

2.3 AGRICULTURE

2.3.1 *Prime agricultural areas* shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture.

Prime agricultural areas are areas where *prime agricultural lands* predominate. *Specialty crop areas* shall be given the highest priority for protection, followed by Classes 1, 2 and 3 soils, in this order of priority.

2.3.2 Planning authorities shall designate *specialty crop areas* in accordance with evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time.

2.5.4 Extraction in Prime Agricultural Areas

2.5.4.1 In *prime agricultural areas*, on *prime agricultural land*, extraction of *mineral aggregate resources* is permitted as an interim use provided that rehabilitation of the site will be carried out so that substantially the same areas and same average soil quality for agriculture are restored.

On these *prime agricultural lands*, complete agricultural rehabilitation is not required if:

- a) there is a substantial quantity of *mineral aggregate resources* below the water table warranting extraction, or the depth of planned extraction in a quarry makes restoration of pre-extraction agricultural capability unfeasible;
- b) other alternatives have been considered by the applicant and found unsuitable. The consideration of other alternatives shall include resources in areas of Canada Land Inventory Class 4 to 7 soils, resources on lands identified as *designated growth areas*, and resources on *prime agricultural lands* where rehabilitation is feasible. Where no other alternatives are found, *prime agricultural lands* shall be protected in this order of priority: *specialty crop areas*, Canada Land Inventory Classes 1, 2 and 3; and
- c) agricultural rehabilitation in remaining areas is maximized.

6.0 DEFINITIONS

Prime agricultural area: means areas where *prime agricultural lands* predominate. This includes: areas of *prime agricultural lands* and associated Canada Land Inventory Class 4-7 soils; and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. *Prime agricultural areas* may be identified by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food using evaluation procedures established by the Province as amended from time to time, or may also be identified through an alternative agricultural land evaluation system approved by the Province.

Prime agricultural land: means land that includes *specialty crop areas* and/or Canada Land Inventory Classes 1, 2, and 3 soils, in this order of priority for protection.

Specialty crop area: means areas designated using evaluation procedures established by the province, as amended from time to time, where specialty crops such as tender fruits (peaches, cherries, plums), grapes, other fruit crops, vegetable crops, greenhouse crops, and crops from agriculturally developed organic soil lands are predominantly grown, usually resulting from:

- a) soils that have suitability to produce specialty crops, or lands that are subject to special climatic conditions, or a combination of both; and/or
- b) a combination of farmers skilled in the production of specialty crops, and of capital investment in related facilities and services to produce, store, or process specialty crops.