

# Best practices in local food

## A guide for municipalities



The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network (OMKN) are very pleased to have had an opportunity to work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Sustain Ontario and other agri-food sector organizations to complete this important report on *Best Practices in Local Food: A Guide for Municipalities*.

The local food industry is a key contributor to sustaining strong local economic development, job creation and is a catalyst for consumer support to a range of local businesses in Ontario's municipalities. It is critical to leverage the existing capacities and strengths of local food economies to build new markets.

There are also broader advantages to supporting local food initiatives. Local farmers' markets can act as hubs that enable social interaction between urban and rural residents and communities. We also know that there are environmental and health benefits to eating local food. Raising awareness of all of the benefits of local food is a critical first step to a strong local food sector and realizing the key community benefits that result.

This Guide is designed to help municipal governments across the sector consider a range of initiatives in relation to the proposed Bill 36, *the Local Food Act*, and the provincial Local Food Strategy. It is directed toward initiatives to support the local food sector which can be assessed and monitored to ensure information is available to all local food stakeholders. The Guide builds upon many of the current municipal local food initiatives in Ontario and from other jurisdictions. It also supports the broader objective in Bill 36 of prioritizing local food in Ontario. Specific guidance is provided in the form of best practices and innovative case study examples to help support council decision-making regarding local food initiatives, policies and programs. Most importantly, the Guide identifies the need to embed a commitment to the development and support of local food initiatives in day-to-day municipal operations in order to promote and support local food sectors.

Finally, the Guide offers a recommendation that points a way forward to working cooperatively with those in the municipal sector, the provincial government and other agri-food stakeholders to support continuous improvement and innovation for local food initiatives.

We hope that the Guide helps to sustain the conversation on local food in Ontario and responds to circumstances within the range of Ontario's municipalities, addresses questions that Councils may have and clarifies ways to begin and continue local food partnerships. Focusing on innovative municipal local food practices demonstrates local government leadership and commitment to strong provincial and local economies. Engaging stakeholders and addressing the ongoing commitment to monitoring performance and effectiveness in meeting both municipal and the government's local food priorities and goals is also key to the municipal leadership role.

I would like to thank the Project Advisory Team and the many other local food leaders consulted in the course of this project. I would also like to thank our consultants at Deloitte Inc. for their research, interviews and writing of the Guide which provides a credible basis for moving forward.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Powers', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

R.F. (Russ) Powers  
President, AMO

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and Food**

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Mr. Russ Powers  
President  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
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Dear Mr. Powers:

I am pleased that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) could partner with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network (OMKN) to develop *Best Practices in Local Food: A Guide for Municipalities*. This report is an important step in building a collaborative and innovative approach across all levels of government and other agri-food stakeholders to enhance local food capacity in Ontario. We all want to raise awareness, and to celebrate the good things that are grown, harvested and made in Ontario.

I have seen many excellent examples of municipalities taking a leadership role in building strong local food economies. Municipalities are well positioned to understand the capacity, challenges and opportunities as they work closely with the local food stakeholders in their communities. I value their experience and commitment.

*Best Practices in Local Food: A Guide for Municipalities* showcases the good things that municipalities throughout North America are doing to support local food. Sharing best practices and building on good ideas with a view to expand local food capacity demonstrates our collective commitment to support the success of our agri-food industry and to grow strong local food economies across Ontario. We achieve more when we work together, and I see this report and the partnership between AMO, OMKN and OMAF as a good example of our collaborative efforts.

I look forward to hearing more about municipal experiences, successes and goals over the weeks and months to come. My hope is that the future brings a wealth of new ideas and initiatives that can be captured and shared with municipalities and throughout the local food sector.

On behalf of myself and the people of Ontario, who can only benefit from this information, I would like to thank AMO, OMKN, Deloitte and the many stakeholders who contributed their time and energy to the creation of this valuable guide for municipalities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen Wynne".

Kathleen Wynne  
Minister of Agriculture and Food

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Good Things Grow in Ontario  
À bonne terre, bons produits



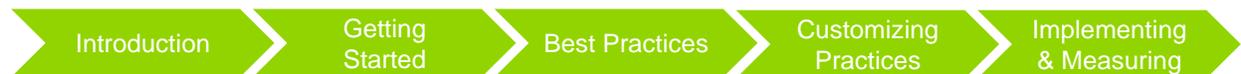
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# Executive summary

## Background and objectives

This guidebook provides municipalities with best practices to support and promote their local food industries. It has five main sections:



With the introduction of Bill 36, *Local Food Act, 2013*, maintaining and growing Ontario's local and regional food systems has become a key government priority that will require municipal support and cooperation. To help promote local food systems and inform the development of local food goals and targets, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) explored best practices for local food initiatives in the context of the province's local food priorities and proposed legislation.

The objective of this report is to provide municipal decision makers with guidance on how to align municipal activities with the expectations outlined in Bill 36 and build on local food innovations and experiences in Ontario and other jurisdictions.

## Methodology

This report was developed through extensive stakeholder consultations and secondary research. A total of 24 stakeholder consultations were conducted with 43 representatives from leading municipalities, regions and local food groups across Ontario, Canada and the United States.

## Key considerations

There are several key factors municipalities must take into account to ensure the success of their local food initiatives:

- Policies and programs must be embedded in the municipality to create a culture that supports and values local food.
- When considering new policies or programs, diverse stakeholders must be actively engaged to set a consistent direction and build buy-in across the community.
- Municipalities must assess their current situation and identify the mix of local food practices that will work best for them. Municipalities facing resource constraints must prioritize high-impact initiatives and explore cost-effective means of implementation (e.g., partnerships).
- It is critical for municipalities to measure and monitor the outcomes of their local food initiatives to ensure these initiatives are truly impacting the local food industry in a positive way.

## Getting started

To ensure local food initiatives are successful, municipalities must first understand the activities available to municipal council, identify challenges in the local food industry, recognize the municipality's unique situation, and locate a municipal champion to spearhead local food initiatives. Municipalities can conduct structured reviews of their food value chain management approaches by examining overarching local food strategies and goals and established policies, programs and partnership models.

Local food industry challenges include outdated planning policies and zoning by-laws, high cost of labour, lack of processing facilities, potential higher cost of local food, and lack of awareness among consumers. Municipalities also face their own challenges, such as aligning policies with federal and provincial laws, coordinating programs across various departments and accessing funding for local food initiatives.

## Best Practices

Municipalities have a number of tools that can be used to foster their local food industry. This report provides best practices for strategy and governance, as well as the six stages of the food value chain:



### Strategy and Governance

Best practices in strategy and governance include establishing a food policy council and developing a food charter. Food policy councils bring diverse members together to discuss food issues, create and support local food initiatives, encourage collaboration, and review and influence policies. Food charters identify key values and priorities for developing a sustainable food system and combine vision statements, principles and goals for a coordinated municipal food strategy.<sup>1</sup>

### Producing

Best practices in producing include urban agriculture, community gardens and planning policies and zoning by-laws. Urban agriculture refers to the production and harvesting of fruits and vegetables, raising of animals or cultivation of fish for local consumption within and around cities.<sup>2</sup> Community gardens are pieces of land gardened by community members to grow fresh local produce for sale or direct consumption. Municipalities can promote agriculture land protection and local food production using the Official Plan for general land use planning goals and zoning by-laws for prescriptive regulations.

### Processing/Preparing

Best practices in processing/preparing include public sector support for processing practices and incubator kitchens. Public sector support involves promoting value-retention and value-add facilities, such as processing facilities. Incubator kitchens support start-up companies in the food sector by providing technical assistance in food processing and training in general business management skills.

### Distributing

Best practices in distributing include public sector-led procurement policies and food hubs. Public sector-led procurement policies are municipal policies that support the purchase of locally-produced food by governmental agencies. Food hubs are organizations that manage the aggregation, distribution and marketing of source-identified food products from local and regional producers and processors.

### Retailing

Best practices in retailing include farmers' markets and mobile vendors. Farmers' markets provide farmers with a direct market outlet for their fresh and value added products and link these individuals with community members. Mobile vendors refer to trucks that bring local food into underserved communities and include mobile farmers' markets, mobile grocery stores and produce carts.

<sup>1</sup> Vancouver Food Charter: Context and Background (2007).

<sup>2</sup> What feeds us: Vancouver Food strategy (2013).

## Consumption

Best practices in consumption include marketing, public awareness and tourism. Marketing involves efforts to raise the profile of local food, including creating a municipal or regional brand. Public awareness focuses on increasing consumer awareness of the benefits of local food, as well as where and when to get it. If the municipality has a rich local food base, culinary tourism may be an option to increase the consumer base beyond municipal borders.

## Waste management

Best practices in waste management include composting and gleaning. Composting encourages the breakdown of plant wastes to be reused as natural soil amendments, which improves soil conditions for subsequent crops and creates a sustainable local food chain. Gleaning is the practice of collecting and donating leftover crops from farmers' fields, usually to provide low-income individuals with access to locally-grown food.

## Customizing Best Practices

While this report provides a long list of local food best practices, municipalities must choose the ideal mix of local food initiatives based on their unique needs and circumstances. Key situational factors to consider are: size and type of municipality, level of municipal resources, agriculture and processing base, proximity to a large centre, and the activeness of the agri-food sector. This Guide provides a framework to help municipalities align their initiatives with these situational factors.

This guidebook recognizes that municipalities face resource constraints that could impact their ability to implement local food initiatives. Municipalities dealing with these constraints must choose between local food initiatives, focusing on the ones that will deliver the highest value and return on investment. High-value local food initiatives identified in this Guide include municipal/regional promotion, farmers' markets, planning policies and zoning by-laws, education and awareness, and community gardens. It is important to note that there are local food initiatives available and accessible to all municipalities, regardless of their size or level of resources.

## Implementing and Measuring

Implementing local food initiatives can occur through a variety of methods. Municipalities may choose to implement initiatives entirely on their own, or they may explore partnership opportunities with non-governmental organizations, private sector businesses or other municipalities in the region to achieve economies of scale. The degree to which a municipality takes on a leadership or supporting role will depend on the municipality's expertise and level of resources.

Measuring the outcomes of local food initiatives is a critical step in building the local food sector and a key focus of Bill 36. This Guide provides a comprehensive list of outcome-based metrics for municipalities to measure the effectiveness of their local food practices. Municipalities are encouraged to build their monitoring capabilities to ensure initiatives are impacting the local food industry in a positive way.

## Conclusion

The best practices found in this guidebook are intended to inform municipal thinking about how to best support the local food industry. Each municipality will need to customize their mix of local food practices to suit their individual needs and circumstances. While the best practices contained in this Guide are comprehensive, the local food industry is constantly evolving and new practices may emerge to inform municipal decision making. To build on the existing local food knowledge base, municipalities are encouraged to continue to share and regularly update local food best practices, as well as successes and challenges, on their websites. This project represents a significant investment in advancing the local food dialogue. It is strongly recommended that the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food continue its leadership with the full range of local food stakeholder organizations by developing a user-friendly resource, such as a central website or linked websites, to continue to capture and share a broad range of local food practices, insights and knowledge.

# Introduction

## Local food study background, key questions and methodology

### Local food study background

Local food is becoming an increasingly important priority for Ontario municipalities as a means of sustaining local economies and supporting economic growth. At the provincial level, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) is committed to improving awareness of, access to, and demand for local food, as well as supporting local food system resiliency. In March 2013, the government introduced Bill 36, *the Local Food Act, 2013*, which emphasized the importance of maintaining and growing Ontario's local and regional food systems through a shared vision and collaborative partnerships, and creates a mechanism for setting local food goals and targets. According to the Act, the term "local food" refers to food produced or harvested in Ontario, and subject to any limitations in the regulations, food and beverages made in Ontario if they include ingredients produced or harvested in Ontario. The purposes of this Act are:

- To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario.
- To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food.
- To encourage the development of new markets for local food.<sup>3</sup>

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“We all want to raise awareness, and to celebrate the good things that are grown, harvested and made in Ontario. Sharing best practices and building on good ideas with a view to expand local food capacity demonstrates our collective commitment to support the success of our agri-food industry and to grow strong local food economies across Ontario.”

Kathleen Wynne,  
Premier of Ontario

To help establish and grow the local food systems, and inform the development of local food goals and targets for the municipal sector as outlined in Bill 36, the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network (OMKN), a project administered by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, explored the development and application of innovative approaches and best practices to local food initiatives in the context of the Province's local food priorities and its proposed legislation.

The objective of the study is to provide municipal decision makers with guidance on how to align municipal activities with the expectations outlined in Bill 36 and build on local food innovations and experiences in Ontario and other jurisdictions. The resulting Local Food Resource Guide serves as a tool to enable municipalities to identify, develop and support dynamic local food initiatives and to promote evidence-based decision making regarding local food goals and targets. Ultimately, the Local Food Resource Guide aids in preparing municipalities to set targets, steps that are being taken to reach the targets, and progress that is being made towards meeting the targets.

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<sup>3</sup> Bill 36, Local Food Act, 2013. Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

## Key questions

The report provides insight into answers to the following key questions:

- What are the key barriers and challenges faced by the local food industry and municipalities trying to support the industry?
- What are the overarching success factors in local food initiatives?
- What are the leading municipal local food strategies and best practices identified in our research?
- What are the key performance measures to evaluate and monitor the progress of municipal local food strategies, and to inform OMAF assessment of the effectiveness of Bill 36?

## Methodology

To develop the Local Food Resource Guide, information gathering was conducted through research, including a literature review, and stakeholder interviews and outreach.

As a key component of the project approach, 24 stakeholder consultations were undertaken with 43 representatives from leading municipalities and regions, and key local food groups across Ontario and select municipalities within Canada and the United States. Consultations ranged from one-on-one meeting interviews to focus group sessions with up to 14 participants.

Our secondary research was focused on government publications from leading Ontario municipalities and others within Canada and the United States, as well as reports developed by key organizations in the local food industry to identify leading local government food policies and practices and agricultural partnership models.

A detailed list of interviewed stakeholders can be found in **Appendix B**.

## Benefits and opportunities of a thriving local food industry

A thriving local food industry provides direct economic benefits as well as other key benefits related to the local and global environment, health benefits that result from eating fresher food, and social benefits that can result in linkages established and maintained among people in the community.

## Economic benefits

The economic benefits of local food have been highlighted in studies across Canada and other jurisdictions. In 2010, the Ontario automotive sector had \$43.6 billion in revenue, while food processing, agriculture products and farming grossed close to \$50 billion.<sup>4</sup> A major benefit of an active local food industry is the multiplier effect, which refers to the economic impact of initial spending that leads to increased consumer spending in a community.<sup>5</sup> When a consumer purchases a local food item from a farmers' market, the farmer retains a greater share of the food dollar and is more likely to spend the money on local employees who in turn spend their earnings locally. In an economic impact study conducted by the Waterloo Region, it was estimated that for every job in the region's agriculture sector, four additional jobs are supported in the economy.<sup>6</sup> Another study estimated that if every household in Ontario spent \$10 a week on local food, there would be an additional \$2.4B in the economy<sup>7</sup>.

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**In the Waterloo Region, it is estimated that for every job in the region's agriculture sector, four additional jobs are supported in the economy.**

Region of Waterloo Public Health 2003

Michele Legere, Coordinator  
Food Matters Windsor-Essex

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<sup>4</sup> Food processing beats auto industry in Ontario, report says (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Buying Local Makes Economic Sense (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Growing Food and Economy – Economic Impact Study of the Agriculture and Food-Related Sectors in the Waterloo Region (2003).

## Environmental benefits

Due to many factors such as agricultural practices and transportation, food systems are major contributors to burning fossil fuels, which releases greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. For instance, food items sold in Southern Ontario have travelled approximately 4,500km on average from the place they were grown or raised.<sup>8</sup> The potential for global climate change increases as a result of this trend, but the effects can be mitigated when communities consume food from local sources. According to a Leopold Center model, if 10 percent of 28 fruits and vegetables were purchased from local sources, up to 17 times less carbon dioxide would be emitted than if the foods were purchased from global sources. This translates to saving up to 436 thousand gallons of fuel in one year.<sup>9</sup>

## Health and Safety benefits

Compared to food items imported from the global food system, the local food system may offer food items that are fresher and more likely to retain more nutrients, as the travel distance to the retailers and consumers can be decreased. Local food is produced to Ontario standards, which may be more stringent than elsewhere; they may also involve less processing, which means fewer chemicals and additives for the food items. Also, an active local food system leads to increased access to local food across the community, which provides more opportunities for people, especially those in underserved communities, to include fresh local produce as a part of their diet.

## Social benefits

Farmers' markets and community gardens act as gathering places for the members of the community to socialize and work as a mechanism to reinforce a sense of place and community identity. It is estimated that people have 10 times more conversations at farmers' markets than the average supermarket, which shows the increase in social capital formation.<sup>10</sup> In addition, local farmers and processors can be more easily identified compared to the global system, which allows the opportunity for consumers to personally connect with the food providers and become engaged in their local food industry.

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Kevin Stolerick of the Martin Prosperity Institute, University of Toronto and Doug Vallery of Experience Renewal Solutions, Toronto.

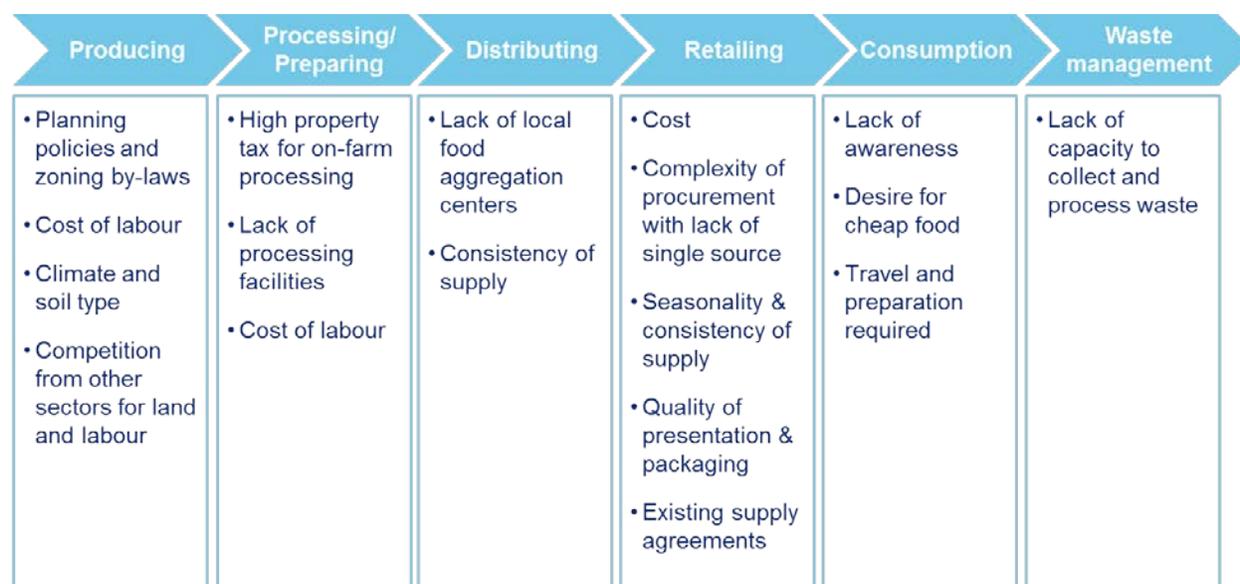
<sup>8</sup> Food Connects Us All – Sustainable Local Food in Southern Ontario (2008).

<sup>9</sup> Food, Fuel, and Freeways: An Iowa Perspective on How Far Food Travels, Fuel Usage, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2001).

<sup>10</sup> The Argument for Local Food (2003).

## Barriers and challenges facing the local food industry

In the current local food industry across municipalities in Ontario, there are key factors reducing the growth rate and maximum potential of the industry. Since each step needs to be in balance, a significant problem at any one step in the food value chain, from producers to waste management stakeholders, can hugely affect the overall success of the industry. It is essential to recognize these challenges from the beginning and pursue strategies that effectively address the issues that the municipalities may face as a result. The diagram below highlights the major municipal and agri-food industry barriers and challenges in each stage of the food value chain. The degree to which each element is a barrier varies across Ontario municipalities. Another barrier –lack of scale – cuts across each step for smaller municipalities.



### Producing

In today's globalized economy, importers tend to have lower cost structures (e.g., cheaper labour) than local businesses, which affect various stakeholders in the food value chain as it is extremely difficult to maintain a competitive price in the marketplace. Municipalities' planning policies and zoning by-laws can restrict farm size to prevent fragmentation, but this can discourage small-scale farm operations. In addition, it is difficult for small-scale farmers to achieve higher rates of return than large-scale farmers due to economies of scale which allow larger operations to drive down the price. Seasonal variation affects the availability of food items, which poses barriers for local producers when they are looking for opportunities to supply produce to major retailers and public institutions and where a consistent, guaranteed volume of supply is required.

### Processing/Preparing

Although processing is a vital part of the food value chain, small to medium-sized processing plants are facing competitive pressures from the global market. Unlike the small processing businesses, large processing businesses usually have enough scale and resources to keep costs down and to comply with federal and other government inspection standards, which is necessary if the processed food (e.g., meat) is to be sold in major retailers that operate nationwide. In addition, value-add processing provides opportunities for farmers to earn extra income by creating "market ready" products for consumers, but on-farm processing is not a viable option for many farmers. This is due to the increase in property taxes if the farmland is no longer assessed as agricultural land.

## Distributing

“Smaller farmers collectively compose a large section of some municipalities’ economies... they need to be recognized and encouraged.”

Michele Legere, Coordinator  
Food Matters Windsor-Essex

Local food producers have a limited number of ways to distribute their produce, including farmers’ markets and farm gate sales. In order for the producers to distribute their products to larger buyers such as restaurants, retailers, and public institutions, the products from different farmers can be aggregated in a distribution center through regional collaboration to create larger volumes of supplies. However, the infrastructure and human resources are frequently lacking locally to organize such initiatives. Similar to the producing stage of the food value chain, small-scale distributors face challenges related to economies of scale, since the proportional fuel costs applied to each volume of food are often higher in local food delivery models. Another major constraint for farmers is the lack of time, as they are required to choose between spending time in production versus distribution and retail.

## Retailing

For regular retailers, there are inconveniences associated with carrying local food in their stores. Retailers and restaurants normally require consistent and sometimes large supplies of food. The cost of purchasing local food from local producers tends to be higher, more time consuming and requires extensive organizational efforts compared to purchasing food from large businesses.

## Consumption

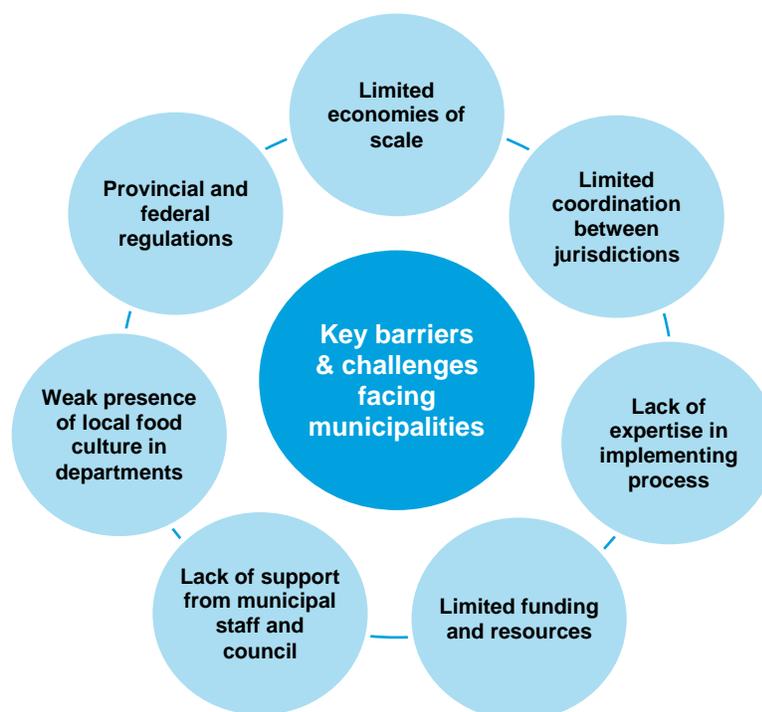
Consumers want to pay the least amount of money for a product that they are purchasing, which is likely to influence their decision in buying cheaper imported goods as opposed to local goods. Also, purchasing from local food sources often means that the food may not arrive processed and prepared (e.g. cabbage heads instead of bagged shredded cabbage), and this can be inconvenient and unfeasible for larger institutions that prepare meals for large groups of consumers. In addition, there may be a lack of awareness of the benefits of purchasing local food and where to get it.

## Waste management

The greatest challenge in implementing environmentally sustainable measures to manage waste is the lack of capacity to collect and process the waste. Some municipalities have municipal-wide collection programs for organic waste (e.g. Green Bin program), which can have the largest impact on promoting sustainability in the community, but it is extremely costly for the government. Due to the nature of the initiative, non-profit organizations run smaller-scale composting programs, but they are often unable to serve the entire community as expansion of the program is possible only when additional funding and infrastructure are available.

## Key barriers and challenges facing municipalities

In addition to the barriers facing the local food industry, municipalities are faced with a set of specific challenges when developing and implementing local food strategies.



It is essential for municipalities to align municipal policies with federal and provincial law, such as aligning the planning policies and zoning by-laws with the Provincial Policy Statement. Each level of government has its own set of responsibilities and areas of governance, thus municipalities are required to work within the policy framework established by the provincial and federal governments. Other considerations include federal health regulations, labeling law, environmental law, and property tax assessment rules.

Food strategy relies on the activities of multiple departments such as economic development, public health, social development, planning, environment, and waste management. Consequently, municipalities can face difficulties in coordinating programs that cut across existing silos and integrating local food initiatives into existing policy and programs. Also, municipal staff may lack in on-the-ground expertise as local food is still a relatively new area of focus for many.

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**“Don’t just ask what municipalities can do for food, but what food can do to help municipalities achieve their objectives.”**

Lauren Baker, Coordinator  
Toronto Food Policy Council

The municipalities that participated in this study identified lack of funding and resources for local food initiatives as a key barrier that in many cases prevents them from implementing strategies that they already have in mind (e.g. community processing facility, food hub). If adequate support does not exist within the municipal council, securing funding for new and existing programs can be a major challenge. In addition, municipal staff have their core work responsibilities, thus taking on new or additional responsibilities for local food initiatives requires individual buy-in and an embedment of the local food culture in the municipal departments. Collaboration between municipal departments and municipal council is required to make strategic decisions on how to best use the available resources, and partnership models with varying levels of involvement from municipalities can be taken into consideration to pursue local food practices.

## How to use this guide

**Getting started** highlights the overarching success factors in local food initiatives then provides an assessment framework for municipalities to use in identifying the current state of their local food industry.

**Local food strategies and practices available to municipalities** organizes key local food initiatives into the different stages of the food value chain.

**Choosing local food strategies and practices** provides a framework for municipalities to determine which strategies and practices are likely to be successful in their communities by identifying common factors required for each initiative.

**Implementing strategies and measuring outcomes** provides partnership models for implementing and governing the initiatives, and measures to monitor the progress of the strategies.

**Appendices** provide detailed information on municipal case studies and a list of study participants.

# Getting started

## How to get set up for success in local food initiatives

Prior to making a decision on strategies to be implemented in the municipality, there are overarching success factors that can be considered to ensure that the project has the right stepping stones towards a successful outcome. These factors include understanding what activities are available to council, understanding the challenges to the local food industry, understanding the municipality's unique situation, finding a champion, and engaging key stakeholders.

### 1. Understanding what activities are available to the municipal council

For each local food strategy, a municipal department is normally involved to varying degrees and the municipal staff engage councillors by providing reports and recommendations for actions to be taken. Also, an active political champion can raise the topic of their local food initiative in council meetings to inform councillors. For a complete list of best practices and descriptions of the municipality's involvement in the practices, see **Local food strategies and practices available to municipalities** on page 14.

### 2. Understanding the challenges to the local food industry

In the local food industry, there are key sets of challenges in each stage of the food value chain. Municipalities will experience variations of these challenges, depending on their unique circumstances. These challenges should be closely examined by the government in order to identify which strategies would be the most suitable to address the issues. For a list of challenges to the local food industry, see **Barriers and challenges facing the local food industry** on page 7.

### 3. Understanding the unique situation of the municipality

Every municipality has its own unique history and culture that became the foundation for its current environment. Keeping this in mind, it is crucial to recognize that choices regarding local food strategies and practices are to be made and implemented according to the municipality's unique situation. The key considerations include size, urban/rural distinction, availability of funding and human resources, climate, growing season, soil composition, food assets, and supply and demand of local food. The framework in the following section can be used to provide structure for an initial assessment of the local food management approaches of a municipality, as it serves as a tool to survey existing policies, programs and processes, creating a baseline for the food system. In addition, a market study of the local food industry can be helpful in determining the needs of the stakeholders in maintaining and growing the industry.

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“There is no cookie-cutter roadmap for municipalities... understanding their unique situation is key to success.”

Don Mills, President  
Local Food Plus

### 4. Finding a municipal champion

Finding the right champion to spearhead a local food initiative is one of the most important success factors to a local food strategy. The champion may be one person or a core group of people, depending on the nature and complexity of the initiative. The champion's role is to bring the appropriate knowledge and expertise necessary to guide the initiative in the right direction, and to foster an overall shift in culture to view local food as an integral aspect of the department or the organization that they belong to. Ideally, the champion should be prepared to work on the initiative for a long-term period, therefore a committed

staff in a municipal department or in a non-governmental organization would be suitable. Also, the significance of having an elected official in the core group should not be underestimated, as political influence can help to push a project forward and receive additional support and buy-in from the community.

## 5. Engaging key stakeholders

Alongside the appropriate champion, key stakeholders, including producers (farmers) should be engaged from the beginning of a project in order to set consistent direction and prevent costly changes once an initiative is underway. From the government, representatives from departments that may be affected by the initiative should attend the initial planning sessions to discuss any potential administrative barriers. Municipal councillors may not be as knowledgeable about local food initiatives, but having a political representative in the group can be highly beneficial. Businesses in the local food industry as well as non-governmental organizations should be engaged in the planning sessions, as they are the stakeholders that are closest to the effects of the policies and programs, and the government may consider partnering with these stakeholders to drive, maintain and grow the initiative. Also, supply and demand requirements must be tightly intertwined and agreed upon when working to scale up local food production and it is critical for farmers to know how much they should be expected to produce and how much they will be paid for it in advance of the coming farming season. In addition, citizen input is vital in analyzing the interest level in community programs and addressing major concerns of the community.

### A framework for understanding the current practices employed by municipalities to support the local food sector

Six steps in the **local food value chain** provide a structure that municipalities can use to assess their existing capabilities, approaches, and gaps in local food management. The food value chain provides a broad and holistic view of the local food system, including:

1. Producing: Growing agricultural products and raising livestock in farming operations
2. Processing/Preparing: Transforming agricultural products into another form as market-ready products through washing, peeling, packaging, freezing, canning, as well as meat processing
3. Distributing: Warehousing and aggregating produce and/or processed goods and delivering them to retailers
4. Retailing: Selling produce/processed goods to consumers, either through traditional retail stores, various forms of farmers markets, or through evolving channels such as online
5. Consuming: Cooking with and eating the goods at home, restaurants, or other venues of consumption
6. Waste management: Collecting, transporting and disposing/recycling of waste materials from food products

In order for municipalities to conduct structured reviews of their food value chain management approaches, four **food management elements** are used to describe aspects of the food value chain. The elements are:

- Overarching local food strategies and goals that are devised to guide food system growth;
- Policies that are established (and approved/legislated) to achieve strategies;
- Programs that are developed, funded, and managed to drive action in the marketplace across stakeholders; and
- Partnership models to execute and oversee the strategies across stakeholders.

Note that some practices that have worked in jurisdictions outside of Ontario are currently not supported by existing Ontario policy or regulations. Further policy and regulatory discussion is required before these ideas will be viable options in Ontario.

### Local food value chain



<b>Food management elements</b>	<b>Local food strategy and macro policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food charter and strategy to confirm municipal priorities, objectives and goals</li> <li>• Official plan to guide the zoning by-laws</li> <li>• Economic development policy, including agricultural and employment factors</li> <li>• Public health policy, including food security and access</li> <li>• Environmental and sustainability policies</li> <li>• Integrated approval processes</li> </ul>					
	<b>Food chain policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning policies and zoning by-laws</li> <li>• Planning policies and bylaws to protect agriculture land and uses</li> <li>• Planning policies to support small/mixed-use farming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning policies and zoning bylaws that allow value-added activity on agriculture land (e.g. washing, packaging)</li> <li>• Permitting rates</li> <li>• Incentive programs (e.g., tax increment grant and matching contribution for feasibility study)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement policy to include local food requirement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitting rates</li> <li>• Permitting process for markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoning by-laws to allow value added businesses on agricultural land (e.g., bed and breakfast)</li> <li>• Signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disposal rules and guidelines</li> </ul>
	<b>Food chain programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban agriculture</li> <li>• Community gardens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processing facilities</li> <li>• * Mobile abattoirs</li> <li>• Community abattoirs</li> <li>• Incubator kitchens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement (e.g., farm to institution)</li> <li>• Food hubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers' markets</li> <li>• Mobile vendors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branding</li> <li>• Quality assurance</li> <li>• Promotion</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Education &amp; awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composting</li> <li>• Gleaning</li> </ul>
	<b>Partnerships &amp; governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional partnerships between municipalities to achieve economies of scale and political clout</li> <li>• Public-private partnerships to foster local agri-food businesses and promote local food to consumers</li> <li>• Partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to organize and maintain community programs</li> <li>• Multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote local food</li> <li>• Food policy council to drive policy recommendations, implement and oversee programs, and bring stakeholders together</li> </ul>					

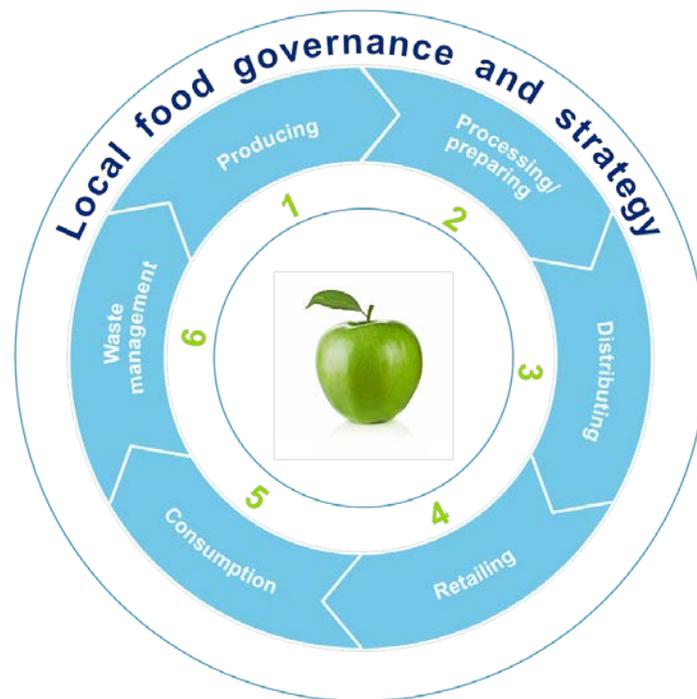
\* Note that some practices that have worked in jurisdictions outside of Ontario are currently not supported by existing Ontario policy or regulations. Further policy and regulatory discussion is required before these ideas will be viable options in Ontario.

# Local food strategies and practices available to municipalities

This section provides best practices that municipalities can use to support and promote their local food industry. A best practice is an activity that has been shown to be most effective at developing a thriving local food industry given the opportunities and constraints faced by municipal governments.

While a range of practices are outlined, there are two best practices – mobile abattoirs (page 24) and transfer of development rights for farmland (page 21) – that have been identified in jurisdictions outside of Ontario. At this time, these practices are not supported by current Ontario policy/regulation and future policy discussion and/or regulatory changes would be required before these practices can be considered in Ontario.

Best practices have been provided across the following areas, and within each, specific examples are described:



This guidebook provides overarching strategy and governance activities, as well as examples of best practices for particular areas of the local food value chain. The strategies and practices included in the guidebook are some of the most effective initiatives that were identified in our research, and will help municipalities to address the challenges in the local food industry. These practices are not intended to be a complete list of activities, but rather a set of key initiatives that could be considered for implementation. The strategy and governance activities establish the supporting structure to ensure all other best practices are set up for success.

After reviewing the strategies, the **Customizing local food strategies and practices** section beginning on page 35 provides insight on choosing the strategies and practices according to the specific contexts of municipalities. The strategies can be used in combination and pursued using the conceptual diagram that displays the relative value of each strategy, but ultimately, municipalities can best determine the appropriate combination when the context of their unique situation is taken into consideration.

## Local food strategy and governance

Municipal local food strategy helps establish the foundation for a dynamic local food industry, as it informs various municipal departments to align their policies and council decisions according to the overarching food strategy. Overarching governance activities are needed to ensure effective management and oversight of local food initiatives. Food policy councils are a crucial governance mechanism because they bring together various members of the food chain, from farmers to municipal representatives, to shape and support the local food system. Food charters also provide an excellent starting point for establishing a cohesive municipal food strategy and direction. Both of these important activities provide a clear understanding of the economic importance of local food and a “local food infrastructure” to promote local food development.

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“Food charters and food policy councils break down siloes between stakeholders and shift perspectives.”

Joan Stonehocker,  
Executive Director  
York Region Food Network

## Food policy council

A food policy council is comprised of members who represent various aspects of the local food value chain, from farmers to government representatives and interested citizens. It serves to create and support local food initiatives, act as a forum for discussing food issues, encourage collaboration across the food value chain, and review and influence policies.<sup>11</sup> Also, it is an essential component of the municipal food strategy to drive key local food conversations and activities, and to serve as a catalyst to bring food policy and program opportunities into government departments by identifying gaps in the existing food system and presenting recommendations and plans.

A food policy council is commonly created by citizens in community organizations and the group is provided with support from the municipality in the planning and visioning process through financial support and staff members, as well as a political champion. It can be housed within the municipal government structure or be completely independent from the government structure. However, the relationship to the municipal government is crucial as it can lead to formal municipal endorsements and structural links, which increase the legitimacy of the council and helps to successfully navigate through the complex rules and regulations of various government departments.<sup>12</sup> Depending on the presence of a political champion, a food policy council can maintain a close relationship with the municipal council and act as an advisory committee regarding food policy matters (e.g. advising in consultations, submitting reports and recommendations). Also, the municipal staff involved in the food policy council can provide updates to their respective department, and a senior staff can provide recommendations to the municipal council.

The activities below describe best practices in creating and managing a food policy council. The involvement of the municipal government in each activity varies according to the participation level of municipal staff and political champions.

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<sup>11</sup> Food policy council overview, best practices, and challenges from Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned (2009).

<sup>12</sup> Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs (2013).

## Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Membership</b>	Recruit members from diverse backgrounds, ideally representing the entire food system. Build a review process in the formation of the council to ensure that new key stakeholders can be included in the future.
<b>Initial plan</b>	Create and document well-defined mission, goals and organizational structure of the council. Establish priorities and agree on a strategic plan – councils can often lose momentum once a major project has been launched, so adopt a holistic approach to improving the food system as opposed to single issue approach. Establish a clear method for decision-making (e.g., consensus or voting system) and communication among the council members.
<b>Operations</b>	Develop a consistent meeting schedule with a place to meet, set meeting agendas, record minutes and keep track of assigned tasks. Draw on the resources of other levels of government, who can provide information, resources, access to tools, and assist with identifying contacts (such as the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food – OMAF). One of the most common first steps for food policy councils is conducting a food systems assessment to identify gaps, assets and opportunities in all aspects of the food value chain – the information collected can stimulate action and collaboration between various stakeholders in the food system and open up public dialogue regarding food issues. Achieve a balance between “quick win” programs and policy changes – when a council is getting started, pursuing a “quick win” program (e.g., facilitating garbage pick-up for local farmers’ market) that is accomplished within a short period of time can build momentum and political legitimacy for the food policy council, while advocating for policy changes can have wider reaching and long-term effects.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Create an evaluation mechanism and monitor whether proposed policies have been passed, the rate of participation in programs, and progress toward objectives (e.g. number of collaborative efforts between government departments initiated).
<b>Partnership</b>	Assess whether a regional food policy council would be a better option for the municipality. For smaller municipalities, it may be more efficient to partner with other municipalities that share similar characteristics such as geography, size, types of crops, etc.

### Example: Toronto Food Policy Council

The Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) is one of the most widely recognized and referenced Food Policy Councils in North America. The TFPC is a subcommittee of Board of Health with 30 members, including two members of the Toronto City Council and 28 citizen members from diverse backgrounds. Toronto Public Health provides staff support for the TFPC, who prepares an annual report for the Board of Health. It has contributed to Toronto’s key plans and strategies including the Toronto Food Strategy, Toronto Food Charter, Toronto’s existing Official Plan and the City of Toronto Strategic Plan. The council brings actors across the food value chain and various programs together to address the lack of comprehensive food policy (see case study in **Appendix A**).<sup>13</sup>

## Challenges

As the food policy council is a multi-stakeholder group, the decision making process and food discussions can become inefficient and off-track. Also, since the group is comprised of volunteer members, consistency in attendance and continuity of leadership and programs can be difficult to achieve. A member’s perspective may be strongly reflected in the council’s priorities compared to other members, which can create a single-focus issue within the council’s activities. Furthermore, the food policy council may be required to coordinate activities with multiple municipal departments, and align its goals with the goals of municipal departments and the municipal council to receive their support, which requires extensive planning and liaising efforts. It is important to have strong, committed champions from the community and municipal government to provide the necessary leadership for keeping the food policy council focused on its main goals and maintaining the alignment of goals between stakeholders.

<sup>13</sup> Food Policy Councils – Innovations in Democratic Governance for a Sustainable and Equitable Food System (2010).

## Food charters

According to the City of Vancouver, a food charter “expresses key values and priorities for developing a just and sustainable food system [and] combines vision statements, principles, and broad action goals pointing towards a coordinated municipal food strategy.”<sup>14</sup> Typically, a food charter is created by food policy councils, community organizations, or municipal departments such as the public health unit, and the process of creating a food charter involves multi-stakeholder consultations and workshops with the community, government departments, and the municipal council. It is critical for the municipal council to adopt the food charter, in order for the key values outlined in the food charter to be acknowledged by government departments and policies to be aligned accordingly.

A food charter plays an important role in guiding the local food strategy, as it creates a unified vision for the various government departments, increases the presence of food policy across the municipality, facilitates collaboration between departments as well as community members, and helps solidify municipal commitments to local food system development.

## Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Key elements</b>	The following are commonly included sections in a food charter <sup>15</sup> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Background or rationale: How and why the food charter was created, and the organization that was spearheading the charter</li><li>• Vision statement: Statement that outlines the overall direction for the municipality’s food system</li><li>• Key principles: Common principles include food security, economic development, local food system support, food skill development, food safety, social justice, nutrition, and health</li><li>• Goals: Can take the municipality approach and/or community approach, highlighting strategies that local government or individuals in the community can use to improve the food system</li></ul>
<b>Endorsement</b>	Foster community involvement by encouraging community members to endorse/sign the food charter and upload the public signature list on the website. If a food charter already exists, it can be adopted by the municipal council to be made public and help guide food system-related decision making in the municipality.
<b>Administration</b>	Create a review process conducted by the food policy council or other organizations in charge of the food charter to update as needed. Monitor and follow up with the goals by creating a strategy document that addresses the programs and policies to achieve the goals. <sup>16</sup>
<b>Partnership</b>	Assess whether a regional food charter would be a better option for the municipality. If other initiatives, such as food policy council or local branding, are developed at a regional level with other municipalities, it may be more desirable to align the food charter with the other initiatives.

### Example: Guelph-Wellington Food Charter

In 2011, the Guelph-Wellington Food Charter was created by Guelph –Wellington Food Round Table’s Policy Working Group in consultation with the community members. The Charter was endorsed by the City of Guelph, as well as 150 stakeholders in the community. In addition, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health funded a Food Charter Toolkit to help facilitate action by different groups in the region, including consumers, growers, businesses, and policy makers.<sup>17</sup>

### Example: Vancouver Food Charter

The Vancouver Food Charter was created by the Vancouver Food Policy Council as a policy step towards reaching a sustainable food system as identified in their Food Action Plan. The Charter identifies five principles of a just and sustainable food supply, including community economic development, ecological health, social justice, collaboration and participation and celebration. The vision and principles were re-visited for their continued relevance during the food strategy consultation process, and feedback gathered from events and roundtables suggests that the vision and principles are still relevant.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Vancouver Food Charter: Context and Background (2007).

<sup>15</sup> Waterloo Food Charter Backgrounder (2012).

<sup>16</sup> Vancouver Food Charter: Context and Background (2007).

<sup>17</sup> Your Guelph-Wellington Food Charter Toolkit (2012).

<sup>18</sup> Vancouver Food Strategy (2013).

## Challenges

Food charters do not address the specific mechanisms that are available to reach the goals (e.g. food security, economic development, environmental sustainability), and it should be updated through a regular review process to ensure that it reflects the municipality's current direction for the local food industry. Further development of food strategy documents or food strategies embedded in existing departmental strategy documents (e.g., sustainability strategy document) is required to provide prescriptive action items, and follow up assessments by the municipal departments and/or food policy council need to be conducted in order to monitor the progress towards the food charter's goals.

## 1. Producing local food

The production of local food refers to growing agricultural products and raising livestock in farming operations. Several best practices in this area have been provided on the topics of urban agriculture, community gardens and municipal planning policies and zoning by-laws. These best practices ensure municipal activities and policies facilitate and support the production of local food.

### Urban agriculture

Urban agriculture refers to the production and harvesting of fruits and vegetables, raising of animals, or cultivation of fish for local consumption or sale within and around cities.<sup>19</sup> The practice can be classified as commercial (e.g. production for sale) or non-commercial (e.g. production for consumption and donation, and common models of urban agriculture include<sup>20</sup>:

- Rooftop gardens: Growing operations for food production on top of buildings;
- Urban farms: Typically larger scale growing operations for food production with primary purpose of revenue generation; and
- Backyard hens/beekeeping: Raising domesticated female chickens and keeping of honey bees in the municipality for the purpose of cultivating honey.

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<sup>19</sup> What feeds us: Vancouver Food strategy (2013).

<sup>20</sup> Cultivating Food Security: Creating a land inventory and urban food landscape on Vancouver Island (2011).

Urban agriculture increases access to fresh, local food through self-production or distribution of food for revenue generation or as donation, and encourages the community to be a part of the local food system. Also, ecological and environmental benefits include reduced storm water runoff with rooftop gardens and reduced carbon footprint due to decreased reliance on imported food. The main role of the municipality is to ensure that policies, programs and resources (e.g. human resources, underutilized municipal land, funding and tools) are in place to enable community members to participate in urban agriculture activities. An interdepartmental committee can be created to collaborate with community organizations and participating citizens, and the staff from the committee can prepare a report to inform the municipal council on the progress of the initiative.

The scale of the initiative can vary from large-scale urban agriculture support (e.g. urban agriculture strategy, accessible land inventory, proactive review of policies and initiatives, generous funding) to small-scale urban agriculture support (e.g. ad hoc support as opportunities arise, limited funding).

## Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Urban agriculture land inventory</b>	<p>Create an urban agriculture land inventory in order for the public to easily identify land available for urban agriculture activities<sup>21</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather a list of potential sites from relevant local government departments and community consultations (e.g., planning department may provide property data in Geographic Information System format)</li> <li>• Analyze the site information using Geographic Information System, aerial photos and maps</li> <li>• Divide the parcels of land into large-scale growing operations, small-scale growing operations, community gardens, and growing on impervious or poor soil</li> <li>• Identify priority sites by setting a criteria and ranking the sites (e.g., zoning types, existing infrastructure, sun exposure, current and future land use plans)</li> </ul>
<b>Basic tools</b>	<p>Create a traveling tool-lending library for urban agriculture participants, including tools such as hoses, wheelbarrows, pitchforks, shovels, composters, stakes, trellises, shovels, rain barrels.</p> <p>Consider providing garden sheds and fencing for urban agriculture participants.</p> <p>Connect urban farmers to organize co-operative tool sharing arrangement.</p>
<b>Water</b>	<p>Encourage investments in systems for rainwater collection and storage and for small-scale water saving irrigation system (e.g., drip irrigation) in order to reduce the demand for treated water.</p> <p>Provide incentives such as utility service fee discounts for green infrastructure that reflect savings to the municipality (e.g., rooftop gardens use storm water and composted rooftop gardens absorb more storm water than grass, reducing the municipality's storm water sewer management costs)</p> <p>Hold workshops on how to reuse water from rain barrels and alternative systems for using recycled water<sup>22</sup></p>
<b>Taxation</b>	<p>Provide tax credit for urban agriculture properties (e.g., State of Maryland passed legislation that authorizes municipal and county governments to give tax relief to urban agriculture land).<sup>23</sup></p>
<b>Training and community outreach</b>	<p>Facilitate training program for potential urban growers (e.g., provide "horticulture animators" for gardening advice and instructions).<sup>24</sup></p> <p>Publish information on urban agriculture policies and urban agriculture success stories through web and print resources for public awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider including learning centers, directory of urban agriculture projects/organizations/actors</li> </ul>
<b>Administration</b>	<p>Appoint municipal staff to oversee urban agriculture practices in the municipality.</p>
<b>Example: Urban Agriculture in San Francisco</b>	
<p>San Francisco amended its Administrative Code in 2011 by creating an Urban Agriculture Program to oversee and coordinate all of the city's urban agriculture activities. Also, the city is addressing the largest barriers to urban agriculture, which are land and water access by providing \$100,000 to ensure water access for areas zoned for urban agriculture, and developing incentives for property owners to allow temporary urban agriculture projects, particularly on vacant properties awaiting development.<sup>25</sup></p>	

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Best Practices in Urban Agriculture (2007).

<sup>23</sup> Cutting through the Red Tape: A Resource Guide for Local Food Policy Practitioners & Organizers (2011).

<sup>24</sup> Could Toronto provide 10% of its fresh vegetable requirements from within its own boundaries? Part II, Policy supports and program design (2011).

<sup>25</sup> GrowTO: An urban agriculture action plan for Toronto (2012).

## Challenges

Municipal planners may face challenges in locating ideal land for urban agriculture that has the necessary infrastructure in place such as water access. There are health risks that are taken into consideration due to the historical land use patterns and unsafe practices such as the use of pesticides. Also, potential environmental risks include soil and water pollution from chemicals or nutrients.<sup>26</sup> Site analysis for potential urban agricultural land is crucial to ensure that risks are identified mitigated accordingly.

## Community gardens

Community gardens are pieces of land gardened by community members to grow fresh local produce for sale or direct consumption. Community gardens help to maintain a sense of community, address the issue of food insecurity, and promote local eating to the members of the community. Typically, a group of community members and community organizations maintain the gardens, while the municipal government provides land, equipment, infrastructure (e.g. access to water, fencing), and municipal staff to collaborate with the community organizations. The municipal staff can report back to its department about the outcomes of the initiative, which can be included in the regular communication to the municipal council regarding departmental updates. The land can be publicly owned and leased to individuals, privately-owned, or collectively owned by community members.<sup>27</sup>

## Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Partnership</b>	Partner with residents and organizations to implement and maintain the garden. Develop a working agreement with the partners managing the community gardens to delegate the responsibilities.
<b>Plan</b>	Organize community visioning workshops to develop a community-generated mandate that can build trust and ensure buy-in. Build local government support by organizing site visits, lunch & learns, and local food luncheons with elected officials and municipal staff.
<b>Land</b>	Identify potential plots of land by contacting land-holding institutions, such as hospitals, churches, and schools. Develop a lease agreement and collect rental fees from participating organizations, or develop land trusts.
<b>Water</b>	Consider various cost-sharing models for providing access to water.
<b>Basic tools</b>	Create a traveling tool-lending library for community garden participants, including tools such as hoses, wheelbarrows, pitchforks, shovels, composters, stakes, trellises, shovels, rain barrels. Consider providing garden sheds and fencing for community garden participants.
<b>Liability</b>	Consider covering community gardens under the municipality's insurance.
<b>Maintenance</b>	Provide signage around the community garden to prevent vandalism. Create clear guidelines for upkeep of the gardens, and establish regular meetings with the partners managing the gardens to discuss operational issues and successes.
<b>Training and Community Outreach</b>	Facilitate training program for community gardeners (e.g., provide "horticulture animators" for gardening advice and instructions). <sup>28</sup> In particular in Ontario, the Ontario Horticultural Association and its member societies as well as Master Gardeners may be able to assist.
<b>Administration</b>	Appoint municipal staff to oversee community gardens in the municipality.

### Example: Community Gardens in Montreal

The City of Montreal is renowned for one of the most well-established community gardens in the world and the largest community gardening program in Canada. Established in 1975, the program is funded by the city for establishing and maintaining the gardens, and some of the boroughs in Montreal provide gardening instructors to visit the garden and offer gardening advice. Residents can pay \$10 per year for a small garden and \$5 for half-garden. There is a well-established partnership between voluntary committees and the city (see case study in **Appendix A**).<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Burlington Urban Agriculture Task Force: Report to Burlington City Council (2012).

<sup>27</sup> Overview and best practices from Dig it! A Practical Toolkit (2009).

<sup>28</sup> Could Toronto provide 10% of its fresh vegetable requirements from within its own boundaries? Part II, Policy supports and program design (2011).

<sup>29</sup> Montreal's Community Gardening Program (2006).

## Challenges

It is often difficult to build political and community support to start a community garden initiative, as liability issues and the longevity of community gardens are questioned by all participating parties. Increased land values in municipalities create an incentive to build housing and other commercial buildings, or in the case of the government, sell valuable municipal assets that are underused rather than using them for community gardens. Also, the coordination of securing appropriate land and water, as well as maintaining the garden can be cumbersome. Strong partnerships between community organizations and municipalities ensure adequate support and resources to implement and maintain the community gardens, and support from the municipal council is important to protect land for community garden purposes.

## Municipal planning policies and zoning by-laws

Planning policies and zoning by-laws are essential mechanisms, which enable local food producers to maintain and grow their operations. Municipalities can make local land use planning decisions that promote agriculture land protection and local food production using the Official Plan for general planning goals and zoning by-laws for prescriptive regulations. Also, municipal councils are required to consider the conformity of the by-laws with the provincial land use planning laws when passing a by-law. For example, Ontario's *Planning Act* requires that all planning decisions be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. At least one public meeting needs to take place to gather feedback and concerns from community members. The best practices described below are divided into urban and rural, as land use and zoning approaches are different to accommodate the varying contexts of these settings.

## Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Urban municipalities</b>	<p>Consider developing a flexible approach to food production in open space zones in the Official Plan and zoning bylaws.<sup>30</sup></p> <p>Create permanent protection of agricultural status for certain urban agriculture sites, such as Montreal's Permanent Agricultural Zones.</p> <p>Coordinate program for temporary-use permits and interim control by-law applications for food production.</p> <p>Review and update animal control and zoning by-laws for keeping of backyard chickens and beekeeping.</p> <p>Add risk management requirements such as obtaining neighbor signatures in support of a proposed change to a bylaw, and liability insurance for implementing controversial programs (e.g., implementing yard hens program through by-law revisions).<sup>31</sup></p>
<b>Rural municipalities</b>	<p>Designate prime agricultural land zones for exclusive farm use.</p> <p>Within existing policy and planning frameworks, explore opportunities to tailor the application of minimum distance separation (MDS) to specific community issues and situations (e.g. non-farm development proposed on an existing vacant lot, application of MDS to barn construction after a catastrophe, etc.).</p> <p>Explore options to encourage alternative forms of land tenure that can facilitate getting existing smaller farm parcels into the hands of new or small farm operators, such as use of lease arrangements and easements. Municipalities may also want to explore options to encourage existing small farm parcels to remain in agricultural production and be made available to small farm operators, especially where they have been purchased by non-farm owners.</p> <p>Define permitted uses to include non-farm agriculture-related uses and value-added operations that would benefit the farmers and the local food industry.</p>
<b>Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)*</b>	<p>TDR refers to the trading of future development rights on farmland, in which agricultural land can be protected from conversion pressure by redirecting development to appropriate areas designated for increased development.<sup>32</sup> Municipalities can implement a TDR program * by designating "sending areas" (area designated for conservation) and "receiving areas" (area designated for development). Developers that are sent to receiving areas are allowed for greater density development than indicated in the zoning laws, while landowners in the sending areas would be provided with monetary compensation to restrict their land use.</p>

<sup>30</sup> Best practices from *Scaling up Urban Agriculture in Toronto* (2010) and *Preserving Agricultural Land for Local Food Production* (2013).

<sup>31</sup> *Nourishing Ontario – Chapter 2: Eastern Ontario*. Accessed at [http://nourishingontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CHAPTER-2\\_EASTERN-ONT.pdf](http://nourishingontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CHAPTER-2_EASTERN-ONT.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> *Preserving Agricultural Land for Local Food Production* (2013).

Activity	Description
	* While Transfer of Development Rights is used extensively in the U.S., it is virtually unused in Canada due to the different system of property rights in the two countries.
<b>Community outreach</b>	Engage the local farmers to understand the land use planning issues that affect them regularly, through public meetings and forums on agricultural related issues between policy makers, planners, farmers, general public, and other relevant stakeholders. <sup>33</sup> For example, municipalities may want to consider establishing an Agriculture Advisory Committee.
<b>Example: Zoning by-laws in the City of Kelowna</b>	
The City of Kelowna designates certain lands as Agriculture Zones in which the principle uses must be agriculture-related activities. In addition to the Agriculture Zones, the City amended their zoning by-laws in 2010 to permit urban agriculture in all zones. This amendment supports urban farmers who wish to participate in urban agriculture activities on private and public land. <sup>34</sup>	

## Challenges

Municipal by-laws can be outdated, if they are not reviewed and revised according to the current conditions instead of based on assumptions about the meaning of agriculture in the past.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the rules may inadvertently encourage the development of large farms at the expense of family farms.

Also, the guidelines provided by Ontario state that new farm parcels must remain large enough to provide farmers with flexibility in pursuing future agriculture operations, and this limits landowners in severing the land.<sup>36</sup>

## 2. Processing/preparing local food

Processing and preparing local food involves transforming agricultural products into another form as market-ready products through washing, peeling, packaging, freezing, canning, and meat processing. Several best practices in this area have been provided on the topics of public sector-led processing practices and incubator kitchens. These best practices help municipalities to support local food processing and preparing.

### Public sector support for processing practices

Municipalities can support various types of value-retention and value-add facilities, including:

- Processing facility: Transforming fruits and vegetables grown on the farm into another form through canning, freezing, or washing and peeling in a community processing centre or on farmland<sup>37</sup>
- Community abattoirs: Not for profit in nature, which is often operated on a user membership and pay-per-use model for meat processing<sup>38</sup>
- Mobile abattoirs\*: Transport trucks/trailers fitted with custom-designed interior that includes cutting and cooling rooms while meeting all requisite food safety standards, which eliminates need for animals to do the traveling and addresses concerns with ethics and quality of the meat.  
\* Cannot be implemented in Ontario's current regulatory and legislative environment and further policy discussion is required before this practices can be considered in Ontario.

<sup>33</sup> Planting the Seeds for Farm Innovation: A Guide to Achieving Flexible Land Use Policy in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe (2010).

<sup>34</sup> Example Practice Guide: Produced as part of the City Wide Food and Agriculture Strategy (2012).

<sup>35</sup> Food Connects Us All – Sustainable Local Food in Southern Ontario (2008).

<sup>36</sup> Planting the Seeds for Farm Innovation (2010).

<sup>37</sup> A Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region (2007).

<sup>38</sup> Opportunities and Challenges in Local Livestock Processing and Slaughtering within Perth County (2013).

Typically, the department of economic development is in charge of leading or participating in processing-related projects and providing recommendations to the members of municipal council. It can support the processing sector by undertaking market studies, providing guidance in the planning stage, providing infrastructure and other resources (e.g. funding, equipment, facility), and gathering stakeholders to maintain the initiative. The level of support from municipalities varies from minimal guidance and collaboration with the industry to spearheading the development of a community processing facility.

Developing the processing sector can have positive effects on the local economy, as the small and medium-sized enterprises constitute more than 50% of Ontario food-processing activity and there is great potential in generating local revenue by meeting their needs.<sup>39</sup> In addition, value-retaining and value-adding activities provide extra income for the farmer, which allows more money to circulate in the local economy and grows the local food industry.

## Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Plan</b>	Identify demand and preferable location for a processing facility. Conduct feasibility/market study such as Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Study to gather market information (if resources are available). <sup>40</sup>
<b>Location</b>	Choose a location for the processing facility that is close to food entrepreneurs and consumer markets for shared-use facilities.
<b>Zoning</b>	Ensure that the zoning code allows for food processing to occur in/near urban areas, or create designated food-processing districts, in order to decrease shipping time and costs for processing. <sup>41</sup> Explicitly incorporate value-added uses as permitted or secondary uses in planning policies and zoning by-laws and seek support from provincial agencies to create the value added policy framework. Clearly identify the difference between value retention and value added in the Official Plan in order for value retention activities to be considered normal part of farm operation and classified under agricultural uses, including pre-cooling, washing and waxing, sorting, packing, drying, slicing, coring and quartering of fruits and vegetables, storage, pickling. <sup>42</sup> Flexibility is required in the policies in the Official Plans – detailed prescriptive standards are to be in the zoning by-laws <sup>43</sup>
<b>Taxation</b>	Consider acting independently to use property tax relief to promote food processing by creating processing enterprise zones (e.g., City of Toronto's pilot program called Imagination, Manufacturing, Innovation, Technology for new food-processing businesses that allows for the phase-in of taxes – 60% rebate on municipal tax increase directly attributable to the new development over a ten year period on a sliding scale). <sup>44</sup>
<b>Training</b>	Provide municipal support (e.g. funding, municipal staff) for technical assistance and training in business management, and connect experts in the processing industry with new processing facility manager and users.
<b>Partnership</b>	Element of scale would be required to make local processing viable – Engage other municipalities through their economic development offices that may be facing similar challenges and barriers to share best practices and identify shared solutions that can be achieved (e.g. regional abattoir). Harvest Hastings is an example of a community organization that has developed support in the local community.

### Example: Northumberland Business Retention and Expansion Project

In 2011, Northumberland County Economic Development led a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) project for local food, with participation from City of Kawartha Lakes, Peterborough, Hastings, Prince Edward, Lennox and Addington and Frontenac Counties, and the Cities of Quite West and Belleville. With funding from the Ontario Market Investment Fund, 363 local food businesses were surveyed across the region, which represented 4,200 jobs in production, manufacturing, retail and service. As a result of the BR+E project, Northumberland County is creating a municipally-owned niche processing facility with partners across the region (see case study in **Appendix A**).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Nurturing Fruit and Vegetable Processing in Ontario (2010).

<sup>40</sup> Mobile Abattoirs: Lessons from Quebec (2013).

<sup>41</sup> Good Food, Good Laws: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities (2012).

<sup>42</sup> Niagara Region Review of Land Use Policy and Related Implementation Measures (2009).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Nurturing Fruit and Vegetable Processing in Ontario (2010).

<sup>45</sup> Regional Local Food BR+E (2012).

### Example: Manitoulin Island Community Abattoir

The Manitoulin Island Community Abattoir is a provincially-inspected freestanding facility that was launched in February of 2013. The facility has been developed due to the ongoing challenge that producers were facing in long transport times to get their product processed (transport times for producers were up to 2.5 hours each way). The launching of the facility was funded through grants from the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government. Additional funding came from First Nations and farmer membership covers some of the operating costs. Membership levels are divided into A and B, with A membership referring to someone who is financially invested in the project, and the B membership referring to someone who is part of the project but not invested financially. The abattoir is a “kill and chill” facility with only the killing and refrigeration of the meat occurring on site, and processing is shipped out to two partnered processors. The abattoir hopes to create jobs by attracting producers to invest in the community.<sup>46</sup>

## Challenges

The processing and preparing stage of the food value chain is often one of the weakest links in the local food system.<sup>47</sup> In municipalities across Ontario, there is a gap in local food processing facilities directed at small and medium scale operations, as they are facing competitive pressures from larger competitors and imported products.<sup>48</sup> For example, small-scale processors may face challenges adapting to new regulatory requirements if there are new costs involved related to reporting, record-keeping or capital investments. Additional costs may be incurred through conducting municipal health inspections for the new processing facilities, as well as any auditing and record-keeping requirements by their customers (especially if they are supplying major retailers). Also, facilities need the economies of scale to cover the cost of developing and running such an operation. In some cases, individual businesses may not be able to compete on the basis of costs, which may make co-op or pay-per-use models more viable.

In terms of taxation, farmers who want to add processing capabilities on their farmland may face a much higher property tax rate if the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation assesses their operations at an industrial tax rate.<sup>49</sup> Planners are required to maintain a fine balance in supporting on-farm diversification while protecting agricultural land from potential non-farm uses that could undermine the agricultural community.<sup>50</sup>

## Incubator kitchens

Incubator kitchens support start-up companies in the food sector by enabling entrepreneurs with an integrated support system, entrepreneurial resources and development services.<sup>51</sup> The kitchens can provide technical assistance in food processing and training in general business management skills. Incubator kitchens are promising economic development tools that lead to healthy, sustainable, and profitable businesses and creation of jobs in the local economy.<sup>52</sup> Municipalities can get involved in the development of incubator kitchens by providing infrastructure and funding for the program, as well as human resource support from the department of economic development to identify and connect local entrepreneurs with experts in the industry. The department can also be in charge of providing recommendations and regular updates to the municipal council.

## Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Analysis</b>	Conduct a market analysis to determine assets and gaps and needs assessment to determine the feasibility of the enterprise. <sup>53</sup>
<b>Inventory</b>	Compile an inventory of available under-utilized kitchen space where incubator kitchens could be placed <sup>54</sup>
<b>Survey</b>	Get the community involved by gathering feedback through surveys, which helps to identify the needs of the local entrepreneurs and creates a sense of ownership across the community.

<sup>46</sup> Opportunities and Challenges in Local Livestock Processing and Slaughtering within Perth County (2013).

<sup>47</sup> Good Food, Good Laws: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities (2012).

<sup>48</sup> Small-scale food processing in Ontario needs regional support says report (2010).

<sup>49</sup> Nurturing Fruit and Vegetable Processing in Ontario (2010).

<sup>50</sup> A Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region (2007).

<sup>51</sup> Wells County Regional Specialty Food Business Incubator (2012).

<sup>52</sup> Local Food Systems – Common Wealth Kitchen Incubator (2013).

<sup>53</sup> Best practices in incubator kitchen from Exploratory Study for a Kitchen Incubator in West Memphis, Arkansas (2009).

<sup>54</sup> What feeds us: Vancouver Food Strategy (2013).

Activity	Description
<b>Communication</b>	Communicate progress through letters, press releases, or meetings with key stakeholders at the local, regional and provincial level.
<b>Requirements</b>	Require business plan development and training before using the kitchen. Adopt a lenient matriculation policy customized to each client, as strict graduation policies can be detrimental to both the business and the incubator due to revenue loss from the lost lease. Customize rates/leases based on equipment usage and hours.
<b>Maintenance</b>	Hire a committed facility manager and partner with existing organizations for additional staff and support. For example, local business consultants, universities, microenterprise development organizations may have the expertise to train and support tenants and may be better equipped to take on the task.

#### Example: Toronto Food Business Incubator

Toronto Food Business Incubator is a non-profit organization that assists entrepreneurs in establishing their own food processing companies. The City of Toronto is involved through its Economic Development Corporation by providing start-up funding of this initiative alongside the federal government. The entrepreneurs participating in this incubator kitchen's Business Incubation Program are provided with advisory support from food industry experts and a commercial kitchen space.<sup>55</sup>

## Challenges

The main challenge of the incubator kitchen is the business model that absorbs part of the production cost in order to fulfill a mission of creating small businesses and employment. Securing funds from a variety of resources including different levels of governments and organizations, as well as advisory services from non-governmental organizations and experts is crucial to the success of this type of initiative.

## 3. Distributing local food

The distribution of local food involves warehousing and aggregating produce and/or processed goods and delivering them to retailers. Several best practices in this area have been provided on the topics of public sector-led procurement practices and food hubs. These best practices help municipalities to establish a viable system whereby local food producers can effectively get their product into the hands of retailers and, ultimately, consumers.

### Public sector-led procurement policies

Public procurement in the context of local food is the purchase of locally produced food by governmental agencies. Local food procurement policies not only provide a consistent source of income for local producers, as it typically represents a significant percentage of local food purchasing in the community, but also showcase the municipality's commitment to the local food industry. An example of a public procurement initiative is a "farm to institution" program, in which farms or groups of farms provide food for local hospitals, universities, long term care facilities, and other public institutions to improve the quality of the food they provide, while increasing the demand for local food.<sup>56</sup> The municipal departments involved in the procurement policy can provide recommendations for the municipal council to adopt new or revised procurement policy (e.g. staff reports).

## Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Analysis</b>	Conduct research on the financial influence of the municipality's annual food expenditures by examining the divisions that are engaged in food purchases, and determine the actual purchasing power and its impact on the food system. <sup>57</sup> Consider agricultural productive capacity in the area and set reasonable local food procurement targets. Identify local product suppliers and distributors.

<sup>55</sup> Cutting through the Red Tape: A Resource Guide for Local Food Policy Practitioners & Organizers (2011).

<sup>56</sup> A Health Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region (2007).

<sup>57</sup> Best practices and challenges from City of Toronto Local Food Procurement – Status Report (2010).

Activity	Description
<b>Plan</b>	<p>Create a local food procurement policy and implementation plan, and take a staged approach to set realistic, escalating targets for increasing the use of local foods.</p> <p>Work with farmers to set prices and discuss volumes in advance of the farming season to help farmers scale up sustainably.</p> <p>Consider starting with a pilot program in one department and implement the model in other departments once the pilot program has proven to be successful.</p>
<b>Funding</b>	<p>Provide financial incentives such as subsidies or start-up loans to distributors willing to focus on local produce and track the original source of the food.<sup>58</sup></p>
<b>Menu</b>	<p>Revise menu items to increase the percentage of locally grown fruits and vegetables served, and gradually expand the menu to include other food items that require more complex preparation.</p>
<b>Training and education</b>	<p>Provide municipal staff education and local food awareness training in the departments being affected.</p> <p>Create order guides of available local food items from municipal vendors to staff members responsible for ordering food.</p>
<b>Communication</b>	<p>Communicate benefits of the local food procurement initiatives to the clients through a public relations campaign.</p>
<b>Partnership</b>	<p>Consider aggregating purchases with similar operations in other jurisdictions or different departments within the municipality, in order to reach sufficient scale to leverage opportunities to purchase local ingredients/local value-added products and reduce the potential price premium for local products.</p> <p>Achieving a larger scale may lead to potential increase in vendor interest since they would be responsible for tracking the use of local products.</p>

#### Example: Markham Sustainable Food Procurement Policy

In partnership with Local Food Plus (LFP), the City of Markham became the first municipality in Canada to adopt a local food procurement policy for its municipally-run cafeteria. The agreement commits Markham to using a minimum of 10% LFP-certified products from local farmers in the first year and increasing by 5% every year until the agreement ends in 2013. By 2010, over 30% of food procurement was LFP-certified and the policy became a model for other jurisdictions such as Halton Region to implement similar procurement policies.

#### Example: School Food Action Coalition in the Region of Peel

The Peel District School Board, in partnership with the Peel Public Health Unit, Compass/Chartwells (third party corporate contract caterer), and Ecosource (non-profit environmental organization), developed a School Food Action Coalition to increase the use of Ontario-grown foods in its school cafeterias. The group focuses on developing menu items that increases the use of Ontario-grown foods, and achieved success by involving students and cafeteria staff through promotional and educational events such as a cooking competition and visits to local farms (see case study in **Appendix A**).<sup>59</sup>

## Challenges

There are hidden costs associated with local food procurement rules. For example, the municipal departments would need budget to source and purchase seasonal products, and change the menus to accommodate seasonal produce. Distributors are often times unwilling or unable to provide source information for the products because tracking the source information would increase the operational costs of the businesses. Also, municipal operations rely on food products that have been processed to save on labour costs, and local producers generally have limited access to processing infrastructure to address the municipality's needs. Aggregating food purchases and menus between municipal departments can help to drive down the additional costs that may be associated with purchasing local food.

Furthermore, municipalities in Ontario are affected by the 1995 Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT), which restricts government procurement that discriminates based on the origin of the goods or services.<sup>60</sup> Also, the 1990 provincial *Discriminatory Business Act* prohibits granting preference to suppliers on factors such as geographic location.<sup>61</sup> It is important to review the restrictions imposed by the regulations, and develop requests for proposals for food tenders that are fair and non-discriminatory.

<sup>58</sup> A Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region (2007).

<sup>59</sup> Ontario's Local Food Champions 2012 (2012).

<sup>60</sup> Possibilities for Local Food Procurement in Ontario (2012).

<sup>61</sup> The Canadian American Strategy Review.

## Food hubs

A food hub is an organization that manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products from local and regional producers. It strengthens producer capacity and access to wholesale, retail, and institutional markets, and is commonly organized in a regional context in order to aggregate enough producers and distributors.<sup>62</sup> A food hub can also include spaces for a processing facility such as a community kitchen, offices for food businesses and a cooking school. It plays an important role in fostering growth of small to medium local businesses, increasing public awareness about the food system and providing a place where food-related businesses and organizations can share resources.<sup>63</sup>

Typically, municipalities provide guidance and expertise to non-profit organizations or private businesses that spearhead the food hub initiative, such as helping to conduct market analysis and making municipal staff available to answer questions regarding municipal policies and regulations. Other resources can be provided by municipalities, such as start-up funding and infrastructure (e.g. refrigeration, storage), as well as promotion through government publications and websites. The activities below can be recommended to organizations spearheading the initiative or municipalities to execute in partnership with other organizations.

### Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Analysis</b>	Conduct environmental scan to determine assets and gaps in small to mid-scale local food aggregation and distribution infrastructure. <sup>64</sup>
<b>Plan</b>	Determine feasibility, core functions, business plan, governance, ownership structure and site for a central food hub. Identify product mix, scale of operation, and equipment requirements for a food hub (e.g., refrigerated vehicle, loading dock, and warehouse). <sup>65</sup>
<b>Survey</b>	Conduct stakeholder consultations with businesses, government, and non-profit participants directly involved in supporting the food hub operations, alongside potential local food industry participants, including institutional food buyers, distributors, retailers, municipal departments such as planning and health units in order to assess the need for a food hub and level of interest.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Provide vacant or underutilized government assets (e.g. building, storage facilities, vehicles) that can be retrofitted to be used for the food hub initiative.
<b>Human resources</b>	Consider human resources requirements, including <sup>66</sup> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food hub manager who is responsible for the financial oversight, business development and grant applications</li><li>• Sales and community animator who works with stakeholders and promotes the food hub within the community</li><li>• Warehouse manager/distribution coordinator who organizes and oversees day-to-day facility operations</li><li>• Delivery person who works as a liaison between the hub and its customers and requires high degree of knowledge regarding all products</li></ul>
<b>Operations</b>	Facilitate pre-season planning with producers based on established market demand. Monitor trends in sales and growth, and identify expansion opportunities in advance to plan ahead for infrastructure and facility resources.
<b>Communication</b>	Create ongoing outreach communication materials such as face-to-face and online communities of practice to facilitate networking with other food hub operators. <sup>67</sup>
<b>Marketing</b>	Develop a marketing strategy using the local farm “story” that creates a sense of connection between the producers and consumers.
<b>Partnership</b>	Consider public-private partnership, in which the municipality provides needed infrastructure (e.g., land, warehouse, equipment) and a private company operates the facility as a tenant without seeking full ownership of the property. Same model can be achieved with non-governmental organizations. <sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup> NGFN Food Hub Collaboration. Accessed at <http://www.wallacecenter.org/our-work/current-initiatives/food-hub-collaboration>

<sup>63</sup> Williams Lake: Imagine Our Future (2010).

<sup>64</sup> What feeds us: Vancouver Food Strategy (2013).

<sup>65</sup> USDA Regional Food Hub Resource Guide (2012).

<sup>66</sup> Perth County Regional Food Hub Feasibility Study (2013).

<sup>67</sup> USDA Regional Food Hub Resource Guide (2012).

### Example: The Local Food Hub in Charlottesville

The Local Food Hub in Charlottesville, Virginia is a non-profit organization that operates a distribution warehouse and an educational farm. The organization was created to address the lack of infrastructure to connect producers and buyers that was identified in a white paper on local distribution center for farm products. The initial goal was to create a hub that could offer a buying experience that is as easy as buying from mainstream distributors, which expanded to creating an educational program for farmers. Funding was provided by Nelson County and local foundations, and the initiative was promoted across the community by a core group of 15 farmers. The food hub continues to help secure Virginia's food system by improving small farm viability and increasing community access to local food (see case study in **Appendix A**).

## Challenges

When operating a food hub, one of the main difficulties is to balance the supply and demand, as maintaining the balance of different products requires extensive planning in advance. Also, once the food hub has outgrown its capacity in terms of physical infrastructure and business system, additional funding is required to secure the infrastructure, such as additional cooling systems, and accounting and management systems.<sup>69</sup> From the buyer's side, many wholesale buyers still resist paying more for food items from a food hub than they would from a mainstream distribution company. Planning in advance of the growing season and maintaining relationships with buyers is critical in providing security for the producers, and educating buyers on the benefits of local food (especially small to medium-size farms) can increase consumer awareness and willingness to purchase local products.

**“It is helpful for farmers to have an idea of volume and pricing in advance of the growing season. Planning together with the buyers would be most beneficial.”**

Kate Collier, Director  
Charlottesville Local Food Hub

## 4. Retailing local food

Retailing local food involves selling produce/processed goods to consumers, either through traditional retail stores, various forms of farmers markets, or through evolving channels such as online. Several best practices in this area have been provided on the topics of farmers' markets and public sector-enabled mobile vendors. These best practices allow municipalities to support a healthy retail market where local food is readily available to municipal citizens.

### Farmers' markets

A farmers' market provides farmers with a direct market outlet for their products and link local farmers with community members.<sup>70</sup> It provides higher profits to the farmers and vendors through direct sales, local job creation, and increased sales revenue. In addition, it reduces the distance that the local food travels to reach its consumers and food packaging. Municipalities can set up a public sector-led farmers' market, but municipalities typically assume a supporting role in the initiative by ensuring the regulations and infrastructure are in place for community organizations to run successful markets.

## Best practices

Activity	Description
Location	<p>Distance-based farmers' market requirements (e.g., 100-mile-markets) can strengthen focus on regional economic development and impact.</p> <p>Locate farmers' markets in underserved areas of the municipality in order to capitalize on economic benefits of farmers' markets.</p> <p>Consider expanding network to downtown location during the work week.</p> <p>Farmer's own stands are a growing direct retail sources that can be encouraged and that often have value-added such as baked goods.</p>

<sup>68</sup> Building Successful Food Hubs (2012).

<sup>69</sup> USDA Regional Food Hub Resource Guide (2012).

<sup>70</sup> Good Food, Good Laws: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities (2012).

Activity	Description
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Identify opportunities for multi-purpose structures and other infrastructure to be used for farmers' markets. Create permanent sites for farmers markets throughout the municipality, and incorporate necessary utilities, parking, and loading areas into the design and provide these facilities at minimal cost. <sup>71</sup>
<b>Human resources</b>	Find a market manager, market volunteers, support from other farmers in organizing the market, community committees, and a critical mass of producers to participate in the market.
<b>Municipal representation</b>	Provide municipal staff point of contact for the farmers' market organizations to ask questions regarding municipal operations and regulations – could include representatives from economic development, tourism, parking, planning, and health units.
<b>Support</b>	Actively support existing farmers' markets by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revising signage by-laws to allow farms to use site-specific signage to promote the market</li> <li>• Providing permit, parking, access to electricity</li> <li>• Facilitating garbage pickup</li> <li>• Creating a market sponsorship strategy and building relationships with retailers and restaurants to jointly promote local supply</li> <li>• Creating local advertising and using existing social media mechanisms</li> </ul>
<b>Gift vouchers</b>	Distribute gift vouchers to underserved and low-income communities that can be redeemed for market produce at farmers' markets.

#### Example: Farmers' Markets in Ottawa

According to Just Food Buy Local Food Guide, there are 21 farmers' markets in Ottawa.<sup>72</sup> The City of Ottawa Markets Management group operates two historical markets, Parkdale Market and ByWard Market. Due to the ongoing concerns regarding the viability of the ByWard Market, city staff were directed by the Planning Committee to address the issues. Project for Public Spaces, a non-profit organization, was engaged in the visioning work to develop recommendations based on research and contributions from workshops held with key stakeholders, including community organizations, residents, and government. The recommendations will be reviewed by the City Council for consideration, and affected stakeholders will be engaged for further discussions before recommendations are implemented. In addition to operating markets, the City of Ottawa's Rural Association Partnership Program provides funding of \$75,000 to support rural business organizations, fairs and farmers' markets.<sup>73</sup>

#### Example: The Food Trust's Farmers' Markets in Philadelphia

The Food Trust is a non-profit organization that operates 25 farmers' markets in Philadelphia, including the city's oldest year-round market and the city's largest outdoor market. The organization has partnered with the City of Philadelphia to create Philly Food Bucks, which is a program developed by the Food Trust in partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health to encourage the use of food stamps to purchase local food at participating farmers' markets. Select markets feature local artists and musicians to provide entertainment for the farmers' market customers.

These activities should be taken into consideration when setting up a new farmers' market or supporting an existing farmers' market. They can also be recommended to community organizations that are spearheading the initiative.

## Challenges

Common challenges in setting up and running farmers' markets include access to infrastructure and permits necessary to hold a farmer's market. Also, prices of produce at farmers markets can be more expensive than supermarkets which may make local produce less accessible to people who have a low-income.<sup>74</sup> Municipalities can be more involved in the planning process of farmers' markets to help remove administrative barriers and make markets more accessible by creating strategies to engage low-income communities (e.g. gift vouchers that can be redeemed at the markets).

<sup>71</sup> Best Practices in Urban Agriculture (2007).

<sup>72</sup> Just Food (2013). Accessed at <http://www.justfood.ca/buylocal/index.php>

<sup>73</sup> City of Ottawa (2013).

<sup>74</sup> Core Public Health Functions for BC: Evidence Review (2011).

## Mobile vendors

Mobile vendors refer to trucks that bring local food into underserved communities, such as mobile farmers' markets, mobile grocery stores, and produce carts.<sup>75</sup> Mobile vendors provide fresh local foods for members of underserved communities, and also increase sales by selling foods outside of the immediate community. Neighbourhoods can be revitalized as mobile vendors bring foot traffic for other businesses, act as gathering places, and serve as a stepping stone for entrepreneurs who want to create stationary businesses in the future.

### Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Location</b>	Encourage placement of mobile vendors along higher-volume transit routes, at community centres, and on university/college campuses. <sup>76</sup>
<b>Community involvement</b>	Develop community buy-in through public consultations and build strong, lasting partnerships with community organizations that can later manage the program.
<b>Funding</b>	For managers of multiple mobile vendors, consider adapting strategy to take revenues from markets that are profitable and invest them into the markets that are not as active, but serve purposes that are not only economic (e.g., providing access to fresh foods in low-income communities).
<b>Permit</b>	Develop permits to support outdoor venues and create policies that will allow for a diversity of food offerings. <sup>77</sup>
<b>Partnership</b>	Partner with non-profit small business lenders to provide reduced-interest rate loans for vendors. <sup>78</sup> Connect potential mobile market vendors with grant-giving organizations or private businesses that can provide technical assistance and strategic advice.

#### Example: Waterloo Neighbourhood Markets

In 2007, the Waterloo neighbourhood markets were established as a pilot initiative by the Region of Waterloo Public Health to address the lack of markets for fresh produce in certain neighbourhoods. The Region of Waterloo Public Health acted as a strong champion to lead the planning and implementation of the initial pilot program, and Opportunities Waterloo Region (non-profit organization dedicated to poverty reduction) took charge of the operational aspects of the markets. Currently, there are three markets in the Waterloo region with limited involvement from the Region and spearheaded by community organizations and volunteers. The initiative remains successful due to the strong community buy-in established in the planning stages of the pilot program (See case study in **Appendix A**).<sup>79</sup>

#### Example: New York City Green Carts Program

The Green Carts program established mobile food carts that offer fresh, raw fruits and vegetables in certain New York City areas. The program aims to increase availability of fresh fruit and vegetables to promote healthy eating and healthy food access. The City partnered with Acción USA, which provides low-interest loans to vendors, and the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund offers grant support to provide vendors with business consulting services.<sup>80</sup> New York City provides a subtle financial incentive to Green Cart vendors by giving them priority over other mobile food vendors, and caps the total number of mobile vending permits and allocates 1,000 new permits to Green Carts.<sup>81</sup>

Municipalities can be involved in the initial planning and launching of the mobile vendor programs, but non-profit organizations and community volunteers are often in charge of administering and maintaining the program.

<sup>75</sup> Good Food, Good Laws: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities (2012).

<sup>76</sup> A Health Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region (2007).

<sup>77</sup> Williams Lake: Imagine Our Future (2010).

<sup>78</sup> NYC Green Cart (2013). Accessed at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/diseases/green-carts-costs.shtml>

<sup>79</sup> Neighbourhood Markets: Outcome evaluation (2009).

<sup>80</sup> Conquering Food Deserts With Green Carts (2012). Accessed at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/18/conquering-food-deserts-with-green-carts/>

<sup>81</sup> Good Food, Good Laws: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities (2012).

## Challenges

Similar to challenges faced by farmers' markets, "bridging the affordability gap" to make markets accessible to low income or otherwise vulnerable community members becomes a challenge.<sup>82</sup> Also, mobile vendors tend to be small in scale and may not be as well-known to the target population as larger farmers' markets. Promotional initiatives by municipalities can help to increase awareness of mobile vendors (e.g. advertisements in local newspaper).

## 5. Consumption of local food

The consumption of local food involves cooking with and eating the goods at home, restaurants, or other venues of consumption. Several best practices in this area have been provided on the topics of marketing, public awareness and tourism. These best practices ensure that consumers are aware of the benefits of local food and are able to identify which foods are local to inform their purchasing decisions.

### Marketing, public awareness, and tourism

Raising public awareness through marketing, education and tourism initiatives can change the perspectives of consumers in viewing local food as a positive and essential part of the municipality, and embedding the notion of local food into the cultural context. A local brand may be the crucial "pull" factor in generating demand for local food that can stimulate increases in supply, and it also has the potential to give retailers and consumers a quality assurance if the label guarantees a certain level of quality.<sup>83</sup> In addition, educational outreach ensures that community members are provided with tools to further immerse themselves in local food activities.

## Best Practices

Activity	Description
<b>Local food guide</b>	<p>Create a local food guide, which highlights farm listings, seasonal crop available charts, restaurants, caterers, retailers and processors listings, farmers' markets, resource listings that carry local food, and seasonal recipes.</p> <p>Make the guide available on the municipal website, and send hard copies to community members, as well as tourism offices and local businesses with significant tourist traffic.</p> <p>Partner with community organizations or designate a municipal department to spearhead the program, such as the health unit.</p>
<b>Promotion</b>	<p>Profile local producers and businesses on the municipal website, including pictures, video clips, contact information, hours and description of the activities.</p> <p>Use social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) to promote local food events and interact with/answer questions from community members on local food topics.</p> <p>Focus on niche products that consumers can associate the municipality with, and gradually expand to other food products.</p> <p>Organize community feasts and forums to celebrate and share local foods.<sup>84</sup></p>
<b>Identification system</b>	<p>Develop an identification system for locally produced food by creating a local brand and distinct packaging.</p> <p>Consider the trend in regional branding as opposed to local. It may be more efficient to partner with other municipalities to develop a regional brand or to merge with an existing brand as costs associated with business development, operations and logistics can be shared. Community organizations may be better suited to drive the initiative, if human resource capabilities are not present within the municipal departments.</p> <p>Decide on the quality assurance and verification process, such as farm visits by the steering committee, as all local designations have some form of "guarantee" with varying levels of formality.<sup>85</sup></p> <p>Partner with businesses to participate in the local branding by determining the membership criteria and fees.</p>

<sup>82</sup> Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Market Initiative (2011). Accessed at <http://nourishingontario.ca/waterloo-markets/>

<sup>83</sup> A Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region (2007).

<sup>84</sup> Dig it! A Practical Toolkit (2009).

<sup>85</sup> Nourishing Ontario – Chapter 2: Eastern Ontario. Accessed at [http://nourishingontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CHAPTER-2\\_EASTERN-ONT.pdf](http://nourishingontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CHAPTER-2_EASTERN-ONT.pdf)

Activity	Description
<b>Culinary tourism</b>	Collaborate with local chefs/restaurants, farms, processors, retailers to organize festivals, trails, advertisements, such as scenic rural driving tours or self-guided walking tours that enable tourists to experience regional cuisine and rural life on a local farm. Some measure of success has been achieved, particularly for wine (e.g., Okanagan and Niagara regions of BC and Ontario) and maple syrup (e.g., Ontario and Quebec promote tourism through maple syrup festivities in the spring). <sup>86</sup>  Initiatives such as “Taste the County” in Hastings County try to link local farm producers with local chefs, restaurateurs and tourists ( <a href="http://www.tastethecounty.ca">www.tastethecounty.ca</a> ). Other examples: <a href="http://www.hastingsfarmshow.com">www.hastingsfarmshow.com</a> and <a href="http://www.cheesefestival.ca">www.cheesefestival.ca</a> .
<b>Development charges</b>	Review by-laws for retail development on farms such as bed and breakfasts, hotels, motels, and consider providing a development/permitting charge exemption or discount for agritourism.
<b>Education</b>	Develop a public awareness education campaign on local eating and benefits associated with local food, such as a public forum to bridge understanding between farm and city community members. <sup>87</sup>  Use community or school gardens to deliver programs on permaculture and ecological impacts of food choices (e.g. on-farm demo).  Provide a local food subject matter expert or a food animator that can be a point of contact for the broader public to deliver workshops, provide farming advice, and promote fostering of the local food system. Community Food Advisor (CFA) is an Ontario organization that has a presence in several Ontario communities and may be able to assist.
<b>Partnership</b>	Create partnerships between neighbouring municipalities to develop marketing campaigns that promote local food as a region (e.g. partnership between Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington Counties has produced a handbook on how to start an artisan cheese business and is in the process of developing one for creating a local brewery)
<b>Example: Kawartha Choice FarmFresh</b>	
In 2003, Kawartha Choice FarmFresh program was established by the department of economic development as a guide for community members to identify farmers’ gate sales and farmers’ markets. Kawartha Choice FarmFresh has joined with a similar Peterborough program, and merged the websites and branding to reap the benefits of regional collaboration. Other events include farmer-restaurant Speed Dating event to encourage connections between producers and buyers (See case study in <b>Appendix A</b> ). <sup>88</sup>	
<b>Example: Savour Ottawa</b>	
Savour Ottawa is a membership-based initiative that aims to highlight local farmers and provide official recognition of local businesses’ commitment to local food. The initiative was launched by Just Food, a non-profit organization that works on rural/urban food issues in the city, in partnership with Ottawa Tourism and the City of Ottawa (Markets Management and Rural Affairs Branches) , and the members consist of restaurants, hotels, caterers, bed and breakfasts, producers, farmers, retailers, supporters, and microprocessors. The members receive support through collective promotional materials, business development events, and harmonized branding. Savour Ottawa received two years of funding through Ontario Market Investment Fund grants (approximately \$100,000 each year) with matching funds offered through farmers, farmers’ markets, City of Ottawa and Ottawa Tourism. <sup>89</sup>	

## Challenges

The coordination of partnerships between municipalities and other municipalities, as well as the industry stakeholders to develop a local brand and marketing can be time consuming, and it may not be feasible for municipalities with small budgets and few staff members to spearhead the initiative. However, multi-stakeholder partnerships can mitigate this challenge by involving voluntary stakeholders to implement the initiative.

## 6. Waste Management

Waste management involves collecting, transporting and disposing/recycling of waste materials from food products. Several best practices in this area have been provided on the topics of composting and gleaning. These best practices ensure that local food is disposed of a sustainable and environmentally-friendly way.

<sup>86</sup> Local and Regional Food Economies in Canada: Status Report (2007).

<sup>87</sup> Williams Lake: Imagine Our Future (2010).

<sup>88</sup> Personal communication with Kelly Maloney, May 27, 2013.

<sup>89</sup> Nourishing Ontario – Chapter 2: Eastern Ontario. Accessed from [http://nourishingontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CHAPTER-2\\_EASTERN-ONT.pdf](http://nourishingontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CHAPTER-2_EASTERN-ONT.pdf)

## Composting

Composting encourages the breakdown of plant wastes to be reused as natural soil amendments, which improves soil conditions for subsequent crops and creates an environmentally sustainable local food value chain. Municipalities can start municipal-wide collection programs for organic waste, encourage community members to create a household-scale compost system or support non-profit organizations in maintaining the compost processing operations.<sup>90</sup>

### Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Existing small to mid-scale composting programs</b>	Support non-profit organizations and their existing composting initiatives through the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide space and funding for a large number of composting bins</li><li>• Connect non-profit organizations with furniture makers or sawmills for carbonaceous bulky materials necessary to the composting process</li><li>• Connect non-profit organizations with community volunteers to expand the program</li><li>• Provide compost facilitators for a consistent program and maintenance of the composting bins</li></ul>
<b>Municipal-wide collection program</b>	Conduct a study to determine the feasibility of a municipal-wide program (e.g. funding, available resources and infrastructure). Consider the following general activities associated with a municipal-wide program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small kitchen catchers and large green bins are distributed to residents and public education/promotion programs (e.g. annual waste and recycling calendar) are also provided to encourage participation</li><li>• Compostable items are picked up on a weekly basis using split body trucks</li><li>• Waste is trucked to a processing facility or several processing facilities equipped with technologies determined by type of residual waste stream (e.g. Source Separated Organics, leaf and yard residuals, biosolids)<sup>91</sup></li><li>• Quality of the compost needs to be monitored in order for it to be useful for agricultural activities</li></ul>
<b>Training and community outreach</b>	Hold composting workshops for community members who wish to participate in backyard composting or members of non-profit organizations. Publish information on community composting initiatives on the municipal website.

#### Example: Composting program in the Region of Peel

The Region of Peel began its kitchen waste composting program in the 1990s to “close the loop” in the local food system and marketing the compost generated from municipal kitchen waste through a bulk delivery service. The region produces over 15,000 tonnes of compost per year, and the demand has been expanding beyond the residential sector to agricultural and commercial sectors by developing knowledge and understanding of the use of compost. The regional staff have actively spread awareness about the benefits of compost as a soil amendment and educated communities to further increase the demand of compost, as well as buy-in and participation of the organic waste collection program from community members.<sup>92</sup>

### Challenges

A municipal-wide collection program for organic waste can be extremely costly, with the cost of processing organic waste in Ontario ranging from \$120 to over \$170 per tonne, which is double the cost of landfilling the material. Also, organics cannot be warehoused indefinitely and long-distance trucking of waste adds to the carbon footprint of organic waste processing. It may be practical to start by supporting small to medium-scale composting initiatives organized by community organizations, and create a long-term plan for gradually expanding the program across the municipality.

<sup>90</sup> Example Practice Guide Produced as Part of City Wide Food and Agriculture Strategy (2012).

<sup>91</sup> The Power of Compost (2012).

<sup>92</sup> Region of Peel – Establishment of Markets for Finished Compost (2013).

## Gleaning

In today's local food industry, it can be cheaper for the farmers to not harvest their fields, if the cost to do so exceeds that of the sale. Also, once high-quality crops have been harvested and sold, the farmers' fields often contain a large amount of crops that could not be sold due to their unconventional size or shape. Gleaning, the practice of collecting and donating excess foods, gives low-income individuals access to locally grown foods and prevents unnecessary wasting of quality food. Municipalities can support gleaning initiatives by providing funding and resource, as well as connecting farms and volunteers to save and even process the crops.

### Best practices

Activity	Description
<b>Existing gleaning programs</b>	Support existing gleaning programs run by non-profit organizations through the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connecting farmers' markets and farmers with the program to develop a regular gleaning cycle</li><li>• Connecting non-profit organizations with food banks and soup kitchens that have the capacity to accept fresh foods and store them</li><li>• Connecting community volunteers to the program</li><li>• Providing equipment and funding to maintain the program</li></ul>
<b>Community outreach</b>	Clearly communicate rules on produce that can be harvested and the volume of crops for gleaning, prior to commencing activities. Provide information on gleaning initiatives on the municipal website. Include the program as a part of existing local food campaigns organized by government departments such as health units.

#### Example: Gleaning initiative in Thunder Bay

The Regional Health Unit in Thunder Bay partnered with the Food Action Network, a non-profit organization, to implement a gleaning program to increase access of fresh local food for low-income families. Through the partnership, transportation is provided to local farms for low-income families to visit the farms and pick produce at no cost, which benefits the farmers by eliminating waste on the farm.

### Challenges

It is noted by many non-profit organizations that securing regular donors can be challenging when a gleaning program is getting started, so trust building is required with handling small volumes of produce and being transparent about the donation process and outcomes of the initiative.

# Customizing local food strategies and practices

The following guide provides municipalities with a general method of choosing the local food strategies and practices that are likely to work best for their individual situation as assessed across five main areas: size and type of municipality, municipal resources, agriculture base, proximity to a large centre, and activeness of the agri-food sector. Each of these areas is defined in further detail below.

## 1. Size and type of municipality

The size and type of municipality will impact the scale of resources and funding available to devote to local food efforts, which may lead some smaller municipalities to explore regional cooperation initiatives as a means of achieving their local food goals. This guide uses the following definitions for categories of municipalities based on Canadian Census information:

	Population	Density
<b>Small rural municipality</b>	Less than 15,000	Less than 300 persons per km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Small urban municipality</b>	Less than 30,000	More than 300 persons per km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Medium rural municipality</b>	Between 15,000 and 30,000	Less than 300 persons per km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Medium urban municipality</b>	Between 30,000 and 100,000	More than 300 persons per km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Large rural municipality</b>	Greater than 30,000	Less than 300 persons per km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Large urban municipality</b>	Greater than 100,000	More than 300 persons per km <sup>2</sup>

## 2. Municipal resources

The level of municipal resources will affect a municipality's ability to execute or support local food initiatives. Municipalities with low resources in terms of staff and funding may choose to pursue more basic, cost-effective practices to promote their local food industries. This guide uses the following definitions for high and low municipal resources:

High resources: Municipalities with extensive funding and staff to devote to leading or supporting local food initiatives.

Low resources: Municipalities with limited funding and staff to devote to leading or supporting local food initiatives.

## 3. Agriculture base

A municipality's agriculture base will impact its capacity to grow, raise and harvest local food. The agriculture base will also determine the type of local food that can be produced in the area. This guide uses the following definitions for a rich and poor agriculture base:

Rich agriculture base: Extensive land within the municipal boundary that is fertile and capable of growing at least one type of crop or raising livestock.

Poor agriculture base: Limited land within the municipal boundary that is fertile and capable of growing crops or raising livestock.

#### **4. Proximity to large centre**

A municipality's proximity to a large urban centre offers access to an expanded local food market through a much larger customer base. It may also allow municipalities to promote local food through the development of a culinary tourism industry. Proximity to a large centre has been defined as follows:

Close proximity: Municipality that is within 100 kilometers of a large urban centre with a population greater than 100,000.

At a Distance: Municipality that located more than 100 kilometers away from a large urban centre with a population greater than 100,000.

#### **5. Active agri-food sector**

The activeness of a municipality's agri-food sector will determine the appropriate mix of local food strategies and practices to be employed. Municipalities with an active agri-food sector may pursue more complex and advanced local food initiatives, while municipalities with a relatively inactive agri-food sector may implement more basic initiatives to promote activity within this sector. Activeness in the agri-food sector has been defined as follows:

Active agri-food sector: Highly active sector with several agri-food businesses and initiatives within the community.

Inactive agri-food sector: Limited activity in this sector with few agri-food businesses or initiatives within the community.

### **A guide to adapting local food strategies to municipal circumstances and capacities**

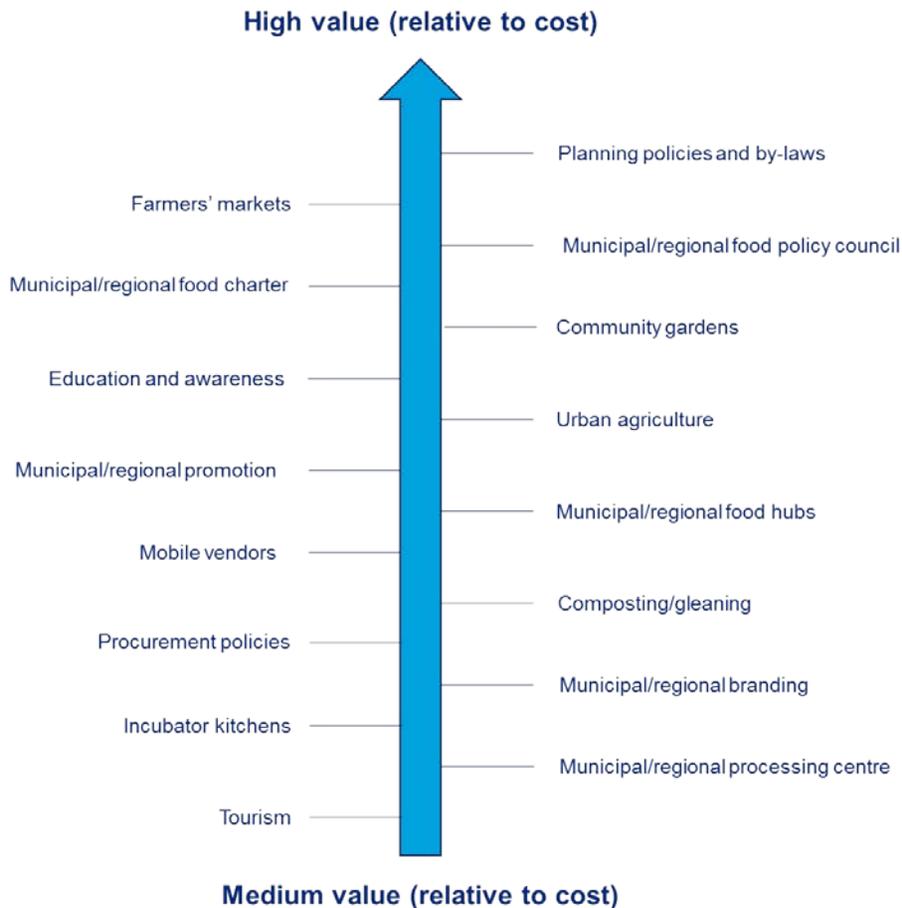
The guide on the following page provides municipalities with a method of choosing the ideal mix of local food initiatives for their individual needs. The guide uses a series of dots to indicate which set of circumstances is ideally suited to each local food initiative. The dots identify the minimum requirements for municipal resources, agriculture base, proximity to large centre, and active agri-food sector.

It is important to understand the unique challenges that northern municipalities can face when it comes to local food. Regional cooperation may not be a viable option due to long, impractical distances between municipalities. The market for local food is also likely to be smaller because of isolated populations and limited access to large urban centres. Northern municipalities must carefully consider these conditions when developing their local food economies.

Please note that the alignment of strategies and best practices in the guide below is intended to provide a broad overview of key practices that could best support the local food industry given a municipality's particular situation. This list is not exhaustive and should only be used as a guiding tool for reference. Municipalities are encouraged to consider the entirety of their current situation and select the strategies and practices that work best given their unique conditions.

	Size and Type of Municipality						Municipal Resources		Agriculture Base		Proximity to Large Centre		Active Agri-Food Sector	
	Small Rural	Small Urban	Med Rural	Med Urban	Large Rural	Large Urban	High	Low	Strong	Weak	Close	At a Distance	Active	Inactive
Municipal food policy council					●	●	●		●			●	●	
Regional food policy council			●	●				●	●			●	●	
Municipal food charter					●	●	●			●		●		●
Regional food charter			●	●				●		●		●		●
Planning policies and zoning by-laws	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●		●
Urban agriculture		●		●		●		●		●		●		●
Community gardens	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●		●
Processing centre					●	●	●		●		●		●	
Regional processing centre			●	●			●		●			●	●	
Procurement policies						●	●		●		●		●	
Incubator kitchens						●	●			●		●		●
Food hubs					●	●		●		●		●		●
Regional food hubs			●	●				●		●		●		●
Farmers' markets	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●		●
Mobile vendors				●		●		●		●		●		●
Branding					●	●	●		●			●	●	
Regional branding			●	●			●		●			●	●	
Promotion					●	●		●		●		●		●
Regional promotion	●	●	●	●				●		●		●		●
Tourism			●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●	
Education and awareness	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●		●
Composting				●	●	●		●		●		●		●
Gleaning			●		●			●	●			●		●

This guidebook recognizes that municipalities face resource constraints that could impact their ability to implement local food initiatives. Municipalities dealing with these constraints must choose between local food initiatives, focusing on the ones that will deliver the highest value and return on investment. The following diagram shows the typical value of implementing certain local food initiatives relative to their typical cost. Municipal decision makers asking “where should we spend our limited resources?” should begin with the highest-value initiatives at the top of the diagram and move on to more complex local food practices down the diagram if they have the capacity. The highest-value initiatives will create the most impact on the local food industry given the resource constraints faced by many municipalities. Again, this diagram should be used only as a guiding tool; municipalities must choose the strategies and practices that will work best for them given their current situation. However, it is important to note that there are local food initiatives available and accessible to all municipalities, regardless of their size or level of resources.



In addition, the following table provides municipal profiles with various constraints and the key activities that can be pursued in order to mitigate the challenges associated with each profile. The profiles can be used as a tool for general guidance, and each municipality should take their unique context into consideration when developing their strategies.

Profile	Key activities
Small municipalities with low level of resources	<p><b>Provide a point of contact</b> for community members and businesses regarding local food matters. Staff from economic development or health unit typically assumes this role and provides support for those who wish to champion local food activities (See case study in <b>Appendix A</b> for an example of a small municipality).</p> <p><b>Farmers' markets</b> can be organized and operated by community organizations, and the size of the markets can vary according to the availability of space and resources. Municipalities can provide support through signage, permitting use of existing infrastructures, and garbage pickup.</p> <p><b>Planning policies and zoning by-laws</b> can be reviewed and changed by the planning department and municipal council in order to promote agricultural activities in certain areas. The immediate cost associated with this activity is minimal compared to other activities. This work may be implemented sooner than other initiatives where staff is already in place.</p> <p><b>Regional food hub</b> can be organized and operated by community organizations, and municipalities in the region can pool resources to set up the food hub (e.g. existing infrastructure for storage and transportation). Regional collaboration is essential in reducing the financial burden by sharing the costs associated with supporting an initiative.</p>
Municipalities with weak agricultural base	<p><b>Regional food charter</b> can highlight collective goals of the municipalities within a region, which can lead to regional collaboration in identifying strategies to address the issues regarding local food production.</p> <p><b>Planning policies and zoning by-laws</b> can be used to protect areas that are more suitable for agricultural activities, if there are parcels of land that are more fertile than others.</p> <p>Raising livestock can be encouraged through activities such as flexible minimum distance separation rules where possible (e.g. reducing setbacks after an evaluation on a case by case basis).</p> <p><b>Community gardens</b> can be developed in collaboration with community members to encourage production in an ideal environment that may not have been possible without government assistance (e.g. identifying the most appropriate land, gathering necessary equipment and infrastructure).</p>
Municipalities that are far from large urban centre and have an inactive agri-food sector	<p><b>Education and awareness initiatives</b>, such as public workshops, can be organized to inform and encourage local food production as well as local food businesses. Community members can become more engaged through local food preparation classes or farm visits.</p> <p><b>Promotional activities</b>, such as "buy local" guide, can be distributed to community members for increase in local food demand.</p> <p>Depending on the specific issues that contributed to the inactivity in the agri-food sector, municipalities can help to mitigate the challenges accordingly. For example, in a region with limited processing capabilities that meet the provincial requirements, a <b>regional processing centre</b> can benefit the entire region's producers who want to add value to their products.</p> <p><b>Regional food hub</b> can aggregate food from producers across the region and reduce delivery and transportation costs.</p>

# Implementing strategies and measuring outcomes

Once the most suitable strategies for the municipality have been identified, municipalities can choose to implement the initiative in a variety of ways. It is common practice for stakeholders to create partnerships in executing the plan, with varying levels of participation and leadership from each stakeholder in the planning, implementing, and maintaining stages of the initiative. After implementation, the impact of the strategies should be monitored using the key metrics in order for the municipality to remain focused on its targets and achieve progress in the local food system.

## Implementing the strategies

Through our research and stakeholder interviews, we have identified five of the most commonly used implementation models that can be adapted to local food strategies.

**Municipal departments** often spearhead local food initiatives or take a corporate lead role, depending on the relevance of the initiative to the department's overall strategy and goals. The most commonly discussed examples are food consuming-related initiatives spearheaded by the health department, and Business Retention & Expansion research by the economic development department. Citizens, NGOs and businesses can be engaged to provide support in implementing the initiative (through voluntary or paid positions).

**Partnership with NGOs** refers to cooperation between a municipality and NGO. This model is ideal when the government does not have a strong program delivery model in place, and the NGO acts as a subject matter expert in the particular strategy area. The government provides municipal staff for guidance and infrastructure to execute the initiative, and the NGO implements.

**Multi-stakeholder partnership** brings together participants from various parts of the food system, from the political level, municipal departments, NGOs, and industry representatives. This model is widely used for large-scale initiatives, as well as for policies and programs that are overarching and broad in scope.

**Regional partnership** refers to a partnership between municipalities or different actors across municipalities to organize regional projects, usually to achieve economies of scale and prevent duplication of work across municipalities with similar conditions and environments. An example of an initiative governed through a regional partnership is the Golden Horseshoe Agriculture & Agri-Food Strategy developed by a steering committee with members from different municipalities across the Golden Horseshoe.

**Public-private partnership** refers to a partnership between a municipality and private sector business, and this model is best-suited to support initiatives that require the business and on-the-ground expertise from players in the private sector. Typically, the government provides overall guidance and direction, while the private sector is more involved in the implementation. For example, New York City created a partnership with Acción USA to provide low-interest loans to Green Cart vendors.

## Measuring and monitoring outcomes of the strategies

The following chart highlights key performance metrics for the local food industry. These metrics have been organized according to their applicability to one of the three purposes of Bill 36:

- Fostering successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario.
- Increasing awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food.
- Encouraging the development of new markets for local food.

With Bill 36 focused intently on the establishment of goals and targets in the local food industry, the importance of using key performance metrics to measure progress cannot be overstated. These metrics should be purposefully selected and defined with achievable targets based on the municipal local food strategy. The metrics provided in the table below are primarily outcome-based so the true impact of municipal activities on the local food industry can be more closely determined. Value is a description of how useful the metric may be as a measure of the health of the local food sector. Complexity is a reference to the difficulty and cost of capturing the data. Municipal control is how much influence the municipality has in relation the outcomes of the metric. In general, the most “desirable” metrics will be those that provide high value, low complexity, and offer high municipal control.

Overall Desirability	Metric	Data Source	Value	Complexity	Municipal Control
<b>Fostering successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario</b>					
	Number of local food products in large supermarkets	Spot checks conducted by local food expert or administrator from the municipality			
	Number of community gardens	Information collected from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipality</li> <li>• Land allocations</li> <li>• Food policy council</li> <li>• Participating NGOs</li> </ul>			
	Number of urban farms	Municipality			
	Number of incubator kitchens	Municipal economic development department			
	Number of community composting facilities	Municipality			
	Number of community processing facilities	Municipality			
	Number of food sector jobs as a percent of total local employment	Provincial employment surveys			
	Number of local food businesses and jobs	Detailed study			
	% of food being produced locally	Detailed study			
	% of food being processed locally	Detailed study			
	Local food as a % of household food basket	Detailed study, including vendor interviews			
	Average linear feet of local food shelf space at grocers of same type	Spot checks conducted by local food expert or administrator from the municipality			

Overall Desirability	Metric	Data Source	Value	Complexity	Municipal Control
	Tax revenue from local food initiatives	Municipality			
	Establishment of food charters and food policy councils	Municipality			
	Number of land use planning initiatives	Municipality			
<b>Increasing awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food</b>					
	% of citizens who know where to buy local food	Citizen survey			
	% of citizens who know when local food is available	Citizen survey			
	% of citizens who understand the benefits of local food	Citizen survey			
	Number of promotional events for local food	Information collected from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal tourism department</li> <li>• Municipal events coordinator</li> <li>• Food policy council</li> </ul>			
<b>Encouraging the development of new markets for local food</b>					
	% of local food purchased by public institutions	Tracked by the institutions			
	Number of procurement policies adopted	Municipality			
	Number of farmers' markets	Municipality			
	Total farmers' market sales	Estimated by farmers' market			
	Number of farmers' market vendors	Provided by farmers' market			
	Number of days that farmers' markets are in operation	Provided by farmers' market			
	Number of mobile vendors	Municipality			
	Number of food hubs	Municipality			
	Total food hub sales	Estimated by food hub			

Legend			
	Highly Desirable		Low
	Moderately Desirable		Medium
			High

# Conclusion

Considering the potential direction of Ontario's Bill 36, *the Local Food Act*, and the opportunities that are available to municipalities, it would be beneficial for many municipalities to take further action in developing the local food industry. The adoption of a holistic approach to assess the entire local food value chain is crucial to ensure that all key stakeholders are included in developing an all-encompassing food strategy and vision that are supported by the members of the community and the local food industry, and endorsed by the municipal council. With the unique situation of each municipality in mind, policies and programs can be customized to enable stakeholders in the local food value chain to reach their full growth potential and turn industry challenges into opportunities.

Although it is not mandated, the strategies and best practices highlighted in the Local Food Resource Guide can be used as starting points for municipalities with different levels of resources in order to access existing opportunities. In addition, maintaining an evaluation mechanism for consistent monitoring of key performance metrics is vital for achieving the desired local food targets that align with the purposes of the *Local Food Act*. When collaborating with multiple stakeholders to plan, implement, and maintain initiatives, the nature of the initiatives along with strengths and availability of each stakeholder should be carefully assessed to determine whether municipalities position themselves in leading or supporting roles.

In order for municipalities to strive together towards embedding the local food culture in their communities, institutions, and governments, they are encouraged to share their best practices as well as their successes and challenges on their websites. Municipalities can continue to build on the existing local food knowledge base by committing to regularly update their best practices, which allows municipalities in similar environments to learn from one another and foster regional collaboration.

The intent of this Guide is to combine leading municipal local food practices from other jurisdictions with the current record of best practices and innovation led by Ontario municipalities and to develop a way forward for local food initiatives across the Ontario municipal sector. Raising awareness of the benefits of local food is a key first step in beginning a conversation and developing municipal capacity to remove obstacles and develop partnerships with the full range of agri-food sector and community local food stakeholders, to promote and nurture a strong local food sector and resilient local economies. The Guide validates the choices of acknowledged municipal local food leaders and informs municipalities who have yet to recognize the potential benefits of local food, of the key considerations in getting started.

This project represents a significant investment in advancing the local food dialogue. It is strongly recommended that the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food continue its leadership with the full range of local food stakeholder organizations by developing a user-friendly resource, such as a central website or linked websites, to continue to capture and share a broad range of local food practices, insights and knowledge.

# Appendix A: Case studies

## Toronto Food Policy Council

### **Fostering collaboration and communication allows local food industry stakeholders to strive towards aligned food policies**

The Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) emerged from a group of community activists that wanted to alleviate hunger issues in the City of Toronto in a systematic way.<sup>93</sup> They collaborated with Tim Lang, who was the Director of the London Food Commission Council in England, to develop a set of recommendations for the City, including the formation of a food policy council. Also, the community activists received advisory support from the former City Councillor Jack Layton, which played an important role in positioning the TFPC within the government structure.

The TFPC was established in 1991 as a subcommittee of the Board of Health, which oversees the Department of Public Health and is comprised of members of the City Council. According to the TFPC Terms of Reference, the TFPC advises and supports Toronto Public Health in developing food security policies, advocates for community food security programs that address the commitments in the Toronto Food Strategy, Toronto Food Charter and Toronto Environmental Plan, fosters dialogue with Toronto Public Health and various food value chain stakeholders, and acts as the community reference group for the Toronto Food Strategy.<sup>94</sup>

Members of the TFPC are comprised of 30 food system experts, academics, and community leaders within the local food system, as well as City Council members. Members can be nominated by the manager, City Council member, or the Mayor, and are required to be approved by the Board of Health. A citizen member from the TFPC and a City Councillor serve as Co-Chairs of the Council, and they are elected by TFPC members. Also, the City of Toronto provides at least one full-time manager, an administrative assistant and a part-time policy associate. Meetings are held on a bi-monthly basis, and all meetings are open to the public.

One of the key success factors for the TFPC is its position within the local government, which can be helpful in empowering community organizations to effectively engage with the government in bringing policy changes. For example, the TFPC has put forward motions before the Board of Health, which have been passed and taken into consideration by the entire City Council. Also, the TFPC tries to address the piecemeal approach to food policy across the government departments and NGO projects by encouraging new connections and communication between City staff, as well as stakeholders across the food value chain to enable collaboration for a holistic change in food policy (e.g. bi-monthly public meetings with community organizations).

To date, the TFPC has contributed in development of the Toronto Food Strategy, Toronto Food Charter, Official Plan, Environmental Plan, Urban Agriculture Action Plan, the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farm Action Plan and the City of Toronto Strategic Plan by providing feedback and direction for the documents. Also, the TFPC increased awareness among City departments and agencies regarding potential food policy changes, convened coalitions of stakeholders for new food projects, and influenced legislation regarding rooftop gardens and local food procurement.

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<sup>93</sup> Case study information from Food Policy Councils – Innovations in Democratic Governance for a Sustainable and Equitable Food System (2010).

<sup>94</sup> Toronto Food Policy Council (2013).

## Community Gardens in Montreal

### Allotting land and providing neighbourhood support allows Montreal to develop 97 community gardens

Since 1975 Montreal has responded to its citizens' requests by actively creating and supporting municipal community gardens.<sup>95</sup> With 97 community gardens and 8,195 allotments (18 square meter plot per allotment), the Department of Culture, Sports, Leisure and Social Development administers the community garden program in cooperation with other municipal departments and gardening organizations.<sup>96</sup> Montreal is divided into Boroughs, and each Borough designates a staff member to oversee the garden sites in its region, and communicates its needs to the municipality.

The municipal government designates land occupied by community gardens as park zones where possible, in order to protect them from commercial development. To date, approximately two-thirds of the community gardens are designated as park zones. In addition to the provision of land, materials and equipment necessary for community gardens are also supplied by the municipal government. The Department of Parks, Gardens and Green Spaces supplies soil, compost, sand, shed, fences, containers for water or waste, and paint, as well as equipment such as picnic tables, hoses and water barrels. Mowing and trimming the grass outside the garden perimeters are also taken care of by the department.

The Department of Public Works provides equipment repair services and water supplies, while the Cleanliness and Recycling Services collects garden waste. Horticultural animators, experts in gardening and liaison between the government and community members, are employed by the City from April to October to visit the gardens on a regular basis and provide gardening advice. They work as liaisons between the Borough manager and community gardening committees, which are voluntary committees of members that oversee the activities of their designated community gardens to ensure that municipal by-laws are respected and rules and regulations are followed.



Picture 1: A community garden in Montreal

Each gardener is required to contribute \$10 per year per small garden, and the community gardening committee sets the amount of dues for purchase of equipment and social activities, which vary from \$2 to \$20. Harvested produce is shared amongst 10,000 participating gardeners and redistributed through community organizations across Montreal to serve community members in low income neighborhoods.<sup>97</sup> In addition to strengthening food security, the community garden program also focuses on educating the public, as the Botanical Department offers courses in organic gardening and medicinal herbs, and 440 youth garden plots are used for horticultural and natural science education.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Photo source: Montreal Gazette (2011).

<sup>96</sup> Case study information from Montreal's Community Gardening Program (2006).

<sup>97</sup> Action Communitaire (2013).

<sup>98</sup> Urban Agriculture and Food Security Initiatives in Canada: A Survey of Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations (1998).

## Northumberland Business Retention and Expansion Project

### Gaps in the local food industry are identified and addressed through regional collaboration

Northumberland County, Durham Region, the City of Kawartha Lakes, and Peterborough have a history of collaborating on economic development efforts. In 2011, Northumberland County Economic Development proposed to lead a regional Business Retention and Expansion project for local food, which is the largest BR+E project undertaken in Ontario. Participating constituencies included the City of Kawartha Lakes, Peterborough, Hastings, Prince Edward, Lennox and Addington and Frontenac Counties, and the Cities of Quite West and Belleville. East Central Ontario Training Board contributed to the project as a community partner to provide insight on skills development and training. Funding and staff time were provided by the Province of Ontario through its Ontario Market Investment Fund.<sup>99</sup>

In total, 363 local food businesses were surveyed across the region and they represented 4,200 jobs in production, manufacturing, retail and service. As part of the second stage of Northumberland County's 2008 Agriculture Action Plan, the findings through the surveys allowed the region to develop strategies to help local food producers, processors and retailers identify new opportunities for revenue growth.

The BR+E project was divided into three phases, and the local steering team and upper-tier Economic Development Officer in each participating jurisdiction worked together with volunteers to complete the activities listed in the table below<sup>100</sup>:

Phase	Activities
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compile a list of businesses that have self-identified the important role of local food in their operation</li> <li>• Host training sessions for volunteers interested in improving the profitability and sustainability of local food businesses by administering the BR+E survey</li> <li>• Alert the media of the regional nature of project and send letters to businesses</li> </ul>
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that all survey data is entered into the database</li> <li>• Establish a team to review the data and identify emerging trends, opportunities, and challenges for businesses</li> <li>• Validate the findings and develop recommendations/potential actions to address opportunities and challenges</li> </ul>
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present survey results and recommendations from the steering team to the Economic Development Officer</li> <li>• Discuss cross-jurisdictional trends, overall findings of the project, and a series of regional goals and recommendations amongst Economic Development Officers from across the region</li> <li>• Work with local and regional stakeholders to increase local food capacity, create partnership opportunities, and help local food producers, processors and retailers identify opportunities to increase profits</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Phases of the BR+E Program**

As a result of the BR+E program, Northumberland County is moving forward with creating a municipally-owned niche processing facility in the Colborne Industrial Park by working with partners across the region. The new processing facility will accommodate small batch processing, packaging and cold storage of foods, and be an interim point for testing the business case and recipes. In addition, the facility will provide the infrastructure and business planning opportunities for the agricultural community to grow their local food businesses. It is projected that \$660,000 will be needed to equip, staff, and operate the facility. To date, the project has gained support from the Northumberland County councillors with funding commitment of \$125,000.<sup>101</sup> Additional financial support includes \$159,000 from Trillium Funding, \$100,000 from the Northumberland Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) and approximately \$60,000 from three Eastern Ontario Development Fund agencies.

<sup>99</sup> Regional Local Food BR+E (2012).

<sup>100</sup> Northumberland County – Regional Local Food BR+E Results and Recommendations (2012).

<sup>101</sup> Northumberland securing funding for food facility, March 25, 2013. Accessed at <http://www.northumberlandnews.com/news/article/1596375--northumberland-securing-funding-for-food-facility>

## Markham Sustainable Food Procurement Policy

### Municipality takes the lead in supporting local producers through a 5-year local food commitment

In 2008, Markham became the first municipality in Canada to adopt Local Food Plus (LFP) procurement practices for its municipal food services.<sup>102</sup> Local Food Plus, a non-profit organization that promotes a local sustainable food system, provides a certification program which requires farmers to follow strict guidelines on sustainable development practices.<sup>103</sup> Markham's procurement policies require a minimum of 10% of its material and produce to be purchased from LFP-certified Ontario farmers, with an increase of 5% each year, valid until 2013. Markham hired a contractor, Unique Caterers, to comply with the policies and supply products from LFP-certified farms and processor. In 2010, over 30% of LFP-certified products were purchased by Unique Caterers, and \$300,000 worth of local produce is expected to be purchased over the term of the contract.<sup>104</sup>

One of the success factors includes the presence of strong political champions, former Councillor Erin Shapero and Mayor Frank Scarpitti, who actively supported the adoption of LFP procurement practices. Also, the municipal government ensured the success of the initiative through promotional activities. For example, a booth was set up at the annual staff appreciation day to explain the LFP standards, and multiple functions served only LFP-certified foods.<sup>105</sup> These activities not only increase awareness of local food among staff, but also ensure community buy-in by creating excitement and sharing benefits of the initiative.

Markham's sustainable food procurement policy aligns with its Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan, which includes a zero waste policy to reduce the costs associated with waste landfills. For example, Markham's food and catering services as well as special events have an organic recycling program (EcoMedia portable recycling bins) available to dispose food scraps.<sup>106</sup>



Picture 3: An EcoMedia portable recycling bin



Picture 2: LFP-certified food served on Staff Appreciation Day

<sup>102</sup> Photo source: Shifting from Global to Local – City of Markham Presentation. Accessed at <http://cms.burlington.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=9955>

<sup>103</sup> Local Food Plus (2013).

<sup>104</sup> Shifting from Global to Local – City of Markham Presentation. Accessed at <http://cms.burlington.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=9955>

<sup>105</sup> Ontario's Local Food Champions 2011 (2011).

<sup>106</sup> Westend Food Co-op (2008).

## School Food Action Coalition in the Region of Peel

### Multi-stakeholder partnership increases the presence of local food across the schools in the region

The Peel District School Board has developed a School Food Action Coalition to increase the use of Ontario-grown foods in its school cafeterias, and it is the first school board in Ontario to engage itself in a multi-stakeholder partnership for this purpose.<sup>107</sup> The Coalition includes members from the school board, the Peel Public Health Unit, and Compass/Chartwells (third party corporate contract caterer), as well as Ecosource, a non-profit environmental organization in charge of facilitating the Coalition.<sup>108</sup>

The group focuses on identifying menu items that could increase the use of Ontario products, while complying with Ontario's School Food and Beverage Policy. Also, this initiative aligns with Peel Board's Environmental Policy, with its first guiding principle as choosing local food whenever possible.<sup>109</sup> The Coalition received funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food through the Greenbelt Fund, and Chartwells also received funding to conduct its product review.

The key success factor for this initiative was to actively engage the stakeholders, including students and staff. For example, a competition was held for students to create menu items featuring local ingredients, and the winning items were to be served in 32 Peel cafeterias by Chartwells.<sup>110</sup> Also, local ingredients used in the menu items are displayed and marked with a special logo for students to easily identify local items. These strategies increased the level of support for the initiative from the students, and also provided a foundation for the students to become engaged in local food initiatives outside of the school context in the future.

The Coalition gained support from the cafeteria staff through training in using local ingredients and participating in farm visits.

Building on the success of incorporating local food items into the schools, the Peel Board continues to include local food requirements in contractual agreements, and EcoSource plans to examine how the students' purchasing choices are affected by the presence of local food in school cafeterias.



**Picture 4: Winning recipe of the student competition served in Glenforest Secondary School**

<sup>107</sup> Photo source: The Mississauga News (2011).

<sup>108</sup> Connecting the Links: Foodservice in the Broader Public Sector (2012).

<sup>109</sup> Peel board brings healthy food closer to home, March 28, 2011.

<sup>110</sup> Ontario's Local Food Champions 2012 (2012).

## Local Food Hub in Charlottesville

### Increase in average farm sales achieved through aggregation of local produce and farmer education

The Local Food Hub was established in 2009 as a non-profit organization to distribute local fruit, vegetables, frozen meat, and value-added food products from over 80 small and mid-sized family farms within 100 miles of Charlottesville to more than 150 businesses and institutions, including public schools, restaurants, grocery stores, senior centres, college dining halls, hospitals, distributors, processors and caterers.<sup>111</sup> The primary distribution area is the 40 mile radius of Charlottesville, but the organization is now sending trucks to Richmond and Washington D.C. Metro area to accommodate the larger buyers.<sup>112</sup>



Picture 5: Local Food Hub warehouse

In terms of the involvement by local governments, Nelson County Economic Development Authority (part of the Charlottesville metropolitan area) provided the initial funding of \$10,000 (USD) to start on the business plan. Additional funding was provided by various local foundations, which was used to obtain refrigerated vehicle, loading dock, and liability insurance with four staff members, including driver, salesperson, business development staff, and director. The warehouse and farm property were donated as in-kind contribution.



Picture 6: Local Food Hub educational farm

The non-profit organization started as a distribution warehouse, and expanded to an educational farm with a variety of outreach programs, as the organization realized farmers needed education and new modern growing strategies, as well as a community amongst themselves to share ideas and best practices.<sup>113</sup> Some of the workshop areas include integrated pest management, season extension, crop rotation, farm business planning, and food safety.

Since working with the Hub, producers have increased farm sales by an average of 25%, and 60% of the producers plan to increase production.

The Hub has reinvested approximately \$850,000 (USD) in the local farming community, and helped to retain over 200 agriculture-related jobs. In addition, the Hub donated more than 100,000 pounds of produce to hunger relief organizations, with 25% of the produce from the educational farm donated to food banks.<sup>114</sup>

Although the municipal government had limited involvement in the Local Food Hub initiative, there are a number of ways that Charlottesville and the surrounding municipalities can further support in the initiative and the local farmers. For example, procurement policies can be created to commit to buying local produce. If public institutions can provide an idea of volume and pricing prior to growing season, it would greatly benefit the producers to plan in advance. Also, since schools in the region lack in infrastructure to process and prepare fresh produce, municipalities can conduct a feasibility study for adding infrastructure in schools or a community processing facility for schools in the region.

<sup>111</sup> Regional Food Hub Resource Guide (2012).

<sup>112</sup> Photo source: The Center for a New American Dream (2013).

<sup>113</sup> Personal communication with Kate Collier, May 21, 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Figuring out Food Hubs: Food hubs and their role in healthy food systems (2012).

## Waterloo Neighbourhood Markets

### Strong regional champion in initial stages creates long-term success and viable markets

The Waterloo neighbourhood markets were established as a pilot initiative in 2007 by the Region of Waterloo Public Health to address the lack of markets for fresh produce in certain neighbourhoods due to geographic or economic factors.<sup>115</sup> For this initiative, Public Health received funding from foundations and in-kind support from community centres and businesses. In addition to the two locations in a community centre and hospital, three markets were added in 2008. The objectives of the markets were to increase people's consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, to increase access to locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables in neighbourhoods that lack food access, to increase social connections within neighbourhoods, and to support local farmers.<sup>116</sup>

In the pilot stage, Region of Waterloo Public Health conducted a community planning process by engaging 26 community partners for consultations, found new sites, offered training, and formulated the overall work plan including a marketing strategy and promotional materials. Opportunities Waterloo Region, an organization dedicated to poverty reduction, ran the markets on a weekly basis, purchased the vending licenses, hired and managed market coordinators and other staff, and managed the finances. Each market had one or two staff people along with community volunteers and produce was primarily purchased through the Elmira Produce Auction Cooperative. Waterloo Region Social Services provided assistance by distributing market vouchers to low-income populations to be redeemed for market products. The markets no longer have sustained support through government policies or programs since the pilot program has ended.

Currently there are two markets in Kitchener and one in Cambridge, and Public Health is not as actively as involved and neighbourhood organizations and community volunteers now manage the markets. The produce continues to be sourced from various local farmers. In addition, the markets have community nutrition workers who provide recipes and samples of prepared meals using local food, and performers provide music and entertainment.<sup>117</sup> The City of Kitchener and City of Cambridge provide market space for free, and tables and tents have been donated or purchased with grant funding. Although the Waterloo Region has stepped back from spearheading the initiative, it acted as a strong champion in the planning and implementation stages and the outcomes were high levels of community buy-in and creation of long-term partnerships with community organizations. As a result, the neighbourhood markets continue to operate with its initial objectives and strengthen the social capital within the community.



Picture 7: Neighbourhood market in Waterloo Region

<sup>115</sup> Photo source: Neighbourhood Markets: Outcome evaluation (2009).

<sup>116</sup> Neighbourhood Markets: Outcome evaluation (2009).

<sup>117</sup> Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Market Initiative Case Study. Accessed at <http://nourishingontario.ca/waterloo-markets/>

## Kawartha Choice FarmFresh

### Local food industry strengthened by collaborative marketing and branding program

Kawartha Choice FarmFresh is an amalgamation of two former marketing and branding programs in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Peterborough.<sup>118</sup> The amalgamation was completed in 2007 due to the similar names of the two organizations and the potential benefits of the expanded area which could be covered by one brand. Since the merging of the two programs, membership has expanded to include over 191 members across the two counties, and more local food has been identified for purchase by local residents and tourists. Also, several buying partnerships have been established between members. The program has been recognized for its local food marketing efforts, including the Gold Marketing Award from the Economic Developers Association of Canada.

The program spearheads and supports numerous initiatives, such as Speed Dating for Farmers and Chefs, an Agricultural Symposium, the Kawartha Choice FarmFresh Guide and Map, a Local Food Summit,<sup>119</sup> a Local Food Business Retention and Expansion Survey and various fundraisers. In the Speed Dating event, producers set up table displays and chefs rotate to meet each producer to explore opportunities for partnership. Also, the Local Food Summit held in Kawartha Lakes allows producers to identify retail opportunities for their products, develop value chain partnerships, and participate in a guest panel discussion with Gordon Food Service, Sysco and Disley Foods on accessing wholesale food distribution for institutional and restaurant trade.



**Picture 8: Producer display at Speed Dating event**

All revenues from membership fees, print and event activities are used for out-of-pocket costs, website and advertising materials. Overhead and staff costs are provided as in-kind support from the Economic Development program budget. Additional funding is obtained through grant applications for specific projects, and the organizations that have provided the grants include Agricultural Adaptation Council, Kawartha Lakes Community Futures Development Corporation with funds from the Eastern Ontario Development Program from the Government of Canada, Ontario Agri-Food Education Incorporated, Healthy Communities Fund, and Victoria Stewardship Council. These organizations have supported initial program development and recruitment, printing of map and guide, logo branding material and signage, roadside signage, interns, display banners and the development of a computer game.

With two separate municipal economic development officers managing the program, it can be difficult when the goals and actions within their strategic plans do not align. In order to overcome this challenge, open communication is encouraged and regular meetings are held to align goals between both governments, and members are surveyed to collect information on their strategic directions. Also, members are at different stages of development, size, and scope of business activities, and the varying needs are met by offering different levels of participation in the program.

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<sup>118</sup> Case study information provided by Kelly Maloney, Agriculture Development Officer, City of Kawartha Lakes (2013).

<sup>119</sup> Photo source: Jake Walling, SNAP Peterborough (2009).

## Local Food Initiatives in Temiskaming Shores

### Small municipality effectively uses limited resources to grow the presence of local food

As a small municipality in Northeastern Ontario with a total population of 10,400, the City of Temiskaming Shores faces challenges such as limited municipal resources and a lack of local producers.<sup>120</sup> Despite its obstacles, the municipal government supports the development of the local food industry by providing assistance in a number of initiatives.<sup>121</sup> In 2012, the City held the first Temiskaming Agricultural Innovation Forum in partnership with Innovation Initiatives Ontario North and the Temiskaming Development Fund Corporation. Although the forum was mainly focused on exploring opportunities for the broader agricultural sector, the topic of local food was explored in panel discussions, which provided an opportunity for farmers, agri-business sector, municipal representatives, and community groups to learn more about the local food industry.

Furthermore, the City created a Municipal Cultural Plan to support its economic development potential, and it includes specific actions that the City can take regarding the local food industry. For example, the Plan describes a public awareness campaign to promote local food networks and the incorporation of local food within cultural and municipal events as actions to support the strategic direction of the City. Also, it recognizes the importance of agriculture as an economic driver for the region, as well as a local food cluster and agritourism.<sup>122</sup>

There are six small plots of land provided by the City for community members to use as community gardens, and there is an Economic Development Coordinator who provides assistance (e.g. connecting individuals with potential buyers, providing information on government funding programs) for individuals who are interested in championing local food initiatives, such as community-supported agriculture.<sup>123</sup> For smaller municipalities, it can be very effective to provide a point of contact for local food and agriculture-related matters, as it empowers community members to champion their own projects. Also, the point of contact can express the municipality's interest and willingness to provide assistance in local food activities through chamber of commerce meetings, health unit meetings, and other community organization meetings.



**Picture 9: Community garden by the City of Temiskaming Shores Fitness Centre**

<sup>120</sup> Temiskaming Shores Census Profile (2011).

<sup>121</sup> Photo source: City of Temiskaming Shores Fitness Centre Facebook (2012). Accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/City-of-Temiskaming-Shores-Fitness-Centre/176152185747120>

<sup>122</sup> City of Temiskaming Shores Municipal Cultural Plan (2013).

<sup>123</sup> Personal communication with James Frank, July 22, 2013.

# Appendix B: Study participants

The following individuals gratefully offered their time to provide their point of view on the municipal local food sector. Note that their participation does not constitute an endorsement of the contents of this report.

Name and title	Organization
Alison Nihart, Facilitator	Burlington (VT) Food Council
Kate Collier, Director	Charlottesville (VI) Local Food Hub
George MacNaughton, Director of Operations	Dairy Farmers of Ontario
Sarah Kerton, EarthCare Thunder Bay Coordinator Catherine Schwartz-Mendez, Public Health Nutritionist	EarthCare Thunder Bay and Thunder Bay Food Action Network
Robert Chorney, Executive Director	Farmers' Markets Ontario
Franco Naccarato, Greenbelt Fund Program Manager Anne Freeman, GFMN Coordinator	Greenbelt Fund and Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network
Philly Markowitz, Economic Development Officer – Local Food Freeman Boyd, Past Coordinator of the Foodlink Grey Bruce Local Food Project Bryan Plumstead, Economic Development and Tourism Manager	Grey County
Janet Horner, Chair	GTA Agriculture Action Committee
Kelly Maloney, Agriculture Development Officer	City of Kawartha Lakes
David Canfield, Mayor	City of Kenora
Don Mills, President Jessica Thornton, Director of Operations	Local Food Plus
Jim Collard, Councillor Dennis Dick, Councillor	Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
Trissia McAllister, Agricultural Economic Coordinator	Northumberland County
Rebecca LeHeup, Executive Director	Ontario Culinary Tourism Association
Cathy Bartolic, Executive Director	Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association
Neil Currie, General Manager Peter Sykanda, Researcher	Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Alison Robertson, Program Manager	Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association
Laurie Nicol, Executive Director	Ontario Independent Meat Processors
Marc LaBerge, Manager Greg de Vos, Policy Advisor Jeff O'Donnell, Team Lead George Ferreira, Program Lead	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Name and title	Organization
Allan Thompson, Councillor	Town of Caledon and ROMA Zone 4 Representative
Carolyn Young, Program Manager	Sustain Ontario
James Frank, Economic Development Coordinator	City of Temiskaming Shores
Lauren Baker, Coordinator	Toronto Food Policy Council
Diane Freeman, Councillor	City of Waterloo
<b>Sustain Ontario Food Policy Groups</b>	
Ben Roberts, Economic Development Officer	Town of Caledon
Lyndsay Davidson, Public Health Dietician	Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit
Nancy Rutherford, Manager of Economic Development, Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Durham Region
Rosie Kadwell, Public Health Dietician	Haliburton, Kwartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit
Janice Dunbar, Community Developer	Huron County Health Unit
Kristin Sainsbury, Economic Development Coordinator	Perth County
Carolyn Doris, Public Health Nutritionist	Peterborough County-City Health Unit
Pat Learmonth, Farm Plan Representative and Workshop Leader	Peterborough County
Marc Xuereb, Planner	Region of Waterloo Public Health
Greg Atkinson, Senior Planner	City of Windsor

# Appendix C: Glossary

**Abattoir:** Facility where animals are processed for consumption as food products.<sup>124</sup>

**Community garden:** Piece of land gardened by community members to grow fresh local produce for sale or direct consumption.

**Food charter:** Reference document for municipal decision makers to express key values and priorities for developing a just and sustainable food system. It combines vision statements, principles, and broad action goals pointing towards a coordinated municipal food strategy.<sup>125</sup>

**Food hub:** Organization that manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products from local and regional producers.<sup>126</sup>

**Food policy council:** Organization that brings together stakeholders from diverse food-related sectors to examine how the food system is operating and to develop recommendations on how to improve it.<sup>127</sup>

**Food value chain:** Various stages of the food system, including producing, processing/preparing, distributing, retailing, consumption and waste management.

**Gleaning:** Practice of collecting and donating excess foods.

**Incubator kitchen:** Licensed kitchen facility that supports start-up companies in the food sector by providing an integrated support system for entrepreneurs, including technical assistance and general business management skills.<sup>128</sup>

**Urban agriculture:** Production and harvesting of fruits and vegetables, raising of animals, or cultivation of fish for local consumption or sale within and around cities.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2013).

<sup>125</sup> Vancouver Food Charter: Context and Background (2007).

<sup>126</sup> NGFN Food Hub Collaboration. Accessed at <http://www.wallacecenter.org/our-work/current-initiatives/food-hub-collaboration>

<sup>127</sup> Toronto Youth Food Policy Council. Accessed at <http://tyfpc.ca/about/frequently-asked-questions/>

<sup>128</sup> Wells County Regional Specialty Food Business Incubator (2012).

<sup>129</sup> What feeds us: Vancouver Food strategy (2013).

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