

Key Purpose

The amendments are designed to protect farmland and support the long-term viability of agriculture in Pictou County.

Major Change: New “Agriculture Potential Zone (A1)”

- A new zoning category will:
 - Prioritize farming and agriculture-related industries
 - Protect high-quality soils
 - Allow:
 - Farming and agritourism
 - Small-scale residential uses
 - Limited rural commercial uses
 - Limited light industrial uses tied to agriculture
 - Prohibit heavy or hazardous industry that could permanently damage farmland

This zone is the central tool for directing development away from prime farmland.

Stronger Farmland Protection Rules

1. Topsoil Protection

- Removing topsoil from good agricultural land will be banned
- Exceptions:
 - Existing businesses
 - Minor removal tied to approved projects

Rationale: topsoil is essentially non-renewable.

2. Subdivision Limits

- On prime farmland and actively farmed land:

- Only 1 new lot per year can be created from a parcel (as it existed Aug 28, 2025)
- Exceptions:
 - Boundary adjustments
 - Land consolidation
 - Large resource-use lots

Goal: prevent farmland fragmentation and rural sprawl.

Agriculture-Friendly Policies

- Agriculture is broadly supported across the municipality:
 - Livestock farming allowed in most rural zones
 - Small hobby farms allowed wherever homes are permitted
 - Agritourism widely allowed

The plan aims to make farming easier, not harder.

Why This Matters Locally

- Pictou County:
 - Has ~50.8% of land as high-value agricultural soils
 - Represents ~9% of Nova Scotia's active farmland
- Key sectors:
 - Cattle & dairy
 - Blueberries
 - Hay production

Agriculture is a major part of the local economy and landscape.

Problems the Plan Is Addressing

- Loss of farmland to development
 - Conflicts between farms and nearby residents (noise, smells, etc.)
 - Aging farmer population
 - Breaking up farmland into smaller, unusable lots
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Where Rules Apply (and Don't)

- The new agriculture zone:
 - Focuses on larger, viable farming areas
 - Excludes small parcels (<5 acres) and heavily developed/coastal areas
 - Some development is still allowed outside prime areas as a “pressure release”
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Flexibility (Rezoning Options)

Landowners can apply to change zoning if:

- The area is small
 - Soil or conditions make farming unlikely
 - Proposed use won't harm nearby farms
 - Proper studies or justification are provided
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Bottom Line

These amendments:

- Protect prime farmland
- Limit subdivision on valuable agricultural land
- Encourage farming and related businesses
- Restrict development that could permanently damage soil

Overall, it's a policy shift aimed at keeping farmland usable for future generations, while balancing the need for rural economic development and housing.

