

Agri-Tech Innovation Program: Funding for Safer Food Production During COVID-19

With the stressed importance of keeping the agri-food sector safe and strong during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the newly announced [Agri-Tech Innovation Cost Share Program](#) provides government funding for the transformation of agricultural workplaces. By supporting projects that adopt advanced or innovative technology to enhance health and safety in the workplace, eligible Ontario farm and processor businesses can access funding that will pave the way for safer food production, improve productivity, and help to grow Ontario's agriculture sector.

"Technology and modern equipment make today's farms more efficient and safer, both for people and the environment. This program will not only protect farmers and farm workers from the COVID-19 pandemic, but it will also enable investments in new processes and state of the art equipment."

- Peggy Brekveld, President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Agri-Tech Innovation Program: Funding Amount

- The **Early Adopters Stream** provides up to 35% to a maximum of \$100,000 per eligible project to offset costs on eligible projects with a minimum value of \$150,000.
- The details and intake for the **Innovators Stream** will open following the closing of the Early Adopters Stream.

Agri-Tech Innovation Program: Applicant Eligibility

An applicant must be either an Ontario farm or processing business as outlined:

- An established Farm Business that is a legal entity and produces agricultural commodities in Ontario under a valid Farm Business Registration Number (FBRN), or an allowable exemption.
- An established Processor Business that is a legal entity that handles agricultural commodities, food, beverage, or agri-based products in Ontario. This includes primary food processing, such as businesses that manufacture products that cut, clean, package, store, and refrigerate raw plant food.

Eligible Ontario Farm or Processor businesses must:

- Be adopting an Advanced Automation or Manufacturing Technology; and:

- Be and remain in compliance with all Requirements of Law for the duration of the project;
- Have a valid and up-to-date Premises Identification (PID) Number for the business location where the project is to take place;
- Provide a Canada Revenue Agency Business Number as part of the application process, if applicable; and
- Be capable of entering into a funding agreement with the Province of Ontario and meeting their obligations under it.

Agri-Tech Innovation Program: Project Eligibility

Successful projects will lead to the adoption of Advanced Automation or Manufacturing Technology that supports the following outcomes:

- Allow businesses to shift away from labour-intensive work practices or processes to help prevent the exposure and transmission of COVID-19, and
- Address at least one of the following labour-related project impacts:
 - Allow business to focus redeployment of workers to higher value-added activities
 - Reduce the ongoing labour shortage pressures in the sector
 - Attract more highly skilled labour to businesses within the sector
 - Increase productivity

Examples of Eligible Projects:

Projects that may be eligible for Farm business applicants:

- Adoption and integration of an automated rack handling system and seeding machines in a greenhouse setting
- Adoption and use of a fully automated optical grading system with visually guided robotics for the grading and sorting of vegetables replacing manual grading/sorting
- Adoption of solar powered autonomous robotic vineyard pruning robots with optical/spectral guidance systems in place of manual pruning
- Adoption of semi-autonomous or autonomous self-propelled transplanters replacing manual/mechanical processes where distancing employees is difficult

Projects that may be eligible for Processor business applicants:

- Installation and training staff on the use of a robotic deboning machine for whole chicken legs replacing labour intensive manual cutting and deboning stations
- Adoption and use of a fully automated optical packing system with visually guided robotics for the sorting and packing of product replacing manual packing/sorting

Agri-Tech Innovation Program: Application Timeline

- This **Early Adopters Stream** of this program opened for intake on May 17, 2021. Eligible Ontario farm and processor applicants **must apply by June 21, 2021** to be considered for funding.
- Details about the Innovators Stream will open following the Early Adopters Stream.

More Funding Options for Ontario Agri-Food Businesses

Established by the Government of Canada, the [Canadian Agricultural Partnership \(CAP\)](#) is a \$3 billion program that provides support for agri-food businesses. There are five streams through CAP that each have their own focus areas, eligibility criteria, and funding amounts.

Get in touch with the professional team of experienced grant writers at Mentor Works and their strategic engineering and innovation partner, Malone Group, to assess whether your Ontario business is right for funding

***Mentor Works** is a business support organization specializing in Canadian government funding. The Ontario-based business has helped hundreds of businesses build and execute their funding strategy through a mix of federal and provincial government grants, loans, and tax credits. Mentor Works offers free online resources, funding webinars, and news via their website at www.mentorworks.ca.*

***Malone Group** helps companies navigate through the concepts and logistics of advanced manufacturing, to select the right strategy and to integrate the solution into your factory. The starting point on this journey is an analysis of your existing facilities and the generation of a step-by-step road map towards the ultimate goal, of integrating computational predictability and operational efficiency.*

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