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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 14, 2013

ONTARIO GROUPS THANK GOVERNMENT OF CANADA FOR SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD

Consumers will once again be able to seek out and enjoy local foods, thanks to actions taken today by the Government of Canada.

This announcement from Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Hon. Gerry Ritz addresses the concerns put forward by Ontario groups, regarding restrictive definitions of "local" food enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

"Thanks to Minister Ritz, we don't need to worry about a government bureaucrat telling Ontario farmers and consumers what is local and what is not," said Mark Wales, President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Supported by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, Gordon Food Services (GFS), and Real Food for Real Kids, this action removes the 50 kilometer requirement for food to be labeled as 'local'.

This action does not address the CFIA definition of natural, which requires foods to not be "interfered or influenced by humans" to be labeled as 'natural'.

Real Foods for Real Kids, a company providing healthy local foods to childcare centres, schools and camps, sources many of their products from growers and producers located in Ontario. However, under the old CFIA rules, they would have been subject to thousands of dollars in fines for calling their food local, simply because some of the farms they work with fall outside the previous 50 kilometer requirement.

"As a business owner, I was subject to an outdated and ill-advised law, telling me what is local. Now, I can go back to my business of serving healthy, local food to children," said David Farnell, owner of Real Food for Real Kids.

Ontario has the most diverse agricultural system in the country, producing more than 200 different agricultural commodities – including a variety of fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy products, greenhouse vegetables and ornamental flowers. Last week, the Government of Ontario announced that anything grown or produced within the province's borders is defined as 'local'. This matches the definitions put forward by other provinces.

“We thank Minister Ritz for recognizing that a limited definition of local food is not reflective of Ontario’s or Canada’s food system,” said Burkhard Mausberg, CEO, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation. “There are many farmers, companies and institutions in Ontario that take a leadership role in the local food movement and it’s important that they not be hindered by archaic rules. We also look forward to participating in discussions on how to best define ‘natural’ foods.”

“As a prominent food distributor, Gordon Food Service Ontario is a leader in the meeting the rapid demand for local foods,” said Jim Robinson, VP for Marketing and Procurement, GFS Ontario. “With more than 700 products listed in our portfolio as ‘local’, we are pleased that we can continue to meet the demands of our customers.”

About the OFA:

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is the largest accredited general farm organization in Ontario. As a dynamic farmer-led organization based in Guelph, the OFA works to represent and champion the interests of Ontario farmers through government relations, farm policy recommendations, lobby efforts, community representation, media relations and more. OFA is the leading advocate for Ontario’s farmers and is Ontario’s voice of the farmer.

About Real Food For Real Kids:

Real Food for Real Kids (RFRK) is a Toronto-based catering company for schools, child care centres, and camps. Every day, RFRK cooks fresh food from scratch using nutritious, wholesome ingredients – including as much local and organic food as possible – for more than 8,000 kids across the GTA and beyond. RFRK helps kids and their families celebrate real food and build towards a lifetime of good health.

About the Greenbelt:

Fresh air, clean water, healthy local food – all brought to you by Ontario’s Greenbelt. At more than 1.8 million acres, it’s the world’s largest permanently protected greenbelt, keeping our farmlands, forests, and wetlands safe and sustainable. The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation works to help keep farmers successful, strengthen local economies, and protect and grow natural features. Join us! Learn more at: www.greenbelt.ca or find us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

About Gordon Food Service:

Gordon Food Service is committed to delivering uncompromising quality, outstanding value and exceptional customer service. Gordon Food Service entered the Canadian market in 1994 and has grown into a national presence, distributing to foodservice operators coast to coast in Canada and throughout the Midwest and Eastern half of the United States. If you'd like more information on the products or services we can offer, visit the [Become a Customer](#) page.

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