

Local Food Procurement in Ontario

September 27, 2010



Report to the
Greater Toronto Area Clean Air Council



Prepared by the Clean Air Partnership



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Preamble

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About the Clean Air Partnership

Clean Air Partnership (CAP) is a registered charity that works in partnership to promote and coordinate actions to improve local air quality and reduce greenhouse gases for healthy communities. Our applied research on municipal policies strives to broaden and improve access to public policy debate on air pollution and climate change issues. Our social marketing programs focus on energy conservation activities that motivate individuals, government, schools, utilities, businesses and communities to take action to clean the air.

Clean Air Partnership's mission is to transform cities into sustainable, vibrant, resilient communities, where the air is clean to breathe and greenhouse gas emissions are minimized.

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About the Greater Toronto Area Clean Air Council (GTA-CAC)

The Greater Toronto Area Clean Air Council promotes the reduction of air pollution emissions and increased awareness of regional air quality issues in the Greater Toronto Area through the collective efforts of all levels of government. The Council identifies and promotes the most effective initiatives to reduce the occurrence of smog and other forms of air pollution in the GTA, and their associated health risks. The goals of the Council are:

- To enable solutions to air quality challenges through a dynamic network that expands knowledge and enthusiasm, and encourages practical and successful policies and actions.
- To promote a better understanding of air quality problems and their implications for public health among policy makers and to improve their ability to address these problems in an economically effective way;
- To explore opportunities for joint initiatives to reduce air pollution, and related health risks, in the GTA; and
- To liaise with municipalities in the GTA and across Canada, organizations with compatible mandates, and communities within the airshed to share best practices for reducing smog and air pollution.

About the GTA-CAC Inter-Governmental Declaration on Clean Air

On June 3rd, 2009 GTA-CAC member municipalities signed on to the *GTA-CAC Inter-Governmental Declaration on Clean Air*, committing them to take action on clean air and climate change.

Article 3.3 of the Declaration calls on the signatories to:

Development of a Local Food Solutions Paper that provides guidance and lessons learned on the development and implementation of local food procurement policies.

This scan was developed in response to the above GTA-CAC Local Food commitment, and is primarily intended to provide information on Local Food Solution Reports and share learnings from Local Food Procurement actions.



Municipal Actions and Reports Produced

City of Toronto

City of Toronto Local Food Procurement Policy and Implementation Plan – Update 2009

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/gm/bgrd/backgroundfile-22345.pdf>

- Toronto's [Clean Air and Climate Change Action Plan](#) identified locally sourced food as a policy area that could reduce Toronto's GHG emissions and energy use.
- The implementation of this plan cost an additional \$15,000, or 0.7% of the Child Services Food Procurement budget.
- The City of Toronto implemented a local food procurement policy for 37 of its 57 child services facilities in 2009, and increased the percentage of locally sourced food purchased to 33.4% from 20%. The above report contains data from only the first quarter of 2009 however, when most Ontario produce was not yet in season.
- Challenges identified include a lack of some produce, especially sweet peppers and lettuce, early in the season and a lack of processed, canned and frozen foods produced and packaged in Ontario.
- The City of Toronto is aiming to expand the local food program to a number of other programs in 2010 because of the success of the pilot program in child services centers.

Food Connections: Toward a Healthy and Sustainable Food System for Toronto - A Consultation Report, February 2010

[http://wx.toronto.ca/inter/health/food.nsf/odad47ac378eabca85256dcd0059fa59/E092F7D5F2C0489D852576E1006F27F3/\\$file/Food%20Connections%20report%20\(FINAL\).pdf](http://wx.toronto.ca/inter/health/food.nsf/odad47ac378eabca85256dcd0059fa59/E092F7D5F2C0489D852576E1006F27F3/$file/Food%20Connections%20report%20(FINAL).pdf)

- **Resulted from The State of Toronto's Food: Discussion Paper for a Toronto Food Strategy**
([http://wx.toronto.ca/inter/health/food.nsf/odad47ac378eabca85256dcd0059fa59/9A53D4DAE547EE31852576CC0050BECE/\\$file/The%20State%20of%20Torontos%20Food%20Discussion%20Paper%20\(may%202008%20final\).pdf](http://wx.toronto.ca/inter/health/food.nsf/odad47ac378eabca85256dcd0059fa59/9A53D4DAE547EE31852576CC0050BECE/$file/The%20State%20of%20Torontos%20Food%20Discussion%20Paper%20(may%202008%20final).pdf)) which provided an introduction to the complex issues facing Toronto's food system.
- Focuses on the creation of a food system that operates with health, rather than profit, in mind.
- Emphasizes a holistic approach to the food system to address concerns resulting from industrialized food production.
- Six recommendations for City of Toronto to take in order to create a healthier food system.

- **Grow Food-Friendly Neighborhoods:** ensure that community hubs, walkable access to everyday services, and lively, safe main streets are at the heart of every community.
- **Make Food a Centerpiece of Toronto’s New Green Economy:** By shifting towards production methods that rely more on labour and skill and less on energy and waste, local food stands to decrease Toronto’s GHG emissions.
 - The [Toronto Food Business Incubator](#) is already in place, helping local food industry start ups become commercially viable.
- **Eliminate Hunger in Toronto:** By focusing on increased access (i.e. – more walkable communities) and advocacy to the provincial government for increases in social assistance and minimum wage, the City aims to decrease the current levels of food poverty, where one in ten households cannot afford to put healthy food on the table regularly.
- **Empower Residents with Food Skills and Information:** Labeling schemes designed to ensure that residents understand exactly what they are eating, coupled with childhood education, will lead to more informed consumer decisions.
- **Connect City and Countryside Through Food:** By creating connections between residents and farmers, the consumption and procurement of local food would be enhanced, leading to increased demand, and increased viability of smaller scale, local farming. Also emphasized is the importance of the City’s leadership role in this capacity, and the report suggests that the City expand its current local food procurement strategy to all City divisions, agencies, boards and commissions.
- **Embed Food System Thinking in City Government:** Recognizing that food issues are multi-faceted and complex, and often deal with issues that are handled by multiple government agencies, comprehensive, cross-committee policies are necessary to deal with the complex issues related to food.

Stories of Micro Food Enterprises – Discussion Paper by the Toronto Food Policy Council, 1995

http://www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc_micro.pdf

- Case studies on small producer/processor operations illustrates the following key points:
 - Small food enterprises, which focus more on relationships with customers and quality product, can become economically viable in today’s economy, especially with the large amount of used equipment available to them.



- The regulations and standards that are in place have been designed with large industrial operations in mind, and many are not applicable to smaller operations. In some cases, these regulations can be a major impedance to success.
- Inspectors and agencies only tell producers what is wrong with their operation, without providing information on how to remedy it. With small producers, an agency cannot assume that they will have all the skill and knowledge to comply with the regulations like a facility with a full-time, trained and paid safety inspector would. There needs to be an educational component to these agencies as well as a regulatory one.

Niagara Region

Niagara Region Local Food Action Plan, 2008

<http://www.niagaracanada.com/uploads/FinalLocalFoodActionPlan.pdf>

- Identifies the importance of identifying and compiling a list of local food producers in the Niagara region for consumer use, as well as the importance of pricing locally grown produce similarly to those items grown outside of Ontario.
- The distribution and marketing of local food products is identified as a priority, including a locally **Grown in Niagara** brand label.
- Identifies the importance of working with large consumers of food such as public institutions, prisons, schools etc.
- Policies to support the growth and processing of locally grown food (i.e. – educational programs, land use programs) are of key importance to ensuring the long-term viability of local food in the Niagara Region.

Province of Ontario

Province Invests In Local Food Initiatives – Government of Ontario new release

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/domestic/omif/omif.html>

- A four-year Ontario Market Investment Fund has been established, and so far has provided more than \$ 6.9 million to 111 projects across the province aimed at furthering local food production and purchasing.
- The above link provides application forms and a list of projects that have been funded by the OMIF.
- On April 6th, 2009 the Province of Ontario announced the allocation of \$24 million to “develop the logistics to get more Ontario grown food into the Province’s

schools, hospitals, food services companies and other institutions. The program features and priorities is being developed by the Province.

Waterloo Region

Since 2002, Waterloo Region has been performing research on food security, local food and improving nutrition for the region.

Optimal Nutrition Environment for Waterloo Region, 2006 – 2046, 2005

[http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/\\$file/nutrition_environment_report.pdf?openelement](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/$file/nutrition_environment_report.pdf?openelement)

- Identifies the agricultural needs for the Waterloo Region (WR) assuming current growth trends. Sets out guidelines for the amount of agricultural land required for each specific crop, such as berries, asparagus, lettuce, rye and oats in order for the region to be food secure and self-sufficient.
- Also identifies the importance of expanding the network of storage, processing and distribution in the region for local foods i.e. – through a food business incubator and new local markets.

Food Miles: Environmental Implications of Food Imports to Waterloo Region, 2005

[http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/\\$file/Food_Miles_Report.pdf?openelement](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/$file/Food_Miles_Report.pdf?openelement)

- Focuses on 58 commonly consumed food items that could be grown in the Waterloo Region, estimated that food items commonly consumed in the Region traveled an average of almost 4,500 km to get there.
- If the same food were sourced from Waterloo Region, then average travel distance would only be 30km. If they were sourced from Southern Ontario, average distance would be 250 km.

A Study of Redundant Trade in Waterloo Region, 2006

[http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/\\$file/Redundant_Trade_Report.pdf?openelement](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/$file/Redundant_Trade_Report.pdf?openelement)

- Redundant trade is the exporting of a product while at the same time importing large quantities of it. For example, Ontario exported \$69 Million worth of fresh

- tomatoes in 2005. During that same time, Ontario also imported \$17 Million worth of fresh tomatoes.
- Redundant trade results in consumer dollars leaving the community. When farmers send food to the “Global Food System”, they receive only \$.09 of every dollar spent by the consumer. With local food systems, farmers receive between \$.80 and \$.90 of every consumer dollar spent. These funds then circulate through the community, bolstering the local economy.
 - Redundant trade also results in a large amount of GHG emissions related to transportation.
 - This report looks at the WR in peak season for produce in Ontario, and even then it found that 26% of produce on the shelves was from outside of Ontario. The year-round impact of imported produce is likely to be even higher than indicated in this study.

A Fresh Approach to Food: Local Food Buying in Waterloo Region, 2004

[http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/\\$file/A%20Fresh%20Approach%20to%20Food.pdf?openelement](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/$file/A%20Fresh%20Approach%20to%20Food.pdf?openelement)

- A survey conducted by Waterloo Public Health indicates that the majority of residents in Waterloo Region (87%) feel that it is important to buy local food. Reasons for supporting local food ranged from supporting local farmers, to increased freshness of produce, to preserving local farmland. This indicates that, in Waterloo, the educational and informational part of the local food campaign has worked. Consumer recognition of the importance of local food has arrived; it is now up to policy-makers to remove the many barriers to obtaining local food.
- Barriers to local food include: not always available and is seasonal. This suggests that there needs to be increased promotion of preserved local goods, and increased availability of local food when it is in season. This report recommends a labeling scheme to identify what foods are grown locally in the region.

Waterloo has established a local food website:

<http://www.foodlink.ca/index.php?p=index> which provides consumers with information on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA); location of local food vendors; and tips for finding, preserving and preparing local food in the region.



Regional Municipality of Durham

Durham Region Food Charter:

http://www.durhamlives.com/healthy_eating/foodCharterDurham.pdf

- The Food Charter, which was approved in May of 2009, commits the Region to providing agricultural protection, the protection of local food resources, increased provision of local, healthy food and environmentally responsible food production.
- The Region has also established a website which tells residents where to find local food, when it is available, and gives tips on preserving and preparing. <http://www.durhamfarmfresh.ca/>

Town of Markham

Markham's Local Food Initiatives:

http://www.markham.ca/Markham/Departments/NewsCentre/News/080604_lfp.htm

- In June 2008, Markham became the first municipality in Canada to adopt Local Food Plus (LFP) procurement strategies for its municipal practices.
 - The LFP certification system addresses production, labour, native habitat preservation, animal welfare, and on-farm energy use, and aims to build a stronger network of small and medium sized local producers by linking them with purchasers of every size. <http://www.localfoodplus.ca/>
- In early 2010 Markham proposed a "Food Belt", which would protect 2,000 ha of class 1 agricultural land in Markham from development, maintaining them as agricultural land. In July 2010 Markham council narrowly voted to reject the "Food Belt" plans and side with a more traditional growth plan. The vote means that about 1,000 hectares will be developed, while the remaining 1,000 hectares of white belt land will be the subject of study by town staff on whether it should be included in a Greenbelt expansion request to the province. The pros raised during the debate included: encouraging more dense mixed use that would foster public transit and non vehicle transport options; increased food security, class 1 agricultural land protection; cons included perceptions that the "food belt" would raise housing costs.



Regional Municipality of Halton

Halton Region is currently in the process of developing a Local Food Procurement (LFP) Plan in partnership with the LFP group. They are aiming to incorporate Local Food Procurement into child care and long term care facilities in the coming year.

<http://www.halton.ca/common/pages/UserFile.aspx?fileId=18226>

Additional Local Food Actions

[Greenbeltfresh.ca](http://www.greenbeltfresh.ca) is an online database of Greenbelt farm products designed to help meet consumer demand for local food and help Greenbelt farmers find new market opportunities.

Free and easy to use, this online tool supports the building of regional food networks in the densely populated Greater Golden Horseshoe and beyond. Commercial buyers can source their requirements by tapping into listings for over 600 farms, while individual consumers can use the Marketplace to find fresh food from local farmers' markets, on-farm markets, pick-your-owns and more.

Greenbeltfresh.ca serves two main audiences: individual consumers, who can type in their postal code to find farmers markets, pick-your-owns, on-farm markets and CSA farms; and commercial buyers who can search some 600 farms for new sources, and will be able to find out products, volume, pack sizes and distribution details.

[Local Food Plus](#) (LFP) was incorporated as a non-profit in October 2005. In September 2006, they launched their program in partnership with the University of Toronto. With this partnership, the U of T became the first university on the continent to formally commit to purchasing local sustainable food for cafeterias and residences across the St. George campus. LFP recognizes the need for a community economic development and job creation strategy, the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and the benefits of a food system that supports positive change for all stakeholders.

In order to achieve that goal they have developed a certification system that puts these economic, environmental and social issues at the forefront. The LFP system addresses production, labour, native habitat preservation, animal welfare, and on-farm energy use, and leverages these standards to open new higher-value markets for Canadian farmers.

LFP is committed to creating local sustainable food systems that reduce reliance on fossil fuels, create meaningful jobs, and foster the preservation of farmland – and farmers.



Garderies bio – A project facilitated by Équiterre

- This project links Quebec daycares with local farms, thus providing guaranteed income for the farmers, increasing the hectares dedicated to organic food production and ensuring that the children are eating fresh, organic, healthy food.
- Since its founding in 2002, the project has grown to include 37 daycares and 25 farms, and provides local organic food to over 2,000 children.
- The project is now entirely self-funded, showing the economic viability of partnerships like this.

Local Food Literature Review

Canadian Co-Operative Association: Local Food Initiatives in Canada – An Overview and Policy Recommendations, June 2008

http://www.coopscanada.coop/assets/firefly/files/files/pdfs/GovSubmissions/LocalFoodInitiatives_in_Canada_Brief-Final_18juno8.pdf

- Finds that the majority of Canadians feel that local food is important to the economy and environmentally friendly.
- Identifies a number of local food initiatives that are growing in popularity in Canada, such as farmer's markets, community supported agriculture, local food in grocery stores, institutional local food procurement, food box programs and others.
- Identifies the importance of local food to the local economy, both for farmers and due to the trickle-down effect of keeping money in the community.
- Benefits to food security are highlighted, as well as some environmental benefits due to reduced GHG emissions from transportation.
- Provincial governments are beginning to promote locally produced food with advertising campaigns, but an agricultural system that focuses more on export of goods and the lack of a coherent, national strategy to keep food grown in Canada continues to be a major impediment to food security and the economic viability of local food production and consumption.
- An aging farming population, increasing land prices, a lack of access to the necessary capital to start a farm, a distribution system that is not set up to accept and process smaller amounts of produce and retailers insisting on year-round contracts with food suppliers also provide significant barriers to the success of local food.
- Co-ops are increasingly being implemented to give small farmers increased purchasing and selling power.



- The report provides a series of 6 policy recommendations that the federal government could enact to move local food production and procurement in Canada forward, including: the official recognition of the importance of local food production; the development of a policy framework that focuses on inter-governmental collaboration and funding for small farming operations; a study of the barriers to local food production; and the development of a network of farmers and policy makers where lessons and insights can be shared.

Ecology Action Centre (Nova Scotia) - Local Food Procurement Policies: A Literature Review, May 2007

www.ecologyaction.ca/files/images/file/food/localfoodprocurementpolicies.pdf

- Provides a comprehensive overview of some of the research regarding local food production and consumption. Focuses on the environmental benefits of local and seasonal food consumption, the economic benefits of keeping money in the communities and revitalizing rural areas, and the social benefits such as increased nutrition and food security that result from increased local food production and procurement.
- Highlights other reports which have shown that storing food for long periods of time, harvesting produce earlier and picking strains based on shelf life rather than nutrition and taste have resulted in a decline in the nutritive value of food.
- Provides case studies of local food policies and initiatives from Italy, Great Britain, United States and Canada, some of which are highly successful, and others which did not catch on as well. These case studies seem to emphasize that a local food plan requires top-to-bottom buy-in, and a level of financial commitment that some organizations are not able to offer.
- In discussions with caterers from the Halifax area, several challenges to procuring local food were identified. These challenges include: seasonality, the difficulty in preserving ingredients; and the increased difficulty associated with acquiring ingredients from a number of small producers rather than a one-stop-shop.
- Based on the case studies and a number of other reports, this report offers a section on the lessons learned and important steps necessary to implement a local food policy.
 - Identifies three key roles: the institutional buyers, the producers, and the matchmakers. The matchmakers are the ones who provide ease of procurement for the buyers by maintaining a database of suppliers and being the liaison between the two parties. This may be a person from inside or outside of the purchasing organization, or may even be an NGO.



- Lays out a step-by-step process that may be used and adapted by an institution in the development of their own local food policy. This framework emphasizes the importance of evaluation and flexibility at every step of the process, and also the importance of instituting the policy gradually.
- Barriers to the implementation of local food policies are also identified and include: trade regulations (such as non-discrimination pacts); contract issues (purchasers prefer to work with large suppliers who can fulfill the entire contract all year round); an inadequate distribution network for locally produced food; the quantity of food available in a local vicinity; the cost of local food; the increasing reliance on prepared, pre-packaged food contributing to a lack of kitchen facilities and lower levels of staff training; and the non-seasonal nature of current food consumption.

Institute for Food and Development Policy, Food Policy Councils (FCP): Lessons Learned, 2009

<http://www.foodfirst.org/files/pdf/Food%20Policy%20Councils%20Report%20small.pdf>

- Focuses on Food Policy Councils primarily in the United States. Food Policy Councils are local organizations which perform research and provide policy direction with regard to food policy and security.
- Food issues are a result of the actions (or inaction) of various government levels and departments. City planners, councilors and developers can approve or deny sprawling settlements, which impacts farmland and can in turn impact the ability of low-income populations to reach supermarkets. Schools can choose to purchase local food and initiate healthy eating initiatives, or they can put vending machines into their cafeteria. This siloing makes it difficult for any one branch or agency to address food issues completely and effectively. FPCs have the potential to work across silos and foster collaboration on food issues.
- The report identifies a number of flaws in the current system of agri-business in the United States, including over-production, the direction of subsidies to primarily large and medium sized agri-business firms and the difficulty in accessing nutritional food for low-income inner-city populations.
- Key to FPC actions is performing work with food production and distribution outside of the agri-business model. They focus on local solutions to food production in order to increase food security and nutrition for all residents.
- The report is broad-ranging, focusing on case studies where FPCs have succeeded and where they have failed. Using this data, the report establishes 5 key potential areas of change that an FPC can affect.

- The potential to address public health through food access, quality of food and food security.
- The potential to impact debates at the state and national levels.
- The potential to bring local food policy to the mainstream.
- The potential to address poverty and inequality.
- The potential to boost local economies.
- The report highlights Toronto's Food Policy Council as one of the most successful examples of an FPC due primarily to its success in implementing food access grants, mother-friendly workplaces and rooftop garden initiatives in Toronto.

Growing Local Food Infrastructure in Ontario: A Literature Review, Cindy Rutley (Athabasca University Master's Student), September 2009

<http://library.athabascau.ca/drr/download.php?filename=mais/CindyRutleyProject.pdf>

- Focuses on the various issues local food movements must overcome, and reviews a number of important articles concerning local food issues.
- The most significant concern identified in the literature is consolidation at every step of the food production and distribution process. Agricultural inputs such as animal feed and fertilizer are increasingly controlled by virtual monopolies, small farmers are not turning profits, land is becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of large agri-business firms, and the processing of agricultural products is concentrated into fewer and fewer firms. This reduction in competition makes it increasingly difficult for small local farmers to be successful.
- Decreasing access to labour, land and networks of processing and distribution are making it increasingly difficult for small farmers to get their products to the consumer.
- The local food movement is relatively new, so little empirical evidence exists concerning the economic benefits, but several studies have predicted, based on present trends and actions, that increasing local food consumption would have multiple benefits for local economies and would require little financial input.
- Increasing local food production and consumption is predicted to revitalize urban centers by decreasing the focus on supermarkets in the urban fringe, leading to increased jobs in the downtown area, increased job security for farm workers, small processors and workers at small food markets.
- Highlights several communities and organizations that have experienced success in promoting local food through a variety of methods. Examples of these methods are Community Supported Farms in Hardwick, Vermont, a branded Co-operative in Bronson, Kansas, an industrial kitchen space made available to rent



for farmers in Appalachian, Ohio and regulatory changes requiring purchasing of local and organic food in Woodbury County, Indiana.

Centre for Urban Health Initiatives Food Research Interest Group: Mobilizing for Food Security and Health Research in Toronto Summary, December 2008

<http://www.utoronto.ca/cuhi/research/supportingdocs/Food%20Policy%20Summary.pdf>

- Indicates that the lack of coherent food policy, especially at the national level is a significant obstacle.
- The majority of actions taking place are occurring at the provincial or municipal levels, there is a gap in policy at the federal level.
- The disjointed nature of food policy is identified as something that could be either a potential strength (in that it is ripe for change / unification) or a weakness (if the status quo is maintained).

Fighting Global Warming at the Farmer's Market: The Role of Local Food Systems in Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions. By Stephen Bentley and Ravenna Barker, published by FoodShare Toronto.

<http://www.foodshare.net/resource/files/foodmilesreport.pdf>

- This report examines the food miles traveled by a variety of products purchased in Toronto in November. One set of food was purchased at the Dufferin Grove Farmers' Market, while the other set was purchased at the No Frills at Dufferin Mall.
- Through a quantitative process, this paper determines that the total carbon emissions from the transport of the food purchased at the Farmers' Market is .118 kg. The same food purchased from the supermarket across the street produced an estimated 11.886 kg of carbon emissions to transport to the consumer.
- This paper thus emphasizes the importance of shifting to more local food production as Canada moves towards becoming a less carbon intensive country. Simply by shifting our consumption habits to a more local, seasonal purchasing regime, we would dramatically reduce out CO₂ emissions.

Équiterre and the Centre for Trade Policy and Law, Local Food Systems and Public Policy: A Review of the Literature, September 2009

http://www.ctpl.ca/sites/default/files/Local_Food_Systems_and_Public_Policy_-_A_Review_of_the_Literature.pdf

- Identifies the various distribution networks available for local food systems (LFS): farm shops, farmer’s markets, food boxes, community supported agriculture, institutional procurement policies and urban agriculture.
- Takes special care to compare the *observed* positive outcomes of LFS rather than the *expected* outcomes.
- Environmental benefits to LFS exist, but there are mitigating factors that may decrease the benefits from a carbon perspective; policy-makers need to take a variety of factors into consideration in identifying the ability of local food to decrease GHG emissions.
 - Local food that is produced out-of-season using greenhouses may actually have a larger carbon footprint than food shipped in from warmer climates, depending on their source of heat and/or electricity.
 - When it comes to meat products, organic farming results in a 30% decrease in GHG emissions, and adopting a lacto-vegetarian diet results in a further 30% decrease in emissions.
 - Traveling more than 7.4km round trip to access local food (eg – from a farmer or farmer’s market) produces more emissions than using a box delivery service.
 - Consumption of local food does have the benefit of decreasing food waste, reducing pesticide usage (if organic methods are adopted) and increasing on-farm biodiversity, if there is sufficient storage available to avoid spoilage.
- The economic benefits of LFS are much less contentious: money spent by consumers within LFS tends to stay in the community and generate more jobs, revenue and security for farmers, farm workers and small scale processors.
 - In Canada, consumers spent \$1.09 Billion on local food in 2009, which in turn is estimated to have generated \$3.09 Billion for the local economy.
 - Consumers benefit as well, as most products at farmer’s markets and through CSA projects are actually cheaper than at the super market.
- Features a table of proposed policy changes to increase the viability and popularity of LFS, which aim to address three priority areas: the lack of financing for LFS; the concentrated economic power of the current agro-industrial system; and the lack of knowledge concerning LFS at all levels. Some of these proposed policies include:
 - Providing grants and subsidies for new start-up farms and providing funding for training and mentoring.
 - Altering land-use policies to allow for more small-scale farms.
 - The introduction of anti-trust laws to restrict market concentration, and the removal of food and agricultural issues from WTO jurisdiction.

- Increased financial and regulatory support for co-ops.
- A review of processing regulations, which are difficult to comply with for small producers.
- Public food procurement policies as a method of leading by example.
- The creation of Food Policy Councils at the municipal level.
- At the federal level in Canada, there are six ministries responsible for food and agriculture. If one includes overseas agriculture, that number jumps to eight. The problem is that each of these departments have varying goals and objectives, some of which contradict one another. For example, Health Canada promotes healthy eating and Environment Canada promotes producing and consuming food that has a decreased impact on the environment, but the policies promoted by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC) has incentives that encourage industrial agriculture, which is often both more environmentally damaging and tends to produce less nutritious food. This observation, which was made in 1999, still holds true today, although steps are being made to rectify the situation.
 - Growing Forward makes a commitment to produce healthier, environmentally sustainable food and to make Canada more food secure.
- The report concludes that there are three general observations concerning local food policy in Canada.
 - There is a patchwork of programs across Canada concerning local food systems; there is no over-arching policy directive that binds all provinces and territories to take action.
 - Programs tend to focus on the demand side of LFS, such as funding for marketing of local brands and farmers' markets, with little recognition of the difficulties faced on the supply side of the system.
 - There is no political champion for LFS. Food is such a complex and vital issue that there needs to be a cross-departmental guideline instituted to ensure that the LFS cause is advanced.
- The report concludes that “if LFS are to expand beyond the margins of society, policy priorities should be antitrust legislation, commodity payments, major changes to agricultural research and education, a fossil fuel tax, and binding international agreements against dumping”.
- This report is only the first step, the authors intend to perform original research using field work in Ontario and Quebec, and also aim to perform an analysis on international trade rules in order to gain a greater understanding of what obstacles they present to the promotion and expansion of LFS.



The Way We Eat: Creating a Vibrant & Sustainable Local Food Economy – A Report by the Greater Edmonton Alliance, 2009

http://www.greateredmontonalliance.com/e107_images/custom/wayweeat.pdf

- Emphasizes the unsustainable nature of the current food system on a world-wide scale, as well as at a more local level.
 - Edmonton has lost 74% of its Class 1 soils since 1982.
 - Extrapolation of results seen in Detroit (where a 20% shift to local foods created 35,822 jobs and an increase of \$900 million in earnings) to Edmonton indicate that a 20% shift to local food in Edmonton would result in a boost of 21,396 jobs, \$540 million in increased earnings and \$92 Million in business taxes.
- Urges City of Edmonton council to take a leadership role in the shift to local food by:
 - Integrating the economic and sustainability impacts of conversion of agricultural land into all new land-use decisions.
 - Developing an agricultural areas plan that assesses the potential suitability for local food production on all local agricultural lands.
 - Promoting a provincial approach to food security.
 - Securing agricultural land and establishing neighborhood approaches to ensure that all residents have access to local food.
- Indicates that if the barriers to acquiring local foods were removed, residents would be willing to commit 40% of their food dollars to the procurement of local foods. If even 25% of Edmonton residents were able to make this commitment, it would result in an economic impact of over \$2 Billion to the Edmonton community.

The University Local Food Toolkit: Sustainable Simon Fraser University and Centre for Sustainable Community Development: Local Solutions

<http://sflocalfood.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/the-university-local-food-toolkit081.pdf>

- Focuses on the food production system in the Vancouver area, shows how even fertile areas import a disproportionate amount of their food.
 - In Vancouver, 75% of all food consumed is imported.
 - In Iowa, conventionally sourced food travels an average of 2,577 km. Sourcing the same foods produced in Iowa would result in an average travel of only 74 km.

- The underlying cause for the current food system is direct and indirect subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, which disguises the true costs of imported food.
- The report focuses its attention on the creation and promotion of local food systems on University campuses, and identifies a number of initiatives that could benefit campus communities.
 - Community gardens, rooftop gardens and container gardening all have the potential to increase the proportion of healthy, local food consumed by students.
 - There are many opportunities for local food production on campus that would require very little space and resources (i.e. – raspberry bushes against fences, window boxes and edible landscaping).
- Highlights the viability of student-run campus farms and farmers' markets, and emphasizes the importance of a farmers' market on campus for environmental, economic and social reasons.
- Provides a checklist for universities in order to establish their own farmers' markets, including finding a suitable location, attracting farmers and establishing by-laws.
- Identifies the importance of institutional local food procurement, although some barriers are also identified.
 - The higher price of local food may be a concern for students on a budget.
 - The mismatch between the growing season and the school year can be a problem for consistent procurement.
 - Storage and staff training can also be a concern in school cafeterias.
- Residences are identified as an area where a local food box program could be beneficial due to the high concentration of students in one location.
 - Food Box programs are already in place at the University of Regina and the University of British Columbia.
- Concludes that, in the campus setting, CSA is the most preferred option, followed by the creation of farmers' markets and organic home delivery, although it also emphasizes that each option is contingent on the specific conditions of the campus.

Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture Report, 2005

[http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/\\$file/UA_Feasibility.pdf?openelement](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/F9E487C67FAC45E885256FE90060ADF6/$file/UA_Feasibility.pdf?openelement)

- Focuses on the impacts of increased urban agriculture – rooftop gardens, community gardens, and private gardens.
- Increasing urban agriculture results in a number of benefits for a city. It increases food security and levels of physical activity while decreasing the urban heat island effect and providing new carbon sequestration opportunities.
- Urban agriculture can also have economic benefits, since condos and hotels can charge higher rates to maintain the rooftop gardens, and businesses that rely on fresh vegetables and herbs can cut back on costs. For example, the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel in Toronto saves an estimated \$30,000 annually by growing their own vegetables and herbs on the hotel roof.
- Also identifies some of the potential barriers to urban agriculture such as increased cost associated with constructing rooftop gardens, liability insurance for rooftop gardens and community gardens and the difficulty in retrofitting existing buildings with new green roof facilities.

Edible Backyards: Residential land use for food production in Toronto, September 2007

<http://www.utoronto.ca/cuhi/research/supportingdocs/ediblebackyardsreport.pdf>

- Highlights the reasons why people choose to garden in their front or back yards. Reasons for gardening range from desire for fresh produce to environmental reasons to aesthetic reasons.
- The report emphasizes the importance of private gardens in conjunction with community gardens to provide food justice to all residents.

Community Gardens on Brownfields: A Summary Report and Inventory, December 2007

<http://www.utoronto.ca/cuhi/research/supportingdocs/UsingBrownfieldSummaryReport.pdf>

- Identifies the practices that are being used to implement community gardens on brownfields. Illustrates that brownfields have been converted into community gardens in Vancouver, Victoria and Halifax.
- Identifies Toronto and Montreal as locations which stand out as urban center without community gardens on brownfields, despite their active community gardening networks.
- Emphasizes that the creation of a community garden must be spearheaded by a community group and supported by the municipality if it is to be successful.

Best Practices in Urban Agriculture: A Background Report Prepared for the City of Kamloops to support development of a Urban Agricultural Strategy.

http://www.fooddemocracy.org/docs/BestPractices_Urban%20Agriculture.pdf

- This report highlights practices, policies and actions that have shown success in other jurisdictions with regard to increasing the reliance on urban agriculture.
- By highlighting policies that have resulted in positive changes from cities such as Vancouver, Montreal and Ottawa, this report highlights practices that could increase the reliance on urban agriculture in Kamloops. Many of these practices are easily transferable to other municipalities, and are broken down into the following 4 categories.
 - **Infrastructure** – Suggested changes include green roof incentives and standards, alternatives to using drinking water for irrigation, composting facilities and alternative irrigation systems.
 - **Economic Development** – Suggested policies include increased commercialization of food products produced in the city, including farmers’ markets, processing facilities and on-site sales. The report also suggests creating links to Buy-Local campaigns and the creation of permanent sites for farmers’ markets.
 - **Coordination with Other Departments and Sectors** – This report recognizes that food policy cuts across jurisdictions, and recognizes the need for coordinated policy approaches such as collaborations with businesses, city councils, churches, community centers etc. in order to further advance urban agriculture.
 - **Land Use Planning** – This report emphasizes a shift in priorities for city planners, encouraging them to consider urban agriculture in all new development proposals, establish an agricultural land database and conduct a survey of the brownfields in the city. The report emphasizes the importance of considering urban agriculture when creating planning guidelines, and encourages the city to define urban agriculture as a distinct zoning type.
- The report closes with a series of recommendations for the City of Kamloops, including amendments to the Official Plan formally stating that community gardens be considered in the planning process, that funding and partnership opportunities be explored, that the city encourage the development of rooftop gardens, in addition to infrastructure for producers to process and sell their goods.
- The report also recommends the creation of a demonstration garden in order to educate homeowners, students etc on how urban agriculture can benefit them.

- Finally, this report highlights best practices for urban agriculture from outside of Canada that have been successfully implemented. These practices are highly transferable, and have already been proven to work in other jurisdictions.

Scaling Up Urban Agriculture in Toronto: Building the Infrastructure. Published by Joseph Nasr, Rod MacRae & James Kuhns with Martin Danyluk, Penny Kaill-Vinish, Marc Michalak & Abra Snider. (Part of the Metcalfe Solutions Paper Series)
http://www.metcalffoundation.com/downloads/Metcalf_Food_Solutions_Scaling_Up_Urban_Agriculture_in_Toronto.pdf

- Focuses on how Toronto can change its infrastructure in order to better accommodate an increase in urban agricultural production. While the paper focuses solely on Toronto, there are many recommendations that could easily be applied to other jurisdictions to improve access to urban agriculture.
- Makes recommendations in the following 5 key areas:
 - **Infrastructure for accessing spaces for production:** suggestions for taxation and bylaw changes which would allow urban agriculture to take place in a wider variety of spaces, such as hydro corridors and rooftops.
 - **Resources, services, and physical infrastructure:** focuses on the actual physical elements necessary for gardening and farming, such as soil, compost, water, seeds and other facilities on site. It emphasizes simple solutions to these problems such as banking topsoil that is removed when new development is taking place and providing easier access to compost produced through the city's Green Bins. However, until further processing can be implemented, Green Bin compost may not display low enough levels of harmful materials to be used for growing food for human consumption.
 - **Food-chain infrastructure:** Current regulations do not permit urban growers to sell their food in Toronto. In many US cities, there is an entrepreneurial element to community gardens, with on-site vending, which is an example that Toronto could follow. Also emphasizes the importance of producer cooperation, especially in providing sufficient purchasing power to acquire post-harvest facilities and the ability to sell produce to institutions who seek larger quantities of food for contracts.
 - **Knowledge infrastructure:** Recognizes that there is a large amount of knowledge relating to urban agriculture in the City of Toronto already, but the concern is that it is concentrated in a limited number of hands, and is spread out and difficult to access. Proposes an urban agriculture clearing house and a database of knowledge that can be accessed anywhere and

by anyone. In addition to these new knowledge resources, youth gardening programs could be expanded and more community mentors could begin teaching residents the important methods of urban agriculture.

- **Governance, coordination, and financial support infrastructure:** The question of how to administer an urban agriculture program is raised, and some models that have proven successful in other cities are explored. These models range from city departments taking the lead to NGOs providing direction for the program. The paper also raises the issue of funding, and points to opportunities for the City of Toronto to take a leadership role by investing in urban agriculture. The paper also emphasizes the need for provincial and federal bodies to provide assistance in order to create sustainable, coordinated initiatives to support urban agriculture.
- Emphasizes that by increasing the role of urban agriculture, both for personal and small scale commercial use, the City of Toronto would benefit by increasing social connectivity, creating jobs and improving nutrition and physical activity.

The Metcalf Foundation Solutions Paper Series

In 2010, the Metcalf Foundation released 5 Solution Papers that outlined several proposed solutions for improving access to local food in Ontario.

Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario. Sustain Ontario – The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming, 2010

http://www.metcalffoundation.com/downloads/Metcalf_Food_Solutions_Menu_2020.pdf

- Ties together research that was performed through the Metcalf Foundation's research on local food, and highlights two major crises in the current food system.
 - **The farm income crisis:** Ontario farmers are losing money and market share to lower cost, lower quality imported foods, while at the same time exporting a large amount of the goods produced here in Ontario. Policies are skewed towards exporting food, leading to redundant trade and underserved communities.
 - **The health crisis:** As production trends have shifted towards cheaper, lower quality food, access to healthy food has become increasingly difficult in many communities. This leads to higher rates of obesity and other nutrition-related diseases.

- Puts forward the following 10 ideas that could benefit the food system in Ontario:
 - **Support producers of locally consumed fruit, vegetables, and meats:** Recommends introducing a minimum price for produce to protect against the pricing influence of foreign goods, and also advocates increasing the profile of Ontario local food programs such as Foodland Ontario and Pick Ontario Freshness.
 - **Make room for new farmers and alternative markets within the supply - managed system:** Small scale and alternative farmers are subjected to the same types of quotas and regulations that commodity producers must adhere to. These regulations can be very difficult for a start-up farmer, and must be reconsidered in order to facilitate the introduction of new farmers into the Ontario food system.
 - **Harvest the whole value of ecological goods and services from agriculture:** Farmers are important environmental stewards, and this paper recommends recognizing the important environmental role played by ecologically sound farming practices, and compensating farmers for that role. This could be done by payment of carbon allowances or by introducing new tax incentives linked to environmental stewardship for farmers.
 - **Plant urban Ontario:** There are 2 levels of urban agriculture identified in this paper – small scale, simple production; and larger, more sophisticated urban agriculture operations. The former can be supported by introducing more people to simple home gardening practices, opening up spaces for community gardens and providing education for new urban gardeners. The latter can be accomplished by planting and harvesting edible landscapes, providing new places to sell the produce and introduce financial and land-use incentives for more intense urban agriculture.
 - **Implement a school food program, and embed food literacy in the curriculum:** Ontario needs a single, all encompassing food policy for schools which states what kinds of food can be supplied in schools. This program must be accompanied by adequate funding to ensure that children all have access to healthy meals at school. In addition to the food program, there must be increased education offered to children regarding how to choose, grow and prepare healthy food.
 - **Support community food centres:** Centres such as The Stop in Toronto offer multiple services, acting as a food bank, a meeting place and a place of education where fresh, healthy meals are prepared in order to demonstrate to residents that healthy cooking can be enjoyable and to give them the skills necessary to prepare healthy food on a tight budget.

- **Establish local food infrastructure through regional food clusters:** Regional food clusters would bring together a number of small and medium sized producers in a region, allowing them to pool their resources and provide larger, more predictable quantities of produce. These kinds of clusters then lead to an increase in local processing capacity and more scale-appropriate operations. This kind of program would require some targeted investment and regulations favorable to the development of regional clusters.
- **Expand public procurement of local, sustainably produced food:** Governments and other public institutions have an opportunity to provide a strong leadership role by creating local food purchasing guidelines. This would require the creation of a database of local producers, and the creation of partnerships to ensure adequate supply of produce. All of these developments would result in stronger linkages between producers of local food, and would lead to a general strengthening of the local food movement in Ontario.
- **Link good food with good health:** The report outlines the need for a strong public outreach program aimed at linking eating habits to health outcomes. Such a program would require the input of a number of ministries, and would provide the impetus for further reliance on local, healthy food.
- **Plan for the future of farming and food:** Land use planning must consider the importance of agricultural land for the future. This report recommends passing legislation that would protect farm land and provide financial incentives for farmers to continue to farm.

In Every Community a Place for Food: The Role of the Community Food Centre in Building a Local, Sustainable, and Just Food System. The Stop Community Food Centre, 2010

http://www.metcalfoundation.com/downloads/Metcalf_Food_Solutions_In_Every_Community_a_Place_for_Food.pdf

- Highlights the actions of The Stop, a Community Food Centre (CFC) in Toronto, but the lessons learned are easily applied to other jurisdictions.
- A CFC is more than simply a food bank; it provides community programs, access to community gardens, community kitchens, civic engagement and access to educational programs aimed at reducing participants' reliance on the traditional food system and teaching them how to prepare fresh, healthy meals.

- This paper makes the case for introducing CFCs as a grassroots method of advocating changes to the food system, facilitating residents to become more interested, engaged and active in their food purchasing habits.
- CFCs provide multiple services in one location, which is ideal for residents with little free time. They are also meeting places for the community, which provides social benefits as well.
- Principle among the barriers identified in this paper is the lack of a stable funding solution. This paper calls upon the public sector to fund new CFCs and provide adequate funding for their continued operation should private contributions drop. The paper identifies that The Stop is about 90% privately funded, and recognizes that while this is possible in a large urban center like Toronto, in smaller jurisdictions securing the volume of funding necessary for operation without public assistance would be difficult.

New Farmers and Alternative Markets within the Supply-Managed System. FarmStart, 2010

http://www.metcalfoundation.com/downloads/Metcalf_Food_Solutions_Supply_Management.pdf

- The Supply-Managed System was established in the 1960s to protect farmers from processors paying them low prices for their commodities. They established a quota system whereby an intermediary organization guarantees the farmers a fair price for their produce, but require them to produce a certain volume of product each year.
- The quota system does have exemptions for small scale egg and poultry producers, but no exemption exists for milk producers.
- The quota exemptions for egg and poultry farmers are very low, and are not economically viable for small scale and alternative producers to financially sustain their activities.
- This paper discusses several options for including alternative farmers and smaller scale producers in the supply-managed system, such as: increasing the quota exemption levels; exempting specialty producers and direct marketed products (i.e. – those sold on farm, at farmers’ markets or through CSA programs) from the quotas; and establishing a separate quota system for specialty products.
- Recognizes that each of its suggestions has potential benefits and drawbacks, but this paper is meant more to bring recognition to the growing importance of specialty producers in Ontario and to recognize that the traditional supply-managed system is hindering the growth of this sector.



Nurturing Fruit and Vegetable Processing in Ontario: Maureen Carter-Whitney, Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy & Sally Miller, West End Food Co-op, 2010

http://www.metcalfoundation.com/downloads/Metcalf_Food_Solutions_Nurturing_Fruit_and_Vegetable_Processing_in_Ontario.pdf

- Outlines the processes of consolidation and closures that have led to the current system where Ontario is heavily engaged in a system of redundant trade, exporting many products only to import the very same products from other regions.
- This paper explores the infrastructure that already exists in Ontario and emphasizes that it is more about organization than physical capacity. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) make up a significant portion of Ontario’s food supply, but they are subject to the restrictions of limited processing facilities because they sell their goods in a chaotic, disorganized manner. If producers organize and leverage their selling power, they can support smaller, local processing facilities.
- Suggestions offered by this paper include increasing the number of food incubators, creating new cooperatives and introducing tax incentives for producers to join cooperatives, in addition to the revisiting of the 50% rule, which states that a cooperative must conduct at least 50% of its business with its own members.
- Another barrier identified is the lack of post-harvest facilities (i.e. – washers, chillers) available to SME producers. There is a serious lack of freezing facilities in Ontario, especially for those who produce organic fruits and vegetables. Suggested actions in this area include cooperative purchasing of a mobile processing unit, such as a mobile freezer, which would allow producers to immediately process their goods, enabling them to move them more easily to a facility for storage or further processing.
- This paper also addresses the many health and safety regulations that producers have to comply with, and the difficulty that a SME owner would have in navigating the “maze of regulations” that have been put into place primarily with large agri-business firms in mind.
- SME producers have a difficult time voicing their concerns to regulators, where agri-business firms have lobbyists and policy directors whose sole responsibility is to ensure that their concerns are heard by the policy-makers. A solution offered by this paper is the creation of SME cooperatives and the creation of separate regulations for SME producers.

- Highlights the taxation policies that increase property taxes for producers who install processing facilities on their land. These property tax increases may even negate the increased revenue in some cases. This paper suggests reevaluating the taxation structure in a way that supports producers building value-adding facilities, especially given the economic and environmental benefits of having these facilities close.
- Labour costs are also addressed as a large component of producer's costs, especially when Ontario farmers have to pay employees \$10.25 an hour and are competing with produce imported from locations where wages are considerably lower. This paper recommends that the Ontario government provide wage assistance for producers in an effort to make their prices more competitive.
- The paper closes with 11 recommendations ranging from the creation of a network of information and producers, changes in regulations to support the creation of new processing facilities and cooperatives, increased marketing for local food initiatives and changes in food safety regulations.

Discussion: Towards Local Food in Ontario

Based on the above reports and actions there are a number of themes that are identified in the literature and actions of communities and institutions.

Economic Reasons to invest in Local Food

Consumer dollars spent on food that comes from the global agri-business chain leave the community. Farmers in the community struggle, while produce imported from thousands of kilometers away is sold at prices that are artificially lowered by subsidies to foreign farmers and the transportation industry. By shifting consumer spending to local food, a municipality increases the circulation of currency *within* the community, which leads to increased consumer spending, a more attractive investment climate and higher tax revenues. Spending public money to protect agricultural lands and promote local food consumption makes financial sense in the long term, as even a small shift in consumer patterns provides major benefits to local farmers, producers and businesses.

Food Security

Municipalities are increasingly realizing that current development trends are unsustainable. In Markham, the proposal of a "Food Belt", which would have reduced urban sprawl and concentrated urban growth, illustrates the realization that developing over prime agricultural land in order to create car-dependant, low-density housing is not a sustainable path into the future. In Ontario, there is only ever enough food on the

shelves to feed the province for 3 days if shipments from other parts of the world stopped coming in. This leaves Ontario in a rather vulnerable position, especially with the fluctuating oil prices of today, and with increased active weather as a result of climate change. As oil prices continue to climb, imported food is going to become less affordable and available, and our supply of food will be vulnerable to shipping stoppages as a result of natural disasters. This was highly evident with the recent events in Newfoundland, where Hurricane Igor's effects left residents without food for days at a time. In order to ensure a similar occurrence in Ontario, and to ensure food security for Ontario into the future, municipalities need to work together with private institutions and other levels of government to create the kind of local food network that has been severely lacking since the institution of the global food system. A network of small local producers, processors, distributors and retailers would invigorate Ontario's agri-food industry, and would provide Ontarians with a sustainable, secure supply of food into the future.

Environmental Benefits of Local Food

Greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation of food make up a significant component of their overall environmental impact. Reducing the distance food has to travel from farm to table is a vital step in reducing the environmental impact of the food we eat, but it is certainly not the only consideration to be made. While transportation is only one aspect of the environmental impact of producing food, in many cases it is significant. However, certain methods of growing food, such as growing in greenhouses that are heated by fossil fuels during the colder months, may actually produce more GHG emissions than transporting food from distant locations. Thus, one needs to consider how a certain food is grown, and the season in which it was produced when attempting to calculate the carbon footprint of the food we eat. This provides further support for choosing a more seasonal diet when eating local food, and attempting to rely more on preserves during the winter months. Consideration also needs to be given to the storage and processing of food once it reaches the home, as this makes up a significant part of food's environmental impact as well. Purchasing in small amounts and using the food that you have in a shorter period of time produces less GHG emissions than storing food for days or weeks, and having local food infrastructure may encourage residents to make smaller, more frequent trips to their local market in order to maintain a high standard of freshness. In addition to GHG reductions caused by decreased food miles and (potentially) storage and processing, switching to a more local food system has other ecological benefits as well. Producing a variety of local foods is also beneficial for local soils and local ecosystems, as crop rotations increase soil fertility, and an increase in the variety of crops grown can also increase biodiversity in the area.



Consumer Desire

Consumers want local, tasty and healthy food. They recognize the benefits of it, appreciate the fresher taste, and are demanding it in increasing numbers. Consumer awareness and desire for local food is quite high. The next step is to make local food more readily available to a larger proportion of the population.

Barriers to a Local Food System

There are many potential barriers to the implementation of a local food system. This section aims to address some of these, but each jurisdiction and region will find that they will have their own unique challenges to strengthening their local food system.

Centralization

Perhaps one of the most significant barriers to a local food system is the centralization of the agri-food business. From large agri-business farms to major processing facilities, centralization in all areas of the food business leads to a system which is extremely difficult for small producers to succeed in. In the name of profit, production facilities have been closed down in developed countries and increasingly relocated to areas of the globe where labour and land are cheaper, taxes are lower and regulations are more lax, resulting in increased reliance on global purchasing chains.

Insufficient Local Food Networks

The shift away from local food networks occurred very rapidly and resulted in a dramatic change in food production, processing and distribution networks. Farmers have to sell their goods to large purchasing firms, who then turn around and sell to large distribution chains. Large grocery store chains often demand year-round supply when they are seeking tenders, a demand that is all but impossible for small and medium sized farmers to meet. Facilities for preserving and packaging locally produced food are also increasingly difficult to find, which leads to further problems for farmers trying to sell their goods locally all year round.

Increasing Reliance on Prepared Food

Many institutions are decreasing the amount of space and staff devoted to the preparation of fresh food. School cafeterias, long-term care facility kitchens and hospitals are increasingly relying on food that arrives in a prepared or semi-prepared (i.e. – washed and pre-cut) state. This preparation is often done outside of the community,

which removes jobs from the local economy. In addition, staff may not have the training necessary to prepare meals from scratch, and even if they did have adequate training, the facilities available to them may be inadequate.

Regulatory / Safety Concerns

Many of the food safety regulations that are in place are there for large, industrial food production facilities. The reporting processes, requirements for transportation facilities and quality guidelines are meant for large facilities, and may often prove onerous and cost prohibitive for small producers and processors. In addition, the methods used for grading produce place an emphasis on the aesthetic appeal of the produce, and misshapen, discolored or otherwise imperfect produce is often categorized as animal feed grade, rather than being used for other uses, such as processed foods or donations to food banks. Imperfect produce is a reality of a more traditional way of farming, and many farmers cannot afford or do not want to use the pesticides and fertilizers necessary to create “perfect” crops, and as a result they find themselves without a buyer for their produce.

Higher Costs

Due to direct and indirect subsidies to the transportation industry, lower labour costs in foreign countries, differing tax structures and varying agricultural input costs, many of the prices of imported food products are actually lower than the prices of food produced locally. When dealing with an institution with a limited budget, such as a hospital board or child care centers, the higher costs of local food may prove to be prohibitive.

Seasonality

In Ontario, many foods are not available year-round. Consumers do not display seasonal eating habits, and consumption of preserved food is less focused upon local food. Increasing seasonal eating and consumption of locally processed and packaged food is an obstacle that must be overcome, and will require reinvestment in Ontario’s packaging and processing sector in order to see significant results.

The Land Market

As is currently being seen in Markham, land on the outskirts of a city has high value to developers. Oftentimes farmers, who may actually be losing money each year they are operating a farm, are eager to sell their land once it becomes available for developers. In addition, the lack of retirement plans and pension funds for farmers mean that often the

prospect of selling their land is the only way for a farmer to retire comfortably. Putting restrictions on land use is a good first step, but without the financial backing to ensure that farming the lands is economically viable and that farmers are able to retire comfortably, farm land will likely continue to be purchased and developed for low-rise, residential use.

Institutional Siloing

Food policy cuts across many different areas of jurisdiction. It can be an issue of public health, agriculture, industry and economic development, transportation or land use and planning, among many others. In order to craft functional food policy, a municipality or institution needs buy-in from all associated departments. If even one link in the chain is faulty, the entire project will be compromised.

Opportunities for Improving Access to Local Food

While it is true that food issues are multi-jurisdictional and requires the coordination of efforts from all levels of government to effectively address the issue, municipalities have shown that their actions can dramatically improve access to local food. Listed here are some of the opportunities available to municipalities to improve the local food system in their jurisdiction.

Corporate and Institutional Purchasing

This is an opportunity for municipal governments to lead by example and to lay the groundwork for an increase in the networks necessary for larger-scale local food systems to thrive. Opportunities exist in many areas of municipal control to purchase local food, such as child care centers, long-term care centers and corporate catering. Though the costs of local food may be higher, in the long run a municipality will benefit financially from increasing the capacity of the local food network due to higher tax revenues and local economic development. Municipalities such as Toronto and Markham have already instituted corporate local food purchasing policies, and have experienced success without a dramatic increase in their costs. (Toronto only saw a 0.7% increase in costs, and nearly doubled the percentage of local food purchased in their child care facilities) Halton Region is presently in the process of implementing their local food procurement policy in long-term care centres.

In addition, these local procurement practices may be necessary in order to advance the goals of Greenbelt policies. Setting land aside for the use of agriculture is a good first step, but if farmers are operating at a financial loss each year due to low commodity

prices and high costs of transporting their goods to distant processing facilities, then the objectives of a Greenbelt are likely to be undermined. Visit Greenbeltfresh.ca to facilitate the matchmaking between Greenbelt food producers with local GTA and region purchasers.

Purchasing Firms

The issue of seasonality and availability is one that comes up often when discussing local food procurement, especially with regard to corporate purchasing. When seeking tenders for food supply, many institutions do not want to have to talk to dozens of suppliers in order to ensure that their demands will be met. For this reason, local food purchasing firms have begun to appear. Groups like [Local Food Plus](#) act as an intermediary between farmers and buyers to ensure that every buyer gets an adequate supply of what they need. This means that a buyer only needs to get in contact with one organization in order to ensure that their demands are met, which means that purchasing local food becomes just as simple as purchasing food produced in the global food chain.

Food Incubators

Having a large amount of local food production is only one part of the equation. In order for a local food system to be viable, producers need access to processing and packaging facilities. Traditionally, these facilities have been owned by large corporations, who buy food, process it and then sell it under their name (i.e. – Mott’s, McCain etc). A Food Incubator, Like the Guelph Food Technology Center (www.gftc.ca) or the Toronto Food Business Incubator (<http://www.tfbi.ca/>) provides producers access to industrial kitchens where they can process their goods in a facility that meets all the regulations necessary to sell their food in the traditional food system (i.e. – supermarkets). Essentially, a farmer can rent the space and the labour necessary to process and package their goods into a value-added product, which keeps even more money in the local community. In addition, these facilities often provide training for producers, teaching them how to package their products in new and innovative ways, providing marketing skills and access to local markets that specialize in selling locally produced and packaged products.

Regulatory Changes

Many of the regulations pertaining to the food processing and production industry are designed with large firms in mind. In order to facilitate the success of smaller producers, different regulations need to be put into place. For example, if a farmer wished to put a

small processing facility on their farm to make preserves, their zoning would change from agricultural to commercial/industrial, which would result in a significant increase in their property taxes. This will likely require a coordinated effort by municipalities and small producers to lobby the provincial and federal governments to alter regulatory requirements for small producers.

Regional Labeling Schemes

Some regions have begun to promote a local “brand” to inform consumers about where their food is coming from. This goes beyond traditional produce labeling schemes (i.e. – Product of Canada) to a much more specific location-based labeling scheme. This would be an excellent way to promote food grown in a municipality’s Greenbelt, and to increase consumer awareness of the importance of preserving farmland and building new local food networks.

Conclusions

Municipal governments have an opportunity to take a strong leadership role in the local food movement. By creating practices (such as farmer’s markets and community food centres) that facilitate matchmaking between producers and purchasers to implementing policies that encourage the procurement of local food (even if it is only done at the corporate level) jurisdictions are helping to lay the groundwork for a stronger, more reliable network of local food production, processing and purchasing. These actions may cost a jurisdiction more money in the short term, but in the long term it will contribute to the economy of the jurisdiction, the security of the region’s food supply and improved nutrition due to increased access to fresh, healthy food.

Ontario is fortunate in that we have the ability to grow a wide variety of produce over a longer growing season than most other Canadian regions. Ontarians want local food, and the land in Ontario is fertile enough to deliver it to them. What is lacking are policies and practices that would encourage a better balance between our present global large scale food production, processing and distribution systems to more efficient local systems that enable regions to better meet their food access and security needs, encourage local economic development, protect valuable agricultural land and reduce the negative environmental impacts of meeting current and future food requirements.



Next Steps

Clean Air Partnership aims for this Local Food Actions and Report Scan to provide guidance for Clean Air Council jurisdictions as they move towards approving their own policies and practices that encourage local food production and consumption. It is the goal of the Clean Air Partnership to facilitate the sharing and lessons learned of these local food policies and practices and in order to better achieve that goal are seeking input from Clean Air Council members on their priority local food actions and learnings. Please complete the below local food survey in order to help the Clean Air Council prioritize actions that would better meet the needs of the following Declaration goal.

3.9 Identify common priority actions/policies to increase understanding of the role sustainable food initiatives have in reducing the amount energy used throughout the food-system.

Survey URL

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CAPlocalfood> or email or fax the below survey to gkalapos@cleanairpartnership.org or to attention Gabriella at 416-338-0616.

Local Food Actions Priorities Survey

1. Local Food Actions and outcomes Survey

After reading the Local Food Procurement Actions and Report Scan, please provide us with some feedback regarding what outcomes and actions are a priority for your jurisdiction, and what CAP can do to help you achieve these goals.

1. Please tell us how important the following local food actions and outcomes are to you and your jurisdiction.

	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Not Applicable
Corporate Purchasing Policies	jn	jn	jn	jn
Urban Agriculture	jn	jn	jn	jn
Food Technology and Business Incubators	jn	jn	jn	jn
Regulatory Changes	jn	jn	jn	jn
Regional Labeling Schemes	jn	jn	jn	jn

Additional Comments

2. With regards to CORPORATE PURCHASING POLICIES, what kinds of outcomes would be a reasonable goal for your jurisdiction? What kind of actions would you like to see CAP undertake in order to assist you in moving towards those goals?

Desired Outcomes

Suggested CAP support strategies

3. With regards to URBAN AGRICULTURE, what kinds of outcomes would be a reasonable goal for your jurisdiction? What kind of actions would you like to see CAP undertake in order to assist you in moving towards those goals?

Desired Outcomes

Suggested CAP Support Strategies/Activities

4. With regards to FOOD TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS INCUBATORS, what kinds of outcomes would be a reasonable goal for your jurisdiction? What kind of actions would you like to see CAP undertake in order to assist you in moving towards those goals?

Desired Outcomes

Suggested CAP Support Strategies/Activities

Local Food Actions Priorities Survey

5. With regards to REGULATORY CHANGES, what kinds of outcomes would be a reasonable goal for your jurisdiction? What kind of actions would you like to see CAP undertake in order to assist you in moving towards those goals?

Desired Outcomes

Suggested CAP Support

Strategies/Activities

6. With regards to REGIONAL LABELING SCHEMES, what kinds of outcomes would be a reasonable goal for your jurisdiction? What kind of actions would you like to see CAP undertake in order to assist you in moving towards those goals?

Desired Outcomes

Suggested CAP Support

Strategies/Activities

7. Are there any other priorities, outcomes or actions that support the development of a stronger local food system that your jurisdiction feels should be focused on? Are there any actions that CAP can undertake that you haven't already mentioned that you feel could help CAP partners improve their local food systems?

Other Priority Areas

Other CAP Actions