

Farmers' Markets: Opportunities for Preserving Greenbelt Agriculture

By David Gurin

Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation Occasional Paper Series
September 2006



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ISSN 1912-4171 Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation Occasional Paper Series (Print)
ISSN 1912-418X Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation Occasional Paper Series (Online)

The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation is committed to promoting awareness and education about Ontario's Greenbelt. To this end we will occasionally publish research and general interest papers that explore our three program areas: viable agriculture and viticulture; vibrant rural communities; and, a restored and protected natural environment.

Farmers' Markets: Opportunities for Preserving Greenbelt Agriculture
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ISBN 978-0-9781524-1-3

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Our living countryside

Table of Contents

Summary and Recommendations	1
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Forces that Shape Ontario Farmers' Markets.....	8
2.1 Farmers: not enough of them at markets	8
2.2 Consumers: eager to buy	9
2.3 Market organizers and managers	10
2.4 Farmers' Market Organizations.....	11
3. Farmers' Markets in a Supermarket Society	13
3.1 Urban and agricultural policy as barriers to farmers' markets.....	13
3.2 Short-term leases deter long-term planning.....	14
3.3 The problem of resellers.....	14
4. Educating the Public.....	16
4.1 Restoring food seasons.....	16
4.2 Organic and local	17
5. Encouraging New Markets	19
5.1 Educating farmers.....	19
5.2 Synergies with other forms of direct sales to consumers.....	20
5.3 Profits and problems in organics	21
5.4 Market networks or market independence?	22
5.5 Strategies to discourage resellers	23
5.6 Sites and specifications for markets	25
5.7 Farmers' markets as events	27
6. Government Help	28
6.1 Federal policy and programs	28
6.2 Foodland Ontario.....	29
6.3 Health inspections.....	29
6.4 Conservation Authority lands and other public property.....	30
6.5 Provincial and municipal encouragement.....	30
7. Measuring Progress	32
7.1 Economic multiplier effect	32
7.2 Preserving agricultural land	32
7.3 Fuel and emissions	33
8. Role of Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation	34
8.1 Public relations and communications plan	34
8.2 Capacity building measures.....	37
Acknowledgements	39
Endnotes	40

Summary and Recommendations

Almost two-thirds of the Greenbelt is farmland, and preservation of this “peri-urban” (close to the city) agriculture is essential to the success of the Greenbelt Plan. Farmers’ markets provide income that can help farmers stay on the land, and the number of farmers’ markets in Ontario (and all North America) has been increasing in recent years. This stems from greater health and environmental consciousness, like that which has propelled the organic food business to enormous yearly gains. But unlike organics, which can be imported from anywhere on the globe, farmers’ markets are by definition local. And in a global supermarket society, farmers’ markets need nurturing.

Canadian agricultural policy favours large producers who export bulk commodities through the international food supply chain. Farmers’ markets are not the places to sell the products of monoculture; a diversity of crops is needed for market success. But for a farmer invested in equipment for feed corn and soybeans, diversifying may represent a significant economic decision. Even among those already growing suitable crops there is reluctance among farmers to sell directly to consumers, because in recent history farmers haven’t had to worry about direct marketing. They have worked through corporate buyers and processors; they have not been oriented toward consumers and are unaccustomed to dealing with them.

The focus on exports misses opportunities to feed the population at home. In Ontario in 2005 there was a food trade deficit of more than \$4 billion. Of the province’s rapidly increasing organic food purchases, about 85% are imported. Farmers’ markets exist outside this global exchange. They are part of a local food supply chain that gets far less official encouragement than agriculture for export. This relative neglect, combined with the aging of farmers and their children not entering the family business, results in a scarcity of Ontario growers with suitable products and willingness to sell directly to consumers. Avoidance of packers, shippers and brokers, the advantage of cash sales, immediate payment, and control over prices would seem to be an obvious benefit of farmers’ markets, yet farmers are resistant. But a new way of thinking is gradually taking shape as the attractiveness of farmers’ markets becomes more evident.

Each farmers’ market has to be predicated on producing income for participating farmers, but the markets also have numerous public policy benefits: they promote nutrition and health, foster urban-rural dialogue, preserve a working landscape and educate the populace about food. Financial success for farmers is most probable at markets located in middle or upper income neighbourhoods, but vendors can also succeed in lower income areas (especially if there is a food subsidy program, as in the U.S.). Most Ontario farmers’ markets are organized by vendors’ associations and community organizations. An experienced market manager is essential to administer the market according to rules the vendors and community agree on. The markets are popular events in their communities; customers tend to be satisfied regulars who are drawn by the fresh quality of the produce.

Market gardening or animal husbandry on a small scale describes the typical work of farmers who sell at the markets. Some also add value by using what they have grown to make baked goods, cheese, sausage or other products. Farmers who make the adjustment to selling directly to consumers can thrive at the markets; and may participate in two or more, sometimes through cooperative arrangements with other farmers. They also sell at farm stands or through Community Shared Agriculture (weekly deliveries to urban residents). Combining various forms of direct sales can add up to a reasonable return for farmers.

The markets' membership organization is Farmers' Markets Ontario, which provides insurance, advice on starting markets and other services, but does not govern the markets. Each Ontario farmers' market is independent; by contrast, Greenmarket in New York City is a network with central control. For permission to sell at any market in New York, farmers apply to the Greenmarket office, which sets rules and fees. Data on the farmers and their sales are compiled and transformed into frequent press releases that generate market publicity, keen public interest and high sales volume.

Farms of 20 acres or less, even a single acre, can produce diverse crops for a market season. Market sales can help assure the future of Greenbelt farmland. But not all vendors at the markets are selling their own produce, and some are not farmers at all, but resellers of products bought at the Ontario Food Terminal. This creates uncertainty in the minds of customers, which could be eliminated by permitting only farmers registered by the Ontario government to participate in the markets. (In California, farm certification, equivalent to registration in Ontario, is required to sell in the markets and New York's Greenmarket attempts to be producer-only.) Or the problem can at least be mitigated by signs that clearly tell where the produce has been grown. Some farmers have suggested legislation for a producer-only rule at markets, but that might be difficult to enact, as the markets are complex: some allow imported products in order to stay open all year; many have non-farmer vendors of processed or prepared food. Any market on its own can enforce a producer-only rule.

An obstacle to bringing more Ontario consumers to farmers' markets is that seasonality has disappeared from the well-stocked bins and shelves of our supermarkets and from the minds of many shoppers. Knowledge of the fruits and vegetables of the season, once taken for granted, now needs to be taught. Some agricultural education for city-dwellers is necessary for expansion of the role of farmers' markets in their shopping habits. The syllabus for that education might be the principles of the "slow food" movement, which opposes the standardization of taste, defends local food and gastronomic traditions, and promotes biodiversity. The movement connects the pleasure of food with awareness of how we get it and our responsibility to those who get it for us. For farmers' markets, the public relations task is to make "local" the new "organic" – to advocate for food grown locally by sustainable methods.

Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) and Canadian Organic Growers (COG) mentor farmers who are already practicing sustainable agriculture and those who wish to convert from conventional farming to ecological methods. Because older farmers are retiring, new young farmers need to be trained. The Future Farmers Intern Program at Everdale Farm and ten other farms in CRAFT Ontario (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training) train young people in sustainable methods. Their graduates can increase

the ranks of farmers' markets participants. The success of these sustainable farmers can be made more certain if low-rent land is provided to them by Conservation Authorities, which have considerable reserves of agricultural land.

A statement of support for farmers' markets should be included in regional and municipal official plans. More important, official plans and zoning should support working farms in peri-urban areas, in conformance with the Greenbelt Plan. Encouragement from elected officials is vital to eliminating bureaucratic obstacles from new market development. For this report, Mayor David Miller said "Farmers markets are a wonderful part of our urban fabric. For example, the City Hall Farmers Market on Nathan Phillips Square brings fresh produce to all of the people of Toronto." Schoolyards can be good sites for markets, and Sheila Ward, chair of the Toronto District School Board, said "[farmers' markets] sound like an excellent program...the kind I would be happy to support."

Measuring the results of farmers' markets in terms of acres of preservation of farmland is very difficult because of the numerous variables involved. But it is possible to measure the reduction in "food-miles" achieved by replacing imported food with local food. The consequent reductions in fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions can also be measured. These quantities, periodically measured, along with sample surveys of farmers' market participation could be benchmarks of progress.

Recommendations for Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation:

Public relations and communications

- Encourage the creation of a market network for cities within the Greenbelt. This would define a place for farmers and communities to link. A network can overcome barriers to farmer participation and assure consumers of quality. It could ease farmers' entry into markets, allowing them to just show up and sell at a designated spot. It could coordinate participation in different markets and help with publicity, standards, farm inspections and municipal permitting agencies. The Foundation has funded Farmers' Markets Ontario to experiment with aspects of a network modeled on New York's Greenmarket. The Foundation should take advantage of the results of this grant and FoodShare's attempt to build a Toronto farmers' market network to inform its future programs of assistance to farmers' markets.
- Encourage farmers and market organizers to join a farmers' market network.
- Advocate for farmer-vendors above all at markets. Act as broker for the advancement of markets; assist with government agencies on all levels.
- Educate about the significance of seasonal local food and advertise its availability in farmers' markets.
- Examine the feasibility of a Greenbelt "brand" for produce grown within its boundaries.

- Promote accurate signage at farmers' markets.
- Encourage dialogue among organizations (CRAFT, Everdale, Local Flavour Plus, FoodShare and others) advocating ecological farming and farmers' markets. This could link rural and urban ideas and avoid duplication of effort.
- Advocate other forms of direct marketing – farm gate sales, Community Shared Agriculture, agro tourism – that work in synergy with farmers' markets to allow Greenbelt farms to survive.
- Create maps for individual markets that show the locations of its participating farms.
- Publish a book describing all the Greenbelt's fruits and vegetables sold at farmers' markets, with instructions for preparation, storage and putting up, as well as recipes.
- Publish an illustrated booklet about Greenbelt farms for children. This would be especially useful if combined with a program of direct farm sales to schools.

Capacity building

- Provide grants which benefit the public by encouraging new farmers' markets. An existing Foundation grant has begun this. It could be followed by further grants that share start-up costs with farmers and communities for new markets. Cost sharing can allow lower market fees for Greenbelt farmers participating in markets for the first time. Grants could also allow for market managers to train apprentices on the job.
- Assist existing markets by improving infrastructure.
- Assist organizations that teach farmers' market presentation and display skills.
- Advocate and support experiments such as cooperative storage and processing facilities, farm to school programs as adjuncts to markets, and expanded hours or days for successful markets.
- Work with the Conservation Authorities and other government landowners to shift farmland leases to longer terms for ecological farmers who sell at farmers' markets.
- Support future farmer training through Everdale and CRAFT internships; assist EFAO and COG mentoring programs and other help for organic farmers. Aid farmers' transitions to market gardening.
- Conduct market research for all forms of direct marketing by farmers to consumers.

Recommendations for governments:

- Provide well-located market sites with supporting facilities.
- Overcome regulatory barriers to farmers' market success. For example, apply public health and safety at markets with rules appropriate to them. Harmonize Health Ministry and Agriculture Ministry policies toward the markets.
- Expand Foodland Ontario programs. Reinstate programs for marketing and promotion.
- Rent at low cost agricultural lands of Conservation Authorities and other public agencies in the Greenbelt to ecological farmers who will sell at farmers' markets.
- Allow reasonable amounts of organic production outside marketing board quotas but within the context of the marketing boards' mandate to support farm income. This would permit small-scale sale of chicken and other products at farmers' markets.
- Permit farmers' market sales of wine from local grapes and fruits.
- Enact zoning bylaws that protect agricultural land and allow food processing on farms.
- Exempt on-farm processing facilities from industrial or commercial property tax rates.
- Consider a farmers' market nutrition program for low income families.

1. Introduction

The Greenbelt is part of a regional plan for south-western Ontario. Of the Greenbelt's 1.8 million acres, 1,184,240, or close to two-thirds, are agricultural; there are about 7000 farms, earning more than \$1.2 billion in farm gate receipts.¹ These farms produce fruit, vegetables, flowers, wine, dairy, beef, poultry and eggs. There are also speciality farms and horse and pony farms. Unencumbered, market forces might urbanize much of the farmland in the Greenbelt, but agricultural protection is a major goal of the Greenbelt plan. The plan conserves the land supply. This is what city planning or regional planning must always do, because the property market cannot conserve land or regulate use on its own. Farmers' markets manage food the way the Greenbelt manages land: outside regular channels. Those channels bring food from all over the world to supermarkets and big box stores. Farmers' markets are opposites of global markets, and many of the farmers who sell at them are resisting the ever-increasing size of farms and the use of synthetic chemicals demanded by the global supply chain.

Farmers' markets are one of the oldest forms of commerce, usually outdoors, in the centers of towns and villages, often the very reason for a settlement's existence. These markets have been the farmers' points of sale for their products for centuries, as much a focus of the townscape as church or cathedral and often adjacent – commercial jumble as foreground to spiritual grandeur. But their centrality was eclipsed long ago; with modernity came retail stores, refrigeration, packaging, and fast long-distance transportation. But they have never entirely died out, and in recent years, with the urban population sensing inadequacies in conventional sources of food, the number of farmers' markets has been climbing all over North America, including Ontario and the Greenbelt.

Farmers' markets today have numerous public policy benefits: they promote nutrition and health, foster urban-rural dialogue, preserve a peri-urban working landscape and educate the populace about food. But a market has to be predicated on producing the greatest possible income to participating farmers. A market can work in a reasonably attractive, visible, well-known, easily accessible location. There is a greater likelihood of success in middle or upper income neighbourhoods, but markets can also prosper in some lower income neighbourhoods. By placing a market at the boundary of neighbourhoods of different classes or by varying prices, farmers can suit different tastes and pocketbooks. In the U.S., the Farmers Market Nutrition Program distributes cheques in small amounts to introduce lower income citizens to the markets.

A market can help bring activity and commerce to downtown areas, but it will not automatically restore declining, abandoned or blighted urban districts. It should be considered a permanent (even if seasonal) institution, a part of a healthy, balanced community.

The region surrounding a farmers' market should have fruit and vegetable farms. These are the products most purchased at markets, and they are grown in the Greenbelt. Farms of 20

acres or less, even a single acre, can produce enough for sale during a farmers' market season. Larger farms can profit by selling at numerous markets during the week.

A market should have a well-known location. In smaller towns, a closed main street, a municipal parking lot, a church lawn or park is suitable. In cities, markets are found in market buildings, public squares, civic centres, parks, community centres and schoolyards. The market may operate for a season of about twenty-five Saturdays or weekday afternoons, or it may run all year in a covered facility. If outdoors, the site can be open or fenced, accessible to farmers' trucks, have access to washrooms and storage facilities, and a place to mount a permanent sign or banner announcing the market and its time and dates of opening.

Markets in Ontario are sponsored by vendors' associations and non-profit community groups. The two often merge for the purpose of running the market. Civic support is desirable, for both publicity and political reasons. An experienced, versatile and personable market manager is essential. This can be a part- or full-time job, depending on the size and frequency of the market. The manager should know or get to know farming firsthand, visit farms and become familiar with how produce is grown. The manager administers the details of the operation, collects fees from the vendors and arranges permits, insurance and publicity. He or she helps write and administer market regulations, keeps financial and administrative records and makes reports to the community group sponsoring the market. The manager's contacts with farmers and the public are crucial to the success of the market.

The manager arranges for signs, tables, umbrellas, promotional pamphlets, flyers, newsletters and posters. Publicity has to be tailored to the location of the market and its participants. Press releases and photos to all media, as well as websites, will bring shoppers to the markets. Publicity events can bring media and attention. Live music, clowns, animals and hayrides invite children, who are escorted by parent-shoppers. Celebrations can create a happy mood in the market, though just the colour and fragrance of fresh things to eat and the bustle of farmers and consumers are usually enough to create a joyous ambience.

Such a mood was often evident during the course of this study in the spring and early summer of 2006. Observations were made at nine farmers' markets in Toronto and eight elsewhere in southwestern Ontario. Discussions were held with market managers and organizers, both at their markets and in subsequent interviews. Numerous farmers who participate in farmers' markets and some who do not participate were interviewed. Opinions were solicited from leaders of local and national farmers' associations, government agricultural officials and academics in agricultural departments of Ontario universities. Municipal officials who host markets were also consulted, as were organizations devoted to food security and quality. Market customers and restaurant chefs were also part of the discussion. And because New York's Greenmarket has succeeded in preserving agricultural land through expansion of market opportunities for farmers, Greenmarket's founder was interviewed, as were its current director and staff. Throughout this study the focus was on promoting farmers' markets as an opportunity for agriculture in the Greenbelt.

2. Forces that Shape Ontario Farmers' Markets

Farmers, consumers, market organizers and managers, and farmers' market and food organizations are the forces that shape Ontario farmers' markets. They are gradually forming an alternative to the dominant methods of bringing food to table in the province.

2.1 Farmers: not enough of them at markets

Farmers' markets are above all about farmers and their need to earn a living, and, in the context of this report, their desire to remain on Greenbelt land and be an essential asset of the Greenbelt. Making farming profitable for small farms as well large ones is the only way to make agriculture sustainable in the Greenbelt (and all Ontario).

A fundamental obstacle to establishing new markets and expanding old ones is scarcity of Ontario growers with suitable products and willingness to sell directly to consumers. Avoidance of packers, shippers and brokers, and the advantage of cash sales, immediate payment, and control over prices would seem to be an obvious benefit of farmers' markets, yet farmers are resistant. There are many reasons for this. Participating in a farmers' market means bucking the larger trend in Canadian agriculture, in which giant consolidated food and fibre firms have established supply chains that move bulk commodities around the globe. Much of the province's agricultural product – hay, soybeans, grain corn, winter wheat, etc. – can't be sold directly to consumers. To sell at a market, a farmer can't use the products of monoculture; he has to plant a diversity of crops. For a farmer invested in equipment for cash crops, this may mean a significant economic decision. Even among those already growing products that can be sold directly there is reluctance, because in recent history farmers haven't had to worry about marketing. They have worked through corporate buyers and processors; they have not been oriented toward consumers and are unaccustomed to dealing with them.

The goal is to encourage the farmer to think of himself as a marketer – with a relationship to customers – rather than a supplier of raw materials to a supply chain. And the farmer has to enjoy (or at least tolerate) the buzz and activity of the markets and be willing to give up Saturday mornings in the summer, or have a family willing to help, or calculate that the cost of labour to run the market stand will still allow profit. A farmer has to grow the kinds of crops customers will buy. These are often more labour-intensive than the highly mechanized growing of cash crops. Specialized crops, less available in ordinary supermarkets, can be very profitable at markets. Greenhouses, which allow the season to be extended, can also mean more money in the farmer's pocket.

Half of Greenbelt farms are less than 69 acres.² Generally, farmers who sell directly to consumers operate small and mid-sized farms, though there are also examples of large farms that devote a portion of their acreage to market gardens. And there are some larger market gardeners who earn well by selling at numerous markets. Most farmers at the

markets sell vegetables and fruits; others sell eggs and meat, and cheeses, jams and other products processed on their farms. Farmers who drive a short distance with a small amount of produce may be satisfied with gross sales of \$500 or less. Farmers who drive longer distances into the cities will expect a gross of \$1000 to \$2000, or even more, depending on the amount of produce they bring to market. Another variable is the amount of labour employed by the farmer, for growing, pricking and selling. A survey of farmers at one Toronto market found the meat vendor needed to gross \$1500-2000 during the four hour market; the honey vendor, \$200; baker \$1100; vegetable vendor, \$1300. The study found "it takes a significant amount of time for vendors to prepare to come to the market...the baker needs 30 hours of preparation time and 4 hours of driving time. The meat vendor takes two days to get ready for market...One farmer making \$500 over four hours might be pleased, while another farmer might not be able to survive on that amount."³

Ann Slater, a farmer and president of Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, asserts she could go to 30 markets in a year and also sell to a CSA (Community Shared Agriculture, see section 5.2) on an intensively cultivated acre and a half. The farmer who does change his mindset toward direct marketing usually thrives. The trend to direct sales is growing, and that is encouraging because it brings real benefits not only to farmers but also to their communities and to rural and urban environments. There is room for a great deal more growth as evidenced by shortages: Debbie Field, executive director of FoodShare, noted this year that by January there were no organic Ontario carrots of the previous season remaining in storage in the province.

2.2 Consumers: eager to buy

It is clear there is abundant demand for what local farmers can supply to markets. This is verified by growth in the number of markets and the amounts spent at them. Characteristics of Ontario farmers' market customers were examined in a 2005 survey.⁴ Except for the Weston market, all were outside Toronto. Among the survey's findings: most shoppers are over 45, but there was growth in the number of younger shoppers compared to a 2002 survey. More than half of shoppers come every week, about 80% by car; they are mostly satisfied with market location, quality and variety of products and friendliness of service. Nearly four fifths buy vegetables, a third buy baked goods and meat; lesser numbers buy eggs and dairy products (primarily cheese), flowers, plants, preserves, honey, maples syrup, arts and crafts and other products. Average spending per shopper in 2005 was close to \$30, up 15.6% from 2002. The 2005 survey did not include markets in central Toronto.

Customers queried informally at the St. Lawrence, Dufferin Grove Organic, Riverdale and Nathan Phillips Square markets in the heart of the city gave slightly different answers. The shoppers appeared to be a bit younger, less than half arrived by car; they showed the same satisfaction with the market and its products, but with average spending about \$35. Spending appears to be higher at St. Lawrence Market, where more shoppers arrive by car, and lower at Nathan Phillips Square, where most are limited by what they can carry on the subway. A suburban Toronto example also shows high spending: the farmers' market in Newmarket surveys its customers regularly and finds the average shopper spends \$35.⁵ More market research might reveal ways to increase farmers' profits further. It is a business

school axiom that 80% of profits are made from 20% of customers. If this is true in farmers' markets, then the tastes of these 20% need to be examined.

Freshness, quality, good taste and healthiness are all qualities frequently stressed by customers as reasons to come to the market. Customers often seek a farmer's advice on how to prepare products. They are curious especially about plants they may never have seen before: fiddlehead ferns, wild leeks or edible flowers. But even more common vegetables elicit a surprising number of questions, which may say a great deal about urban remove from fresh food.

Good farmer-customer relationships are a reason many become "regulars" of certain of farmers in a market. At the indoor all-year market in Guelph, there are regulars who come "because they know the farmers" and want to support them. They describe their favourites: a 75-year old Italian who grows figs and rapini along with tomatoes in his hothouse, for example. Some even help their favourite farmers in "a tough season." One regular said "I can't imagine life without the market," and another spoke of the market making her feel "more connected to my place." "Look at this beautiful lettuce," one said, showing a deep green head, picked early that morning. A group of regulars, occupying the benches at one of four picnic-style tables near the prepared food counters, described the market morning at the tables: at six the pensioners come for coffee; at eight the efficient shoppers, often with kids, who get bigger breakfasts; at ten, the more relaxed, who drift in until the market closes at noon. Farmers' markets can become convivial social centres as well as food sources.

2.3 Market organizers and managers

Most Ontario farmers' markets are organized by vendors' associations and community volunteers. Some are in municipally-owned facilities and managed by vendors or by municipal employees. Others are run by community organizations, Business Improvement Areas, Chambers of Commerce or civic clubs. There is a variety of governance models. Some examples follow.

The Dufferin Grove Organic Market, in a Toronto city park, is an alliance of Friends of Dufferin Grove and farmer-vendors, with market rules developed according to needs of farmers and community. The Friends are active in all aspects of enhancing the city park, but describe themselves as "not an organization. There is no executive, no annual meetings, no formal status."⁶ The Friends are citizens from the mixture of upper and middle income and subsidized housing bordering the park who meddle creatively in all aspects of running the park. On the other side of Toronto, Friends of Riverdale Farm was founded to plan the future of the Farm, and grew from that mission to sponsoring an outdoor farmers' market in Riverdale Park, a city park adjacent to the farm.

The Newmarket market was founded by the municipality as a downtown revitalization effort; a vendors' association governs the market, which is managed by a city councillor. Almost all Newmarket vendors are from the Greenbelt. Nathan Phillips Square market is organized by the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Organization, which promotes roadside marketing and pick-your-own operations. Most of the farmers at Nathan Phillips (as at many

markets) also sell at their farms. The Hamilton and St. Catharine's markets are administered by those municipalities; the Milton market by the Chamber of Commerce and a vendors' association. The St. Lawrence North Market is owned by the city and supervised by a city employee, but with the advice of an Eligibility Review Committee of five farmers, who assess the qualifications of vendors and also act as governing board of the market. The St. Lawrence application asks for farm property tax bills, detailed questions about farm area, crops by number of acres or length of row, varieties of berries and apples, pears and plums. Egg, dairy and meat producers are asked for details about numbers of chicks, size of milking herd and number of stock raised for sale at the market. Even veterinary bills are requested. Bakers are asked to list raw ingredients grown on the farm and ingredients purchased. They must also describe their baking equipment.

Most managers are employed by the farmers' market. Managers recruits farmers and encourage variety in products sold. They develop market rules according to the needs of farmers and communities, collect stall fees, organize meetings, arrange publicity, and deal with politicians and food safety inspectors. The role of the manager is crucial. They are not only knowledgeable but also extraordinarily dedicated. A market manager salary starts at about \$15/hour and rises to \$20/hour, but some work far more hours than they are paid for.

2.4 Farmers' Market Organizations

Farmers' Market Ontario (FMO) is a membership organization of farmers' markets in the province. It supplies advice to market organizers on recruiting vendors, raising money, writing rules and hiring managers. FMO provides insurance, training and consultant services. Over the years it has been awarded Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA, formerly OMAF) grants to advertise and promote markets, train vendors, improve sales, research consumer needs and deal with issues of food safety. In 2004 FMO published *Sharing the Harvest: How to Build Farmers' Markets and How Farmers' Markets Build Community!* The 177-page paperback includes descriptions of some Ontario markets, the rules and regulations of an exemplary market and a listing of member markets. The book is an attractive and readable guide, useful to groups starting or improving a market.

One farmer who was involved in starting a market in a small Ontario town said "we could never have started our market without the help of Bob Chorney (FMO Executive Director). He came to us in the spring and we were up and running in the summer." The same farmer remembered a course on "product presentation" offered at the Agricultural Training Institute that was prepared by FMO. A manager at another market, interested in eliminating resellers from the market, pointed out that FMO had many member markets with resellers; this, he felt, makes it difficult for the organization to take a strong stand against them. But FMO has recently asserted the importance of eliminating resellers, despite some member markets dissenting strongly.⁷ Some markets, organized by small farmers and operating on minimal budgets, find FMO fees high, but Chorney is usually referred to as the most experienced and knowledgeable professional on the subject of farmers' markets in the province.

There are other organizations that, unlike FMO, are not farmers' market membership organizations, but are instrumental in the farmer-city link because of their focus on the

environment, health and food security. The Toronto Food Policy Council develops policies and programs promoting food security, nutrition and environmental health. It has encouraged Toronto farmers' markets. Foodlink in Waterloo Region, just outside Greenbelt boundaries, is an advocate of "food localism." It seeks to link farm and city by creating "an awareness of the true value of local food"⁸ and promoting practical ways of making it widely available.

FoodShare in Toronto works on food issues "from field to table." FoodShare covers "the entire system that puts food on our tables: from the growing, processing and distribution of food to its purchasing, cooking and consumption."⁹ One of FoodShare's programs is the "Good Food Box," which buys fruits and vegetables from local farmers and from the Ontario Food Terminal and distributes them to paid subscribers. Under a grant from Project for Public Spaces, a non-profit planning and design organization, FoodShare is working on building a network of farmers' markets that will concentrate on low-income neighbourhoods of Toronto. FoodShare is also operating (in conjunction with local communities) seven fresh produce stands in high-need neighbourhoods. The stands are supplied, like the Good Food Box, mostly by Ontario farmers (directly or through the food terminal), organic when possible.

The Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, in addition to the help it gives farmers with growing food in an ecologically sound way, offers a full-day course on direct marketing, including advice on selling at farmers' markets.

3. Farmers' Markets in a Supermarket Society

3.1 Urban and agricultural policy as barriers to farmers' markets

The globalized market sends an abundance of imported products to supermarket shelves, while farmers' markets in the developed world are a tiny niche. Historically, they depended on women shoppers, but in an age of two-earner families, freezers and far-flung suburbs, speed and convenience trump freshness and friendliness. The markets may offer better-tasting produce and more sociability, but they are not as convenient as supermarkets in an age that puts a premium on constant availability. The structure of modern society and city planning is a barrier against farmers' markets challenging the dominance of supermarkets.

Canadian agricultural policy supports globalization. It is generally aimed at increasing the export of bulk commodities. When the grain and live animal trade are removed from calculations, Canada is a net importer of agricultural products. While the export focus makes sense in many regions of the country, it is far less productive in peri-urban locations; it results in lost opportunities to feed the people at home. In Ontario in 2005 there was a food trade deficit of more than \$4 billion.¹⁰ Of the province's rapidly increasing organic food purchases, about 85% are imported (roughly the same percent as for conventionally grown foods).¹¹ But the external costs of transporting and growing these imports – greenhouse gas emission, air and water pollution, environmental degradation – are absorbed by the planet and society as a whole and don't register in the consumer price.

The number of farms in Ontario has decreased substantially; those that remain are larger and more specialized than ever. The big farms contract to sell their produce to food companies like ConAgra and Archer Daniels Midland; and the farmers' decisions have to suit the contract even if they don't benefit their community or the local ecology. At the extreme, the farms become like industrial plants, producing a specific commodity for a global supply chain rather than growing what is best for animals on the farm and the natural resources that keep the farm fertile.

By contrast, smaller scale farmers tend to know their farms and their communities intimately and are more likely to be stewards of the land. They are small business owners that have records of being interested in protecting not just the economic value of the land, but also its ecological health. A farmers' market is part of this mentality; it is a local supply chain that depends on small to mid-size farms and a nearby urban market to thrive. In southern Ontario, Greenbelt farms are ideal producers for farmers' markets in Toronto and other nearby cities. In the short-run, it is unlikely the global barriers will be overcome, but public policy can nurture the local supply chain, and in so doing it will also be nurturing the social capital for the next generation of farmers.

3.2 Short-term leases deter long-term planning

A bit more than 44% of agricultural acreage in the Greenbelt is rented.¹² Some of the rented land has been purchased by developers, and there are large public landowners: the Conservation Authorities, Ontario Realty Corporation, Transport Canada (Pickering Airport lands) and Rouge Park. Most tenants have short term leases, which can be a barrier to planting anything but cash crops. Tenant farmers are generally unwilling to abandon accustomed practice and equipment for long-term plans to produce crops saleable at farmers markets.

3.3 The problem of resellers

What is the definition of a farmers' market? This is debated by participants in the markets. Purists among farmers and market managers prefer markets strictly for farmers selling what they have grown themselves – producer only. Others allow farmers to buy from neighbouring farmers when they are low on a product, or for a group of cooperating farmers to pool products for market, with one selling for all. Still others allow farmers to supplement their own product with produce bought at the Ontario Food Terminal, as long as it is grown in Ontario. And some allow sale of imports from outside Ontario, especially in winter months at all-year markets. Most who speak publicly take a dim view of vendors who are strictly resellers of goods they have bought at the Terminal or elsewhere. Just who can sell what at farmer' markets remains an unresolved issue that creates uncertainty in the minds of customers, and is an obstacle to the growth of the markets.

According to Kurtis Andrews, a farmer who sells at a few markets: "I routinely witness 'hucksters' (persons who buy and resell produce from the food terminal) who mislead the public by taking advantage of a flexible definition of farmer (signs stating 'farm grown', etc.). Such practices erode both consumers' trust and farmers' ability to make a living. In such scenarios, legitimate farmers are routinely squeezed out of markets, due to unfair competition, and consumers are left with little more than an outdoor supermarket. We must keep the 'Farmer' in 'Farmers Market.'"¹³

Most customers do want to buy from farmers, but it is not always clear which vendors really are farmers. At one market recently visited the most prominent stand had a white canopy with "Fresh Fruits and Vegetables from the Farm" emblazoned on it along with the Foodland Ontario symbol. But the vendor admitted he wasn't a farmer; he bought everything at the Food Terminal. This kind of vendor impedes actual farmers who want to use farmers' markets as an alternative to the wholesale market, where they can encounter purchasing monopolies that don't allow them adequate profit. Imports can be sold through supermarkets, but local producers who want to capture some of the retail mark-up have no alternative other than direct sales to consumers.

While some markets adhere to producer-only rules others are dominated by resellers. There are resellers in most markets in Ontario.¹⁴ Other jurisdictions also face the problem of resellers, but stricter regulation appears to limit them. In California, each seller of produce needs to have a "producer certification" from his County Agriculture Commission. In New York City, Greenmarket enforces producer-only to the best of its ability. It requires that

“regional farmers [defined as within a large ellipse around the city] and other regional producers must be in full control of the production of all products sold at Greenmarket.”¹⁵ Constant vigilance is required to enforce this: in New York and in many Ontario markets visits to farms are crucial roles of market management.

While most markets may be best served by embracing producer-only as rigorously as possible, there also valid arguments for allowing some reselling by farmers. All-year markets feel that in order to maintain their customer base they need to offer variety after the Ontario harvest season, and organic markets feel they need to offer organic products that can't be grown in Ontario. To accommodate these needs, markets have worked out rules for percentages of imports that can be sold by farmers (but not by non-farmers who are just retailers of Ontario Food Terminal items) during the season and off-season. These are spelled out in section 5.5 of this report.

There are additional issues about baked goods, other processed food and prepared food sold to eat in the markets. What proportion of a cake or frozen lasagne sold must have been from the vendor's farm? What is the place of arts and crafts at a market? Are butchers who are not farmers permitted to sell meat? Cafes and restaurants add to the ambience of the market, but how much of their servings should be locally produced? In Ontario each market has its own rules. (See section 5.5.)

There are also governmental barriers to farmers' markets and to the kind of farming that best serves them. Recommendations for overcoming these barriers are in section 6.

4. Educating the Public

4.1 Restoring food seasons

Seasonality has disappeared from the well-stocked bins and shelves of our supermarkets. Plums, melons, peaches and all manner of fruits and vegetables, once available only in season, are now sold year-round. Many young (and a surprising number of older) people are not even aware of the meaning of the phrase “in season.” In their experience produce has no season. This is an astonishing transformation from a time not long ago, when food was intimately related to time of the year. The result is a kind of perpetual Garden of Eden in our supermarkets. But there is a snake in that garden; it is the effect on the environment of transporting the food, a cost borne by society as a whole – an “externality” in the language of economists. Apples from South Africa, for example, come with the cost of thousands of “food-miles” – to use a term coined by environmentalists more than a decade ago and now coming into more common use. In addition to environmental cost, there is the very tangible matter of taste: fruit from Chile or some other faraway land in January is rock-hard and tasteless, but it sells because many purchasers no longer even know the feel and flavour of ripe fruit in season.

None of this is to castigate Canadians for wanting bananas and oranges or salad greens all year. But the difficulty is that in June, when Ontario strawberries are fresh and succulent, rubbery California strawberries are the only ones to be found in most supermarkets. Same irony in August, when Niagara Peninsula peaches are tender and delicious, but Georgia peaches are the only ones in local stores. Strawberries and peaches aren’t the only victims; local farmers of all Ontario fruits and vegetables tell of difficulties in marketing their products against the competition of imports that (because of foreign subsidies or dumping of excess product) are cheaper. Local food is sometimes more expensive, but that need not necessarily be a marketing obstacle if consumers understand that the food is fresher and ecologically sounder than imports. The higher cost of organics has so far not been an impediment to the ever-expanding organic market. Belief in the value of local food and knowing it is available from the nearby Greenbelt has vast potential to increase demand for food in farmers’ markets. Educating the populace about local food and its seasons is the first step in public relations for Greenbelt farming. This education should begin in elementary schools and in the markets themselves, to which school children should be taken.

The syllabus for that education might be the principles of the “Slow Food Movement,” started in Italy in 1986. It opposes the standardization of taste and defends local food and gastronomic traditions. It promotes agricultural biodiversity and defends unique domestic and wild animal and vegetable species. The movement connects the pleasure of food with awareness of how we get it and our responsibility to those who get it for us. Slow Food branches around the world are called *convivia*. One of them, in London, Ontario, sends out a newsletter, and organizes cooking classes, tastings, and group dinners of local food.

4.2 Organic and local

As important as education of consumers is livelihood of farmers. The best lesson in this regard is sales of organic food in North America, which have increased 20% a year for the past ten years. The (adjusted) share price of Whole Foods in 1992 was \$3; it was \$62 in 2006. Whole Foods has recently been the fastest growing mass retailer in the United States and Canada, and now Walmart has entered the organic food market. But the great majority of this organic food is imported from distant places, and much of it warrants the label "industrial organic," as some of the same factory methods of raising animals are employed, even if the feed is grown without pesticides.

"I think there is a gathering sense that organic and local is not the same," says Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. "Buying national organic products does very little for the local economy. Local food chains are very, very important. Organic has important values having to do with pesticides and how land is treated, but now that it is industrialized, buying organic doesn't necessarily support farmers consuming less energy....Moving organic food across the country uses just as much energy as conventional. I think this is becoming more important."¹⁶

The impulse to buy organic is healthy; the organic movement has done a good job of educating the public on the perils of pesticides and other chemical inputs. But with their industrialization organics are losing lustre. Now the task is to make "local" the new "organic," to advocate for food grown locally by sustainable methods. Such food in farmers' markets can make them attractive and profitable.

This has happened in noticeable measure in New York City, where the Greenmarkets have become the standard for taste and quality, and where "local" has replaced "imported" as the desirable adjective in restaurants and food stores. Greenmarket was started in 1976 with a foundation grant and support by the city. Nowadays, like Kleenex for tissues, Greenmarket has become the common word for farmers' market in New York and environs. Restaurants advertise their use of Greenmarket products. This was not achieved overnight; it happened by dint of the perseverance of a few key individuals and by assiduous media coverage. The coverage resulted from the high quality of goods in the markets and their visibility in public squares, parks, vacant lots and schoolyards. Greenmarket has become a recognized brand name. In fact, it is a registered mark.

A similar conflation of brand and product could happen in Ontario with Cookstown Greens. These salad greens are grown organically by David Cohlmeier, a farmer and Slow Food advocate in Cookstown, south of Barrie. Cookstown Greens appear on menus in upscale Toronto restaurants. It wouldn't be surprising if some time soon we find ourselves referring to all excellent salad ingredients as Cookstown Greens.

In California the farmers' markets federation is called the Federation of Certified Farmers Markets. Certification means the farmers in the market are genuine growers and the markets can advertise themselves as "the real thing" – "places where genuine California farmers sell their fresh picked crops directly to the public." This suggests that the public relations strategy for farmers' market should be two-pronged. (1) Create consciousness of a regional food economy. By deciding to buy local, the consumer makes an empowering decision to

preserve farmland and strengthen the local economy. (2) Build farmers' markets as one of the natural sales points for fresh and nutritious local products – especially organic local products – and keep the markets directly linked to farmers. The media will notice and the publicity will encourage new and expanded markets.

5. Encouraging New Markets

This section describes programs and techniques to stimulate development of new farmers' markets and improve existing markets. Some of these are properly the responsibilities of farmers' market organizations, others may need governmental help (section 6), and some are recommended as projects to be aided by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation (section 8).

5.1 Educating farmers

Farmers' markets begin with farmers. But because farmers are aging and their children aren't following them into the business,¹⁷ nothing could be more important than educating young farmers and inculcating them with environmental values. Fortunately, Ontario has organizations doing just that. One of them, Everdale Environmental Learning Centre, is located in Erin, within the Greenbelt. A food movement activist describes Everdale as "a hive of activity generated by a very few good people with little encouragement from government."¹⁸ Its Future Farmers Intern Program has been training apprentice farmers since 2000. Most students are in their early twenties, most with university degrees or in process of earning a degree. The students learn how to be certified organic farmers. The program has a remarkable retention record: out of 26 graduates, 19 are still farming, either on their own farm or as farm managers. Trillium Foundation funds helped the Learning Centre get started. An Agriculture Canada grant and a private American foundation helped develop the Intern Program. Now it is funded by farm sales from the Everdale organic farm and help from Carrot Cache, a fund created by Carrot Common to support worker co-ops and organic farmers. There is strong demand for the Intern Program – 6 or 7 apprentices are chosen each year from about 70 applicants. Everdale signifies a modicum of return to sustainable agriculture as a chosen style of life, one particularly suited to peri-urban agriculture and farmers' markets.

According to Gavin Dandy, Everdale's director, it is the "social appeal, the idea we are community-based rather than commodity-based" that draws the interns. Dandy points out that the internal logic of organic farming supports direct sales to consumers: "If you deal with wholesalers, they want a lot of one product, which means monoculture...when you have more diversity, you're imitating nature." Further, "a 200 acre corn farm in the Greenbelt is in the wrong place, but it's hard for a 55+ grain farmer to become a market gardener." Everdale's training of young farmers has the potential of adding to the number of organic farmers (now only 47 out of 7000¹⁹) in the Greenbelt and thus the supply of fresh organic produce, a commodity in demand at flourishing farmers' markets. Everdale is one of eleven organic farms belonging to CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training) Ontario. Each farm offers a full-season internship program and each hosts field trips from the other farms to broaden the young farmers' experience. Host farmers lead a workshop on an element of farming: composting and nutrient management, cover crops and rotations,

implements and machinery; livestock management, biodynamic methods, fruit crops, or farming finances.

The Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) is a key organization for sustainable farmers in the province. EFAO promotes sustainable farming through courses, seminars, conferences, farm tours, meetings and a newsletter. Its research and courses cover soil tillage, green manures, composting, crop rotations, soil erosion control, weed management, livestock health, the interpretation of soil tests and conservation practices. EFAO educates farmers considering the transition to more ecological practices as well as those who already have organic experience. The organization is an impressive combination of idealism and practicality. It has occasionally offered informal support to members who are part of community groups starting a farmers market. Sales through farmers' markets are essential to its members. There is also a need to learn how to be a farmer at market. "You can't just walk in and make the \$1000," points out EFAO President Ann Slater.

A group of farmers who came together through EFAO started the Eco Farmers Market at Dalston (north of Barrie). Completely farmer-run, it started with farmers who had been through EFAO mentoring programs. Thirty-seven farmers met and brainstormed, putting ideas on flip charts. At first the market was held in a parking lot beside a restaurant, but the town objected because of parking problems (an indication of how touchy selecting a site can be); now the market is on a farm, made available by the owner on Friday from 3 to 8, June to Thanksgiving. Twelve farmers, who use ecological (not necessarily certified organic) methods are the vendors. They don't use herbicides, pesticides or artificial fertilizers and they make "maximum use of perennial pastures...use heirloom seeds and heritage livestock breeds that make the most" of local farming conditions.²⁰ They don't feel able to pay the daily fees charged by most markets and instead assess themselves \$50 a year. Each pays his own insurance by riders to existing farm policies. They work cooperatively on signage and all other logistics and operate by a code of ethics that emphasizes the ecological and local nature of the market. The Eco Farmers Market at Dalston and other small markets manage without formal bylaws.

5.2 Synergies with other forms of direct sales to consumers

Farmers' markets alone may provide enough income for some growers, but many need more than one kind of opportunity for sales. Direct sales at the farm, to a CSA, and to institutions such as schools and restaurants can all work together to make a farmer more certain of reaping profit from the intensive labour of market gardening or small-scale animal husbandry. The Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association helps farmers deal with consumers visiting their farms. A CSA is an arrangement whereby a local farmer (usually organic) sells subscriptions to urban residents who get a weekly box of freshly harvested farm items. To participate, subscribers pay 6 months or a year in advance, which can provide crucial revenue for the local farmer. In Ontario, produce is delivered weekly to local community depots in Hamilton, Burlington, Dundas, Oakville, and Toronto.

Direct farm sales to institutions are a relatively untapped market in Ontario. In California and other states, Farm to School programs (with some federal funding) play the role of CSAs in the classroom. The school district is the subscriber and the box is delivered to different

schools and classrooms each week. Rather than a lecture on eating five fruits and vegetables a day, students are presented with a box of fruits and vegetables delivered from a farm at the urban edge of Los Angeles or other cities. The produce is picked the previous day and dropped off at the school by the farmer. Teachers prepare lessons about where the food came from and about the value of freshness. Analysts of the program²¹ report that students marvel at fruit that is sweeter than any they tasted before, and they try vegetables they would not normally eat. The program gives farmers income; students get nutrition education. This program is worth emulating, either with government help or as a private or foundation initiative. A farmer who has a ready market for, say, 500 heads of lettuce a week at schools will feel confident in planting another hundred for a CSA or farmers' market. And this allows more diversity in the market stalls.

Appreciation by school children augurs well for the future, but the approval of restaurant chefs can have an immediate effect on the solvency of a farmer selling at market. Knowledge that a proportion of product will go to a restaurant makes a trip to market less risky. Often purchases by chefs at the market can evolve into direct deliveries to the restaurant on market day.

Another synergy can occur when farmers who can't afford processing facilities that meet health standards sell their products to a caterer who cooks the sausages or sells the peach pie at a market stand. The caterer advises a customer that if he likes the prepared product he can get the makings "at the food stand over there." Ideally, the happy customer then purchases lamb or fruit from the farmer who grew it.

Finally, farm tourism – recommended on some restaurant menus which name the source of their food – can be one more element of making local food appreciated and sought after. All forms of direct marketing to consumers add up to assure a local food supply network to meet continuing local demand.

5.3 Profits and problems in organics

Achim Mohssen-Beyk of the Quinte Organic Farmers Cooperative – a group of farmers who initially got to know each other through involvement in EFAO – in Prince Edward County says that the nine farms in the cooperative always sell out at farmers' markets, despite the higher price of organic products. The selling farmer for a particular market picks up the produce of the others and takes it to market. The cooperating farmers get the advantage of daily sales with only one or two weekly trips to market. (Without formal cooperatives, there are also farmers who regularly go to market with produce of their neighbours as well as their own.) "Our prices cover production plus a living," says Mohssen-Beyk, who laments that in general people don't know where their food is coming from and how difficult it is to grow food. But organic farmers at markets are educating people while selling (a public benefit of the markets). Peter Finch, one of the Quinte farmers says the "supply of organic produce can't keep up with demand. We're growing about 50% more this year than last." He feels there is a new consciousness about food and people feel good about buying local, pesticide-free food. This is especially true in Toronto markets, which are more profitable than rural markets. Regular shoppers make requests and farmers try to provide what is asked for. There is profit in selling at markets for all farmers, and probably more profit for organics, which

customers often expect at a market. Farmers need to be made aware of the potential profit from high quality food sold at markets.

But organic growers also have particular problems, especially in the sale of products which fall under the jurisdiction of marketing boards that impose a quota system. Supply management through marketing boards has its positive side: poultry, eggs, dairy and turkey farmers survive because prices are set to cover costs of production and reasonable return on investment. The good side of marketing boards is that they assure farmers make a living; the bad side is that they make new entries difficult. For example, Chicken Farmers Ontario, the poultry marketing board in this province, will not allow any sales from farmers without quota. There is a secondary market in the buying and selling of quota, but it is expensive to buy. (The problem is compounded by farm safety standards that are hard – some say impossible – to implement when the chickens are truly free-run and living outside much of the time.) In Alberta, farmers with fewer than 2000 chickens need not own a quota for their sales, but in Ontario no chickens can be sold outside of quota, so organic chickens are only available through CSAs. Organic farmers are mostly new producers, so the quota system is an obstacle to them.

The National Farmers Union recommends both *expanding* supply management (to guarantee an economic safety net for more farmers) *and reforming* the system, so as to allow reasonable new entries. The NFU believes there “is room to embrace the alternative production methods and direct marketing approach of small flock farmers by allowing quota exemptions. At the same time it is possible to maintain the successful and necessary marketing regime for Ontario’s 1100 commercial chicken farmers who raise 220 million chickens each year.”²²

Despite its challenges, growing can be less a problem than marketing for organic farmers, especially for animal products. One solution for farmers is to sell to Pfennings, a respectable organic farmer and the largest organic wholesaler in Ontario, or through a coop. Selling to Pfennings or another wholesaler avoids the headache of marketing, while selling through a coop means meetings and work, but a larger share of profit. (Quinte is a good coop model.) Scale is the issue; it’s hard to market alone, but farmers’ markets provide an outlet, both for individuals and cooperatives.

Organic farming doesn’t get the support it deserves from government at the federal or provincial level. There is no extension service to provide ready answers to problems. Without more government encouragement, organic farming will not reach its potential. Meanwhile, the programs of EFAO and Canadian Organic Growers are the equivalents of extension course and indispensable to organic growers.

5.4 Market networks or market independence?

Each Ontario farmers’ market is independent. FMO can recommend market rules and procedures, obtain grants for distribution to markets, or lobby for its member markets, but it does not control the markets and cannot compel standards or behaviour. By contrast, Greenmarket in New York is a centralized operation. Farmers apply to the central Greenmarket office for permission to sell at any of 51 markets in 37 locations throughout the

city (a convenience for them, and a safeguard for the markets against rule-breakers). Market rules are standardized and fees set centrally. The markets have the official support of the city, so city agencies are cooperative in making sites available, and through the city's community planning boards there is a mechanism for neighbourhood approval for new markets and hours. Market managers can work full-time or nearly full-time work by managing several markets on different days. Farm inspections are made by experienced staff. All over the region farmers know where to go if they want to be market vendors. A Farmer Consumer Advisory Committee, about 60% farmers, 40% consumers, meets to advise management on regulations and on the conditions of the markets. Perhaps most important of all, there is a central source for a constant stream of publicity to community and metropolitan media.

A vendor application to Greenmarket is extensive. In addition to crop plans (like those requested on the St. Lawrence application in Toronto), an applicant must provide: a producer profile listing all family participants at the market, year the farm was settled, generations in farming and changes in land ownership. Greenmarket also asks about changes made in products over the years, percentage of income over five and ten years from wholesale, farmers' markets, farm stands and other sources. Farm land must be described, including an indication of whether or not it is in an agricultural zoning district. The kind of labour used, marketing strategy and even goals and philosophy are requested. All this information helps Greenmarket paint a picture for the public, journalists and policy makers. Greenmarket issues market profiles before each season, listing markets that need vendors and the products sought. In partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Greenmarket runs the New Farmer Development Project for immigrants with agricultural experience who wish to become farmers in the region.

The Greenmarket formula has been very successful in New York City and it could work in Toronto. Careful attention should be paid to the FoodShare exploration of this system for use here. Interviews with market managers in Toronto suggest support for the idea, but it would be a challenge to alter the independent approach now embedded. An interim idea, described in section 8, would be for Friends of the Greenbelt to set up an advisory organization with elements of what Greenmarket offers without adopting its top-down structure.

5.5 Strategies to discourage resellers

Problems with resellers are common. Sometimes they become the dominant presence in a farmers' market, perverting the name and defeating the purpose. Most Ontario markets are not supposed to allow resellers who aren't farmers, nonetheless they are present. For vendors who are legitimate farmers, markets have worked out various accommodations. All year markets have formulas such as the requirement that 70% of the volume of goods in the growing season (June – November) be grown by the seller; 30% off season (Dec. – May). The 30% can include storage crops: apples, potatoes, turnips, parsnips, leeks. It can also include greenhouse-grown crops. There are often rules that require posting the place of origin of the product, but they are not uniformly enforced. The consequence is that at any time of the year a shopper can find lemons, pineapples or Greek olive oil in the St. Lawrence or Dufferin Grove or other markets where all produce sellers are actually farmers. But a price card

alongside these products that are exotic to Ontario may have the name and address of an Ontario farm. The effect is jarring to shoppers who come to the market expecting local produce.

Most markets allow prepared food and baked goods where the ingredients are not entirely from Ontario (e.g., banana bread). Butchers who are not farmers are also at markets; presumably they cut only Ontario meat, but there are often no signs certifying this. Some markets permit arts and crafts vendors (appropriate when farm-grown skins or other materials are involved), even clothing sellers, though too many of these can create an undesirable flea market atmosphere in the market.

There are two levels to alleviating the reselling problem. The first is to assure that all who sell produce at farmers' markets are farmers. This can be achieved by requiring everyone selling farm products to be in the Ontario Farm Business Registration Program. Farm businesses with gross farm income of \$7,000 or more must register with Agricorp, an agency of the province that works with food producers. To register, the farmer pays an annual fee of \$160.50 to one of Ontario's accredited farm organizations: Christian Farmers' Federation of Ontario, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, or National Farmers' Union. (Registration is obligatory for agricultural rates in municipal property taxation.) Markets could require that vendors post their farm registration number. This is a reasonable requirement for the integrity of farmers' markets. Some farmer-vendors who are angry about the existing situation advocate provincial legislation to require that only registered farmers sell at farmers markets. The Town of Huntsville has a bylaw that permits only primary producers as vendors in its farmers market. These producers must produce 70% or more of the goods they intend to sell. There is some question about the bylaw's efficacy.²³

The second level (proposed by Kurtis Andrews, a farmer who sells at several markets) would identify each product with a coloured sign that can slip into and behind 1 quart and 4 litre baskets. The sign would give the farmers name, location and registration number, followed by colour-coded indications of whether the product is vendor-grown, Ontario-grown or imported, along with how far the product has travelled ("field to plate in ___km"). The sign would also carry the price and indicate if the product is organic. Even if the distance the food has travelled were left off, the signs would still be giving consumers information they deserve, in a clear and prominent fashion. The colour-coded signs alone, even without registration numbers, would reveal who is a vendor and who a reseller of Ontario or imported products.

Information about food origins at markets is as reasonable as ingredient and nutrition requirements on food labels. But, practically speaking, laws requiring that farmers at markets be registered, or requiring signs of the sort described, could only be passed by dint of lobbying the provincial legislature. This could happen only if a strong voice speaking for farmers' markets advocated it, which would have to be FMO. So any effort to bring such a program into being would have to be won first within FMO by a significant number of markets wanting legislation. Probably the most realistic approach is for farmers to voluntarily post their registrations, and if all farmers in a market are registered, then the market can advertise itself as producer-only. Such markets together might want to call themselves the Ontario Registered Farmers Markets (like the California Federation of Certified Farmers Markets).

Another, more comprehensive, way to insure probity in the markets is through the standards established by Local Flavour Plus. LFP nurtures local and regional economies by promoting environmentally, socially and economically sustainable food systems. It does this by certifying farmers and food processors for sustainability and local origin and linking them with local purchasers. Local (defined as Ontario) is mandatory in the LFP scheme, so that would eliminate imports from farmers' markets. Shoppers often give concern for the environment as a reason for coming to farmers' markets, so standards encourage sustainability (the LFP goal) should be appreciated. As the premium for organics does not seem to reduce high demand, a reasonable premium for LFP standards shouldn't discourage trade at most markets.

5.6 Sites and specifications for markets

Public squares, parks, schoolyards, municipal parking lots with low weekend use, vacant lots, and closed streets are all good sites. Consultation before starting the market is crucial; a market should be a welcome asset in a community. Although there will rarely be unanimity, a market should have the good will of the majority of the community. Within Toronto, a good guide to site selection is to choose sites in the most densely inhabited districts, either residential or commercial, or mixed. Nathan Phillips Square is ideal because of the density of workers and residents in the vicinity and availability of transit. Residential high density and office workers in North York make the market work in Mel Lastman Square. Cabbagetown's density makes the Riverdale Farm market work. A high density residential location also means shoppers don't need parking space; they can come from their homes with shopping carts. Toronto's city planning division has mapped 140 distinct neighbourhoods in Toronto. Nearly every one of these has a population base that could support a farmers' market, with a range from just a few stands to many, and a public site that could accommodate it. And some neighbourhoods are now underserved by ordinary food markets. There are farmers who have long known this and who sell corn, apples, peaches or other produce in season in the city. They show up a dozen or so times a year, choose a street corner with many passers-by, and sell out rapidly. Their farms are mostly close to the city, on land rented from Rouge Park or one of the other government land-owners, so the farmers know the city well enough to figure out where to park their trucks.

It is not hard to figure out where farmers' markets could prosper, but it is sometimes hard to get official approval. Permission to use Toronto parks has depended on the interest and good will of local supervisors more than on a set of rules. Paul Ronan, director of parks for Toronto Parks and Recreation, says his department checks first with Toronto Public Health (TPH) about new farmers' markets. His department is in the "early stages of working on a policy"²⁴ for farmers' markets with TPH, which in 2005 published *Toronto Public Health Guidelines for Farmers' Markets*. It describes how food vendors may meet the legal requirements for meat, eggs, milk and food handling at markets. Ronan says the Riverdale and Dufferin markets "came out of community need." This is a way of saying that Friends of Dufferin Grove campaigned effectively for the market. Not every community is capable of such campaigning, and objections to a location can come from councillors and others who misunderstand the purpose of the market. In a recent Toronto case, the local councillor objected to a new market in a park because "parks shouldn't be used for commercial purposes." While a market is indeed commerce for the farmer, it is usually under the

umbrella of a non-profit organization with the goal of improving nutrition, ecological understanding and urban-rural links. It has little impact on park maintenance and is as appropriate to a park as a café or a festival, provided it doesn't take space users of the park need for other purposes.

Toronto officials need to be reminded that the mayor would like to encourage farmers' markets. For this report Mayor David Miller stated that "Farmers markets are a wonderful part of our urban fabric. For example, the City Hall Farmers Market on Nathan Phillips Square brings fresh produce to all of the people of Toronto. Local farmers markets in many other city neighbourhoods offer people the opportunity to eat fresh and healthy while we support our friends in the agricultural community."²⁵

There are few farmers' markets in Toronto schoolyards now, but Sheila Ward, chair of the Toronto District School Board, wrote "this sounds like an excellent program...the kind I would be happy to support."²⁶ The TDSB general manager for facility services wrote "there are no specific policies in place which would prohibit events such as farmers' markets. However, the TDSB is mindful of the impact ...on the surrounding community (e.g. traffic, parking, noise, litter) and on the board's stressed exterior infrastructure (pavement and turf)." Permits would have to be "considered carefully, on a case by case basis."

While municipal staff have to respond to the complaints of councillors and citizens, market sponsors with their own space can act independently. Such is the case with the Evergreen Foundation, which has grants to refurbish the Brick Works in Toronto. The project will emphasize regional food, including a farmers' market of 180 stalls, with a portion of them allocated to each of the five Ontario food regions. Evergreen is willing to create a sixth for the Greenbelt. The Brick Works will sponsor a "slow food festival" and a restaurant that features local food.

Suburban GO stations are natural locations to serve commuters on their way home. Unfortunately, the station areas lack room for farmers' trucks and stalls unless some parking spaces are used. But the parking lots tend to be overcrowded, as almost all GO commuters arrive at their stations by car (GO estimates that only between 5 and 10% of riders walk to the station). Nonetheless, the convenience of a few farmers' stalls at the station at the height of the growing season might be attractive enough for commuters to forego some parking spaces once a week at the height of Ontario's growing season. Wide sidewalks near TTC subway entrances may be more suitable for one or two stands where curbside parking space is available for farm trucks.

Farmers' markets have a good grasp of the specifications for stalls within their allotted space, the appropriate days and hours of operation and general design and ambience of the markets. The markets generally use space cleverly. Stalls are, understandably, more generous at outdoor markets. So a vendor's space is more generous at Nathan Phillips Square than at St. Lawrence Market. Outside the city, vendors usually have more space. Newer markets adopt the patterns of older ones, but as most markets are physically flexible, changes can be made easily, if vendors agree.

5.7 Farmers' markets as events

A farmers' market is inherently an event, and this attracts shoppers. Despite similarity of function, each market has individual character. The St. Lawrence North Market, Toronto's oldest and best known, is abuzz from very early Saturday morning. There is an atmosphere of authenticity that emanates from the 49 inside and 10 outside vendors. The market atmosphere is enhanced by the architecture, and by the pea meal bacon sandwiches and other attractions of the south market. Both north and south markets animate the neighbourhood and bring clientele to nearby shops.

Riverdale Farm Organic Market is more relaxed. Approaching the market through the trees of the park feels like coming upon an encampment of farmers and foragers a time long ago. At the first markets in spring this impression is strengthened by thickly-bearded Dael Wilson, a forager, also known as a "wildcrafter," who sells fiddleheads and wild leeks he gathered in the woods. Also among the twelve vendors (six farmers and six vendors of bread, pastries, coffee, garden designs and dog treats) is Ted Thorpe, a fourth-generation Ontario vegetable farmer. He has been certified organic since 1990, growing vegetables, herbs and fruits. He describes his business as a "small family farm," but with enough produce to sell at two markets in Toronto and two in small towns. He thinks it's important to "occupy the kids" at the market, and, indeed, there are many kids with their mothers, munching on market cookies or on ice cream from a store across the street. This makes the market an "event" for them too. Moreover, it is a place where they begin their education in food and nutrition. "A rainy day in the city doesn't seem so awful when kids remember that farmers need the rain."²⁷

In Milton, just the closing of Main Street to accommodate the market makes an event. In Newmarket, buskers play and a horse-drawn cart pulls kids around the market; other markets have music or other entertainments. But the main event has to be the market itself, catering to shoppers who return every week.

6. Government Help

6.1 Federal policy and programs

All farmers face difficult odds: their share of the food dollar has been declining sharply while farm input costs have dramatically increased. But the complexity of federal agriculture policy is beyond the scope of this report, except to note again that federal policy is committed to building export sales. Its major thrust is not support of small farmers most likely to be building local food supply chains – the kind of farmers who supply farmers' markets. This is the context for farmers in the Greenbelt and elsewhere, and advocates for them need to focus on promoting federal policy that includes and enables a local food system. According to the Executive Director of the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee, this requires "a transition from world market to local market, from marketing exports to feeding 11 million in Ontario, an uphill battle because of domination by the export model."²⁸

Food subsidy to low income families is a social policy with implications for farmers. There is no such policy in Canada, but the U.S. has food stamps, a Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (known as WIC), and school food subsidies. There is also a WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which is limited in dollar value but seems to encourage farmers' market shopping. The program issues cheques that can be used to buy fresh, unprepared fruits, vegetables and herbs from farmers, farmers' markets or roadside stands that have been approved by a state agency. Fifty-eight percent of farmers' markets in the U.S. participate in food stamp or WIC programs.²⁹ A small experiment in nutritional subsidy exists in Toronto: the Riverdale Farmers Market gives out Riverdale Farm Dollars (\$10 per family) in the form of cheques to immigrants attending a school for English as a Second Language. The pilot project (funded by Carrot Cache) is designed to get parents from Regent Park schools familiar with the market. Market vendors accept the cheques and then redeem them with the market manager. A more informal experiment was tried in Toronto on World Food Day in 2005. To introduce children to farmers' markets, a thousand coupons worth a dollar each were given to kids by the Toronto Food Policy Council to make purchases at the farmers' market in Nathan Phillips Square. The delighted children used them to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. These experiments are worth repeating on a larger scale by the provincial or federal government.

Canada needs a national policy for food security. Like an energy policy, it would attempt to link supply and demand. With food, the goals would be improving human health and the health of the land. Central to such a policy would be securing a diversity of food supply from peri-urban areas. It would also devise a system of rewards for farmers who are stewards of the environment and expand advisory services for sustainable farmers.

6.2 Foodland Ontario

A list of farmers' markets can be found on the agriculture department or ministry websites of many American states and Canadian provinces. Unfortunately, this is not the case with OMAFRA, where searching for "farmers' market" will bring up "Food Safety Tips" as the first result. There is no list of markets.

But Foodland Ontario is a division of OMAFRA, and its six full-time staff and fourteen full and part-time field staff do work with grower groups to promote Ontario products in stores and farmers' markets. They issue point of sale labels, tags, and posters to supermarkets, where they report finding managers receptive, but lack of supply and price differentials can still result in imported produce on store shelves even when local produce is in season. It is hard to know relative percentages of local and imported food sold in each commodity because the bar codes register food by type without distinguishing origin. At the cash register, a tomato from Ontario is the same as a tomato from Mexico, an accounting element that ought to be remedied.

Foodland's logo may have had more presence in farmers' markets in the nineties because of OMAF's Shared Cost Program, by which a farmers' market and OMAF each paid half for marketing and promotion. All promotional material had to have the Foodland Ontario logo on it. This is a program worth reinstating. More generally, the GTA Agricultural Action Plan³⁰ calls for Foodland Ontario to "meaningfully differentiate" local products through advertising and public relations campaigns and to "initiate an Ontario First priority to increase sales of locally grown products." The Plan recommends this be done in concert with FMO and Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (though Local Flavour Plus may become a key means of achieving the differentiation the GTA plan advocates). Foodland's programs should indeed be expanded, so consumers become more aware of the value of local food. Organic food has become popular because of media attention; with help from strengthened Foodland publicity and advertising, local food could gain similar appeal, and farmers' markets could become the most appealing places to buy it.

6.3 Health inspections

While public health and safety must always be a concern, some inspections of farmers' markets seem overreaching to market managers and farmers. The manager of one organic market told of a health inspector complaining of soil on wildflowers near produce, although the flowers and the produce grew beside each other in the field. Roger Knapp, a farmer who bakes bread and makes ice cream and yogurt on his farm complained of having to install a commercial kitchen at great cost when formerly his farm kitchen was adequate. He spoke of the "lady down the road who can't make jam anymore" because she lacked commercial facilities. "They're destroying local culture," Knapp feels. And farmers' markets in Ontario stay away from food preparation demonstration (the kind often seen in food stores) and sampling because of fear of violating the health regulations.

In response to a particularly egregious behaviour by public health officers in June (pouring bleach on egg salad sandwiches), Minister of Health George Smitherman said "our government is introducing an amendment to an existing regulation specifically stipulating

that we will not regulate farmers markets as if they are restaurants or grocery stores.” Smitherman’s reaction to this episode and an earlier withdrawal of support for more stringent inspection of markets are examples of politicians’ understanding there is strategic public support for farmers’ markets. Public health authorities should base their rules and inspections on epidemiological evidence; there is little such evidence to justify crackdowns on farmers’ markets.

Health scientists and farmers who process food or serve food at markets need an open inquiry about health rules. And the ministries responsible for agriculture and health need to harmonize their policies. It is wasteful and counterproductive for one ministry to advocate direct sales in the interests of adding to farm family income while another ministry promulgates rules that make it cumbersome or impossible.

6.4 Conservation Authority lands and other public property

Public land in the Greenbelt provides an opportunity for rentals to farmers who use ecological methods and sell at farmers’ markets. The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority rents out 3262 acres of agricultural land for cash crops, hay and pasture. Most rentals are now short term; they could be conditionally extended to longer terms for desirable uses. The TRCA could experiment with putting out bids for land to be used in the most sustainable ways. Brian Denney, Chief Administrative Officer of the TRCA says, “We would like to use a few hundred acres of our agricultural land for small-scale farms. That’s the path that makes the most sense to us. We would like to make an arrangement with Everdale or a similar organization that would use the land to produce high quality organic vegetables and fruits for sale in cities in our region. So far this has had the support of the authority; they enthusiastically supported a farm at Black Creek Village, which is just starting up.”³¹

Similar programs, which could include farmers who grow the traditional food of new immigrant groups, should be pursued by Conservation Authorities, as well as in Rouge Park, the Pickering Lands and other property owned by the Ontario Realty Corporation and the federal government.

6.5 Provincial and municipal encouragement

The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission, an agency of OMAFRA, is accountable for the province’s 21 agricultural marketing boards, six of which regulate production through quotas. The marketing boards operate independently, but the commission is supposed to support “positive changes to marketing plans that are the outcome of discussions between a board and its industry partners.”³² The commission should encourage the boards to allow organic production outside of quotas.

The province should permit sales by the vintners of wine they make from fruits and grapes grown in Ontario at farmers’ markets in Ontario. There are Ontario wine makers eager to sell at markets, and such wine sales are already permitted in Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well as in California, New York and New Hampshire.

The Ontario Municipal Property Assessment Corporation sets the standards rural municipalities follow in their assessment practices. But OMPAC policy contradicts the intent of OMAFRA's policy of encouraging farmers to diversify by adding value to farm products. Farm income is increased by making cheese from milk, jams from strawberries, sausages from meat and numerous other processes. Processed or "value-added" items sell particularly well at farmers' markets. But the addition of value-adding businesses can raise the property's tax category from farm to commercial or industrial, with a much heavier tax burden. Property taxation can become an expense so high that the enterprise will not succeed. Value-adding farm enterprises should be identified as farm activity for assessment purposes.

In urban municipalities, a statement of support for farmers' markets should be included in regional and municipal official plans. But far more important is that official plans and zoning allow for agriculture (and on-farm food processing) in areas near cities. Within Greenbelt boundaries this requires that local planning be in conformance with the Greenbelt Plan. Zoning for the markets themselves is not usually an issue because of the temporary nature of most markets.

Official statements that support farmers' markets, like that made by for this report by Mayor David Miller or TDSB chair Sheila Ward can be used to get officials in charge of parks, public facilities and schools to look with favour on the establishment of new markets wherever feasible.

7. Measuring Progress

Farmers' markets (1) have a multiplier effect in the Greenbelt economy; (2) preserve agricultural land by providing a living to farmers who want to stay on the land; (3) save fuel and reduce emissions because food is transported shorter distances; (4) improve the community. For the last benefit there are few precise benchmarks, but periodic sample surveys could track the proportion of the population who shop in farmers' markets and their attitudes toward the markets.

7.1 Economic multiplier effect

A food dollar spent locally generates more income for the local economy than a dollar spent at a grocery with products from all over the world. Farmers and other vendors buy their raw materials and equipment locally. With the proceeds of their sales they buy local goods and services. Shops and restaurants near markets increase their sales on market days. The multiplier used by FMO and others is three times the actual sales by the vendors. To track sales, market managers have to survey vendors. In California markets where vendors' fees are based on a percentage of sales, this is an easy chore. In Ontario, where vendors' fees are by the day or season, getting total sales figures is a harder job. But it can be done by willing market managers and cooperative vendors. It is already done in some measure by FMO, which conjectures an annual farmers' market sales total of more than \$645 million, and, based on the commonly used multiplier of three, an economic impact of \$1.9 billion.³³

7.2 Preserving agricultural land

Saving Working Landscapes, a report by American Farmland Trust, Scenic Hudson and Open Space Institute, describes the conservation of farmland in the Hudson Valley just north of New York City, and credits direct sales to consumers for saving farms. Close proximity to large urban centres makes these farms prime land for suburbanization, but availability of farmers' markets (and farmland trusts) is the counterweight that allows them to continue. *The Washington Post* reports that in Loudon County, Virginia, outside Washington D.C., a farmer "who has sold exclusively at farmers markets for more than two decades, says the markets make it possible to maintain his property as farmland...All over America, farmers markets are saving family farms." Another farmer says "If it weren't for farmers markets, there never would have been a chance for me and thousands of other people like me to farm." Neil Hamilton, director of the agricultural law center and a law professor at Drake University in Des Moines explains, "At any market, you can see vendors who have been conventional farmers raising soybeans and corn... but they find they can make the same money from a half-acre of strawberries."³⁴

These testimonies are anecdotal; because there are so many variables, it is difficult to correlate sales at farmers markets with acres of farmland kept in production. Statistics

Canada's Census of Agriculture asks farmers what they produce, their practices (including organic methods) and gross receipts; the Greenbelt Foundation's Census of Agriculture in the Greenbelt extracts data by municipality within the Greenbelt. One way of determining farmland saved could be by comparing total farms with farms participating in markets in each municipality. The market participants would be obtained from vendors' addresses listed for markets in and around the Greenbelt. The addresses would be from market websites or from FMO. This would reveal the percentage of farms by municipality that sell at markets. Changes could be noted at each census and compared with changes in farm acreage, though cause and effect wouldn't be certain.

Ideally, it would be useful to know by Greenbelt municipality: farms, farmers' market sellers, percentage of farmers participating in markets and farm stands, total farm acres, total acres producing edibles by categories, acres used in farmers' market and farm stand sales, percentage of acres in farmers' market and farm stand sales, total acres of non-edibles (hay, silage, feed corn, etc.). Unfortunately, this would be expensive to obtain, except, possibly, in 2011, if Statistics Canada can be persuaded to add questions, as it often does, to its next census.

7.3 Fuel and emissions

An Iowa State University study³⁵ was designed to compare fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions of local and imported foods. The study measured fuel use and emissions in the conventional food supply chain against a local system. A Weighted Average Source Distance was used to calculate a single figure that combined information on the distances from producers to consumers and amount of food product transported. Using similar methodology, a Toronto study³⁶ compared food at a Dufferin Mall supermarket with the same food at the Dufferin Grove Organic Farmers' Market across the street. The Dufferin Grove produce traveled an average of 101 kilometres; the supermarket food 5364 kilometres. The average ton-kilometres moved was .0795 for Dufferin Grove; 3.8533 for the supermarket. "On the whole," the study reports, "the imported items were transported 81 times further than the local items. Fresh lamb chops imported from New Zealand traveled the farthest, an estimated 193 times the distance of their local equivalents...Both the pears and the carrots traveled to the Los Angeles Food terminal before being trucked up to Canada." This study brings home the food-miles challenge with brilliant clarity. Periodic repetition of this study would create benchmarks to measure progress in the substitution of home-grown for imported consumption of products. Widely publicizing its findings would be a powerful educational tool, fitting in nicely with the ideas of posting kilometres traveled on farmers' market price signs.

8. Role of Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

Farmers' markets that are not primarily dedicated to the farmer-vendor cannot help the Greenbelt Plan's goal of preserving agricultural land. The Foundation should ally itself with other groups in the Greenbelt and adjoining cities whose goals encompass local ecological farming and farmers' markets sales. Such an alliance could be strengthened by a member of the foundation's board also sitting on the boards of FoodShare, Local Flavour Plus and Everdale (or similar farming intern programs).

The foundation can help farmers' markets by public relations and by "capacity building" – assisting groups whose mission is to improve the quantity and quality of markets. The budget for public relations depends on media and printing costs; the costs of some capacity building are listed below. A staff member, full- or part-time, with experience in the growing food security movement, CSAs, farmers' markets or the environmental movement could direct both communications and capacity building. It could be a current market manager. And this staff person's work could be part of a larger agricultural portfolio at the foundation.

8.1 Public relations and communications plan

1. A farmers' market network

A farmers' market network for cities with the Greenbelt would create a defined place for farmers and communities to link. It could be operated as a central authority, in the fashion of New York's Greenmarket, or it could offer just some of the services of Greenmarket without supplanting the autonomy of each market (in some cases a source of community pride). By establishing a central authority, Greenmarket has produced a market system that is consistent and reliable for farmers and consumers. Its prominence and wide reach overcome barriers to farmer participation and assure consumers of quality. Even without the extent of Greenmarket's control, a network can aid autonomous markets with publicity, farm inspections, advisories on standards, and help with municipal permitting agencies. A network could ease farmers' entry into markets, allowing them to just show up and sell at a designated spot. It could coordinate participation in different markets in the same week or collaboration with other farmers at market stalls. The Foundation's grant to FMO for Project Green includes "establishing a unique cultural identity analogous to the New York City [Greenmarket.]" The four markets in which FMO will attempt this could be viewed as a nucleus of a network that could attract other markets.

A network could insure that farmers who sell at markets are from farms registered with the province. Or it could attempt to institute Local Flavour Plus standards (see p.21) as a requirement for vendors (though some all-year networks might want off-season exemptions). It could direct farmers not only to standard markets but also to festivals – opportunities for vendors who don't have product all year or product only a single date or a

few. In the words of one farmer: “some September folks with apples who can’t afford a year’s fees.” These kinds of farmers are not specifically served by any organization now. Farmers’ markets prosper initially in middle to upper income neighbourhoods. After farmers gain experience and some financial security in these neighbourhoods, they can sometimes find ways of selling profitably in lower income areas. In the U.S. this is facilitated by supplemental nutrition programs (see section 6.1). Through its Good Food Box, FoodShare has experience in guiding low-income families to more nutritious diets with mostly local food. The foundation should work with FoodShare on its project for a market network that focuses on low-income neighbourhoods.

2. Advocate for the farmer in farmers’ market

For Greenbelt purposes the authenticity of farmers’ markets—that they live up to their name—is essential. Foundation support should go to markets that focus on farmer-vendors, not resellers.

3. Advertising

The retail food industry uses sophisticated marketing techniques. Farmers’ markets must also advertise, but more efficiently, as they can’t equal the huge advertising budgets of corporate food processors and retailers. To advertise successfully the markets need to know customers’ motivations, many of which are revealed in FMO’s survey (see section 2.2). The advertising message would be healthy, fresh, local and ecological. Foodland Ontario advertising is for the entire province; there is sweep for additional advertising that promotes the farm products of the Greenbelt.

The best advertising is free, because it is part of news or feature stories. The foundation staff member could act as press agent for the markets within a reasonable radius around the Greenbelt. The food sections of local newspapers are eager to carry positive market stories; in the case of The Toronto Star, so eager that the newspaper’s reaction to a proposed health inspector crackdown on markets was to publish a list of markets and their virtues. Serious attention to public relations can capture major rewards: “Bringing It Home,” a regular column on using the Greenmarket as a family’s larder, is appearing this summer in the New York Times.

4. Branding

Foodland Ontario is a kind of “brand,” not of a commercial product but rather of a public service, the promotion of home-grown products. A Greenbelt brand would be similar; it could appear as an additional logo alongside Foodland’s familiar logo in stores and at farmers’ markets; and it could in more general ways publicize the agricultural richness close to the city. While this would help farmers in the Greenbelt, it should be approached gingerly because it could create complications in farmers’ markets and among farmers in general, as it might be viewed as creating unfair distinctions between farms located only a few kilometres apart on different sides of the Greenbelt boundary. Perhaps the most positive way of instituting a Greenbelt Farmers Market would be for a new market to solicit Greenbelt farmers as vendors. Evergreen at the Brickworks (see p. 22) is willing to try just that.³⁷

But even without the formality of a brand, the arrival of asparagus or peaches or other products at markets is an event that can be advertised as a Greenbelt event, with the product from Greenbelt farms available at listed farmers' markets. Even storage vegetables and greenhouse products available off-season can be celebrated.

5. Maps

Wellington County, Waterloo and Durham Regions and other jurisdictions distribute detailed maps entitled *Buy Local! Buy Fresh!* They pinpoint farmers' markets and each farm that sells direct. The foundation could produce maps for individual markets that showed the locations of farms selling at that market. This would show farm-city linkages, and encourage direct sales and farm tourism. It would make the geography of the Greenbelt graphically alive. The foundation's sponsorship could be on a shared basis, in order to give the farmers a stake in the project. A comprehensive map on the foundation's website could link each farm that participates at markets with the markets themselves, showing distance the kind of produce and the distance it travels to market.

6. Books

The foundation should publish "Greenbelt: The Complete Guide to Local Farmers' Markets," or a similarly titled book that would list alphabetically all the fruits and vegetables grown in the Greenbelt and sold at markets. Each entry would have tips on selecting, storing, putting up, and preparing, with serving suggestions and recipes. This was done by a commercial publisher to celebrate Greenmarket in New York. A similar book celebrates the San Francisco area markets. As many people are unaware of simple techniques for ripening fruit or storing vegetables, the book could be handy, as well as being a reminder of the presence of the Greenbelt.

7. Schools

An illustrated booklet about Greenbelt farms, including what they produce and how, would educate children. This would be especially constructive if combined with a farm to school program instigated by the foundation.

8. The foundation as broker in building markets

The foundation could act as broker for the advancement of markets by assisting markets with government bureaucracies, bringing together varying interests and assessing the progress of projects and encouraging government and foundation grants for farm and market projects. It could promote longer term leases for ecological farming on publicly owned agricultural land in the Greenbelt and facilitate alliances between TRCA (and other public land owners), and farm intern programs that could use land for beginning farmers who would sell their produce at markets.

9. Agro-tourism

City-dwellers' knowledge of agriculture shouldn't be limited to the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, but should also entail visits to Greenbelt farms (where money can be spent). Agro-tourism promotional should be available at markets.

8.2 Capacity building measures

1. Training new farmers

Support CRAFT (which includes Everdale and ten other farms with internships) in training future farmers. Everdale is a registered charity; the other farms are not, so different avenues of assistance might be necessary. Aid the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario in its practical mentoring programs for farmers already practicing. A dearth of farmers has been identified as a major farmers' market problem.

2. Transition assistance and market mentoring for farmers

Support mentoring by experienced farmer-vendors, especially from farmers who have made a transition from cash crops to market gardening. Support organizations that improve farmers' techniques of post-harvest handling and presentation at markets.

3. Market start-up costs

Subsidize market infrastructure by sharing the start-up costs of new markets in 2007. Costs can vary widely depending on availability of farmers and of a market site and facilities. Other variables are the experience of the organizer, who presumably becomes the market manager, and the receptivity of a community. Sometimes organizers are volunteers, significantly lowering costs, which, with a paid organizer, can be roughly approximated at \$15,000 to \$20,000 in Toronto.

4. Strengthening existing markets

Arrange a program in 2007 for grants to assist markets with particular needs for infrastructure or other forms of help. Small grants to struggling organizations can sometimes motivate more innovation than large grants to established organizations.

5. Training market managers

Pay the salaries of market manager apprentices, and part of the salary of managers who train them for a few months. The apprentices would eventually work on their own in new markets they could have a role in establishing.

6. Limiting market fees for beginning farmers

Pick up a portion of the fees of new market participants from the Greenbelt in 2007. Minimal fees for the first year of at a market could increase participation. Market fees charged to

farmers range considerably, roughly from \$10 to \$40 per stall, with some farmers taking as many as six stalls. There are waiting lists and higher fees for farmers at St. Lawrence or Nathan Phillips and lower fees at less central markets. New participants are most likely to start out at markets with lower fees.

7. Signage

It isn't always clear (without asking) at markets what is the price, the farm of origin, and the organic (or not) nature of the produce. The foundation can propose an informative signage system (see p.23-4). It can also subsidize market name signs or banners (with its logo) for markets selling Greenbelt products.

8. Use of Geographic Information Systems

Use GIS analysis to identify farms whose land use and socio-economic characteristics might lend themselves to market participation.

9. Supporting experiment and innovation

There are many ideas worth exploring. A farm to school program (see p. 20) would be a profitable accompaniment to farmers' markets. Cooperative arrangements for storage of winter vegetables and fruits could increase the all-year presence of Ontario produce. Finding a way to reverse the dramatic decline in the number of small abattoirs in the province would allow farmers' markets to sell more meat from Ontario farms. Arrangements to allow farmers to use inspected kitchens at local schools could give them an approved place to prepare foods to sell at market. Increasing the frequency of a particular market could test the effects of more convenience and regularity. (Union Square, the flagship Greenmarket is open four days a week. It is the most profitable, even though average purchases are smaller. In a way, it replicates old-fashioned shopping, almost competing with supermarkets in convenience for residents and workers in its neighbourhood.) Greater frequency for selected markets in the Greenbelt region could be an experiment worth encouraging.

Acknowledgements

Kurtis Andrews (farmer), Barry Benepe (founder, Greenmarket, New York), Cathy Bartolic (manager, Nathan Philips Square Farmers' Market; Executive Administrator, Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association), Peter Bzkot (farmer), George Carvalho (manager, St. Lawrence market), Robert Chorney (Executive Director, Farmers' Markets Ontario), Jim Clark (Executive Director, Ontario Cattle Feeders Association), David Cohlmeier (Cookstown Greens), Jeff Crump (chef, Ancaster Old Mill), Neil Currie (General Manager, Ontario Federation of Agriculture), Gavin Dandy (Farm Manager, Everdale), Barb Davies (Manager, Natural and Cultural Heritage, Rouge Park), Debbie Field (Director, FoodShare), Pat File (farmer, agricultural consultant), Peter Finch (farmer), Anne Freeman (manager, Dufferin Grove Organic Farmers' Market), Bob Gottlieb (Occidental College, California), Elizabeth Harris (Friends of Riverdale farm), Karen Hutchinson (Caledon Countryside Alliance), Jim James (Foodland Ontario), Roger Knapp (farmer), Gabriel Langholz (New York Greenmarket), Rod MacRae (Local Flavour Plus), Peter Mitchell (University of Guelph), Achim Mohssen-Beyk (Quinte Farmers Cooperative), Mary Lou Morgan (Carrot Cache), Dale Reesor (farmer), Jennifer Reynolds (FoodShare), Wayne Roberts (Toronto Food Policy Council), Mike Schreiner (Local Flavour Plus), Ann Slater (EFAO), Joe Sponga, (manager, Newmarket Farmers' Market), Lori Stahlbrand (Local Flavour Plus), Tom Stromolo (New York Greenmarket Director), Ted Thorpe (farmer), Elbert VonDonkersgoed (GTA Agricultural Action Committee), Alvaro Venturelli (farmer), Marlene Werry (Regional Municipality of Durham), Lewis Yaeger (Rouge Park), Mark Xuareb (Waterloo Regional Health). And numerous unnamed farmers and customers met at markets.

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