Energy Audit (Level 2), available here. The completed energy audit must have been prepared within the last 3 years and must have been prepared by a qualified third-party consultant/engineer/energy auditor.

INTAKE DATES

INTAKE	INTAKE DATES	ELIGIBLE PROJECT START DATE (INVOICE DATE)	ELIGIBLE PROJECT COMPLETION DATE	CLAIM DEADLINE	PREVIOUS INTAKE GUIDE
2	Intake Opened: October 16, 2024, 9am ET Intake Closed: October 29, 2024, 5pm ET	Date indicated in approval notification*	February 15, 2025, for costs incurred on or before February 15, 2025. February 15, 2026, for costs incurred February 16, 2025, to February 15, 2026.	February 15, 2025 February 15, 2026	View
3	Intake Opened: August 13, 2025, 9:00am ET Intake Closed: September 3, 2025, 3:00pm ET	Date indicated in approval notification*	February 15, 2026, for costs incurred on or before February 15, 2026. December 1, 2026, for costs incurred February 16, 2026, to December 1, 2026.	February 15, 2026 December 1, 2026	View
4	Intake Opens: July 8, 2026, 9:00am (EDT) Intake Closes: July 29, 2026, 3:00pm (EDT)	Date indicated in approval notification*	February 15, 2027, for costs incurred on or before February 15, 2027. September 30, 2027, for costs incurred February 16, 2027, to September 30, 2027.	February 15, 2027 September 30, 2027	

*The **eligible project dates** are included in the approval notification issued by OSCIA for each successful application. Eligible costs can only be incurred, invoiced and/or paid by the applicant on or after the **start date** specified on the approval notification.

The Agricultural Stewardship Initiative will support multi-year project implementation. Please refer to the information in the Eligible Activities and Costs section below.

COST SHARE SUMMARY

35% cost-share funding up to a maximum of $90,000 per project application

PROGRAM DETAILS

Who is Eligible to Apply?

Farm businesses that file farm business taxes in Ontario as demonstrated by:

- A valid **farm business registration number (FBRN)** *For information on registering a farm business and/or a religious exemption, visit Overview (agricorp.com).* .

  OR

- A Religious Exemption Letter provided by the OMAFRA Appeal Tribunal (provide with application submission).

  OR

- A Cultural Exemption Letter provided by the First Nations Agriculture & Finance Ontario (FNAFO), formerly known as the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario to First Nations farmers, verifying the farm business operates in a First Nations community (provide with application submission).

  OR

- An income exemption from the Farm Property Class Tax Rate Program (i.e., Start-up farm businesses, Business structure change, Not a normal production year, Age/Illness/Death of a spouse) (provide with application submission).

Applicants must:

- Have a verified, 4th or 5th Edition Environmental Farm Plan; and,
- Be in compliance with all requirements of the law and must remain in compliance for the duration of the project.

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Eligible Activities and Costs

Projects are aimed at improving energy use efficiency within existing agricultural production facilities, including activities and costs associated with the engineering and design, installation and/or calibration costs directly required to support the implementation of energy efficiency improvements, including, but not limited to, the following list.

One type of improvement can be applied for per application:

Eligible activities are applicable for farm buildings/infrastructure and equipment/machinery required for production.

Geothermal Heating and/or Cooling (for farm/production buildings):

- Geothermal heat pumps, heat exchangers, pumps and other equipment;
- Geothermal wells or piping fields;
- Excavation and drilling costs for installation of geothermal wells or piping fields
- Piping, fittings and components associated with installation of the geothermal heating system;
- Fluids for geothermal system (i.e., glycol);
- Engineering and labour costs associated with system design and installation;
- One-time system set-up and calibration costs.

High Efficiency Motors (motors must meet or exceed National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) Premium Efficiency (or equivalent like the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) IE3 rating):

- Variable frequency drives (VFD) for electric motors (e.g., irrigation pumps, ventilation fans);
- High efficiency electric motors replacing existing non-efficient motors.

Building Envelope, Infrastructure and Ventilation:

- Sealing, caulking;
- Vapour barriers, weather stripping;
- Energy efficient doors and/or windows;

- Installation of new or upgraded energy curtains for greenhouse production facilities (Controlled Environment Agriculture);
- Upgrades to improve permanent greenhouse cover materials (Controlled Environment Agriculture);
- Installation of improved building insulation in walls and/or ceilings;
- Cool roofs (e.g., ceramic paint coatings for roofs of attic-ventilated livestock barns);
- Installation of sidewall curtains (natural ventilation);
- Natural/dual ventilation;
- Energy efficient exhaust fans;
- Solar air heating (i.e., panels and siding);
- Air-based cooling technologies;
- Energy efficient circulating fans (e.g., high-volume low speed (HVLS) fans);
- Installation or upgrades of ventilation heat exchangers;
- Energy efficient ventilation fans which are separate from a heat exchanger;
- Efficient mechanical ventilation systems.

Heating (includes water heating):

- Controllers (e.g., variable timers, auto variable timers, software for climate controllers);
- Creep heat pads and heat pad controllers;
- Refrigeration heat recovery;
- Upgrade to a tank-less instantaneous water heater (with a uniform energy factor (UEF) of 0.93 or higher) to replace existing tank-type water heater;
- High efficiency electric hot water tank;

- Upgrades to boiler systems or heating systems;
- Biomass boilers for hot water;
- Energy efficiency water bowls (less than 150 watts) and energy-free water bowls;
- Cooling air recovery;
- Solar hot water heating (i.e., panels (flat plate/tubes) and siding);
- Electric heat pumps;
- Upgrades to higher energy efficiency HVAC systems;
- Higher energy efficiency evaporators (e.g., maple);
- Reverse osmosis equipment (e.g., maple).

Refrigeration and Cooling:

- Pre-cooling (i.e., plate coolers, refrigeration heat recovery/reclaimer);
- Higher efficiency refrigeration compressors;
- Variable speed vacuum pumps (dairy);
- Variable speed milk transfer pumps;
- Scroll compressors (dairy);
- Heat exchangers;
- Electronic controllers;
- Electric heat pumps.

Lighting (fixtures, new wiring and controls associated with the following technologies, need to be approved under the Canadian Electrical Code (e.g., CSA or ULC-approved), and where

appropriate be ENERGY STAR or Design Lights Consortium™ (DLC) qualified):

- Lighting controls to switch lighting in response to available daylight;
- Energy efficient lighting systems;
- Electronic ballasts;
- Dimmable High Intensity Discharge (HID) lighting and controls (e.g., high pressure sodium (HPS) and metal halide lights);
- Premium/high efficiency T8 or T5 fluorescent lighting with high energy efficient ballast (electronic ballast);
- LED lighting and fixtures.

Grain Drying:

- Retrofits to existing on-farm grain dryers for improved heat reclamation;
- Grain storage temperature/moisture management controllers that replace manual aeration fan controls (includes sensors inside grain storage bin);
- Switching/conversion of existing grain dryers to low-carbon fuel burners (biodiesel, bioethanol, biogas, sustainable biomass);
- Electric heat pumps.

Other Eligible Costs for implementation of an eligible energy efficiency improvement may include:

- Engineering and system design.
- Installation of equipment and other system components that are directly related to the completion of the proposed energy efficiency improvement project.
- Decommissioning existing equipment costs may be considered when part of an approved upgrade for energy efficiency.
- System calibration.
- Costs associated with staff training necessary for the effective operation of the proposed project.

- Installed energy monitoring equipment and energy controls that are directly related to the proposed energy efficiency improvement project.

Note:

1. The above list of eligible activities and costs may not be a comprehensive list, and consideration may be given to other activities that will reduce fossil fuel use or make significant improvement to reduce another greenhouse gas source (e.g., hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) from refrigerant upgrades), or reduce use of electricity. This is subject to the applicant providing sufficient documented evidence with their submitted application, outlining the proposed activity and how it will provide a significant positive benefit in terms of energy use efficiency at the facility where it is proposed to be implemented.
2. Before an appliance or piece of equipment is installed, used, sold, or advertised for sale in Ontario, it must be approved by an accredited certification or evaluation agency. The item must carry the official mark or label of the agency which indicates that the product has been independently assessed for safety and performance. The list of accredited certification or evaluation agencies are listed by Standards Council of Canada: https://scc-ccn.ca/search/accredited-organizations.
3. Projects proposing to reduce energy use by replacing existing inefficient equipment/facilities with upgraded, energy efficient equipment/technologies/features must demonstrate the existing features have been decommissioned. OSCIA may request proof at the time of claim that the existing features have been removed and will not continue to contribute to the whole farm energy usage.

Multi-year projects under the Agricultural Stewardship Initiative:

If you are undertaking a project that requires certain conditions to complete (e.g., weather, production cycles, longer timelines, etc.) there is potential to propose project costs across two program years (costs incurred before and after the claim deadline for the current 2026-2027 program year). This would be considered a multi-year application.
Program years are:

- 2026-2027: Project costs proposed between the eligible project start date indicated in the application approval letter to February 15, 2027. If approved, costs must be incurred, invoiced and paid, and claimed by February 15, 2027.

- 2027-2028: Project costs proposed between February 16, 2027, to September 30, 2027. If approved, costs must be incurred, invoiced and paid within these dates, and claimed by September 30, 2027.

- If submitting a multi-year application, ensure that project costs proposed on the application form align with program year that project costs will be incurred, invoiced, and paid.
- For approved multi-year projects, one (1) claim must be submitted in each program year that project costs were proposed, and a cost-share allocation approved.
- The project must be completed and fully paid for by the 2027-2028 claim deadline of September 30, 2027.
- If you have questions about project timelines, claim submission dates or submitting a multi-year application, contact OSCIA at s-cap@ontariosoilcrop.org.

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Ineligible Activities and Costs

- Proposed projects that do not demonstrate an anticipated energy savings after implementation (reduced electricity and/or fossil fuel use).
- Facility energy audits or engaging the services of energy savings consulting companies or consultants.
- Stand-alone engineering, design, or calibration costs for a proposed project (i.e., costs for a project that is not fully implemented/completed).
- Training costs associated with a previously installed upgrade/ that are not directly related to the fully implemented/completed proposed project applied for.
- Installations, upgrades and retrofits for any purpose other than upgrading existing structures/facilities for same use (e.g., new fixture placements).
- Construction of new barns, storage or packing sheds, or agricultural production facilities that are considered an expansion and NOT a replacement of the current energy-inefficient structures/facilities/ equipment.
- Projects necessary to comply with a requirement under the Ontario Building Code.
- Costs normally associated with meeting Ontario Building Code specifications.

- Projects and costs necessary to comply with a requirement of membership in your commodity group (e.g., an improvement mandated by the Board or leadership of your commodity – such as ventilation for animal welfare).
- Purchase of new grain dryers or storage.
- Any activities and/or costs not directly related to an energy efficiency improvement for an agricultural production facility (i.e., improvements to homes and other residences (temporary or permanent) on the property.
- Farm vehicles, tractors, etc.
- Equipment used for energy generation (e.g., solar, wind, biogas, etc.) – with exception of energy generated for direct use, or that changes fuel use and reduces the use of fossil fuels (e.g., grain dryer switching energy source to biomass, solar-run water heaters, biomass boiler, solar air heater). The energy generated for direct use must show an energy use saving from current energy usage at the facility.
- Upgraded energy-efficient facilities/equipment where existing energy-inefficient facilities/equipment is not properly decommissioned / is continuing to be used in the farm operation in addition to the new project.
- Costs associated with the independent assessment for safety and performance of equipment by an accredited certification or evaluation agency as accepted by the Standards Council of Canada. Note: Before an appliance or piece of equipment is installed, used, sold, or advertised for sale in Ontario, it must be approved by an accredited certification or evaluation agency.
- Costs not directly related to the installation of geothermal systems (e.g., costs related to construction of a room/facility/structure to house geothermal systems' equipment).
- Installation of non-permanent or seasonal production facilities insulation materials (e.g., polyethylene sheets).
- Replacing or repairing standard doors.
- Furnaces.
- Standard roofing materials.
- Fans below minimum energy efficiency standards.
- Rewiring costs unrelated to the installation of an eligible item.

- Standard motors.
- Generators.
- Generator repairs/parts.
- Electric battery packs intended to replace fossil fuel use.
- Standard thermostats/switches.
- Standard hot water tanks.
- In-kind contributions.

Other Ineligible Costs and Activities

- Normal operating costs associated with conducting or expanding a business's current operations, including annual service fees of any type
- Any cost that is eligible for a rebate, credit, or refund (e.g., a refundable portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax).
- Gifts and incentives.
- Costs of travel, hospitality, meals, and/or accommodations.
- Permits and approvals.
- Purchase, lease, construction or sale of land, buildings or facilities, and associated taxes or fees (e.g., land transfer tax).
- Extended warranties, taxes, legal fees, financing charges, loan interest payments, bank fees.
- Materials or products produced by the applicant's farm business.
- Invoices and/or payments not issued in the approved applicant's name.
- Materials or services purchased outside of the eligible invoice dates indicated in the application approval letter.
- Any cost purchased from a supplier who is not at arm's length from the applicant (i.e., businesses owned by the same individual(s), or by siblings or parents, through blood or marriage).

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How Much Cost-Share Funding Is Available?

35% cost-share funding up to a maximum of $90,000 per project application

A Farm Business may submit up to two (2) applications per intake. Applications will be reviewed once the intake closes.

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Merit Assessment Criteria

The Agricultural Stewardship Initiative is a merit-based program. Complete applications that meet eligibility criteria are assessed using Merit Assessment Criteria, which are specific to each Project Category. A merit-based application review process is used to allocate cost-share funds to projects.

The Merit Assessment Criteria for **Larger-Scale Energy Efficiency Improvements** include:

- Details provided in the application describing the proposed project.
- Project addresses risk identified in Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Action Plan.
- Proposed project addresses an energy efficiency improvement recommended in the completed energy audit (Detailed Energy Audit (Level 2), or equivalent).
- Estimated level of energy use reduction anticipated as a result of the proposed energy efficiency improvement project.
- Contributions of the proposed project towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., fossil fuel use reduction).

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What Do I Need to Apply?

The following must be included with an application submission:

- Application Form
- FBRN or documentation to support an eligible FBRN exemption
- Valid premises identification (PID) number. For details, please visit the Provincial Premises Registry.
- Certificate of completion for a 4th or 5th Edition Environmental Farm Plan

Applications are evaluated based only on the information submitted and will not be considered if they do not meet the eligibility criteria or if they are incomplete.

Be sure to carefully review the Agricultural Stewardship Initiative program guide details in entirety. Before you can apply, you will need to visit osciaportal.org and create a user account. Once you have created a user account, if the intake is open, you will be able to enrol and submit an application.

You must include all of the information listed under Documentation Required With the Application with your application submission. If documentation is not received with the submission, the application may be considered incomplete and will not be assessed.

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Documentation Required with the Application

- Certificate of completion for a 4th or 5th Edition Environmental Farm Plan.

Copy of a completed energy audit report that meets the minimum requirements outlined for a Detailed Energy Audit (Level 2), available here.

  - The completed energy audit must have been prepared within the last 3 years and must have been prepared by a qualified third-party consultant/engineer/energy auditor;

- The proposed energy efficiency improvement project needs to be identified as a recommended activity in the completed energy audit.

- Completed **ASLEE Energy Worksheet**, available here.
  The ASLEE Energy Worksheet helps producers assess their current baseline energy usage from all sources for their whole farm operation before implementing energy efficiency improvements, and then estimate energy savings anticipated after implementing the improvements.

  The ASLEE Energy Worksheet includes information demonstrating the level of energy efficiency improvement proposed after the implementation of the proposed project:

  - Baseline of current energy use for the whole farm over a 12-month period;
  - Estimated energy use of proposed energy efficiency improvement, which will assist in calculating the anticipated energy savings and type of energy saved (i.e., reduction in fossil fuel use, reduction in use of electrical energy).

- Any additional supporting documentation and explanation that helps support estimated energy use savings of proposed project. This can include energy efficiency improvement calculations/documents provided by equipment contractor/supplier, manufacturer specifications, quotations outlining equipment size, efficiency rating, application, etc.

NOTE: OSCIA may request documentation, for example, copies of the farm's energy bills used to establish baseline energy use or documentation supporting energy efficiency claims outlined in the energy audit.

Applications are evaluated based only on the information submitted. If required documentation is not received with the submission, the application may be considered incomplete and will not be assessed.

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How Do I Submit My Application?

Applications are only accepted during the application intakes dates noted above.

The Enrolment and Application Form, and all required documentation can be submitted electronically through the OSCIA Portal. If the intake is not currently accepting applications, you may still visit osciaportal.org to create a user account and be ready for upcoming opportunities.

Applicants to the Energy Efficiency Improvements project category will receive notification by email of the outcome of their application approximately **50 business days** after the application intake closes.

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Limits of the Cost-Share Funding

- The eligible **start date** for your project is the date specified on the approval or partial approval letter issued by OSCIA for each successful application. Projects cannot be started before that date. Eligible costs can only be incurred, invoiced, and/or paid by the applicant on or after the date specified on the approval or partial approval notification.

- Deposits that are fully refundable, made by the applicant before the eligible start date to secure goods or services needed to complete the project, with the balance payable after the eligible project start date, may be eligible. The claimed invoice must be dated within the eligible timelines indicated in the approval or partial approval notification and must not indicate the deposit as non-refundable. If the invoice does not clearly indicate the payment as a deposit, or if the deposit is non-refundable, the amount is ineligible for cost-share. Any deposit or payment made prior to April 1, 2023, is not eligible under the Sustainable CAP program.

- OSCIA issues payments after projects have been completed and required claim documentation is received. The project must be paid for in full by the approved applicant prior to cost-share being issued.

- All invoices for the approved project must comply with the eligible invoice dates as outlined in the notification of approval issued by OSCIA for the proposed project. OSCIA cannot issue cost-share payments for incomplete or partially complete projects.

- Applicants are responsible for securing all necessary approvals and permits for the proposed project before starting and complying with all applicable municipal bylaws and provincial or federal regulations. OSCIA may require copies of permits obtained for some projects before issuing cost-share payments.

- OSCIA reserves the right to require additional documentation and ultimately accept or reject submitted project invoices and proof of payment for cost-share consideration.

- Stacking of Sustainable CAP cost-share funding from one or more business and/or one or more sources of Sustainable CAP funding, towards the same project is not permitted. Stacking with other programs outside of Sustainable CAP up to 100% of the project cost, is permitted if the other program allows stacking and at least 15% of the project costs come from non-government sources. All funding for a project from additional off-farm sources, excluding financing, must be listed on the claim form for an approved project.

- Activities funded under Sustainable CAP, Agricultural Stewardship Initiative will not be entitled to carbon credits/greenhouse (GHG) offsets during implementation in the year funding is received, after which, applicants may be eligible for Federal and Provincial GHG offset systems as applicable.

- A cost-share allocation is based on the eligible project costs outlined on the approved Application Form. Accurate estimates to the best of the applicant's ability must be reflected in the total project cost submitted on the Application Form. Quotes are strongly encouraged to support all proposed project costs. If final project costs exceed the original estimate or the scope of the project changes, there is no obligation by OSCIA to extend cost-share beyond the original allocation and/or project scope.

- All goods and services must be purchased from an entity that is at arm's length from the farm business. An entity is considered arm's length if they are not related, not affiliated persons or otherwise controlled by another member or members. Parent/child and siblings, through blood or marriage, or businesses owned by the same individual(s) are not considered arm's length. Refer to Section 251 of the Income Tax Act (Canada) for the additional detail on determining arm's length relationships.

- Projects that have received cost-share funding are routinely inspected. The decision to inspect may be based on project type, project value, or any other criteria selected by OSCIA. Projects may also be inspected randomly. Inspections are carried out before the claim is paid. Biosecurity protocols are followed by all representatives of OSCIA.

- Information presented is the best available at the current time. In the event of a conflict between anything set out in this program guide and/or any other program material and the Minister's Order, the Minister's Order will prevail. Errors and Omissions Excepted. Check with OSCIA for applicable updates. Material is subject to change without notice as the cost-share program evolves.

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How Do I Submit a Claim?

Application outcome notifications will be sent approximately **50 business days** after the application intake closes. If an application is approved for a cost-share allocation, written confirmation will be provided from OSCIA by email. This approval letter will confirm:

- Any costs from the application that were deemed ineligible
- Eligible invoice dates, project completion, and claim submission deadlines
- Information required with the claim submission
- Links to the necessary documents (e.g., Claim Form, Electronic Funds Transfer Form, Claim Questionnaire, etc.)
- Information on how to submit the claim

For single year projects, the project must be ***completed and fully paid for before a claim is submitted.***

For multi-year projects, one (1) claim must be submitted in each program year that project costs were proposed, and a cost-share allocation approved. The project must be ***completed and fully paid for before the final claim is submitted***.

As part of an eligible project, every claimed cost must be supported by an itemized invoice in the name of the approved applicant business and one of the following proofs of payment:

- Copy of front and back of cancelled cheque.
- Cash register receipt showing itemized purchase and payment received.
- Electronic image of processed cheque.
- E-Transfer confirmation, which includes the word ‘Deposited’ or ‘Autodeposited’.
- Bill Payment confirmation from a banking institution.
- Statement from banking institution indicating to whom the processed cheque was written, or electronic payment made, and for what amount.
- Third-party confirmation (e.g., email confirmation) of an e-transfer/electronic payment that shows who paid, who was paid, how much was paid and the date the payment transfer was successfully

completed.

- Credit card or debit card receipt clearly identifying the amount and to whom the payment was made. Credit card or debit card numbers and other information, including costs that are unrelated to the project, should be blacked out.

  Cash payments for project costs are strongly discouraged, as they may not meet requirements for proof of payment. If proof of payment by the applicant is not provided, OSCIA cannot support the cost.

  OSCIA may request any additional information from the applicant that OSCIA deems necessary (e.g., copies of any audit reports, plans or permits obtained by the applicant in conducting the project) to support their claim.

  Cost-share payments are made by electronic funds transfer (EFT) in the name of the legal business. All cost-share funding is considered income to the business for tax purposes. OSCIA will issue a tax form (AGR-1) and report the amount paid to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); this is why an applicant's Social Insurance Number (SIN) is collected if the applicant does not have a CRA Business Number. Only one claim can be submitted per project per program year, and only one payment will be made per claim.

  If you have any questions about project timelines, claim submission dates, or submitting a multi-year application, contact OSCIA at:
  s-cap@ontariosoilcrop.org.

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