Models and Best Practices for Building Sustainable Food Systems In Ontario and Beyond

Edited by Irena Knezevic, Karen Landman, Alison Blay-Palmer and Erin Nelson
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IRENA KNEZEVIC AND ERIN NELSON</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODELS AND BEST PRACTICES</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMON SUCCESSES</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMON CHALLENGES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: NORTHERN ONTARIO</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONNIE NELSON AND MIRELLA STROINK</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMERGING THEMES AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITATIONS</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 1: EAT LOCAL SUDBURY (ELS)</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 2: FOOD SECURITY RESEARCH NETWORK (FSRN)</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 3: LA MAISON VERTE</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 4: TRUE NORTH COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 5: NORTHERN ONTARIO HEALTH UNITS</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2: EASTERN ONTARIO</strong></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PETER ANDRÉE, PATRICIA BALLAMINGIE, AND BRYNNE SINCLAIR-WATERS WITH LINDA STEVENS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPES OF INITIATIVES</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMON LESSONS FROM PARTICIPANTS’ EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS TO FUNDERS</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 1: EASTERN ONTARIO LOCAL FOOD CO-OP</strong></td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 2: FOOD DOWN THE ROAD</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 3: JUST FOOD OTTAWA</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 4: LANARK LOCAL FLAVOUR</strong></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE STUDY 5: WENDY’S COUNTRY MARKET AND MOBILE MARKET</strong></td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3: THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE

LISA OHBERG AND SARAH WAKEFIELD

SUMMARY ............................................................................................................. 117
BACKGROUND ....................................................................................................... 117
PARTICIPANTS ....................................................................................................... 119
COMMON ACCOMPLISHMENTS ......................................................................... 119
COMMON CHALLENGES ...................................................................................... 120
OTHER COMMON THEMES ................................................................................. 122
REFERENCES ......................................................................................................... 123
CASE STUDY 1: GRAND RIVER COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE (GRCHC) ........ 124
CASE STUDY 2: GOOD FOOD BOX NETWORK ..................................................... 129
CASE STUDY 3: PLAN B ORGANIC FARM ............................................................ 135
CASE STUDY 4: FOODSHARE ............................................................................ 140

CHAPTER 4: SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO ................................................................ 146

ERIN NELSON, IRENA KNEZEVIC, AND KAREN LANDMAN

SUMMARY ............................................................................................................. 146
BACKGROUND ....................................................................................................... 146
PARTICIPANTS ....................................................................................................... 149
COMMON ACCOMPLISHMENTS ......................................................................... 149
COMMON CHALLENGES ...................................................................................... 150
CASE STUDY 1: EVERDALE ORGANIC FARM AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTRE ..................................................................................................................... 151
CASE STUDY 2: WATERLOO REGION NEIGHBOURHOOD MARKET INITIATIVE ............................................................................................................................... 155
CASE STUDY 3: HERRLE’S COUNTRY FARM MARKET ........................................ 160

CHAPTER 5: SOUTHERN ONTARIO ...................................................................... 165

IRENA KNEZEVIC AND ERIN NELSON

SUMMARY ............................................................................................................. 165
BACKGROUND ....................................................................................................... 165
PARTICIPANTS ....................................................................................................... 166
COMMON ACCOMPLISHMENTS ......................................................................... 167
COMMON CHALLENGES ...................................................................................... 170
OTHER COMMON THEMES ................................................................................. 173
CASE STUDY 1: SPRING ARBOUR FARM ............................................................. 175
CASE STUDY 2: WESTERN FAIR FARMERS’ MARKET ........................................ 180

CHAPTER 6: PROVINCE-WIDE INITIATIVES ..................................................... 186

IRENA KNEZEVIC AND ALISON BLAY-PALMER

SUMMARY ............................................................................................................. 186
BACKGROUND AND PARTICIPANTS ................................................................. 186
COMMON MOTIVATIONS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND CHALLENGES .......... 186
CASE STUDY 1: LOCAL ORGANIC FOOD CO-OPS (LOFC) / ONTARIO NATURAL FOOD CO-OP (ONFC) ............................................................. 189

CHAPTER 7: OTHER NOTABLE INITIATIVES FROM ACROSS ONTARIO .......... 195

NORTHERN ONTARIO REGION ........................................................................... 195

LEE-ANN CHEVRETTE, CONNIE NELSON, AND MIRELLA STROINK
EASTERN ONTARIO REGION ................................................................. 205
BRYNNE SINCLAIR-WATERS AND LINDA STEVENS
GOLDEN HORSESHOE REGION .......................................................... 227
LISA OHBERG AND SARAH WAKEFIELD
SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO REGION ...................................................... 238
ERIN NELSON AND IRENA KNEZEVIC
SOUTHERN ONTARIO REGION .............................................................. 249
IRENA KNEZEVIC
PROVINCE-WIDE INITIATIVES ............................................................. 258
IRENA KNEZEVIC
APPENDIX I: VUE MAPS ...................................................................... 263
Glossary of Key Terms

The following key terms will be referred to (and can be searched for) throughout this report. While not exhaustive, this reference list highlights some important concepts related to building sustainable food systems in Ontario and beyond.

**Community Food Centre**
Based on the Stop Community Food Centre in Toronto, this model addresses food access, food skill-building and education, using food as a tool to foster community engagement. See [www.cfccanada.ca](http://www.cfccanada.ca).

**Community Food Security**
Community food security is a “situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.” [Note: This definition is taken from Hamm, M.W. and Bellows, A.C. (2003). Community Food Security and Nutrition Educators. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 35(1): 37-43.]

**Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)**
A CSA is a way to link producers and consumers more directly. Consumers become members by purchasing shares in a CSA farm at the beginning of the season. They then receive a portion of the harvest over the course of the season.

**Co-Operative**
A popular business model for sustainable and local food system initiatives, co-operatives can take on many forms. They are based on the idea that members collectively own and manage a business or organization that meets their needs.

**Farmers’ Market**
Increasingly common in Ontario, farmers’ markets offer consumers opportunities to buy farm fresh products and, in many cases, connect directly to growers. They also provide a space where producers can sell their goods without intermediaries.

**Food Charter**
A food charter is a document that outlines the principles and values that a community would like to see in its food system. For some Canadian examples of food charters see [sustainontario.com/resources/food-charters](http://sustainontario.com/resources/food-charters).

**Food Hub**
As discussed throughout this document, there is no standard definition of a food hub. Generally, the concept refers to community-based initiatives that address a range of food-related issues, including bringing producers and consumers closer together, improving food literacy, and increasing food access.
Food Policy Council
A popular form of sustainable food system advocacy, food policy councils involve citizens coming together to help design policy for local, sustainable food systems and to lobby for adoption of these policies.

Good Food Box
Originally created by Toronto’s FoodShare – and now increasingly common across Ontario – the Good Food Box model is a not-for-profit method of distributing fresh fruits and vegetables to community members. See www.foodshare.net/good-food-box.

Institutional Procurement
Institutional procurement policies are guidelines used by institutions (e.g. hospitals, schools) to make decisions about food purchasing. They are widely seen as an opportunity to scale up demand for local, sustainable foods.

Local Food Map
Popularized by FoodLink Waterloo Region’s Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Campaign, local food maps now exist for many communities across Ontario and show customers where they can buy fresh, local foods. See www.foodlink.ca/index.php?p=43.

Local Food Network
Local food networks are local- or regional-level networks of individuals and organizations working together to address various elements of food system sustainability.

Premier’s Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence
These awards recognize individuals, businesses, and organizations in Ontario for agri-food innovation excellence. See www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/premier_award/index.html.

Supply Management
Within a supply management system, national or provincial marketing boards control supply through production quotas. In Ontario, this kind of system governs the broiler, egg, dairy, chicken and turkey markets.

Urban Agriculture
Urban agriculture refers to food production that occurs within cities or, in some cases, in peri-urban areas. It can happen on a variety of scales, and is gaining popularity as a contributor to more sustainable local food systems.

Value Chain
In discussions of food systems, the value chain means the entire chain of interactions that link food producers to food consumers. It includes both producers and consumers, as well as processors, distributors, and retailers.

Values Chain
Like the value chain concept, a values chain refers to the linkages that occur within a food system, from field to table to compost. While value chains tend to emphasize economic linkages, values chain thinking emphasizes principles like social justice, participatory democracy, ecological health, and community well-being.
Introduction

Irena Knezevic and Erin Nelson

Background
In recent years, issues of human and environmental health, and vulnerability of the industrial food system, have prompted numerous alternative food initiatives around the globe and, correspondingly, across Ontario. Such alternatives involve redesigning the food system at the levels of production, distribution, and consumption, and address the issue of sustainability with respect to ecosystems, health and nutrition, the economy, and social justice.

One of the areas of growing activity concerning food has focused on local food. Initiatives such as food hubs (community-based initiatives that address a range of food-related issues) and local food networks (more regional groups of community food projects that may include food hubs) tend to address multiple aspects of food system sustainability. For example, local food initiatives can curb some of the environmental impacts of food production and distribution, contribute to improved health and nutrition, increase food skills and food literacy, support local food producers and local economies, foster social justice, and build community. They have the potential to be transformative at the local level, and can also contribute to changing systems.

Within the Canadian context, a number of signs point to growing momentum for local food initiatives. An important national-level example is the work being done by Food Secure Canada – in particular its spearheading of a national conversation about alternative food policy. That conversation resulted in the 2011 publication of Resetting the Table: A People’s Food Policy for Canada, which lists “ensuring that food is eaten as close as possible to where it is produced” as the first principle of a democratic and secure food system (see http://foodsecurecanada.org/).

There are also many Ontario-based examples of innovative and exciting efforts to foster the development of local sustainable food systems. In addition to the many initiatives that will be presented in the chapters that follow, it is worth mentioning organizations such as Local Food Plus and FarmStart. Founded in 2005, Local Food Plus certifies sustainable producers and facilitates institutional procurement of local sustainable food. While it began in Ontario, the non-profit organization’s success (and support from the Metcalf Foundation, McConnell Foundation and World Wildlife Fund) has allowed it to expand to other parts of the country (see http://www.localfoodplus.ca). Also founded in 2005, FarmStart “aims to encourage and support a new generation of entrepreneurial, ecological farmers.” With support from several sources (including the provincial and federal governments, and McConnell, Metcalf and Trillium Foundations) FarmStart has become a leader in training new farmers and facilitating access to land in Ontario (see http://www.farmstart.ca/). These examples (along with those presented in the rest of this
document) represent just a sample of the diverse activities that are helping to build thriving sustainable food systems in Ontario and beyond.

In addition to the increasing number of initiatives dedicated to a sustainable local food agenda, there is also a growing body of literature in Ontario that addresses sustainable food system issues. For example, *Local Food: From the Ground Up* was prepared in 2009 for OMAFRA's Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative. Based on interviews with local food stakeholders from across the province, that report highlighted some key best practices and common barriers with respect to local food system development. It also made some policy recommendations, including a call to: increase the connectivity of infrastructure for local farmers, processors, distributors and retailers; increase institutional procurement of local sustainable food; increase accessibility of high quality, nutritious foods while ensuring a fair wage for farmers; develop regulations and infrastructure to support small- and medium-scale producers; use public education mechanisms to help create “ecological consumers”; and foster the development of urban agriculture (Landman et al., 2009).

One year later, in 2010, the Metcalf Foundation published *Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario*, which was similarly based on conversations with Ontario's “food and farm leaders” and designed to provide suggestions for building a better provincial food system. The authors identified ten distinct areas for improvement, many of which overlapped with the findings of the 2009 report. Some specific recommendations from the 2010 document include: making space for new farmers and alternative markets within supply management systems; implementing a school food program and embedding food literacy within curriculum; supporting the creation of community food centres; linking good food with good health; and planning for the future of farming and food (Baker et al., 2010).

**Models and Best Practices**

Community food initiatives are proliferating across North America. As they grow in numbers and scale many such groups encounter similar if not the same barriers to success and sustainability – and find that the processes of garnering support and resources can also be quite similar across geography. There is a need and desire to learn from one another. Good models and sound practices can provide recipes for success. Some of the most celebrated community food initiatives are now being partially or wholly replicated in other physical and virtual spaces; this is evident in the research findings we present here.

Among the most salient examples of a celebrated model is Toronto's The Stop Community Food Centre. Once a food bank, The Stop's work now includes community kitchens and gardens, peri-natal support, food markets, and many other programs. Widely considered a pioneer in multifaceted community food work, The Stop has been at the forefront of moving away from the charity model of food provision and building a community of food that empowers, educates, and engages (see Scharf et al., 2010). At the time of our data collection, two other Ontario communities – Stratford and Perth – were
already developing community food centres modelled on The Stop (both are included in this report). As we finalize this report, three other centres – another one in Toronto, as well as in Winnipeg, MB and Dartmouth, NS – are being launched, and Community Food Centres Canada network has been established. They all testify to the broad relevance of The Stop's model.

More detailed accounts of the Stop Community Food Centre model as a case study are available at www.cfccanada.ca (see also Scharf et al., 2010; Saul and Curtis, 2013). In this report we have focused on the development of the model as it is being replicated in Stratford and Perth. We wanted to acknowledge the importance of the Toronto Stop Community Food Centre in shaping the trajectory of community food initiatives in Canada. This report offers a wide range of models and best practices, including the practice of The Stop is an example of a trailblazing initiative and the lessons they offer other communities in Ontario and Canada.

Summary of the Research Project
The research presented in this document emerged as part of the momentum described above. It was designed to build on the findings of earlier reports, and help support practical initiatives seeking to create more sustainable local food systems. While the report presents a number of models and best practices based on research across the province, these examples represent a far from exhaustive list of the impressive array of local food activities happening in Ontario. The authors also recognize that each community and region in the province has its own unique set of assets and challenges. As such, this document is not intended to be a prescriptive template, but rather a source of information, insight, and hopefully some inspiration, for people interested in working towards more sustainable food systems in Ontario and beyond.

The Research Group
The research for this report was carried out by five regional teams. These teams were led by researchers deeply connected to the local food movements in their areas of the province, and included postdoctoral fellows and students. The five teams were:

1. Northern Ontario: Connie Nelson, Mirella Stroink, Lee-Ann Chevrette, Ryan Hayhurst
2. Eastern Ontario: Peter Andrée, Patricia Ballamingie, Brynne Sinclair-Waters, Linda Stevens
3. The Golden Horseshoe: Sarah Wakefield, Lisa Ohberg
5. Southern Ontario: Alison Blay-Palmer, Irena Knezevic

Philip Mount, working with Peter Andrée, developed the relational maps compiled in Appendix I. Maps outlining the boundaries of each region were prepared by Ivana Lung.

1 There was no team specifically dedicated to the Greater Toronto Area. While a number of GTA initiatives do appear in the report, because of the significant attention already being received by successful GTA endeavours (e.g. The Stop Community Food Centre, Evergreen Brickworks, The Big Carrot), this report focuses instead on other parts of the province.
with some initial mapping work done by Robert Sissons. Irena Knezevic, assisted by project co-leads Alison Blay-Palmer and Karen Landman, composed the general overview of the regional chapters and, with support from Erin Nelson, assembled the final report.

**Research Methods**

The information presented here, and in the chapters that follow, is based on data gathered in the spring and summer of 2011. Each research team scanned and reviewed local food activities happening in their respective regions. A total of more than 350 projects were initially identified across the province and, from that list, 171 were selected for a first round of interviews. Those interviews focused on questions about the history and motivations behind each initiative, its reasons for success, and the barriers it faced. An attempt was made to ensure that a cross-section of initiatives was considered in each region. As such, initial contacts were made with a variety of actors, including Premier’s Award for Agri-Food Innovation and Excellence recipients, Public Health officials, local OMAFRA and Economic Development representatives, community leaders, and academics, among others.

After analysing interview results, the research group selected 19 initiatives to be the focus of more detailed case study research\(^2\). The selected projects represent particularly successful and innovative examples of local food work across a variety of organizational models. Research team members made site visits to each of the case study initiatives and conducted in-depth interviews with one or – in many cases – more representatives in order to gather information.

**Other Products and Activities**

In addition to this report, the results of the research described above were also compiled into a Community Food Toolkit ([http://nourishingontario.ca/community-food-toolkit/](http://nourishingontario.ca/community-food-toolkit/)) designed to offer step-by-step assistance to people interested in working towards more sustainable local food systems at the community level. The results have also formed the basis of a number of both academic and non-academic publications and presentations, and have informed the development of future research project ideas. For more detailed information on activities related to, and building upon, the work presented in this report, please see [http://nourishingontario.ca](http://nourishingontario.ca).

**Common Successes**

The research helped to confirm that, across Ontario, there is growing momentum around local food. Results from each region suggest that participation in a wide variety of local food activities – from farmers’ markets, to community gardens, to local food branding programs, to Community Supported Agriculture – is steadily increasing. In most cases, participants are motivated by multiple factors, including local economic development, social justice, health, the environment, and community building.

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\(^2\) In 2013, Toronto’s FoodShare was added as a 20th case study. As noted earlier, the GTA was not the focus of initial research; however, because of FoodShare’s strong leadership role in Ontario’s sustainable food system movement, it was decided that its inclusion in this report was important.
In general, there was a strong recognition of the power of food-based projects to act as building blocks for healthy communities by fostering relationships and connections, strengthening local economies, and inspiring broader community engagement. Many research participants spoke of the role that local food initiatives play in their social lives, and it was abundantly clear that “[f]ood hubs are thus seen to be much more profound than the mere provision of food” (Chapter 1). Indeed, multi-stakeholder co-operation grounded in strong social relationships was commonly identified as one of the most important elements for success, and the research found evidence of creative collaborative efforts of all sorts – from producer co-operatives, to collaborations between community initiatives and local health units, to multi-stakeholder food policy councils or round tables.

Another effective mechanism for building thriving local food systems is raising consumer awareness by increasing the visibility and profile of local food. Projects with that aim were evident in most parts of the province, and included local food maps, local branding campaigns, “buy local” food guides and directories, and promotional activities by food businesses (including restaurant-producer collaborations). In many cases, these kinds of efforts are supported by local economic development offices, and are viewed as an important way to keep money within the local economy.

Beyond the awareness-raising activities described above, broader educational efforts were identified as another key element of many of the successful projects presented in this report. Such efforts include public education about local food and the food system, culinary skills training, future farmer training, and nutrition education. Education was viewed by many research participants as a highly effective way to build rural-urban linkages, increase consumer skill levels with respect to local food preparation and use, and, perhaps most importantly, help change peoples’ attitudes about, and relationship to, the food they grow and eat.

In all regions of the province, funding was an important concern and, while finding sufficient resources was a common challenge, there were also many examples of initiatives finding ways to finance their efforts creatively, become financially viable, and in some cases realize profits. For example, several Ontario co-ops have replicated or adapted the Oklahoma Local Food Co-op model (see Chapters 2 and 7) and been able to produce profits. Some initiatives concerned with local food accessibility are combining profitable efforts with a social justice cause by “bundling” projects so that for-profit work (e.g. gourmet food baskets) can support social justice work (e.g. low-cost or no-cost local food boxes). Others manage to harness substantial funds from sources such as the Ontario Market Investment Fund, The Trillium Foundation, and the Metcalf Foundation to launch their projects, and are looking for models to ensure long-term financial viability and sustainability. The following table highlights some of the most commonly cited sources of funding for local food initiatives, while more detailed information is provided in the case studies and project summaries in the following chapters.
Table 1: Common Funding Sources for Local Food Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>FUNDING SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (especially the Ontario Market Investment Fund), Agriculture Canada, Ministry of Health, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of the Environment, Healthy Communities Fund, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Rural Secretariat, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal/Regional</td>
<td>Economic Development Corporations, Green Municipalities Funds, Regional Health Units/Health Departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Universities, Tri-Council funding (if partnered with academics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Faith groups, United Way, numerous small and local foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>BIAs, Campbell, Walmart, Union Gas, Home Depot, Sobeys, Hellmann’s</td>
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**Common Successes**

While successes are many, research also identified a number of common challenges that act as constraints on local food activity in Ontario. A lack of steady funding was the most widely-cited challenge. The problem of insufficient resources to cover administrative costs, marketing, infrastructure and capital costs, and other expenses is often compounded by high reliance on volunteers and overworked and/or underpaid staff. While important sources of support, many of the funding streams that are available do not cover core funding, are not sustainable in the longer term, and can be challenging to access – particularly for farm businesses.

Another frequently cited challenge was the policy and regulatory framework that governs food systems in Ontario, which was widely perceived to favour an industrial model of production, while presenting some significant obstacles to smaller-scale locally-based production, processing and distribution initiatives. From procurement policies, to public health regulations, to zoning bylaws, the existing system leaves many small- and even medium-scale producers, processors, and distributors finding it difficult, if not impossible, to compete. Facilitating local processing and distribution through the development of regional infrastructure, increasing institutional procurement practices that
favour local foods, and enacting scale-sensitive regulations are among the possible means to address regulatory and policy challenges.

The high cost of farmland and development pressures on agricultural land are additional barriers to local food system development in some regions, while the loss of the farming population base was seen as a concern across the province. There is some tension between these challenges on the production side of the food system, and the accessibility goals of many local food initiatives, with research results demonstrating that the needs and interests of small-scale producers and low-income consumers can sometimes be at odds. There was some promising evidence of increased co-operation between local food advocates and community groups concerned with food security; however, ensuring fair prices for farmers while simultaneously making local food affordable for low income people is still an issue that requires attention.

A challenge related to accessibility is that, although public awareness of local and sustainable food is growing, paying its full value still runs counter to the deeply embedded culture of cheap food. Recognizing this tension, many research participants discussed how difficult it can be to convince people to pay for local food when lower-priced options are available. Educational efforts that reveal some of the externalized costs of so-called cheap food (and the benefits of alternatives) can help combat this problem; however, even when price is not an issue, distribution-related barriers can make local food less convenient to obtain.

Finally, the research results, and the research process itself, confirmed that increased clarity regarding what terms like “food hub” or “local food network” mean, and how “local” is defined, would be helpful. While a lack of clear definitions in part highlights the exciting diversity that characterizes Ontario’s local food initiatives, it also presents some challenges in terms of communication, particularly across different sectors and stakeholder groups.

**Organization of the Report**

This introduction provides a broad overview of the research that contributed to this report, and highlight some of the major common successes and challenges that emerged from data across the province. The remainder of the report offers much more specific information and analysis based on region. This regional analysis is important given that Ontario is a large and highly diverse province. The particular challenges, keys to success, or priorities in Northern Ontario, for example, are not necessarily exactly the same as those in more populous parts of the province, or parts of the province that rely less on country foods.

Chapters 1-5 present the results of the regional research teams (Northern Ontario, Eastern Ontario, the Golden Horseshoe, Southwestern Ontario, and Southern Ontario). Each of these chapters begins with a general overview of the region and description of the research participants. That information is followed by analysis of common accomplishments and challenges, and presentation of any other emerging themes. In
some cases, the chapters offer specific recommendations for improvement, including policy recommendations. Each regional chapter concludes with detailed descriptions of best practice case studies. Chapter 6 covers province-wide initiatives, and the final chapter then presents summaries of other notable initiatives from each region. The report concludes with a graphic appendix consisting of case study “maps” demonstrating the resources and relationships that contribute to their success.

**References**


Chapter 1: Northern Ontario

Connie Nelson and Mirella Stroink

Summary

• Northern Ontario constitutes about 87% of the landmass of Ontario and contains pockets of rich glacial soils that jut like fingers throughout the boreal Precambrian shield.
• Within this context 26 food hubs that are community-based catalysts for addressing local food systems have emerged.
• These local food systems incorporate the promotion of access and availability of healthy local foods through initiatives that promote increased local production and distribution.
• Food was described as a vehicle for empowerment and social justice, as an opportunity to create community spaces for relationships to develop, as an essential determinant of health and dignity, as a way of strengthening the local economy, and as a way of offering healing and support to those in need. Food hubs are thus seen to be much more profound than the mere provision of food.
• These food hubs have emerged as a result of connectivity that has self-organized in diverse ways within the communities. This diversity and connectivity uniquely blends local resources to encourage vibrant community-based food systems, and thus appears to provide a resilient shadow system to the mainstream commodity-based food system. The mainstream and shadow food systems are co-evolving, each influencing the other, and each exhibiting adaptive patterns in an environment that is demanding access to more local healthy food.
• To date all of the existing northern food systems are supported by short-term funding and huge amounts of volunteer time. Whether the current local food hubs can transform and scale up to become a dominant food system that integrates access to healthy nutritious food with production and distribution infrastructure that is social justice and equity based remains an open question.
• Our research shows that current policies and regulations add to the resilience of the mainstream commodity based food system and create barriers to the emergence of the alternative food hubs.
• Pivotal to the transformation of food hubs are support systems that encourage local processing and storage, regionally-based distribution systems and policies and regulations that support a place-based food system.

Background

Northern Ontario is comprised of 11 districts in total and has a land area of 802,000 square kilometres, which constitutes about 87% of the land area of Ontario (See Figure 1.1). Thus, Northern Ontario is a significant component of the geospatial area of Ontario.
with potential for both cultivated and boreal food sources including fish, blueberries and mushrooms. Two-thirds of this landmass is traditional territory of First Nation peoples through Treaties 3, 5, 9 and Robinson-Superior Treaty. Aboriginal peoples comprise approximately 2% of the Ontario population and approximately 20% of Northern Ontario.

Figure 1.1: Districts of Northern Ontario
Source: [http://www.mndmf.gov.on.ca/sohfc/northern_ontario_districts_e.asp](http://www.mndmf.gov.on.ca/sohfc/northern_ontario_districts_e.asp)

For the purposes of this study, Northern Ontario included all the districts in Northwestern Ontario (Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay) and the districts of Cochrane and Algoma-Manitoulin in Northeastern Ontario. Table 1 provides an overall comparative look at the relative position of Northern Ontario (Northeastern and Northwestern areas) with regard to farmland.

Climate change is expected to have major implications for the length of the growing season, the variety of crops grown and grain yields in northern Ontario. In examining climate change scenarios for Canada, Qian et al. (2005) predict that the number of frost-free days is expected to increase by 30-45 days in northern Ontario by the middle of the century. The predicted changes for the frost dates indicate an earlier ending of frosts in spring and a later starting of frosts and killing frosts in the fall (Cummings, et al., 2009a-g).
Table 1.1: Total Land Area, Workable and Non-workable, Reported by Farms in the Study Area, Northern Ontario, and Ontario, 1996-2006 (acres) (Modified from Table 5.2 http://www.nodn.com/upload/documents/thunder-bay-district-agri-impact-report-final-oct.-26-2009.pdf)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1996</th>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Average</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>farms</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td>farm</td>
<td>farms</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td>farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>67520</td>
<td>13879565</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>59728</td>
<td>13507357</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>2915</td>
<td>1025190</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>2635</td>
<td>1012026</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>57211</td>
<td>13310216</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>2479</td>
<td>1022060</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stability over time of agricultural activity in northern Ontario is seen as a moderating effect on the boom and bust cycles of the forestry and mining sectors, the predominant income sources. Since 2006, the forest product sector has experienced both contraction and closure of large-scale sawmill operations and forest processing mills. This decline is associated with a decreasing demand for newsprint and the downturn in the U.S. housing market. In contrast, mining potential has been rapidly expanding with notable developments like the chromium Ring of Fire in the western Hudson Bay lowland areas. Both the mining and forestry management practices and northern policies have placed tensions between increasing local food sources and these extraction resource industries that are accompanied with potential for long term soil, water and air toxic contamination. Several of the local food hubs studied in this report have focused on local food sources that include both cultivated and forest food sources. Contamination from flooding of land associated with hydroelectric energy projects, leakage of toxic substances from improper mine closures and limitations in environmental safety of current mining processes and forest management practices such as herbicidal spraying have added challenges to the revitalization of the mixed economy cultivated and traditional food acquisition practices of Northern Ontario’s aboriginal peoples (Stroink & Nelson, 2009).

Forest food sources are key to flourishing local food systems in the region. However, there is a complexity of interwoven factors that have kept forest food sources from becoming an intimate part of the local food system. First, fish and forest food do not factor into the definition of food and thus are denied eligibility for support from funding sources focused on developing local food sources. Second, the regulatory system assumes a homogenous, agriculturally-focused food system across the province. Third, food gathered from the informal economy of an individual’s fishing or securing moose, grouse or caribou cannot be ‘sold at the gate’, for there is no regulatory gate as on farms for selling of these local food products. This is of special concern to urban aboriginal organizations that wish to serve traditional foods to their client base. Fourth, those who obtain a hunting tag for moose or those living on First Nations find that fuel costs are making hunting prohibitive. Moreover, fire suppression policy has added to distancing of food sources and thus the cost of forest food sources, as fire is needed for moose and deer browse. Fifth, policies that appear geared to protect against overfishing by tourists may compromise food security as an abundant food system source is limited by quotas,
including the number of fish that one can keep in home freezers. In addition, in Northern Ontario, Species at Risk listing of sturgeon and caribou may impact on availability of local food sources.

The physical infrastructure is diverse, but not developed in a way that facilitates regional local food system marketing. Both the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways create a national transportation system across the country but two of the secondary rail lines that facilitated transportation within Northern Ontario (Sioux Lookout line and one from Longlac to Thunder Bay) have been totally dismantled. Hence, the total potential of rail to facilitate regional local food movement has been compromised and diminished.

Similarly, the largest outbound port on the St. Lawrence Seaway system is located in the City of Thunder Bay, but provides no infrastructure for moving goods within Northern Ontario. Infrastructure has been developed for an export market rather than a regional market. Northern Ontario is served by two major highways, Highway 11 and 17, that are both part of the TransCanada Highway and provide an east-west distribution channel but only as a ribbon located between 2 - 300 km north of the U.S. border. Other road transportation is more seasonal including the use of logging roads (which are often closed by forest companies) to access forest food sources such as blueberries, fish and mushrooms and the 3000 km of ice roads that weave through the north for 2-3 months each year. It should be noted that, perhaps due to climate change, the capability to use ice roads for transportation of heavy food goods to northern communities has been severely compromised by insufficient cold weather to develop the ice needed to support these large northern transport crawlers.

There is substantial air service throughout the region with the City of Thunder Bay and Sioux Lookout being two of the busiest airports in Ontario. However, air cargo is expensive for shipping local food. Currently, a small percentage of food that is flown to the Northern Stores does begin the trip north from Northern Ontario communities including Thunder Bay, Timmins and Sudbury. However, the historic food distribution pattern to northern First Nation communities is Minneapolis to Winnipeg and then north.

Development of the regional food system in a way that emerges organically from the unique human and ecological setting will strengthen the autonomy and economic vitality of all Northern Ontario communities. In terms of local food hubs reaching the northern communities, there is scant infrastructure that connects to the emergence of the local food system as described in this chapter. Northern Ontario embraces a complexity of food systems (traditional, forest, agricultural, mainstream imported) across huge scales. There is currently a lack of bridging among these different food systems reinforced by the physical infrastructure but discouraged from emergence by food histories and a policy framework that only speaks to one food system (Food Secure Canada, 2011).

Northern Ontario has proven itself to be a source of agri-food innovation. Since the Premier’s Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence was established in 2006, sixteen food hub producers have been recognized for their innovation and contribution to the community and economy.
There is also growing involvement in value-added farm activities in northern Ontario. In some cases farmers are working independently on their value-added activities while in other cases producer cooperatives have been established. Producer cooperatives are viewed as an effective way to facilitate value-added product development and the establishment of support infrastructure including processing, marketing and distribution systems. Agri-sector stakeholders acknowledge the need for greater networking between producers and community organizations. Moreover there is a high demand by local food producers for additional access to processing and storage facilities viewed as critical to the expansion of value-added local food products that can extend the season for availability of local food. Of particular interest in Northern Ontario is the establishment of additional local poultry abattoirs. Currently there is only one for this vast area. This is a particular challenge in that poultry must be processed near to where they are raised. The current situation of one abattoir for 87% of Ontario’s land mass is thwarting local food hub development. Last year in the City of Thunder Bay, $13 million was spent on importing chicken as a food source.

A regional analysis of agri-related business activity in the combined areas of Thunder Bay District, Kenora District, Rainy River District and Cochrane District reveals that agriculture is making a significant contribution to the wider economy beyond the farm gate. Collectively, the 840 farms and the 270 agri-related businesses in this northern Ontario study area generate approximately $140 million in agri-related sales consisting of $62.1 million in direct sales (farm receipts) and $77.9 million in indirect sales (agri-related business sales). The associated sales expenditure multiplier indicates that for every dollar of farm income there is an additional $1.30 in business sales activity in the wider economy (Cummings, 2009 d-g).

Additionally, the agriculture sector in this study area supports between 2,520 and 3,465 jobs consisting of 1,120 direct jobs (on farm jobs), 455 indirect jobs (agri-related business jobs) and between 945 and 1,890 induced jobs (jobs in government sectors). The associated employment multiplier indicates that for every job in the agriculture sector an additional 1.3 to 2.1 jobs are supported in the wider economy. The high range job multiplier is more closely linked to the Thunder Bay region given the concentration of dairy and other agriculture sectors in the region and the larger agri-related business.

There are numerous agricultural resources in Northern Ontario, most of which have provincial ties but promote agriculture in place-based ways that ensure the viability of food production in the North. These resources include Federations of Agriculture, research stations, Soils and Crop Improvement Associations, Cattlemen’s Associations, Dairy Associations, farmers markets, Christian Farmers Association, agriculture societies with provincial charters, Slow Food, and Health Units that monitor food safety and promote local food. The agriculture research stations are catalysts for providing localized field trial information about the suitability of crop varieties and crop choices for northern climates. The Thunder Bay Agriculture Research Station is operated by a nonprofit Board of Directors and the New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station (NLARS) also operates the Verner Test Site in Nipissing District and the Emo Agricultural Research Station in Rainy River District. NLARS is managed by the University of Guelph Kemptville
Campus. In addition, the National Farmer’s Union has a presence in Northern Ontario as well as the federal Kapuskasing Experimental Farm. All of these resources provide a diversity of approaches to adapting agricultural practices to northern conditions. They frequently partner with the academic institutions in the north to introduce new topics such as viability of organic certification in the north, blueberries as a farm crop, chick peas and crop planning for vegetable production.

With continued financial growth shown in the historical data and with great potential for expansion of agriculture in the future, farming in Thunder Bay District is a “spot of sunshine” in the economy of Northwestern Ontario. With over $32.3 million in gross farm receipts and 605 on-farm jobs, just the direct-farm impact is significant. With indirect and induced jobs, total jobs as a result of agriculture are between 1400 and 1850 (Cummings, 2009g). “This report indicates that farming is on the rise in the area,” stated Peggy Brekveld, president of the Thunder Bay Federation of Agriculture (TBFA). “By continuing to support our research facilities and developing more added value opportunities, agriculture will continue to be a driving force in our local economy.” Area gross farm receipts are the highest for Northern Ontario at $30,600/farm, and well above the provincial average of $26,200. As well, the number of farms in the Thunder Bay district grew between the last two census reports to 252, up from 238. [http://www.tbfarminfo.org/facts.shtml]

Agriculture in Kenora District continues to have competitive advantages and economic opportunities including a substantial farmland base that supports the growth of a variety of crops, lower land prices relative to land prices in Southern Ontario, and access to a large regional market (Northwestern Ontario). There are opportunities for further expansion of crop production in the District. Based on projections from climate change models, the growing season in the southern portion of Kenora District is expected to gradually increase over the next 100 years, which will result in further crop production opportunities for the region (Cummings, 2009 e).

Rainy River District reported over 211,000 acres of farmland from 312 farms in 2006. This represents the largest area of farmland of any District in Northern Ontario and is more than double the farmland area reported by most other Districts. The average farm size in Rainy River District is 678 acres, which is substantially larger than the average for northern Ontario (412 acres) and the provincial average (233 acres). Agricultural soils in Rainy River District are fair to moderately high in productivity and can support a range of crops with good crop and soil management practices. The soil and climate conditions in the region allow for the production of a variety of field crops including barley, wheat, oats, corn, alfalfa, and other hay crops. In 2006, almost 60,000 acres or 28% of the total farmland base in Rainy River District was reported in crop production. Rainy River District farms are also involved in variety of livestock production including beef, dairy, sheep, goats, and pigs as well as farm raised bison, deer/elk and llama/alpaca (Cummings, 2009 f).
Agriculture in the Algoma - Manitoulin region continues to have competitive advantages and economic opportunities including a substantial farmland base that supports the growth of a variety of crops; lower land prices relative to land prices in Southern Ontario, its isolation from the threat of contaminants from industrial farms; and its access to a regional market (Northeastern Ontario) (Cummings, 2009a).

**Participants**

Over forty initial contacts were made resulting in studying a total of 40 food hubs in the North. Of these 40 initial contacts, 26 were contacted for interviews. Interview participants represented a diversity of food hub activities in 15 different communities throughout the region. This exercise presented a significant opportunity to identify, explore and connect with these initiatives, and has illuminated a very vibrant, innovative, progressive and widespread local food movement in Northern Ontario. There were two co-operative ventures, two for-profit producers, two OMAFRA representatives, three farmers’ markets, four economic development committees, five emergency food and social advocacy organizations, two academic networks, five community health unit representatives, and four community development initiatives.

**Table 1.2: Interviewed initiatives by typology**

Due to the diverse nature both within and among the 26 food hubs represented in this study, we have opted to identify the typologies with which each initiative identifies. There is much overlap, and several initiatives fall under multiple typologies, as shown in Table 2. This illustrates how numerous northern food initiatives are multi-faceted.
Analysis of Interview Data

Operational Details of Reported Local Food Hubs

All but three respondents discussed the operations of the project or hub in which they were involved. One Public Health Dietician and two OMAFRA representatives spoke generally about the diversity of operations and organizational structures that exist, depending on the particular hub. Six food hubs operate as non-profit organizations with a Board of Directors. Two respondents represented or discussed for-profit food hub models, and two represented blended for- and not-for-profit social enterprise
Six informal organizations or networks were discussed that included four multi-organization partnership projects. Two non-profit co-operatives were discussed, as were two university-based food hubs. Five District Health Unit municipal offices were discussed, as were two food hubs operating as municipal committees.

Table 1.3: Categorization of northern food hubs by type of organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Examples named</th>
<th>Specific comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit with board</td>
<td>Moosonee Native Friendship Centre</td>
<td>“Through volunteer labour, contributions of board members, partner agencies. Lots of in-kind donations as well as volunteer hours.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northeast Superior Community Forest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thunder Bay Country Market (Farmer’s Market)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NWO Women’s Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taste of Timmins (committee of BIA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Food Distribution Association</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For-profit business</td>
<td>Clover Valley Farmer’s market</td>
<td>“Board driven not-for-profit with a for-profit storefront.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cornell Farms</td>
<td>“In the process of evolving from non-profit model to social enterprise model. This blends a business model with a not-for-profit.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended</td>
<td>La Maison Verte</td>
<td>“In the process of evolving from non-profit model to social enterprise model. This blends a business model with a not-for-profit.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willow Springs Creative Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal organization</td>
<td>Apple Core Atikokan (Northwestern Health Unit interview)</td>
<td>“Both are grassroots groups. They have terms of reference. No funding. They have a chair and co-chair. There are 5 to 6 different organizations involved in both groups.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or network</td>
<td>Rainy River Valley Food For All</td>
<td>“Not a lot of organizational structure. Currently there are two farmers who are president and secretary. They keep the books and call the meetings; it is very informal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cloverbelt Farmers Market (Dryden)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ogden Simpson Veggie Garden Project</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kitchenshuykoosib Inninuwug Garden Initiative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ignace Community Blueberry Initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit co-op</td>
<td>True North Community Co-op</td>
<td>“A non-profit cooperative, the governance structure is based on democratic control and rooted in the cooperative principles, autonomy being the most important.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainy River Abattoir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic
Food Security Research Network (Lakehead University, Thunder Bay)
Nordik Research Institute (Algoma University, Sault Ste. Marie)

“We are a network that is based on complexity theory. We have over 160 partners, they come from agricultural groups, research stations, soils and crops, Federation of agriculture, schools, aboriginal groups, social services and health.”

District Health Units
Thunder Bay District Health Unit (Food Action Network)
Northwestern Health Unit – Dryden
Northwestern Health Unit – Sioux Lookout
Northwestern Health Unit – Kenora
Northwestern Health Unit – Fort Frances

“Health Unit has a paid employee, who is the lead on the projects administratively, and then works with different organizations and others…”

Municipal Government
AGRIVA (committee of Hearst EDC)
EDC Wawa with municipal tourism department (Wawa Farmer’s Market)

“AGRIVA is a subcommittee of the Hearst Economic Development Corporation. A very small portion of the budget comes from revenues of the market. In-kind support from the EDC.”

Size of operating budgets varied from zero to $150,000 / year. Sources of funding included government and foundation grants, provincial funding for interns applied for annually, in-kind contributions of other entities, and fee-for-service or profit generating activities. Twelve respondents identified at least one partnership with another organization as being an important part of their operating structure.

The non-profits tend to be heavily staffed by volunteers and operations depend on volunteer contributions. The informal organizations and networks tend to be more emerging and newer than the other organizational types, and are either not yet at the point of becoming incorporated, lack the resources and time to do so, or the nature of their role in the local food movement means it is best to remain dynamic, informal, and emergent. The latter is particularly true of partnership-based projects where the work is being done by collections (sometimes ad hoc or per project) of other people and organizations pooling resources to achieve a common goal. District Health Units play an important background role in supporting and making possible the diversity of small-scale emergent community initiatives. Some Economic Development corporations, universities, and municipal offices also play this supportive or incubating role.
Reflections on Personal Involvement, Concerns, and Motives

All respondents except the two OMAFRA reps indicated that they were personally involved in local food hubs. Of the 11 respondents who indicated how long they had been involved, length of time ranged from less than 1 year to 12 years (mean = 4.8 years). One indicated having “always been a foodie.” The nature of the respondents’ involvement included being part of their job (12), being a volunteer (4), being a Board member (1), Board official (4), or founding member (2), or being a producer (2). Note that some individuals indicated being involved with their food hub in more than one capacity over time (e.g., volunteering then assuming a paid role). Many of these individuals are involved in or volunteer with multiple initiatives. All but one respondent indicated that they would like to stay involved or increase their involvement in a variety of targeted ways. One, who had been the manager of a farmers’ market for 12 years, felt it was time to start decreasing his formal involvement due to age.

Table 1.4: Motivation for involvement in local food hubs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“My understanding of how justice happens...food is a perfect vehicle for that because you can still grow your own food. That is a perfect place for empowerment, where people can garner control over their lives, and there are spinoff benefits – increased health, good for the environment, feeds back into local economy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development / social capital</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“AGRIVA and the market have to create a space within the community where relationships can develop. Provides a community space.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viable local food / agriculture</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Creating a structure that allows producers to set their own pricing – this allows for local food production that is viable and that consumers are not exploited.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“People are very disconnected from their food supply, and think that they act independently from nature. There is a great risk in this.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food sovereignty, rights, empowerment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Food is one of the most basic human rights, it is an essential determinant of health and human dignity.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“My interest is in economic development and I wanted to be involved in a program that brought benefits to people and the community and could act as an incubator for local business.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents indicated 14 types of guiding motivation. The most frequently listed were social justice, community development and social capital, and the need for viable local food systems, including agriculture. This diversity of guiding motivations or concerns reflects differences in starting point or perspective. Five respondents indicated that all the potential guiding motivations listed were important and emphasized the interconnections among them.

It is difficult to rank [these motivations] because they are all interconnected – part of the same thing. I don't think you can have any sustainability without justice.

Ranking: 1) developing a more sustainable food system – this sums up a lot of different issues, it covers the environment and is also an economic choice. As you retain products locally, you ensure the viability of the entire chain.

It is interesting to note the foundational role of food in the life of living systems such as human health, community, and culture. In response to these questions, food was

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecting people with growing food, with the land, with each other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“It is about getting back to the way we used to live [in this neighbourhood] – where people helped each other. This is bigger than the food for my belly, is more about the quality of life for every person who lives here.” “The most important one is reconnecting people with growing their food.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“To increase food security in Dryden, to increase access to healthy food, and to increase capacity to produce.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of job / gov’t priority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“It was part of my job at the tourism centre.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food crisis</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“There's also that element of horticulture therapy that is good for healing, health, development.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Main reason was diversification, so profitability.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profitability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I want the learning experience of working with producers and learning to incorporate my personal experiences, so I can become a food producer.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“The most important motivator: providing food. The community plan recognized gaps in services available to the community homeless and at-risk of homelessness population.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
described as a vehicle for empowerment and social justice, as an opportunity to create community spaces for relationships to develop, as an essential determinant of health and dignity, as a way of strengthening the local economy, and as a way of offering healing and support to those in need. Food hubs are thus seen to be much more profound than the mere provision of food.

**Factors Determining the Effectiveness of Food Hubs**

Respondents identified many factors that are an impact on the effectiveness of a food hub, or things that a food hub needs to do in order to be effective. Of the 22 statements offered, the identified factors fell into two broad types: (1) factors underlying the vibrancy of the hub and (2) its capacity to engage and strengthen the community.

The factors underlying food hub vibrancy included its viability and profitability, the number of producers in the area, and the hub’s capacity to add marketing strength. Clustering with other hubs and forming partnerships was seen as a way to enhance effectiveness. A coordinated regional market or network was identified as an existing need that would further enhance effectiveness.

Factors underlying the food hub’s capacity to impact the community and increase its engagement and strength included increasing individual awareness, changing people’s behaviour, getting people to recognize the responsibility that comes with certain rights, and reducing targeted needs.

Two people pointed out the unique circumstances of remote northern communities with increased cost of food and limited choices for grocers. Two people highlighted the interconnectedness among and importance of all examples offered. One indicated that it is difficult to measure these indicators of a hub’s effectiveness, so it is challenging to determine the impact of the hub.

> Many of these are not very measurable (i.e. health). It is difficult to know if you're improving people's health.

**Table 1.5: Factors determining effectiveness of local food hubs by theme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hub Vibrancy:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profitability / viability</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>“Instead of profitability for producers, we should be talking about viability. It is not about profitability, it is about viability and the pricing structure [being] set up to ensure viability of local businesses.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 of those viability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of local food</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Accessibility issue – Dryden is a convenience-based community.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing of local food, provision of space, premium pricing at market</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“The most important thing is to provide a space to market their products.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clustering with others, regional market need; cross-supporting each other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“More interaction is needed across the region. The market should be developed regionally and support each other, cross promote and strengthen the food system.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security (including number of producers)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Food security issue: not enough producers to fill the demand.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Community:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community building and engagement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Contribution to community building and education. We try as much as possible to encourage membership, volunteerism, and community engagement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting community needs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“It has to be built around and reflect the needs of the community and what they want.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Health and nutrition awareness built from buying local, benefits to the local economy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and awareness, behavior change</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“We need to develop habits around supporting local food and this means behavioural changes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of isolation / small communities; cost of food, alternative to one grocer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“The most important factor that determines the effectiveness of food hubs in my community is our cost of living in an isolated community.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We only have one grocer so not a lot of local competition. This [a market] gives an alternative.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All items listed and interconnectedness among them</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“All factors are important, it is difficult to separate them from one another.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1.6: Barriers affecting the development of local food hubs by theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Policies and regulations for producers, amount of paperwork, also MNR for forest food | 14     | “Policy presents a real conundrum because it's written at 20,000 foot level and looks at the big picture; it is a one-size-fits-all. It's all generally well intended for the betterment of people but it may not be most appropriate for some local producers.”  
“Food inspection laws are way too tight. Regulators are stimulating the uninspected market because they make it too difficult. If the goal is to increase food safety, they are not doing it properly. Local producers spend too much time overcoming regulation. The average consumer has no idea how difficult it is for the local food movement to cross all these hurdles.”  
“MNR politics and [herbicidal] spraying [affects blueberry initiatives].” |
| Education, including consumer education, food preservation and skills, beliefs about mill towns, fear of change, behavior change | 12     | “There is a continued assumption that we need education from outsiders. We are not respecting our internal knowledge. We need to talk to our own people. Need to look at expertise of farmers and growers.”  
“Teaching people that our town can be known for something other than its mill.” |
| Limited funding, administrative needs, consistency in staff          | 7      | “Specifically for us, it is funding. In order to have a consistent operation we need to have a staff person.”  
“Funding. There is a need to employ someone in an administrative position year-round. There is a need for continuity.” |
<p>| Seasonality, climate (and effects of same on market’s visibility)     | 5      | “Also lack of availability, year-round, of produce. We have two large potato producers, but these don't want to sell year-round. That is the biggest barrier – people don't see it [the market] there all the time.” |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Isolation of Northern communities (both a strength and a barrier), costs of transportation, lack of local entrepreneurs and human resources to run markets etc. | 5         | “Our location is both a strength and weakness. We have added costs for transportation of goods. But this distance also acts as an extra buffer which perhaps might help create stronger local markets.”  
“We are an isolated community, so there are high distribution costs and transportation costs. We need to develop better partnerships to share costs.”  
“Small population – can't sustain a large greenhouse operation. Lack of local entrepreneurs to build projects.”  
“The Sioux Lookout Market is on a weekday and you have to pay for a table so anyone who is interested in developing a product is typically working full-time and unable to attend the market.” |
| Distribution processes and costs if not in a system (e.g., Co-op)    | 4         | “Insufficient distribution systems is a real problem in the north.”  
“Insufficient distribution possibilities is only a problem if you're not integrated into the system.” |
| Lack of supply, lack of producers, training and encouragement for farming | 4         | “For the most part [outside of peaks] there is barely enough supply to meet the local demand there already is at the market.”  
“We do not have a lot of local producers and so there is a lack of knowledge and skill… There's a problem with the education system in that farming is not promoted or supported as a career choice.” |
| Access to land, municipality for gardens and MNR for crown land       | 2         | “We are surrounded by Crown land and it is difficult to access this land and change the zoning to agricultural.” |
| Lack of infrastructure                                               | 1         | “There is insufficient infrastructure. This has been difficult for producers to have steady supply of product for the consumers.” |
| Conflict among local food organizations and definitions of local     | 1         | “Another concern is that large scale producers are marketing their products as local when they are not. They're fooling the public and being dishonest. They have large amounts of money for their marketing strategies whereas we have smaller budgets.” |
All but one respondent listed several barriers to the development of local food hubs. The most frequently-cited issue was the policies and regulations facing producers and potential producers. While food safety regulations were recognized as important and generally well intentioned, the one-size-fits-all approach to these policies were seen as too cumbersome for smaller producers who cannot compete and get their products into the mainstream market. In addition to the policy and regulation barriers facing agricultural producers, two respondents also mentioned the challenges experienced by those wishing to harvest and market forest foods such as blueberries. The policies and practices of the Ministry of Natural Resources are not set up to deal with forest food and favour timber production. This hampers both access to Crown land and the safety of forest food as a result of herbicidal spraying practices.

The second most frequently-cited barrier was education, including consumer awareness and behaviour change as well as lack of support, education, and training for those potentially interested in food as a career choice. One respondent specifically highlighted the challenge of convincing community members that the town could be something other than a mill town, referring to the deeply-rooted mindset of people in long-established single-industry resource towns. Two respondents also highlighted concerns with barriers to exchanging and nurturing local, place-based, internal knowledge of food practices, as well as people’s wariness of outside knowledge and the actual limitations of that knowledge.

Four respondents mentioned a lack of local producers to supply sufficient local food to meet demand. One interviewee mentioned a lack of young farmers in her community and a small, aging group of existing farmers. Note that this issue varies considerably across the region, as Thunder Bay has a growing population of young farmers while smaller communities in the region are losing their farming base.

The small, isolated populations of northern communities was mentioned and described as both a challenge and an advantage by five respondents. Challenges include increased distance from other communities and the associated transportation costs. Producers seeking to sell their products often have to travel long distances throughout the region to access markets. Other challenges include the small populations unable to support entrepreneurial efforts. The advantage of being isolated, however, is that the distance provides a buffer that may strengthen the local market.

In addition to listing multiple barriers, several respondents highlighted the interconnections among the various barriers.

**Personal Approaches to Overcoming Barriers to the Promotion of Local Food Hubs**

All but one person had ideas to share as to how they were personally working to overcome barriers to the growth of local food hubs. Fourteen responses focused on advocacy type of food hub activities. There was quite a diversity of approaches to advocacy.

**Table 1.7: Approaches to overcoming barriers**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocacy</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Specific comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding for charitable food distribution</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“I look into different funding opportunities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal word of mouth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Wearing my red market hat!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Grant applications (enhance local food assets, explore niche markets and introduction of new food crops) | 3      | “Working on the blueberry project in Chapleau. Trying to get government on board and to give us a break on the land. I feel they need to make some accommodations for isolated communities.”  
“Trying to reach new markets.”  
“Looking for money, trying to renovate.”                                  |
| Writes articles for national magazine                                   | 1      | “I write for COG – I have written articles about these barriers.”                                                                                                                                             |
| Networking and building partnerships both within and across communities | 5      | “[I] work with communities to increase their awareness of what they can do to promote local food.”  
“Partnership with BIA, helping to develop a new culture of consumption around food and inspiring new connections between producers and consumers.”  
“We are doing so by asserting our autonomy and building our own relationships and reputation based on our actions.” |
| Land tenure reform                                                       | 3      | “We are surrounded by Crown land. We need more access to land and change zoning bylaws to make it agricultural.”                                                                                             |
| Youth entrepreneurship                                                   | 1      | “We have programs for youth entrepreneurs. We hope to encourage someone who will take on such a [food hub] project.”                                                                                         |
| Policy advocate (federal, provincial and municipal)                     | 3      | “Federally: a national food policy and strategy for food.  
Provincially: more support for local producers.  
Municipally: more support for local production.”  
“It comes back to the same complaint: there's not as much work being done in northern Ontario. We are generally overlooked; many people don't realize this part of Ontario exists. There are a lot of policies in place that are irrelevant.” |
Six of the responses focused on consumer education as a way that they could personally contribute to building local food hubs. Personal growth including further education and practicing what one advocates was mentioned by four respondents.

*By ‘doing the do’.*

One of the respondents who directs a charitable food distribution centre for over two dozen regional food banks is engaged in a shift within his organization to work and pay local farmers to grow food for charitable distribution. This is challenging the existing organization to move from a charitable model to an empowerment model where local farmers are paid a sustainable wage and charitable consumers have access to more nutritional local food.

**Reflections on Policy Issues and Local Food Hubs**

There was a consistent theme among 16 of the respondents that many existing policies work as brakes on the further development of local food systems.

*Not being so controlling of the development of things. For example, the poultry issue. To do this in Thunder Bay would have to overcome all of these issues. The politicians have gone beyond helping everyone. There are too many regulations.*

Moreover, there is a need for policies that are flexible and attentive to nurturing place-based food systems.

*Policy should start from the local economies, conditions, policies, needs of the communities, to get away from the big business model. There needs not only to be regulations that address the rationale of local food production.*

*We are generally overlooked; many people don't realize this part of Ontario exists. There are a lot of policies in place that are irrelevant.*

*There needs to be more flexible policy. We're dancing with the bylaws all the time.*

Reference was made to unique food sources in the North that are currently curbed as local food sources because of regulations.

*Look at the restrictions of wild game. There should be ways around this. Blueberry tenure problems. We don't have anything that facilitates keeping fish local because our policy for fish is based on tourism and export markets. It works against food security. We need to redirect provincial programs to support local including tax breaks for selling locally.*

The special needs of the northern most parts of Northern Ontario were acknowledged.
The northern fly-in communities are 100% dependent on food that is flown in. We need to dedicate resources to develop self-sufficiency food systems.

The current regulations embody the interests, values and asymmetrical power relations of different actors in the mainstream value food chain. The respondents voiced frustration in how these current regulations are used to govern the agri-food systems that leave the north thwarted in their endeavours to build a resilient local food system.

Currently the government does not do enough to support local producers. It's basic economics: small business is what the rest of the economy rests on. Should have policies to get licensing geared toward smaller farms. All levels of government should be concerned because food is critical for all.

Two respondents mentioned the need for a national food policy. Three respondents described the need for policies focused on individual behavioural shifts that would encourage the promotion of local food.

Any new policies should emphasize 'buy locally grown' as much as possible.

Two respondents mentioned funding for consumer education and for operational dollars for running existing programs.

Programs for consumer education. Programs that support local food knowledge and preservation.

In summary, there is a strong consensus that the northern approaches and solutions to building a local food system are not adequately supported by existing provincial policies. More place-based ‘made in the North’ policies are viewed as a key mechanism for releasing the current constraints on northern food production and distribution.

Effective Mechanisms for Promotion of Local Food Hubs

From the 26 case studies, five respondents provided no specific activities or projects. Two responses mentioned several of the better known programs in Southern Ontario and one person mentioned the importance of La Foire Gourmande.

The best way to get people interested in food is to actually celebrate it and taste it.

Seven respondents mentioned community gardens as an effective approach to introducing local foods. Those programs that help people to be more self-sufficient in their food knowledge and food production are, in the long-term, the most effective.

Of special note is that three of these community gardens are situated in unique settings: a provincial correctional facility that trains participants in life-long gardening, animal husbandry skills, a non-profit group that provides wheelchair accessible gardening units to twelve homes for adults with specialized needs, and a garden at a mental health facility that teaches skill development.
The second most frequent response of five was local food boxes, sometimes referred to in this region as Good Food Boxes and sometimes as Locavore boxes. The specific funding support and means of distribution vary widely among these local food box programs.

Within the Northern region, Nutrition North was mentioned as an effective mechanism for distributing food in the fly-in communities and two responses named CSA (community supported agriculture) as an effective distribution approach to building local food hubs. Two respondents mentioned the importance of local country markets and one had cautions about accessing provincial funding for markets.

> *There are government resources available to start these things (i.e. money for accessibility). Otherwise I would suggest staying away from any government funding because they can gain more control over what you are doing. Funding for local food comes from the provincial government, but we don't use it.*

Two respondents did not mention specific activities but confirmed the importance of partnering to build local momentum for food hubs. Singular diverse answers included having a university or college working with a local food group as effective, the local fresh food guides and the Wabigoon Lake blueberry initiative.

**Unique Types of Food Hubs for Northern Ontario**

The responses to this question reflected some of the unique geospatial aspects of northern Ontario. Of the 26 respondents, four provided no suggestions.

Three of the food hub responses were directly related to the local food sources that are a challenge to tap into due to existing provincial policies. Specific mention was made of the abundant opportunities and the demand for commercial blueberry production. One person stated, “There is a lot of demand for fish and wild game but there is a lot of red tape associated with this.”

The vastness of the area and the variety of community situations was noted. Specific mention was made for the need to source more food to the northern remote communities. More connectedness, making use of online resources and a knowledge hub were mentioned by five of the food hub respondents.

> *Because of our geography we are isolated from one another. Would like to see greater connections....*

> *I am excited about this project because it will make us better aware of what exists. This project will help us become more aware of viable food hub models and provoke more intense collaboration within the region.*

> *Don't want to create more organizations, but having an Internet site where all of the local food initiatives are linked so everyone knows what everyone else is doing.*
Another seven respondents focused on shoring up food hub resources within their particular communities; and the related support for local knowledge in the emergence of community-based food hubs.

*A Food hub* has to be about community development and social justice. We need more community level discussions.

Other specific suggestions included: the procurement of local food by grocery stores and restaurants, expansion of self-sufficiency gardening, and the need for winter and communal food storage to support local food hubs.

**Funding Sources for Northern Food Hubs**

Of the twenty-six food hub respondents, two did not know of any sources of funding for local food initiatives, three did not respond and one felt they were ineligible for funding because they were had unincorporated status. Of the twenty that did respond, there was diversity in scale from international to local funding sources. One commonality is that all of these funding sources are project based and do not provide long term sustainable operational or capital infrastructure support.

**Table 1.8: Indicated funding sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Provincial</th>
<th>Local</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evergreen Foundation</td>
<td>Metcalf</td>
<td>Trillium</td>
<td>Patterson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Society</td>
<td>J.R. McConnell</td>
<td>OMAFRA</td>
<td>District Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td>Units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TD Bank</td>
<td>NOHFC</td>
<td>Private donations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Way</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>(promotional and Healthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Fund)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FedNor Community</td>
<td></td>
<td>School-based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NonProfits</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Thoughts from Respondents**

Ten of the 26 food hub respondents had no additional responses. Other responses fell into the categories of:
Knowledge Diffusion

It is good to gather information from lots of different initiatives as it could give good ideas of how others can do this.

We can help each other.

Future Networking

Would like to know what is happening in other communities in the North and be connected with them.

The potential to grow a regional food network.

Food Hub Models

One respondent recognized the importance of the food hub movement transitioning from charity models to community-based empowerment models. Another respondent specifically referred to The Stop as a good example of a food hub that is diverse in its approach.

Education modules to work to bring communities from a charitable model to an empowerment model. To move through the community food security continuum. Really defining this more and making it into something we could use in workshops in the community.

[The Stop] recognizes immigration issues, growing food, they look at food in the social context, in terms of poverty, racism, low income neighbourhoods. Food is an important link – it isn’t the port and nexus – we have to deal with it all in this broad and chaotic context.

Report

Two respondents specifically mentioned a report as an outcome of this research study. One respondent saw the need to use this report as a mechanism to get better connected to both resources and funding. The other respondent encouraged the use of accessible language in the report so that “….everyone can read it and understand.” This respondent also hoped that the report would provide local knowledge about farming and allow for emergent, organic approaches to food hubs rather than advocating for adoption of best practices across the study area.

Would like to see recommendations on how to make things flexible and adaptable for each region, to get back to each region and build something based on the contributions of the real stakeholders who have been around. Need to be respected and included. We need to take a page from our First Nations neighbours who respect their elders and go to them for information/knowledge.
Emerging Themes and Conclusions
The interviews and case studies conducted as part of this study revealed a vibrant and dynamic patchwork of local food hubs emerging in Northern Ontario. Common themes that emerged across these varied initiatives will be discussed here and will point to some recommendations for future work.

The Northern region is geographically large but relatively small in terms of population. However, as in other parts of the province there is a strong and committed movement to foster local food hubs. The advocates of this movement are driven by a concern with ensuring social justice, community development, and a viable local food foundation for their communities. In order to achieve these aims, people are forming innovative and collaborative models of local food hubs. Critically, they are drawing on partnerships to bring together the resources and capital contained in various existing entities, such as universities, health units, and libraries to nurture and incubate projects and initiatives. These approaches are essential given the lack of consistent funding available to form and operate stand-alone food hub ventures.

An additional advantage of the partnership and project-focused approach to forming local food hubs is that the lack of fixed structure allows the hub project to be flexible and emergent, and thus more responsive to situational changes and community needs. Another notable feature of the studied hubs is the use of innovative organizational models. In addition to two co-operative ventures, there were two hubs that adopted or were exploring blended for- and not-for profit social enterprise models, and a complexity-inspired academically-based food network. Such innovative organizational models may be a strategic advantage in nurturing food hub movements in the shadow of the industrial food system.

Many of the individuals who participated in this study were inclined to view the complex challenges and other factors shaping the local food movement through a lens in which interconnections are brought into focus. The interconnectedness and big picture story underlying the various examples offered in the interview guide were highlighted repeatedly by several respondents. This tendency to focus on connections and the big picture may be a valuable attribute self-selected in food hub advocates.

One notable observation is the manner in which food was understood. While basic food access was an important motivator for many food hub advocates, so too were health, community, and culture. Thus, food is being seen as foundational to a holistic notion of life lived well. For example, food was described as a vehicle for empowerment and social justice, as an opportunity to create community spaces for relationships to develop, as an essential determinant of health and dignity, as a way of strengthening the local economy, and as a way of offering healing and support to those in need. Food hubs are thus seen to be much more profound than the mere provision of food.

One potentially unique factor for consideration in this northern portion of the study is the importance of forest food in ensuring local food viability. While this only emerged indirectly in two respondents’ concerns with the MNR and other regulations affecting
forest food, this may reflect an underground and informal quality to forest food hubs making them less amenable to study than other local food hubs. For example, while it is not possible to market and sell locally-caught fish without a commercial license, there are certainly dense informal networks of families and friends through which legally-caught fish are shared. The same would be true of locally-hunted game, particularly in First Nation communities (Nelson & Stroink, 2010). Thus it could be argued that a form of local food hub exists for forest foods that is less formal and developed than other local food hubs, but no less important, particularly for those many communities in the far north where large scale cultivated food systems are not feasible.

Limitations
There were a number of limitations regarding the scope of this northern regional research. Specifically, we did not contact the representatives of any of the existing agricultural bodies in the region, such as the research stations, soils and crop associations, or agricultural federations. These individuals may have had a revealing perspective on the emergence of local food hubs in the region.

We were also unable to include only two food producers. This was in part due to the timing of the research (spring-summer data collection), but more of these voices including the aging and younger farmers in various communities would have added valuable perspective.

Finally, we were only able to include two respondents who dealt in non-timber forest products (i.e., blueberries). This is in part due to the shift in mindset that would be required to recognize an informal forest food hub. For example, fishers who give away their locally-caught fish may not realize that they are acting as a food hub. The for-profit company, Forbes Wild Foods, which markets forest food from across Canada but originated in northern Ontario, would have been a valuable contact with an interesting perspective.

Recommendations
Three main recommendations for next steps emerged from this study.

Recommendation 1
The first is the repeatedly articulated need for greater regional collaboration and partnership among local food hubs and other supportive organizations and entities. Many of the respondents interviewed were excited about the opportunity to learn about food hub activities in other neighbouring communities; it was noted in several interviews that individuals felt alone with their communities in attempting to address local food viability and food security. Therefore, it is recommended that future work explore options for regional networking, coordination, and communication. This includes a longer-term goal of considering a coordinated approach to a regional food market. The True North Community Co-op is beginning to build a regional food distribution network within their model and thus presents one approach for further consideration.
Recommendation 2
The second recommendation is the considerable need for policy work through which to facilitate and support the emergence of a complexity of local food systems from under the shadow of the dominant food system. This work should reflect a broader definition of food and be inclusive of fish, game, and other forest foods. The task would be to examine current policies and approaches to such issues as food safety and conservation with innovative approaches to ensuring local food security as a guiding factor. This would require the integration of forces currently housed within separate ministries and governed under different layers of government.

Recommendation 3
Finally, there is a need for further research on the nature of local food hubs dealing with forest foods. Hubs of knowledge and skill in acquiring forest food could be identified and mapped, as could the networks of food sharing and exchange that occur with this food. While this food sharing may not currently be able to be part of the dominant economy, it would be important to explore how reciprocity and trade through informal economies takes place in these food hubs.

References


Case Study 1: Eat Local Sudbury (ELS)
Prepared by Lee-Ann Chevrette, Connie Nelson, and Mirella Stroink

Location: Sudbury Ontario

Interviewees: Allison Muckle, local producer and founding member of ELS; Maureen Strickland, Coordinator of Eat Local Sudbury

In person interviews and site visit August 16, 2011

Overview
Allison was one of the original members of the group that started Eat Local Sudbury in 2006. She had recently completed a Craft Farm apprenticeship and was very interested in the concept of the hundred mile diet. She wanted to eat local and began working to figure out where to source local food in the Sudbury area. Between September 2005 and March 2006 Allison and her partner did a 150 mile diet; the research they did in order for them to source local foods was the foundation for Eat Local Sudbury.

Initially, two farms came together to discuss doing a CSA. They applied for and received approximately $500 to print brochures for promotion of the CSA. Two farms did a CSA in 2006 and 2007. They received federal funding through the Cooperatives Development Initiative in 2007 to conduct a feasibility study and then from FedNor in 2008 to open a local food retail outlet. The main vision was to create a food hub, and to increase the accessibility and availability of local food.

Eat Local Sudbury was incorporated in November 2007. The first board consisted of five members. They conducted a feasibility study to explore having a stall at the farmers market and not an actual storefront location. Once the study was complete, they began with stalls at the farmers’ market and, based on that success, opened a storefront location in downtown Sudbury once the farmers’ market closed for the season. In 2008 Allison was the paid coordinator for Eat Local Sudbury (funding through FedNor). They also had two job creation partnership positions through Employment Ontario. At that time they had one outdoor booth and two indoor booths at the Sudbury farmers’ market.

They began wondering what to do once the market was finished and so, with funding through FEDNOR, they moved into a downtown location. They then received a Trillium grant for three years, which paid for a coordinator. There are several local producers that continue to sell their products through ELS. Approximately 20% of the produce that goes to the store is from Dalew Farms in Lavigne, Ontario; however, Dalew have supplied approximately 80% of the produce sold at the market.

Maureen was hired as the new coordinator in March 2011. She came from Nova Scotia with a background in community development, social enterprise, and business. She comes to the organization in the third year of a three-year Trillium grant; she describes her challenge as establishing the organization as independent from external funding, and creating a model of self-sufficiency.
Currently ELS receives an NOHFC-funded intern, who acts in the capacity of Institutional Purchasing Coordinator, a Canada summer job student, who acts as Market Produce Assistant, an ONFresh/GreenBelt Fund-funded part-time employee for deliveries, and a Wikwemiking First Nation-funded position to run the store. They essentially have five positions in the summer; this will drop down to three in the fall.

The organization is evolving; it is established as a co-op. It provides local food to consumers, acts as a business incubator for growth of existing and aspiring local producers, and provides consumer education.

**Uniqueness**

ELS was the first food co-op in northern Ontario. At the time that it was started it was very unique to have a store that was selling strictly locally-produced goods. Also, it was unique in that it was started by farmers and consumers collectively; originally 50% of the Board was made up of farmers.

**Human Resources**

ELS currently has five staff members: one full-time coordinator (Maureen), one full-time one year intern, one summer intern, one part-time delivery driver, and one summer student position. They source local food products from numerous local producers.

**Physical Infrastructure**

Eat Local Sudbury has a storefront location; they share the building with ReThink Green at 176 Larsh Street in downtown Sudbury. They have a van which they have retrofitted for deliveries, several fridges and freezers, computers, and a point-of-sale system. They have only one phone line for five staff members, which is sometimes problematic. Maureen feels that they need to invest in better communications and marketing. Maureen feels that in terms of long term sustainability, ELS should consider purchasing real estate.

**Financial Resources**

They have received significant funding. Currently ELS has funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Greenbelt Fund, NOHFC for an internship and the Cooperative Development Initiative.

**Community Resources**

ELS has a partnership with ReThink Green. They share office space and other resources. They provide office space for the Food Charter Animator, and the Good Food Box Coordinator. ELS collaborated with the Social Planning Council of Sudbury and the Sudbury Food Connections Network on a Trillium grant. ELS is planning to build a walk-in cooler. Co-op Boreal runs out of College Boreal, and they do institutional purchasing through ELS. ELS also sells to Science North, and Laurentian University. There also are members of Ontario Natural Food Co-Op.

**Community Resources/assets we would like to be connected to**

ELS would like to explore more opportunities for institutional purchasing. For example, Co-op Boreal provides food to the francophone daycares in the area and ELS may be able to provide food for them. ELS would also like to tap into social enterprise and
cooperative funding streams, and to explore opportunities to be a training ground for employability skills.

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**

One of the key constraints is that there is inconsistency because a new intern is hired every year. They are relying on externally funded positions and so there is a lack of consistency. There is also too much work for the amount of staff that they currently have.

Allison feels that it is difficult to have a co-op that includes farmers/producers and consumers. Farmers are exceedingly busy during the summer months and they have little time to participate. There is some difficulty in involving farmers in the operations of the co-op. They have significant time constraints and traditional meetings do not work well. Allison suggested that the farmers could perhaps form an advisory group or have one farmer representative that meets with the Board. She feels the organization is going through a natural evolution, and is focusing on developing more policy and procedures now. It is evolving from a grassroots group.

Coordinating vegetable production with multiple producers is also a challenge, and it is difficult to keep things fresh in the store. What is required is better communication and coordination. It is also difficult to keep things in stock because of irregular hours at the abattoir and irregular deliveries.

Currently, the bulk of revenue in the store comes from value-added products and meat, as opposed to the produce. If they did not have an NOHFC intern to manage and sell the produce, they could not cover the costs.

Maureen feels that one of the greatest barriers has been a lack of long term visioning, and a business plan to ensure the viability of the initiative beyond the term of its external funding.

**Successes**

Eat Local Sudbury appears to be very well-regarded; many other organizations and academic institutions have approached them to study their structure and their approach to building a local food co-op. They have managed to put local food in Sudbury on the map and get the community talking about supporting local producers. Eat Local Sudbury has also been instrumental in increasing traffic at the local farmers market.

**Relevance**

In Sudbury, the producer community is very small, so this may be relevant to other small communities. Other cooperatives, such as the True North Community Co-op, have explored the model used by Eat Local Sudbury, and have used this information to inform some decisions in developing their own initiative.

**Resources**

Eat local Sudbury has a website (www.eatlocalsudbury.com/), and brochures.
Case Study 2: Food Security Research Network (FSRN)
Prepared by Lee-Ann Chevrette, Connie Nelson, and Mirella Stroink

Location: Thunder Bay, Ontario

Interviewee: Connie Nelson, Professor, co-founder, and director of FSRN

In person interview and site visit

Introduction
The Food Security Research Network (FSRN) is acknowledged as an important catalyst for promoting agriculture and food security in the region – which has indirectly helped to support the growth of farm operations and other agri-related initiatives (e.g., small scale farming, community gardens) that have a specific focus on promoting local food production and consumption. There is also growing interest in organic farming in the area and direct marketing activities such as farm retail outlets and farmers’ markets. Although only recently established, FSRN has become a very important institution for the local agriculture sector. As described by agri-sector stakeholders, FSRN has attracted the interest of and successfully engaged younger people in agri-related activities with a strong emphasis on promoting production activities for the local market. FSRN is credited with fostering optimism for growth in the local agri-sector and local food production activities. (Thunder Bay District Agriculture Impact Study, October, 2009 http://www.tbfarminfo.org/facts.shtml#agri)

The Food Security Research Network was a key participant in the national People’s Food Policy Research Project funded by Heifer International. The Project held ‘table talks’ across the nation to determine what federal policies may facilitate principles of food sovereignty and to provide the framework for a just and sustainable food system in Canada. FSRN launched our first Table Talk at the World Food Day on October 16, 2009. It was a resounding success. FSRN supported the PFPP in two key ways:
1. Dr. Mirella Stroink was the Chair of the national committee for developing food policy based on the ‘table talk’ data from rural and remote communities.
2. Lee-Ann Chevrette was our local ‘Community Food Animator’ and was the organizer of many table talk initiatives throughout the data gathering phase.

The unique context of building local food systems in underdeveloped and remote areas has resulted in the Food Security Research Network writing the food security and food sovereignty theme paper for the International Forum on the Social and Solidarity Economy: Government and Civil Society Montreal, Quebec (Canada), Palais des congrès, October 17-20, 2011

Overview
Northern Ontario offers unique conditions in which to explore the challenges, opportunities and solutions for food security from many different vantages. FSRN strives to bring together the resources and innovation needed to engage in these solutions. The
FSRN began in 2006 with a focus to bring together a unique blend of resources from the academy and the community for the following purposes:

- Capacity building in socio-economic development towards a northern regional food system
- Developing resilient, thriving and adaptive local food systems in Northern Ontario through community service learning (CSL), graduate student theses and community-based research
- Giving participants life-influencing experiences in being a symbiotic part of the organic transformation to an ecological focused food system

**Physical Infrastructure**

FSRN is a large network of over 60 community partners in Northern Ontario including:

(a) local agriculture organizations (TBARS, TBFA, TBSCIA and Cattlemen’s Association), farm producers, emergent new farm markets, community gardens, CSA; (b) umbrella First Nations’ organizations Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Mattawa First Nations, Independent First Nations as well as specific communities; (c) schools in the development of school gardens and related curriculum; (d) charitable and social organizations. Our FSRN Network is based on complex adaptive systems theory which we call the Contextual Fluidity Partnership model.

Since 2006, FSRN has provided the infrastructure support system for faculty in 12 disciplines spanning five academic Faculties – Business, Education, Natural Resource Management, Health and Behavioural Sciences, and Social Sciences and Humanities to deliver a community service learning program that focuses on building capacity in a resilient local food system for Northwestern Ontario. Through the FSRN food security CSL program, knowledge travels back and forth between the classroom and the community, providing all of us with opportunities to learn from each other and from shared experiences.

FSRN employs through the Ontario Work Study Program for both 16 weeks in the summer and during Fall/Winter terms, university students who reach out and assist community groups with their food-hub-related initiatives. This has included assistance with programming for wheelchair accessible raised bed gardens for over a dozen group homes for developmentally challenged adults, support for a community garden project in an urban core area of Thunder Bay, assistance to a First Nation in the development of a viable market for blueberries, assistance in the development of a cooperative food hub, guidance with market garden training for a fly-in remote First Nation community and support with our FSRN Campus Community garden.

For the last 6 years, FSRN has promoted local food systems by sponsoring World Food Day where a core message is the importance of local food, and of allowing international countries to produce local food for themselves rather than exclusively for the export market.
The Annual FSRN-sponsored Food Forum provides a community gathering for sharing and discussing local food system initiatives. Both the Food Forum and the World Food Day events are attended by faculty, staff, and students from Lakehead University, as well as individuals and organizations from the broader Thunder Bay community.

Natural Resources

*Roots to Harvest: An Urban Youth Garden Initiative – ‘Punks Growing Food’.*

Through a three year external grant from the Ministry of Research and Innovation, FSRN initiated an urban garden that serves high risk youth in the community. FSRN partners with YES employment to hire 10 – 15 young people between the ages of 15 and 18 to work as apprentice market gardeners for July and August. YES employment fully subsidizes the wages of these youth to work with Roots to Harvest for 6 weeks in the summer. The apprentice youth market gardeners work a minimum of two days at a ‘home base’ garden site then spend the rest of the five-day week working with farms, researchers and community organizations around Thunder Bay. From these experiences, the students learned about soil remediation, the dynamics of growing in northern climates, pest control, weather mapping, GPS plotting, berry production, greenhouse plant production, planting to attract beneficial insects, companion planting, bee keeping, flour milling, fish management and much more. The students also harvested weekly food baskets for three local women with children, through a partnership with the Faye Peterson transitional house. Networks of partners have evolved that look forward to the collaborations with the programs, the students, community workshops and the involvement in the food action community. The youth have transitioned to continue to be valued food community members. The university community that have mentored the youth have found an eager outlet and an information gap that had previously not been filled. The schools see Roots to Harvest as a valuable resource and make requests for workshops.

*FSRN Campus Community Garden.*

This was the third year of food production at the FSRN Campus Community Garden. The garden, which is nestled between the Hangar and the McIntyre River on Lakehead University Campus, is a vibrant garden that combines a 120-plot community garden, with an additional 23 plots, which are allocated for research and demonstration activities. In total, there are 143 garden plots in the garden, the majority of which measure 10’ x 10’. This year the membership rose to over 80 gardeners, many of whom were returning gardeners who opted to have multiple plots. The garden membership is diverse, and includes faculty, staff and students from Lakehead University, as well as members and organizations from the broader community. A number of community organizations have been involved in the garden. Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) had two plots in the garden. NAN hired a young woman, who is from a remote northern community and currently studying at Lakehead University. It was her first experience with gardening and she enjoyed it tremendously. Superior Science Children’s Camp also participated in the garden. Children from the camp helped to plant, tend and harvest the veggies they grew on their plot. Nanabijou Childcare Centre, located at Lakehead University, also had a plot in the garden, and the children participated in planting, tending, harvesting and eating a diversity of vegetables from their garden plot. Brain Injury Association of Thunder Bay (BIATBA) had six plots in the garden this year. Together with their clients, staff from the
BIATBA planted, tended and harvested a variety of fresh vegetables and herbs over the course of the season. BIATBA also facilitated two ‘Art in the Garden’ events where clients and their friends and families were invited to come to the garden to participate in an art activity with a local artist. Both events were well attended. This year the garden membership donated their volunteer hours to growing food communally, for donation to the Lakehead University Student Union Food Bank and the Regional Food Distribution Association. We ran a very successful 4-month gardening workshop series, wherein we brought in local experts to share their knowledge and engage with the gardening community. All workshops were open to the public and were well attended.

FSRN has also provided financial and academic support to a graduate student in the Masters of Environmental Studies (MES) program as she completed a two-year research study on the garden. She explored motivations and benefits of participation, specifically perceived food security, well-being, knowledge and connection to nature.

FSRN’s Outreach to Building Other Community Gardens. (Regional Community Gardens [http://www.foodsecurityresearch.ca/index.php?pid=57])
Interest has been rapidly spreading in the development of new community, school, church, and individual family gardens both within the city of Thunder Bay and in the region of Northwestern Ontario. The Ogden-Simpson & East End Veggie Garden Project now includes a large six city-lot community garden, alleyway gardens and over two dozen individual family gardens.

“We’ve been taking direction from the Food Security Research Network, who’ve started gardens all over the city, so we can grow vegetables right here for their residents.”

Click here for more information on the Port Arthur Rotary’s Field of Greens project.

The regional Upsala School Garden has incorporated their schoolyard garden into the school curriculum. Examples include: JK/SK – Living and Non-Living Things, Gr. 1 and 2 – Needs and Characteristics of Living Things, Grs. 3/4/5 – Habitats and Communities, Grs. 6/7/8 – Biodiversity and authentic, real-world mathematical problems such as older students calculating the capacity of the raised beds. Participating were the students of the school, the teachers and staff, and the community through Keeping Good Schools Open.

Gardens in Ginoogaming, Aroland, and Constance Lake First Nations are also bringing new options for food security through both cultivated boxes and raised bed gardens and the rediscovering of accessing traditional food sources in the boreal forest.

Download our Regional Gardening Initiatives report for summer 2009.
Successes
The Food Security Research Network has launched some pivotal and key economic development initiatives in this area:

1. Through two research grants from FedNor and the Agriculture Adaptation Council, FSRN carried out the marketing research to establish market demand and value food chain information for the establishment of Brule Creek Farm flour mill which in its short existence of 2.5 years has already generated a multiplier effect of 3 for direct employment with Brule Creek and additionally in providing local farmers with another outlet for their grain crops.  

2. Through an NOHFC grant, FSRN launched the first CSA operation in Northwestern Ontario located at Boreal Edge Farm.  
   [https://sites.google.com/site/borealedgefarm/csa](https://sites.google.com/site/borealedgefarm/csa)

3. Through a research grant from the Ontario Cattlemen’s Association and from the Thunder Bay Cattlemen’s Association, a consumer marketing study was completed which demonstrates high potential for growth in grass-fed beef in Northwestern Ontario. Grass-fed beef has been scientifically proven to have high nutrient values.

4. FSRN assisted Aroland First Nation for two years in developing a viable economic initiative for selling their abundant and very tasty blueberries. This initiative has become self-sustaining and is now being run by Aroland First Nation.

5. FSRN assisted in the launching of the True North Cooperative which is a non-profit community co-operative selling local food and other regionally-produced goods. The goal of True North is to improve the resilience of our community through a stronger localized economy. In order to centralize marketing and storage, we have a downtown storefront in Thunder Bay but our distribution network extends throughout the region of Northern Ontario.

6. We recently completed a chicken abattoir marketing study through a Business course CSL initiative. Last year, several local farmers were fined by the provincial government for selling chickens at the farm gate. FSRN seeks to find a solution to this present situation by assisting in the establishment of a local chicken abattoir.

7. A marketing study resulted from our OMAFRA three year grant *Determining health benefits, horticultural and market potential of wild blueberry ecotypes from Northwestern Ontario* which includes research on value-added blueberry products in the Ignace area and with Aroland First Nation.

8. FSRN has an agreement with Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation to facilitate the development of a long term farming program for the community that works toward their objectives of providing food self-sufficiency. This year we provided northern local food system training in establishing a northern market garden.
9. FSRN is assisting in establishing Roots to Harvest as an independent non-profit organization serving youth in gaining skills to contribute to the local food system.

Financial Resources
The Food Security Research Network operates from a diversity of funding sources such as J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, SSHRC, Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario Cattlemen’s Association, Canadian Council on Learning, Agricultural Adaptation Council, Health Canada’s Aboriginal environmental health research programs, and Ontario Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Policy and Program Resources
Connie Nelson states: “While our focus is on working as insiders to the community to build a more resilient local food system, we need to be addressing both municipal and provincial and sometimes even federal policies that are currently constraining the development of the local food system. In order to effectively work on these policies, we nurture close and active working relationships with Food Secure Canada, Sustain Ontario, CCEDNet, People’s Food Policy Project, and Farm Start.” In order to have some immediate models of success, some of FSRN’s early socio-economic developments were focused in areas where they could build capacity without having to secure policy changes. Examples are starting the first local flour mill, a CSA, a large community garden, a film - Northern Grown - highlighting local system entrepreneurs, and supporting the publication of a short growing season northern garden book. Now that we have established these initiatives and these local food system businesses have become mentors for the region, we are moving into more challenging initiatives that involve policy issues such as approval for a local poultry abattoir, changes in the provincial quota system for laying hens, organic food labels, and food processing needs.

Desired Assets
There is a need for a significant shift in both federal and provincial funding to encourage economic activity that is socially driven to support a resilient local food system. FSRN sees a critical need for revamping the agri-industrial funding system to allow more opportunity for individuals and organizations to be eligible for funding a local food system that aims to integrate health, sustainability and the economy. Connie Nelson reflects, “This funding shift is key to having local food produced, harvested, distributed and processed through ecological practices that build resilience. Our current silos of having nutrition discussed by health and production by agriculture is putting a brake on the development of local food systems based on values of local nutritious foods that put dollars back into the hands of local producers and provide the consumers with quality nutritious food.”

Constraints/Overcoming Them
In the north we need to build production capacity in areas that may not be ‘new development’ for southern parts of the province, but are very new to us. If we are going to shift from transporting foods over a 1000 km from Southern Ontario then we need to
investigate processing and production in unique northern situations. Moreover, some of our niche markets are sometimes not considered foods, like blueberries and mushrooms. Connie Nelson states, “I have had many discussions on this issue with potential funders.”

There are many challenges to developing a vibrant local food system for our northern First Nation communities (~ 60). Traditional food systems have been undermined by generational loss of knowledge during the residential school system era, industrial development that has contaminated the natural land base, the reserve system itself that concentrates population and thus puts pressure on existing food resources, the high cost of transportation and the limited transportation options like air and winter roads. Post residential school has been characterized by a culture of expecting outside mainstream society food sources to be better than local sources. The Food Security Research Network provides training for First Nation communities that wish to enhance an integrated system of local food sources and cultivated gardens.

Relevance
FSRN works from an inside the community perspective in spawning regional socio-economic development. Relationship building and trust are essential before successful collaborations can occur that support building a local food system. It is important to focus early on building capacity. The switch from an agri-industrial system to a local food system is revolutionary in its impact on how we eat and what we eat. In order to extend the availability of local food, there needs to be a multiple approach to preserving and processing local food for local distribution.

First Nations’ local food system issues need to be approached by blending cultivated and boreal forest food sources.

The Food Security Research Network and the Community Service Learning program is in itself a new way of addressing food security, coupling university resources – faculty, students and staff – with dedicated Northwestern Ontario partners in a Contextual Fluidity Partnership Model designed to foster growth in knowledge.

Case Study 3: La Maison Verte
Prepared by Lee-Ann Chevrette, Connie Nelson, and Mirella Stroink

Location: Hearst, Ontario

Interviewee: Manon Cyr, General Manager

In person interview and site visit August 19, 2011

Overview
La Maison Verte (LMV) is a not-for-profit organization that was started in 1982 by l’Association Parmis-Elles, a women's group located in Hearst, Ontario with the mandate to create financial opportunities and promote well-being for women in the area. In 1981
the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources awarded potential tree growers a five-year black spruce seedling contract. The Association was looking to invest in a project with greenhouses and, together with private funding, they created what was the beginning of LMV. Seventy local investors established the greenhouses with some help from government funding. Michelle Lamy was involved in the project for 29 years; she retired in July, 2011, and was replaced by Manon Cyr who has taken on the role of General Manager.

Initially LMV was contracted by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to grow 2 million seedlings. In 1988 and 1991 contracts with forest companies increased production to 6 million seedlings, and later gradually increased production to about 9 million seedlings annually. LMV had a 12 million tree capacity with two major clients: Hearst Forest Management, and Nagagami Forest Management. Over those years LMV contributed significantly to the regional economy through jobs creation for the community.

As a result of the sharp downturn in the forest industry in the 1990s, LMV lost 80% of its seedling business. Consequently, they recognized the need to diversify their operations.

In 1994 they started to produce tomatoes in the greenhouses. In 2009 they began to grow cucumbers. The tomatoes and cucumbers are started in December and are available for sale between April and October. They plant 2000 beefsteak tomato plants, 1000 cherry tomato plants, and 200 cucumber plants. These tomatoes and cucumbers are distributed both locally and regionally. Locally, they are sold to individual community members and local businesses, including grocery stores and restaurants. They also distribute to numerous grocery stores in communities across the northeastern Ontario region. In order to do so, they were required to have their product barcoded, which they did in 2010. LMV has a partnership with the local youth group that buys their green tomatoes at the end of every growing season; they make green tomato relish, and sell it as a fundraiser.

In 2011 LMV started a local food basket program. It is similar to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), in that individuals purchase a share/weekly basket in advance. Thirty-two people purchased shares in 2011, and received 15 weekly baskets over the course of the growing season. LMV is planning to increase the shares to 50 in 2012. Any extra produce that is grown is brought to the weekly farmers’ market. They are also exploring developing a multi-producer CSA, of which they can be one producer.

The original impetus for the initiative was job creation and profitability. Over time, additional objectives have been included in the initiative. These include increasing community resilience through local food production, community building and education. LMV is exploring partnerships with the local Health Unit to get local food baskets to young families, single mothers, and other individuals who may be marginalized economically.

**Human Resources**

LMV has an eight-member Board of Directors. They currently have six full-time employees and hire approximately 20 part-time/seasonal employees from April to June.
The majority of their full-time employees have been working there for between 15 to 25 years. The majority of the employees are women. They also have numerous volunteers who work for several hours each morning. Their employees and volunteers are very committed, and have been instrumental to the success of the initiative.

**Physical Infrastructure**
LMV owns numerous greenhouses. The majority of these greenhouses are allocated to seedling growth. One greenhouse is allocated to tomato and cucumber production. One greenhouse is allocated to growing the vegetables for the local food basket. LMV owns three Gators (6-wheelers), and two forklifts. They also have a store, which is the for-profit center where they sell tomatoes, cucumbers, garden supplies, bedding plants, herbs, shrubs, trees, and giftware.

**Financial Resources**
Over the years, LMV has received external funding for the development of the initiative. In 2009, they were awarded $50,000 to conduct a research and development project on reclamation with willow. In 2011, LMV received $2810 from Nord-Aski, a regional Economic Development Corporation that promotes economic growth in northeastern Ontario municipalities. These funds were used to develop and promote LMV’s newly established local food basket initiative. LMV is currently in discussions to receive 50% funding from NOHFC for a geothermal project. The greenhouse operations are not-for-profit. If the greenhouses generate a profit, there is a formula for redistribution of this profit to its employees. LMV’s gift store, on the other hand, is a for-profit center.

**Community Resources**
LMV is a non-for-profit initiative that is run by L’Association Parmis-Elles. They have numerous informal partnerships within the community including restaurants, local businesses, and a youth group.

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**
The greatest challenge has been the loss of 80% of their business due to the downturn in the forestry sector. They have overcome this by diversifying their operations and moving into growing food. Transportation and distribution are significant challenges due to the nature of the geographic location of the communities and the large distances between neighboring communities. Currently, local businesses work independently but LMV sees a need for greater efforts to cooperate, and pool resources, so that transportation and distribution systems may be improved. Manon is interested in exploring a distribution/delivery system along the transportation corridor that could be shared among businesses in the Northeastern Ontario region.

Other challenges include the "one-size-fits-all" approach to government regulations and policy relating to food production. LMV feels there are unrealistic expectations on small, local producers who do not have the same resources available to them as do large scale producers. LMV feels that the policies that affect them do not necessarily reflect the reality of what is happening on the ground.
For example, for their safety policies, LMV is expected to meet all of the requirements that large corporations are expected to meet, but with only a fraction of the budget. Although safety is a very high priority, they simply do not have the same resources available to develop their internal policies, rules, and procedures. They feel that the rules and regulations are prohibitive, and deter a lot of people from starting their own small business practices. For example, in the larger stores such as Walmart, binders that include all of the health and safety and other policies, including training manuals, come with the store. For smaller operations, the responsibility is on the business person to develop the necessary policies to meet higher level requirements.

There is a significant loss of expertise when old farmers retire, because this knowledge stays with them rather than being passed down to younger generations, as has been traditionally done for many generations. However, younger generations are generally not interested in taking over their parents/grandparents’ farms, as they do not feel that farming is a viable career. Consequently Manon believes we are experiencing the loss of local food producers.

In order to get into the mainstream market, LMV had to research and invest in a barcode system for their packaging/products. They recognized this as a necessary investment, which enabled them to move into that market and distribute to local and regional grocery outlets. Another constraint is the seasonality of their food production operation, and the highly perishable nature of their products.

**Successes**

Their greatest success lies in the fact that, in 2012, they are celebrating their 30th year in business. Although the organization has seen many changes over the last 30 years, it has demonstrated its ability to adapt to a fluctuating and declining forest sector and to diversify its operations in order to survive. This diversification has enabled the operation to maintain all of its six full-time jobs, as well as its 20-25 seasonal jobs. These individuals have been able to remain in their home community and raise their families there. LMV has ongoing community support, and tremendously dedicated staff and volunteers. They recently celebrated the retirement of Michelle Lamy, who has been with the project since its very beginning (29 years). In August 2011, LMV was on the front cover of Northern Ontario Business magazine. The new barcoding system for their packaging/products has enabled them to move their products into the mainstream market. LMV was awarded “Prix Phénix – Nord de l'Ontario” in 2002.

**Uniqueness**

LMV is unique in many ways. It is owned by a not-for-profit women's association whose objective since the early 1980s has been to set up business ventures that create jobs for women. Hearst is an isolated rural northern Ontario community with few employment opportunities for its local residents. LMV has provided six full-time and 20-25 seasonal jobs for last 29 years. Despite an 80% loss in their seedling business as a result of the downturn in the forest industry, LMV was able to diversify their operations and maintain all of these jobs.
They are also unique in the ways in which they have diversified their operations. Given the fact that they had the infrastructure, it was relatively easy for LMV to move into local food production. They have abundant capacity to increase local food production and to explore the development/growth of additional crops.

**Relevance**

LMV has demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing economic conditions, identify opportunities and needs, and diversify their operations in order to capitalize on these opportunities and meet these needs. It demonstrates that there is a need to ‘change with the times’ in order to maintain viability; it is necessary to be able to adapt and diversify. They have demonstrated how a small, remote northern community may create and maintain a successful business that creates long-term jobs for its community members, while creating products that are safe and healthy for its local residents and regional neighbors.

**Resources**

LMV has a website: www.lamaisonverte.info/index.html. They will be creating a Facebook page in the fall of 2011.

**Case Study 4: True North Community Cooperative**

Prepared by Lee-Ann Chevrette, Connie Nelson, and Mirella Stroink

*Location: Thunder Bay, Ontario*

*Interviewees: Joseph LeBlanc (Chair), Serena LeBlanc (Board Member), Ryan Sitch (Board Member)*

*In person interviews and site visit September 2011*

**Overview**

The True North Community Cooperative is a not-for-profit co-op that was initiated by Joseph LeBlanc, Heidi Zettle, Bryan Dowkes and some students at Lakehead University in January 2009. These individuals identified a need to increase availability and accessibility to local food in Thunder Bay and Northern Ontario as a whole. While they were working as students for the Food Security Research Network, they wrote a paper for a TD Go Green Challenge, in which they outlined their vision for the Northern Ontario Food Production and Distribution Network. The Food Security Research Network employed one summer work-study position to help move the study forward, and provided in-kind support throughout the early stages of the development of the initiative. By the end of summer in 2009, a founding Board was identified. The Co-op was incorporated in November 2009.

The co-op's governance structure is based on democratic control and is rooted in cooperative principles, autonomy being the most important. The Board can have up to 11 members. Special advisors to the Board exist, who can be past Board members or general
members. The role of the special advisors is to offer specific expertise, while not having to commit to full participation on the Board. Board members come from different backgrounds and affiliations, and act as representatives of the co-op, not of their affiliated organizations (employers).

The geographic scope of the cooperative is the region of Northern Ontario as defined by FEDNOR: Muskoka/Mattawa River, all of northern Ontario to Québec, Manitoba and the Nunavut borders.

The co-op has three different levels of membership: individual, producer and commercial/organizational members. Currently, the co-op has 298 individual members, 51 producer members, and 8 commercial/organizational members. Products carried by the co-op are not limited to food and can include anything that is produced in northern Ontario by their producer members (i.e., anything from their lands or their hands). Some of the products they sell include, vegetables, fruits, berries, cheeses, forest foods, meats, eggs, chips, flour, rolled oats, herbal teas, honey, herbs, mushrooms, preserves, wool, knitting, skin care products, photography, jewelry, pottery, clothing and toys. They do have policies that restrict them from carrying anything from outside Northern Ontario and from selling products from non-member producers. They have exempted dairy and poultry products from these restrictions as heavy regulation in these industries limit their availability.

**Uniqueness**

True North Community Co-op is unique in many ways. One thing that makes the coop unique is its focus on Northern Ontario, including remote communities. There is a strong focus on social justice issues relating to local food accessibility. The co-op Board’s motivations and work are not exclusively focused on the storefront; their focus is on the community of Northern Ontario collectively.

The co-op is also unique in its funding structure, its working Board of Directors, its regional approach to ‘local’ food, the fact that it is community-based, and the broad focus on not only selling and consuming local food, but also education, community development, and social justice. The co-op seeks to provide a fair and stable market for local producers, to improve access for consumers to healthy, local food, to connect producers and consumers, to cluster and share resources with other businesses, and to facilitate the equitable distribution of food to under-serviced remote Northern Ontario communities.

There is a ribbon of intense agricultural production in the southern part of the Northern Ontario region, and very little agricultural production in the northern portion of the region. Traditionally, there has not been a strong relationship between these two sub-regions. The co-op aims to build a bridge to facilitate the distribution of this food to the more northern regions, where the need for fresh healthy food is high, and the current capacity to grow it is low. The co-op is building the capacity to enable this, and to build these markets so that both sub-regions benefit. They also facilitate relationship building between and among producing members so that they may expand their markets.
**Human Resources**
Their 8-member working/volunteer Board of Directors takes on the majority of the responsibilities for the co-op's operations. There are a number of sub-committees, or task groups, all of which share the diverse operational responsibilities of the co-op. These task groups include both Board members and individuals from the general membership. They have a diverse age range of Board members which allows for diverse perspectives, knowledge and sponsored ability sharing, and the building of resilience. During the summer of 2011 they were able to hire a summer student for 12 weeks, after receiving funding support through Canada Summer Jobs. They have recently hired another student for a 12 hour per week position; her wage will be funded by the co-op.

**Physical Infrastructure**
The co-op runs out of the storefront location in downtown Thunder Bay. Their infrastructure includes a standup fridge, a standup freezer, and a chest freezer. They share their storefront with another local business called The Green House, with whom they also share some of the other physical infrastructure, including the computer and a point-of-sale system.

**Financial Resources**
The co-op has an operating budget of about $10,000 per year. Most of the financial resources are derived through the storefront sales and membership sales. They charge 30% above the product costs set by the producers; much of this funds the operations of the co-op. They have deliberately chosen to grow naturally rather than to have funding that extends them beyond their natural capacity to grow (i.e., they have not sought operational funding). The goal is to remain self-sufficient in terms of funding.

**Community Resources**
The co-op is very strategic in terms of its partnerships. All partners are membership-based. They currently have eight commercial/organizational members: Nishnawbe Aski Nation, The Green House, Bay Credit Union, Bonobos Foods, Growing Season Juice Collective, Peetabeck Health Centre, Gargoyles, and the Bean Fiend. They are also associated with Ontario Co-operative Association, and the Paro Center for Women's Enterprise.

**Community Resources/assets we would like to be connected to**
One of the co-op's most critical needs is for someone to undertake a research project that would explore the current food distribution networks in Northern Ontario. There is a strong need to understand the structure of these networks as they exist currently. There are numerous existing channels for food distribution to all of the communities in Northern Ontario; however, no one has committed to identifying and exploring these. It is also necessary to identify opportunities to access, share, and work within these existing structures to distribute and increase access to healthy, locally and regionally produced foods. Moreover, such a project may also identify additional and perhaps alternative food distribution channels. There are over 80,000 individuals living in Ontario's remote northern communities, which are fundamentally dependent on these food channels.
Constraints/Overcoming Them

Some of the co-op’s constraints involve the lack of operational funding. As the co-op grows there is a need to hire more permanent staff and they are in the process of building capacity to support this growth. Because of the co-op's desire to grow naturally and sustainably, it takes time to create and establish the diverse initiatives they would like to explore. They are not able to take a lot of risks. They will only take steps forward if there is a solid foundation to stand on.

Successes

There have been numerous successes in the year and a half that the co-op has been operating. One of the greatest successes is the opening of a storefront location that serves to increase the availability and accessibility of local foods to individuals living in and around Thunder Bay. The co-op is open six days a week, and provides a centralized location for local producers to sell their products and for local consumers to access them.

Another success is a tremendous community support and interest that the cooperative has received. To date, there are 51 producer members, 298 individual members, and 8 commercial/organizational members. These memberships are from across the region and not just around Thunder Bay, demonstrating substantial regional support for the initiative.

Connections have been made between the co-op and local businesses and organizations, and they try to work co-operatively to develop relationships that are mutually beneficial. For example, the co-op works with two other local businesses to share shipping costs for certain products that they source from producers in the region.

Another success is that they have been able to maintain the autonomy of the organization. They have been very conscious of developing a structure that allows them to stand on their own two feet, and to not depend on external influences. Rather, they have sought to focus on meeting the identified needs in the region.

This year the co-op started a multi-producer co-operative community supported agriculture (CCSA) initiative, which includes nine local producer members and 43 individual members (i.e., they provide 43 local food boxes/shares weekly over the course of 12 weeks). Twenty six shares are split among seven remote communities, while the remaining 17 were sold within the city of Thunder Bay.

The co-op is an active participant in the Nutrition North Program; of 33 national suppliers they are the only non-profit organization that was accepted into the Program, and the only one focused on local food. They receive a subsidy for delivering healthy foods to remote northern Ontario communities. Through the CCSA program, they send food regularly to Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Attawapiskat, Peawanuck, Fort Severn, Muskrat Dam, and Bearskin Lake First Nations.

The co-op also has a federated co-op in Fort Albany. True North Community Co-operative Fort Albany has become a catalyst for food security initiatives in the remote First Nation. Members had been undertaking numerous food initiatives independently for approximately four years. Since pulling together under the co-operative structure,
individuals have begun undertaking collective projects and moving forward long-held dreams, turning them into a reality. With support from the Board of Directors, producer members, and organizational members individuals in Fort Albany have begun community and household gardens, a poultry project, good food boxes, placed individual orders for food, and added regionally produced goods to the list of products available through their alternative markets. The autonomy of members in Fort Albany is of the utmost importance. Eventually these members will incorporate an autonomous co-operative of their own and TNCC has and will continue to lend their knowledge and resources towards this end goal.

Relevance
Over the course of the development of the co-op, a number of individuals met with another co-op in Northern Ontario that had started just a couple of years prior to the opening of True North Community Co-op. They were able to gather information about the challenges and successes of the other co-op and to implement different strategies to avoid similar mistakes. They have made a conscious effort to grow the co-op naturally and sustainably and to build a strong foundation for its success. They have developed relationships with local businesses to sustain themselves; through these mutually beneficial relationships, they share capacity, overhead, infrastructure, and staffing. It is a very collaborative initiative.

The initiative is community-based and seeks to help redefine the vision of community. The initiative seeks to reflect the interconnected reality between human players and the natural systems that sustain us. This requires a systems approach. We must take into consideration all of the factors that affect our food system.

This is a model that could be used in other communities to increase availability and access to local foods, and to connect local producers and consumers. This co-operative creates a structure that allows producers to set their own price for their products; this supports the viability of local food production and ensures that neither producers nor consumers are exploited. They focus on true value pricing, which means that prices are consistent regardless of where the product is sold.

They are a regional co-op so their storefront is only one component of their operations. Most sales occur beyond the store, primarily through the CCSA, and through the Nutrition North Program, where food is shipped to several remote Northern Ontario communities.

The commitment to the initiative is based on community economic development, social justice and food sovereignty. The co-op encourages active community engagement and volunteerism. It demonstrates that one need not be a primary producer to be an active part of the local food system, and that consumers need to be valued as much as farmers. They believe that all individuals working towards building a strong local food system should be valued.
Resources
The co-op has a website: www.truenorthcoop.ca (under construction), a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/truenorthcommunitycooperative), a quarterly newsletter, pamphlets, and membership cards. They also produce an Annual Report which is available to the public.

Case Study 5: Northern Ontario Health Units
Prepared by Lee-Ann Chevrette, Connie Nelson, and Mirella Stroink

1) Northwestern Health Unit:
First round interviewees: Jennifer Maki, Public Health Nutritionist (Sioux Lookout), Stephanie Cran, Public Health Educator (Dryden), Chelsea LeCain, Public Health Dietitian (Kenora), Megan Bale, Public Health Dietitian (Fort Frances), Lisa Haessler (Coordinator for CloverBelt Country Farmers’ Market and Locavore Box)
Case study interview: Stephanie Cran, Public Health Educator (Dryden), Jennifer Maki, Public Health Nutritionist (Sioux Lookout)

2) Thunder Bay District Health Unit:
First round interviewee: Catherine Schwartz-Mendez, Public Health Nutritionist
Case study interviewee: Catherine Schwartz-Mendez

3) Sudbury & District Health Unit:
Case study interviewees: Bridget King, Public Health Nutritionist, Lesley Andrade, Public Health Nutritionist

Introduction
Health units in northern Ontario play a significant role in the development and support of local food system initiatives within their communities, districts and regions in northern Ontario. It appears that they face numerous and similar challenges and opportunities, and provide significant resources to building community food security.

This case study explores the efforts of three distinct health units in Northern Ontario. These include: the Northwestern Health Unit, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, and the Sudbury & District Health Unit; these three health units serve northwestern and northeastern Ontario. It should be noted that four additional Northern Ontario health units, namely the Timiskaming Health Unit, the Porcupine Health Unit, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and the Algoma Public Health Unit, share many similar challenges and opportunities to these three included in the case study. In fact, all seven of these Northern Ontario health units work collaboratively on food security issues through the Northern Healthy Eating Project, an initiative that will be explored in greater detail below.

Although the food system initiatives that each of these health unit supports may be unique to their particular health unit and reflect the circumstances within its own
catchment area, they share numerous similarities in their approaches, and the ways in which they act as food hubs within their regions. Additionally, these health units work collaboratively to share resources and information in order to address community food security.

In the following sections, specific details on each of the three health units are provided, as well as a description of their similarities, and collaborative efforts. It is important to note that the mandate of the District health units does not extend to the far north on-reserve communities in northern Ontario.

Overview

**Northwestern Health Unit**

The mission of the Northwestern Health Unit is to improve the quality and length of life in our communities - healthy lifestyles and longer lives lived well. The Northwestern Health Unit (originally named the Kenora-Keewatin Area Health Unit) was established in 1948; at that time it served only 6 communities. Today, the Northwestern Health Unit covers the Districts of Rainy River and Kenora, and has 13 offices which serve 19 municipalities and unorganized territories (from Pickle Lake to the American border to the Manitoba border). Staff involved in this study were contacted in the Sioux Lookout, Kenora, and Dryden and Fort Frances offices.

The number of staff has grown from 6 in 1948 (with a budget of $25,000) to the present complement of 119 permanent staff and 33 temporary or contract staff (with a budget of approximately $11.4 million for 2006). The present area of the Health Unit is about 77,700 square kilometers, with a population of about 90,000, which has increased from approximately 12,000 people in 1948.

The degree of involvement of Health Unit staff in the development of local food systems varies from providing support and planning, and information for funding resources to very hands-on local food initiative support.

**Thunder Bay District Health Unit**

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit is a non-profit agency funded jointly by the provincial government and the municipalities that they serve. The Health Unit is governed by a Board of Health which is comprised of twelve municipal representatives and three provincial appointees. Their main office is in Thunder Bay, but they have branch offices in Geraldton, Marathon, Manitouwadge, Nipigon and Schreiber.

The Food Action Network (FAN) is a network that brings many groups together to improve access to enough affordable, nutritious, safe, environmentally sustainable food for all. The Thunder Bay District Health Unit was an original partner, since 1995 when the Food Action Network was created. The NorWest Community Health Centre led the first group meeting; at that time, the initiative was more focussed around emergency food/food banks. A couple of years later, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit took on the Chair role for the group, because it fit better within its mandate. They have been the clearinghouse and administrative lead on FAN since 1998. The purpose of this group is to create awareness, support food projects, promote local food, advocate for policies that
support community food security, and act as an information centre for community food security in the District of Thunder Bay.

The Sudbury & District Health Unit
The Sudbury & District Health Unit is a public health agency committed to improving health and reducing social inequities in health through evidence-informed practice. Their main office is in the City of Greater Sudbury and they have four branch offices throughout the districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin.

The Health Unit has over 250 staff who deliver provincially legislated public health programs and services. The Health Unit is governed by the Board of Health, has strong community and inter-agency partnerships, is part of a provincial network of 36 non-profit public health agencies, and is funded jointly by local and provincial governments. They work with individuals, families, the community and partner agencies to promote and protect health and to prevent disease.

The Health Unit prepares the annual Sudbury and Manitoulin Districts’ Community Food Security Directory, which serves to increase community food security in the Sudbury & District Health Unit catchment area by:

• linking individuals with food programs and other food resources in their community
• increasing awareness of the healthy community food systems approach and the City of Greater Sudbury (CGS) Food Charter.

Human Resources
Northwestern Health Unit
The Public Health Dietitians, Public Health Nutritionists and Public Health Educators have the greatest involvement in local food security initiatives within the Health Unit. There are two Public Health Nutritionists and they provide support and planning to food system initiatives across their region.

Thunder Bay District Health Unit/FAN
FAN has one paid staff person, Catherine Schwartz-Mendez, who acts as Chair, and provides support and planning to a diverse number of local food initiatives that are affiliated with FAN. They also have a summer student, and have other Health Unit staff who provide administrative and other in-kind support to the network.

The Sudbury & District Health Unit
Lesley Andrade is the Chair of the Northern Healthy Eating Program and a Public Health Nutritionist. The SDHU has 7 Registered Dietitians (2 public health nutritionists and 5 public health dietitians).

Financial Resources
All three Health Units receive provincial and municipal funding support. They also apply for additional external funding for projects and have been successful in receiving funding from such funding bodies as OMIF, Futures, and PACE.
Programs

There are numerous programs which have been initiated across northern Ontario with the assistance of staff and resources from the Health Units. Some of these are listed below; additional details on each initiative are provided in the original interviews.

**Northwestern Health Unit**
- Healthy Living Food Box (Kenora)
- Clover Valley Food Box (Fort Frances)
- Rainy River Valley Food For All-Rainy River District
- Apple Core (Atikokan) (group)
- Farmers Markets in Kenora, Dryden/Oxdrift, Fort Frances, Sioux Lookout
- Locavore Box (Dryden)
- Community Gardens
- Nutritious Food Basket

**Thunder Bay District Health Unit/FAN**
- Good Food Box (launched)
- Thunder Bay Food Charter
- Community Garden Collective
- Get Fresh Guide (directory of local producers)
- Nutritious Food Basket annual survey and report
- School nutrition programs
- Partnerships with numerous local food initiatives

**The Sudbury & District Health Unit**
- Sudbury and Manitoulin District’s Community Food Security Directory
- Sudbury Food Charter
- Nutritious Food Basket annual survey and report
- Community Gardens
- School nutrition programs
- Partnerships with numerous local food initiatives

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**

Many of the barriers relating to the development of local food systems are consistent across these three Health Units. All provide services across large geographic areas. There are significant issues with accessibility to local food, including transportation and distribution barriers. In some northern communities, there are very few (and in some cases no) local producers. This means that the existing local producers typically travel large distances to provide local food to communities in the North. This is, in part, out of necessity; due to the relatively small populations of these northern communities, there is a need to access additional markets to increase viability and profitability.

Climatic challenges were identified as a significant barrier to developing a local food system; the growing season in the north is relatively short and local fresh produce is available for only a few months per year. Additionally, the agricultural community (i.e.,
local producers/farmers) is relatively small in the North. There is a significant concern about the loss of farmers and the subsequent loss of agricultural knowledge and skills. Farming is not considered to be viable career choice by most, and it is certainly not promoted as such in the current educational system. A loss of traditional food preservation skills have compounded this, because even if there is an abundance of food grown during the available growing season, few individuals are knowledgeable of methods to preserve these foods for winter use.

Lack of available funding is a significant constraint, as is time availability. Health Unit staff are involved in numerous initiatives and provide whatever assistance they can to support these initiatives; however, consistent funding to hire coordinators has been recommended several times as a possible solution.

Policy constraints on local food production were also identified, including the ‘one-size-fits-all’ issue with respect to policy that is written for larger producers. These policies often create significant barriers that are prohibitive to small local producers.

Consumer education was also identified as a significant barrier to the development of the local food system. There is an expressed need to develop more educational programs that will highlight the many important benefits of supporting the development of a strong local food economy.

Because the health units have enforcement powers and responsibilities, it was identified that there are, at times, challenges in dealing with local producers, whose efforts they ultimately want to support. Although some government policies may not be entirely applicable or relevant for small producers, it is the Health Unit’s responsibility to uphold these regulations.

It is more relevant in the North to look at a regional food system as opposed to a local food system. Due to geography, climatic, and transportation/distribution barriers, many of the existing local producers travel significant distances to access markets. It is not uncommon for individuals to refer to food that has traveled upwards of 500 km from another northern Ontario community as ‘local’.

Lack of both provincial and national food policies were also considered a significant barrier constraining their ability to advocate for change to the current food system model. Such policies would help to increase awareness of what is required and what steps they can take to get there. Positive changes to the education system and to the activities of communities/municipalities would result from such policies.

There is also a significant interest in the North in wild fish, game, and plant harvesting; however, there are significant constraints in terms of public health. These issues were not covered in this case study.
Successes
There were numerous successes identified through this case study. Aside from their involvement in the development and ongoing support of numerous local food initiatives, their collaboration efforts are also a success.

All seven northern Ontario Health Units collaborate through the Northern Healthy Eating Project. This initiative, which is the result of the merging of two separate networks (the Northern Nutrition Personnel and the old Northern Healthy Eating Program), is a network and sharing collaboration, with a food security and advocacy focus. Registered dietitians from these Health Units come together three times per year via teleconference to discuss community food security. One face-to-face planning meeting is also scheduled.

In 2010, the group came together and did some strategic planning. They identified that there are unique needs in the north and not as many resources available to individuals. There is a vast geography, and it became apparent that there was a need to pool resources, share knowledge and skills and support each other. The group felt that they would have a louder collective voice in advocacy for the north for community food security.

Uniqueness
The uniqueness of these Health Units lies perhaps in the large geographic distances that they serve, and their apparent ability to connect with numerous sectors involved in the development of a strong local food system within their respective locales. Particularly in the smaller northern communities, the mandate of these Health Units allows them to play a central role in supporting the efforts of diverse groups and initiatives. They provide staff time, funding and in-kind support, and are often the administrative lead on projects.

Relevance
The role played by these Health Units in the development of local food systems is significant and appears to be consistent across Northern Ontario. They certainly appear to act as food hubs and are often the ‘go to’ organization when it comes to local food security initiatives within their respective communities. Although there are four additional northern Ontario Health Units, as mentioned above, that were not included as part of this case study, an investigation of their roles as local food hubs would be of interest to the broader picture in northern Ontario food hubs. They likely play a very similar role in the development of local food systems to the three Health Units included in this case study.

Resources
Northwestern Health Unit
Website: www.nwhu.on.ca
They have publications and links to other resources at their website.

Thunder Bay District Health Unit/FAN
Website: www.tbdhu.com
http://www.tbdhu.com/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/FoodSecurity/FAN.htm
They have publications and links to other resources at their website.
The Sudbury & District Health Unit
Website: www.sdhu.com
They have numerous publications and links to other resources on their website.

Nutrition Tools for Schools
School Vegetable and Fruit Action Guide, Paint your plate. Create a masterpiece. (Both of these initiatives were collaborations with many health units).

Additional Notes
All of the individuals who were interviewed while conducting this case study identified both a desire and a need for greater knowledge and resource sharing, and communication and collaboration among those working in the realm of community food security in Northern Ontario. There appears to be a shared experience in the North, with individuals/organizations experiencing similar opportunities and constraints; providing opportunities to share these experiences and learn from one another appears to be a priority. The idea of a ‘Northern Food Network’ to connect these initiatives, was identified on several occasions.
Chapter 2: Eastern Ontario

Peter Andrée, Patricia Ballamingie, and Brynne Sinclair-Waters with Linda Stevens

Summary

• All counties and cities developing food initiatives, though most activities take place in urban and peri-urban settings.
• Five types of initiatives: 1) food access programs/networks; 2) local food promotion and education initiatives; 3) farmer-based local distribution cooperatives; 4) regional or citywide integrated food justice organizations/networks; and 5) private local food distribution businesses.
• Multi-stakeholder cooperation is the cornerstone of most activity.
• Key (but not insurmountable) challenges: core operational funding; start-up financing; accessibility of local foods to people on low incomes.
• Common lessons of participants: focus on local/regional level (but not blindly so); build from the bottom up; address distribution and processing capacity gap; engage in public education; create system-wide change, including socio-cultural connection to food.
• Key recommendations to all levels of government: adopt preferential institutional procurement policies; develop scale-appropriate food inspection regulations; reexamine quota system (in dairy, poultry, and eggs) with small-scale producer needs in mind; amend land use policies and bylaws; integrate hunger alleviation with support for local food systems; get involved to support groups within civil society, and struggling “for-profit” ventures.
• Key recommendation to funders: continue and augment funding in this arena; make infrastructure and staffing costs eligible expenses; consult and include existing local groups; adopt concessions for smaller groups that cannot raise matching funds; provide context-appropriate support.
• Eastern Ontario case studies (organized alphabetically): Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op; Food Down the Road; Just Food Ottawa; Lanark Local Flavour; and Wendy’s Mobile Market.

Background

For the purposes of this study, Eastern Ontario extends eastward from the City of Kawartha Lakes and Prince Edward County to Ottawa, and along the border of Québec from Renfrew County to the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry that sit on the St. Lawrence Seaway. In total, the region comprises more than a dozen counties and several cities, most notably Ottawa (with a population of 812,269), Kingston (117,207), Peterborough (74,898), Belleville (48,821), and Cornwall (45,965). Of these

3  City population figures from 2006 census: http://www.citypopulation.de/Canada-Ontario.html
cities, both Ottawa and Kingston are significantly rural [with 80% and 70% of their land designated “rural”, respectively (Shea)].

Figure 2.1: Map of the Eastern Ontario Region

In terms of agricultural productivity, this region of Ontario can be broadly divided into three zones, with the center of the region dominated by the southeastern tip of the Canadian Shield that stretches from the Kawartha Lakes into Frontenac County northeast of Kingston. The Shield is extremely rocky and covered in only thin soils at best. Parts of it in this region were colonized for growing crops by European settlers in the early 1800s, but much of this land was then left to return to forest and rocky pasture when those settlers or their descendants headed West to the Canadian Prairies for better farming prospects later that century. Below the Canadian Shield, which includes much of the City of Kawartha Lakes, the bottom halves of Peterborough and Hastings Counties, as well as Prince Edward County, agricultural potential is considerably higher. To the east of the Canadian Shield, in the Ottawa Valley and the lowlands that stretch from Ottawa towards Montreal (i.e. the United Counties of Prescott and Russell) there is also better land for growing crops. In these two zones, agricultural land is typically devoted to the major cash crops of corn and soy, with dairying and calf-cow operations as the main forms of livestock farming. On the more challenging lands of the Canadian Shield, farming is
sparse but more diverse, including maple syrup operations, sheep farming, and market gardening on pockets of the best soils.

Participants
Over the last ten years (or more in a few cases), almost every county and city in this region has developed some type of food initiative of interest to this research project. However, most of this activity appears to be taking place in the urban or peri-urban settings around Ottawa, Kingston and Peterborough, or in areas with a strong tourism economy like Prince Edward County.

This chapter is based on two sets of interviews undertaken in this region. Brynne Sinclair-Waters, an M.A. Candidate based at Carleton University in Ottawa, made 56 initial contacts and conducted 29 interviews. Linda Stevens, co-owner of Community Voices Consulting Group in Kingston, made a further 46 contacts and conducted 27 interviews. The two sets of interviews are slightly different, which impacts our analysis. Brynne’s interviews included a wide range of community food initiatives in Eastern Ontario, while Linda’s interviews were more focused (because the Kingston and Frontenac interviews were conducted in coordination with research for the “Plan to Grow Project of the New Farm Project”). The National Farmers Union New Farm Project is a farmer education, training, and support program aimed at strengthening the Kingston region’s farm community and local food system (See “Notable Initiatives,” in Chapter 7, for more details). As a result, of our 28 “notable initiatives” and “case studies” from Eastern Ontario, a disproportionate number (8) are based in Kingston, and even more Kingston-based interviews dealt with community food activity at a more general level (such as organizing networking meetings or working on food issues in municipal government, all of which informs this chapter’s introduction).

This concentration of interviews in (and around) Kingston reveals the breadth and depth of interconnections that have been developed across a wide range of food-related projects and civil society organizations (with some government support) in just one mid-sized urban community in Ontario. For example, in Kingston alone, the organizations currently active in food initiatives include: the local branch of the National Farmers Union, the Sisters of Providence Justice, Peace and Integrity Office, St. Vincent de-Paul (a lay Catholic organization), Kingston Community Health Centres, Queen’s University, the Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington Public Health Unit, the City of Kingston (municipal staff), the Downtown Business Improvement Association, Partners in Mission Food Bank and Loving Spoonful. Along with other local actors, these organizations are involved in various initiatives, from the New Farm Project, the Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty, the Healthy Eating Working Group, Local Food - Local Chefs, Community Harvest Working Group, community gardens, amongst others. Interviewees from these organizations tended to refer to one another and to many of the same food initiatives (most are listed in our Case Studies or Notable Initiatives sections). Similar dynamics were observed in the urban centre of Peterborough (Favreau, Hubay), even more in Ottawa (Garahan, Hossie, Krekoski), and to a somewhat lesser extent (in terms
of numbers of organizations and activities) in rural communities, though these rural initiatives are also well-networked.

Of the 56 interviews undertaken for this chapter, just over half (29) resulted in a description under “notable initiatives” or “case studies”. Interviews that are not reflected in these sections include those that were conducted with academics, city staff, OMAFRA staff and others who told us about their food-related and policy work in general. We also did not include several projects that are still in the preliminary or visionary stages. In other words, behind the initiatives formally documented there are many others in the developmental stages, demonstrating further potential in this emergent sector.

Notably, of the interviews undertaken for this chapter, women represented the vast majority of the sample. Of Brynne’s interviews, 25 of 29 interviewees were women, while 16 of 27 of Linda’s interviewees were women. As one respondent noted, “the food movement is really driven by female energy – by compassionate, intelligent women.” Many had farming backgrounds, while others developed their interest in food issues from their university education (Kittle, Simpson, Belinsky, McFarlane, Bisson, M. L. Walker). Others came to this work through a broader interest in social justice and social inclusion (Favreau), while others had more specific backgrounds that brought them to food-related work, such as pre-natal nutrition (Chang). A common denominator across the sample was that informants are committed and passionate about this work, whether or not they are paid for it.

Elsewhere, this report reviews the range of motivations behind food initiatives in Ontario in general, so this is not examined in detail here. In sum, there is especially strong interest in supporting local farmers and ensuring that all people have access to healthy food, regardless of their socio-economic status. It is also clear that environmental issues associated with our current food system, and the need to make it more sustainable, or resilient, was important to many of our respondents. An interest in creating new opportunities for beef farmers in light of the BSE crisis of the early 2000s also figured strongly in the creation of at least two of the initiatives described here (Kawartha Choice FarmFresh and the Fitzroy Beef Farmers Cooperative). The desire to create new economic opportunities in the food sector clearly informed many of these initiatives, and appears to be a cross-over motivation in many cases – allowing people with diverse backgrounds and interests to work together towards common local goals. Finally, it is notable that the most diverse responses came when participants were asked if one of their motivations was “to improve our chances of surviving the coming food crisis”. Some were not clear on what the question implied or felt that there was no evidence of an imminent food crisis (Shea and Gargaro) while others felt that the crisis is already happening for those with the lowest incomes. Others argued that the most vulnerable in society would have the most to lose if food prices continue to rise (Bryan) while still others felt strongly that regional food production capacity has to grow so that our communities as a whole can withstand sudden price shocks in oil and food (Heath). Notably, the view that these motivations can be complementary, rather than work at cross-purposes, is reflected in many of the initiatives described below.
Types of Initiatives
This research began with a typology that led us to categorize each initiative according to whether they were rural, urban, large, small, commercial, not-for-profit, etc. This typology was intended, among other purposes, to ensure a diverse sample. Upon completion of the research, we have decided to divide our sample of 28 into five general categories, based on the primary focus of each initiative’s activities. These categories help us make sense of the different points of view expressed in the interviews and the specific preoccupations of each organization. The categories include: 1) food access programs and networks; 2) local food promotion; 3) farmer-based local distribution cooperatives; 4) regional or citywide food justice organizations and networks; and 5) private local food distribution businesses. However, these five categories should not be interpreted rigidly – they are meant only to guide us through an exploration of the work these initiatives are doing and the lessons that can be gleaned from their experiences. Furthermore, the category names do not fully speak to the level of cross-sectoral activity taking place in how these initiatives are carried out – a feature that does come out in the descriptions below. For example, it is heartening to see that organizations formerly focused on trying to make food available cheaply (or for free) to individuals on low incomes (e.g. food banks) are increasingly building links with local farmers in order to support the local agricultural economy. Meanwhile, groups interested in promoting locally produced foods are also increasingly working to make local food more affordable and accessible.

The following five sections summarize the characteristics of initiatives and highlight issues raised by interviewees in each of these five categories.

Food Access Programs and Networks
The first category, representing 11 of 29 initiatives, includes food access programs and networks. The primary mission of these initiatives is generally to ensure that healthy food is accessible to all, regardless of income level. Organizations in this group include individual food banks such as the Perth and District Food Banks, Partners in Mission Foodbank (Kingston) and the Gleaners Food Bank (Quinte). This group also includes several networks of organizations that work on food access issues. All Things Food/Bouffe 360˚ is an initiative that includes a food bank, social planning council, student nutrition program and local health units, and aims to make local, healthy, food accessible to everyone in the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry. Another network, the Healthy Eating Working Group in Kingston, brings together organizations working in health, social justice, agriculture, and institutional food (Queen’s University) with municipal staff to develop a local food policy council and food charter. Its focus appears to be more strongly on food access than on local food production and distribution issues, though it is reaching out to these communities (Armstrong). Yet other examples of networks include the Food Matters Coalition of Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties (comprised largely of food banks), Haliburton County FoodNet, the Food Security Network of Hastings and Prince Edward County, and the Food Providers Networking Group (Kingston). The Hunger Elimination Project in Napanee, funded by the Salvation Army, plays a similar coordinating role among food banks and other food access programs. Several of these initiatives (e.g. Haliburton County FoodNet and the Food
Security Network of Hastings and Prince Edward County) are led by, and supported through, their local public health units (as is Kingston’s Healthy Eating Working Group mentioned under food justice networks below).

Some of the initiatives in this category, such as Loving Spoonful (Kingston), deal with food access issues through a broader range of community development projects. For example, Loving Spoonful helps to coordinate community gardens, and provides skills development around food gathering, handling, preserving and cooking in addition to their core activity of reclaiming and redistributing surplus prepared food from area caterers, markets, wholesalers and restaurants (Belyea). Similarly, the Food Matters Coalition now organizes allotment gardens in Brockville so people can produce their own healthy food (Heath). Almost without exception, these initiatives were interested in a “community food center” model (such as The Stop in Toronto), which brings together a food bank, urban agriculture, skills training, farmers’ markets, and more. Most of these groups, however, had not moved far down the path in recreating this model in their own community. The Perth and District Food Bank is an exception because they are now working to build a community food center with funding from The Stop’s province-wide “pilot program”. This funding will allow for the construction of a commercial kitchen, community gardens and cooking classes. For other groups, a unified approach to myriad food production, distribution and access issues is still in the future. Many of these groups are still facing challenges networking across sectors. For example, the Food Matters Coalition of Leeds, Grenville and Lanark (2011)4 would like to bring more farmers into their fold, as a way to work towards their mission of creating a “sustainable and resilient community food system that is accessible to everyone” but in practice they have found it difficult to connect with local food producers.

Consider this quote, from an interview with Diana Chard and Cathy McCallum from the Food Security Network (Prince Edward and Hastings County):

> Food Security Network members are committed to the importance of everyone having access to sufficient, safe, healthy and personably acceptable food without economic or social barriers. Farmers are so important and deserve a decent income and support from the community. If our food system is not sustainable – we are in big trouble! Food security is multifaceted and is broader than being free from hunger.

This quote is representative of a sentiment shared by many interviewees that were involved in food access programs and networks – that food access issues cannot be addressed without considering broader issues, including the viability of farming and the environmental sustainability of the food system. In fact, those working in food access programs were the most likely to characterize food as a “human right” (e.g. Taylor, Favreau).

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Stable, core funding remains the biggest challenge facing food access programs. For example, the Peterborough Just Food Box, which has been subsidized by municipal government in the past, now fundraises $51,000 every year from other sources so that it can continue to offer a food box to its customers at a subsidized price.

Local food promotion and education initiatives
The second category is that of **local food promotion and education initiatives**. Representing 7 of 29 initiatives, it includes primarily programs dedicated to supporting local farmers [e.g. Kawartha Choice FarmFresh, New Farm Project (Kingston)], increasing the visibility and presence of local foods in institutions, restaurants, grocery stores (e.g., Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Network) and in the tourism industry (through culinary tourism) [e.g. Local Food – Local Chefs (Kingston)]. Many of these organizations also have a strong role in public education around sustainability issues and the other benefits of supporting a local or regional food economy [e.g. Lanark Local Flavour (see detailed case study in section to follow), Lanark Slow Food, Local Flavours (Frontenac)]. At least one of the initiatives specifically target farmers [New Farm Project (Kingston)] while others target youth (e.g. Lanark Local Flavour). (The Ottawa Chapter of the Canadian Organic Grower’s “Growing Up Organic” program also fits in this category, though this COG chapter is also listed below for their work in developing a local organic farmers’ cooperative). Further, some of these programs address issues of social justice regarding food distribution (e.g. Lanark Local Flavour and the New Farm Project), and attentiveness to these issues was certainly present in many interviews. Only a few of the local food promotion initiatives actively address questions of access to fresh local food for people on low incomes, even if their staff members recognize these issues are important (e.g. Byrick). Finally, it should be noted that some of the initiatives in this category have broader mandates than promotion and education. Besides educating local farmers about the prospects of the local food economy through training and support, for example, the New Farm Project in Kingston facilitates the regional branch of the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT – a province-wide farm internship program), hosts a research project entitled “Plan to Grow”, and also coordinates an Equipment Sharing Cooperative (Stutt).

At the organizational level, initiatives in this category are the most likely to work in partnership with economic development arms of municipal and county governments. This inclusion can provide a huge boost in terms of staffing and business expertise (e.g. Jopling, Chaumont, Puterborough, Lavigne, Meerburg). Some of these organizations (e.g. Kawartha Choice FarmFresh, and the Agri-Food Network of Eastern Ontario) thus have a clear marketing and economic development agenda, and have tied their work to wider activities aimed at building entrepreneurship in their county or region. This economic development approach emphasizes the importance of “knowing what is already available in your region and what the needs are” (Chaumont) and the “need to strengthen value chains by identifying gaps and showcasing them to entrepreneurs… to create new revenue streams for farmers” (Jopling). In some ways, these more business-oriented initiatives appear to be filling voids left by the intensive farmer support that OMAFRA provided in rural Ontario before the provincial government cutbacks of the mid-1990s.
Other initiatives are less business-oriented, and focus instead on building sustainable rural communities through broader civil society engagement rather than government support. These organizations are likely to have the most innovative funding models. Lanark Local Flavour, for example, finances some of its activities through tree sales and income generated from a solar array on the local library’s roof! However, the ability of other groups to replicate the latter strategy will depend on the continuation of the Ontario Power Authority’s microFIT program to guarantee (fairly lucrative) rates for renewable electricity generation, along with the need to raise adequate capital up front – clearly a challenge for smaller non-profits.

Given their orientation towards promotion of local food, many of the initiatives in this category (e.g. Local Foods – Local Chefs, and Lanark Local Flavour) discussed the value of creating events involving local foods and chefs as a way to get their message out to consumers around the benefits of supporting local food and farmers. Organizations that were focused on farmer education [e.g. the New Farm Project (Kingston)] were more likely to put their efforts into workshops and newsletters to keep farmers informed.

**Farmer-based local distribution cooperatives**

The third category, representing 7 of 29 initiatives, includes farmer-based local distribution cooperatives designed to distribute local foods to local consumers. All of the initiatives in this sample are organized as not-for-profit organizations, and all but a few (e.g., the Smiths Falls Farmers’ Market) distribute in to large urban areas. Most of these farmer-based cooperatives have started within the last ten years [e.g. Fitzroy Beef Farmers Cooperative (Ottawa)], some within the last five years [e.g. Kawartha Ecological Growers (KEG), Ottawa Valley Local Food Cooperative] and some only within the last two [e.g. Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op (EOLFC) – see detailed case study in section to follow]. Others are still in the process of forming (e.g. a new cooperative of organic farmers in the Ottawa area organized by the Ottawa Chapter of the Canadian Organic Growers). While most of these initiatives are led and overseen by producers, one [By-the-Bushel (Peterborough)] is a multi-stakeholder cooperative including both producers and consumers as members. These cooperatives are mostly based in peri-urban settings that have access to a large urban market (e.g., Ottawa, Toronto, Kingston, and Peterborough), although they all also serve significant rural markets. Finally, the Smiths Falls Farmers’ Market is the only farmers’ market in our sample (though there are dozens in the region) and has therefore been included under the heading of farmer-based local distribution cooperatives. Notably, many of the farmers involved in the new distribution cooperatives also sell at farmers’ markets, and see these newer initiatives as a way to expand beyond farmers’ markets into other types of direct sales to families, restaurants, and caterers (Stewart, Martinez).

Drawing on the now widely implemented Oklahoma model software, one of the common organizational features of the initiatives in this category is their use of the Internet for marketing, selling, and compiling orders (see the EOLFC case study for details). Even the CSA farm in the category of private local food distributors (below) is converting to this model, to offer customers greater choice in the produce they receive.
Prohibitive upfront capital costs remain a key challenge for these cooperatives – an issue in the private sector as well (Manley). While these organizations do not require a lot of funding, initial staffing costs exist. The Trillium Foundation has played an important role in getting some initiatives off the ground (e.g. EOLFC, amongst others). As Garahan noted: “I cannot stress enough the importance of Trillium Foundation in the province of Ontario. It is truly a pioneer, allowing civil society to take leadership in local food and new farmer initiatives.” Additional support has been made available through the Ontario Natural Food Co-op (ONFC) and the Ontario Cooperative Association. These sources of funding are critical, since private commercial lending has been difficult for these cooperatives to access.

Four of these initiatives appear to have made a successful transition from start-ups to being financially self-sustaining: the OVFC, KEG, Fitzroy Beef Farmers Cooperative, and the Smiths Falls Farmers’ Market. Furthermore, the Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op is growing quickly and, although it still relies on Trillium Foundation grant money to pay for staff, it hopes to be self-sustaining within another year.

While these initiatives may become self-sustaining, the food they provide is not necessarily inexpensive, and often proves out-of-reach for low-income consumers (EOLFC, OVFC, KEG, By the Bushel). Anderman, one of the organizers of the OVFC, noted that to become more mainstream they would have to come up with strategies to make food both more affordable and accessible.

Citywide or regional integrated food justice initiatives
The fourth category, representing 2 of 29 initiatives, includes citywide or regional initiatives designed in some way to address all of the above through networks or programs conceptualized through a “community food security” or “food justice” lens that seeks to address both food access and sustainable production and distribution issues simultaneously (see Allen 1999). First, Just Food Ottawa, one of the largest grassroots, community-based, non-profit organizations in the region, strives to advance a vibrant, just and sustainable food system, through myriad programs, working collaboratively with numerous partners. Its diverse activities are important in the region, and were cited by others (e.g. Armstrong) as a model to follow (along with Toronto’s FoodShare and The Stop). (See detailed case study, in the following section.) Second, Food Down the Road (FDTR) brought together diverse stakeholders (including producers, eaters, health advocates, business people, educators, etc.) to “look ‘down the road’ toward a sustainable Kingston and countryside where all citizens can enjoy healthy food”. FDTR was initiated by the farmers and eaters of the National Farmers Union, Local 316 in December 2006, and funded as a yearlong initiative by the Agricultural Management Institute (AMI) (a Canada-Ontario bilateral agreement to implement the Growing Forward Initiative). FDTR continues to operate under the NFU umbrella, with committee oversight (for more detail on FDTR, see case study below).

Private local food distribution businesses
The final category, representing 2 of 29 initiatives, includes private local food distribution businesses. Desert Lake Gardens (Sydenham) is a community-supported agriculture (CSA) farm that also sells certified organic foods from other farms from
within the region, both through its own membership and through another private company called “Wendy’s Mobile Market” (Frontenac), which is the second initiative in this category (see detailed case study, in the following section). It should be noted that we deliberately focused on larger collaborative projects. Thus, while our region includes a growing number of private companies moving into local food distribution, these were not our primary focus (They also proved more difficult to get interviews with than publicly funded or collaborative initiatives).

**Common Lessons from Participants’ Experience**

**Multistakeholder collaboration as the cornerstone of all activity**

The strongest theme to come through the vast majority of interviews is the role of multi-stakeholder cooperation in developing local and regional food initiatives of all types. As Garahan summarized: “To engage in food policy, you need relationships that are well-established, and cross-sectoral, to ensure that policies are more holistic.” In parts of this region, collaboration also implies bilingual cooperation (Welch) – placing particular demands on organizers. As Wildgoose of the Perth and District Food Bank explained, “building a good set of partners to work towards common goals is crucial.” Favreau of the Peterborough YWCA noted that this “takes time, a willingness to make it happen… it takes a generosity of spirit.” Collaboration has strengthened many of these initiatives. According to Trealout of Kawartha Ecological Growers, “community makes you stronger” through sharing of inputs and resources. Moreover, cooperation means that there is also a social dimension to the work. For farmers who work alone, this can be a welcome change (e.g. EOLFC – Martinez). Effective partnerships are also especially important when funds are scarce (Nash, Belinsky) because funders like to see that key local players are already working together (Shea and Gorgana).

Increasingly, this cooperation leads to the creation of new structures, both virtual (e.g. food policy councils) and physical (i.e. local food centres and food hubs). Examples of the former include ongoing efforts in Ottawa, Kingston, and Hastings and Prince Edward Counties to build networks and institutionalize food charters and policy councils. The construction of new physical spaces includes Perth and District Food Bank (The Stop pilot project), EOLFC (which is constructing a physical distribution space in cooperation with a private business), and efforts by By-the-Bushel to move in this direction through the creation of a storefront in Peterborough. Also noteworthy here is Organic Central, a private sector project initiated by Tom Manley near Cornwall. He is working to establish a physical space where a number of organic food businesses come together under one roof and share resources to better achieve economies of scale, lower costs, and access to infrastructure, inputs and markets (Manley).

Some interviewees pointed out the need for more cooperation. For example, one interviewee highlighted the potential for cooperation between mainstream and alternative farming organizations (e.g. the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, National Farmers Union, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario). She characterized farmer organizations as quite similar to political groups – families align themselves with particular organizations or commodity groups. This
interviewee argued: “we have to find a way to start integrating.” Heath of Local Flavours (Frontenac) agrees. His organization brings non-certified organic and conventional farmers to the table with organic producers, hoping that it provides opportunities to bridge tensions and encourage dialogue and opportunities for producers to learn about organic options. “You can’t have conversations”, says Heath, “if people remain divided or excluded.”

When agriculture groups do not work together, the danger is that they may begin to perceive each other only as competition – a dynamic that can block progress. Martinez experienced this in setting up the EOLFC, and noted: “it’s important not to be competitive and to be open and as helpful as possible to other groups.” Respondents also identified other barriers to collaboration. For example, local businesses tend to view farmers’ markets as competition, even though the literature generally shows that farmers’ markets bring consumers to other area stores and money to the community as a whole (Sheedy, Taylor).

**Focus on local and regional levels (but not blindly so)**

Many of the interviewees discussed the importance of rebuilding local and regional food systems. There was even talk about the need to have regional networks of local food hubs (Manley). At the same time, respondents varied in how they defined “local” when referring to local food. Some defined local food as grown within a specific region or “foodshed” (e.g. Just Food Ottawa). Others were hesitant to draw “boundaries” for their local region, concerned that they often tend to run along geographical and political boundaries that limit opportunities for collaboration and distribution across these lines. Cheryl Nash pointed out that if she were starting over she would take “Lanark” out of her group’s name (Lanark Local Flavour) to put the emphasis on supporting farmers in the region rather than tying the identity of her organization to a specific county. Local Flavours (Frontenac County), inspired by Lanark Local Flavour, deliberately chose not to brand their organization in relation to a particular county or region, despite being funded through the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. Many argued that the local food movement adds value by connecting consumers directly with farmers and their food, and that this should ideally be done through face-to-face interactions (such as a farmers’ markets). They felt that province-wide marketing initiatives, which call Ontario-grown food “local,” could undermine more local efforts, particularly when they are trying to work with food providers and grocery stores. Some interviewees felt that this view that Ontario-grown food is local has been propagated by OMAFRA efforts and particularly by initiatives such as Foodland Ontario and the Ontario Greenbelt Initiative. Finally, some respondents noted that consumers are confused about the term “local”, and that the continued presence of imported food at some farmers’ markets exacerbates this problem (Shea and Gargaro).

Often along with local and regional designations come verification requirements. Most initiatives rely on informal verification processes, such as farm visits by one of the members. Even in the cases where official certification does not exist, all have some kind of guarantee, with varying levels of formality (e.g., Savour Ottawa’s verification processes are most formal; By the Bushel, EOLFC, and KEG, less so). Several interviewees expressed the desire for continued OMAFRA funding in this regard,
including Moe Garahan of Just Food Ottawa, who argued for the need to build upon the local farmer verification systems currently developed to ensure that the investments and economic impacts made to date at regional levels are not lost.

Build from the bottom up, recognizing the distinctiveness of each community

“It can be built from the grassroots up; it doesn’t have to be top-down.” (Manley)

“For real progress in moving to a more sustainable system, progress starts from bottom up and not the top down. Politicians look for a parade and then get ahead of it.” (Heath)

Several interviewees noted that the distinctiveness of each community must be recognized when new initiatives are established. Although an existing model might be a useful starting point for a group in another region or town, efforts must always be made to make strong connections and build relationships with all relevant existing partners in the community. It is particularly important to acknowledge the distinct character of rural and urban communities, which often have different characteristics. In small rural communities, establishing partnerships often involves a slow process of dialogue, diplomacy and education.

Many interviewees identified successful models for local food initiatives in the Toronto area, but also stressed that communities in Eastern Ontario are different and have distinct characteristics and needs. These interviewees expressed concerns about Toronto-based projects attempting to “replicate” themselves provincially with little knowledge of the region and its key players, and without enough local, grassroots involvement, characterizing this approach as “too top-down” or “one-size-fits-all.” These critics stressed that if local groups are being used tactically to demonstrate activities at a provincial or national scope, then involvement should be substantive, with funds attached, and that special effort should be made to work with local groups to ensure that the project meets the community’s needs.

Need to address the missing middle (distribution and processing)

Many respondents identified the need to fill the gap in local capacity around small- and mid-scale processing and distribution (Kittle, Belinsky, Anderman, Jopling, Dowling, Shea, Monson), and many of these organizations are actively involved in that very task. As Manley asserted: “The rural food processing industry has been eliminated over the last few decades and has not been replaced. From a public policy point of view, Canada needs to re-invent local food infrastructure.” Many organizations that are considering expansions are hoping to add commercial kitchens so that food processors that are hoping to scale up from their kitchens have a place to go (Manley). From an economic development perspective, manufacturing and processing food has been identified as a gap in existing value chains. Thus by teaching skills, such as canning and preserving, it is hoped that entrepreneurs will fill this gap and help to create new revenue streams for farmers (Jopling). Some would like this gap filled with operations that are cooperatively-owned (Anderman).
Importance of public education, including reaching out to youth

“*In the beginning, I failed to recognize how far removed people are from a physical presence of a farmer or food.*” (Nash)

The importance of education was another one of the major themes to emerge in many of the interviews (Anderman, Martinez, Kittle, Sheedy, Trealout, Kadwell, and McFarlane, among others). More specifically, the need for ongoing education arose in relation to the confusion around local and organic among consumers (Kittle), the cost and value of local foods, and the way that the food system works.

Organizations address these educational gaps in various ways. Some actively build more direct connections between consumers and farmers as a way to ensure a two-way knowledge exchange (Jopling, Nash, Sheedy, Stewart). Those organizations that actively promote local food attempt to clarify in the public’s mind what local food actually entails, using agri-tourism, food fairs and other events to get this message out (Chaumont). Various organizations also have promotional directories and websites (e.g. Kawartha Choice FarmFresh, Canadian Organic Growers, and Lanark Local Flavour) (Wildgoose, Manley), others, such as Just Food Ottawa, produce annually both hard copy and online a *Buy Local Food Guide*. In addition, despite conflicts in recent years between farming communities and Health Units in some regions (Nash), Health Units have been very helpful on education around a variety of food issues (Wildgoose).

Many voiced the need to educate young people, particularly about where their food comes from, the health and environmental benefits of local food, and the viability of farming as a career option (Welch, Kittle, Lavigne). Several initiatives focus their educational activities on youth and schools through school gardens, youth gardens, and student nutrition programs (e.g. Lanark Local Flavour and Growing up Organic). For example, The Ottawa chapter of Canadian Organic Growers has worked with over 20 schools in Ottawa to implement school gardens and develop curriculum-connected lesson plans to accompany the gardens. Simpson (2011) argued that this work is important “because so many kids lack that awareness of where their food is coming from. Once they have that connection they are interested and happy to eat healthy foods.” Another interviewee noted that teaching children about food “has been the most incredibly rewarding work I have ever done in my life” (Nash). Other groups aim some of their new farmer training at young people interested in taking up farming as a career or set to inherit their parent’s farms. The Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op has been developing internships in association with Alfred College, a francophone agricultural college affiliated with the University of Guelph, but located in Kemptville. These internships aim to train youth to become the local food growers of the future. The New Farm Project in Kingston and Just Food Ottawa also support internships through their affiliation with CRAFT. Many believe that this kind of work is particularly important as the number of farmers declines, so that young people see farming as a viable career option (Belinsky, Kittle).
Create system-wide change, including a socio-cultural connection to food

While certainly not unanimous across the sample, a large number of interviewees emphasized the need for system-wide change in how we produce, distribute, consume, and even think about food. In the words of McDermott (2011), “Mother Earth is crying out for us to change our ways… There is a lack of acknowledgement of spiritual and emotional relationships with food.”

Some called for local food initiatives to be scaled up (Sheedy), or for more systemic efforts to get local foods into local grocery stores (Duncan). In the case of the latter, local farmers face considerable barriers due to the fact that many large grocery retailers view all provincially grown food as “local”. Some voices went much further, however, believing that “everything is broken” when it comes to the dominant food system (Belinsky). Others spoke about “revolution” and the need to mainstream “radical ideas” (Bisson) and asked whether a better distribution system “is even reconcilable with capitalism” (Welch). Echoing this more critical view, Favreau felt that we need to implement a “paradigm shift” around food in order to really make a difference, particularly when it comes to challenging the prevailing notion that bigger is better: “It’s a challenge because it’s not only embedded in the way we relate to food but it’s embedded in the way we relate to so many [socio-economic, political and ecological] systems.”

Five of the interviewees stressed Indigenous perspectives and the need to include Indigenous people in the processes of rebuilding our food systems in Eastern Ontario. McDermott stated:

> For us (Algonquins), food networks and feeding ourselves cannot be restricted to anthropocentric viewpoints, meaning we honor our natural law and we honor, in Algonquin, ginawaydaganuk,[which defined] very loosely [means] the web of life. We can't change these [laws]. They are given to us by our creator; [they are] our sacred responsibility. It's not an option to change them.

Recommendations to Governments

When it came to questions around policy change, respondents widely agreed that regulations or policies needed to change at all levels of government. Furthermore, many have a clear vision of an alternative future. How we get there in terms of specific policy and regulatory changes, however, was often unclear. Some informants noted their own difficulties in formulating a policy strategy. For instance, Chaumont of the Eastern Ontario Agri-food Network, commenting on various initiatives in her region, noted: “It's been a bit hit-and-miss to change policies. We don't have specific contacts or a strategy for changing them.” (Chaumont)

Nonetheless, there was considerable agreement on three issues. First, respondents identified the potentially positive (even transformative) role that preferential procurement policies at municipal, provincial and federal level institutions could play in local food systems (Anderman, Nash, McFarlane, Lavigne, Bryan, Dowling). Second, respondents
widely acknowledged the challenges represented by current food inspection regulations (especially related to meat inspection) (Dowling) and provincial marketing board systems for poultry and dairy products (Jopling, Lavigne). Many voiced the need for “scale-appropriate” regulations, arguing that current regulatory models are designed for large-scale operations, and simply place huge (and unnecessary) burdens on smaller-scale businesses (Jopling, Nash). Some simply called abattoirs “over-regulated” (Dowling).

Reflecting these regulatory challenges, Chaumont noted that the Eastern Ontario Agri-food Network, in an effort to get local meat into area grocery stores, has faced obstacles around packaging and labeling. One respondent also noted that regulations governing how cheese can be sold were overly stringent, leading to challenges for small distribution networks (Martinez).

Several interviewees felt that the quota system was preventing small-scale operations from starting up since it is so difficult to buy quota in order to get going (Manson, Anderson). The marketing board structure also makes it difficult to produce in small numbers for local markets (e.g. eggs and chickens) since quota is required for a farmer wishing to raise above a minimum number of layers or broilers. Because it isn’t designed to include organ and small family farms, the quota system has also made it difficult for cooperatives to sell certain products, such as ecologically raised eggs and chicken from small-scale producers, even though there is demand for these products among the cooperatives’ customers (Anderman, Martinez).

Third, several of the respondents also spoke of the broader role that municipal government does, could (or, arguably, should) play in building local food systems, in particular, in terms of economic development policies (Duncan, Nash, Taylor) and land-use policies (Shea and Gargaro, Favreau, Bisson, M.L. Walker). One respondent argued that getting more municipal engagement involves an uphill battle: “Overall, you have land use policies and a development regime that greatly favours developers that are extremely well resourced to use the tools that are available… Everything is weighted against protecting the land.” (McDermott) For instance, as an example of a municipal bylaw meant to help, but that actually hinders … In other instances, there seems to be some willingness to make changes. Urban Agriculture Kingston managed to push its back yard hens program through thanks to bylaw revisions, but the added requirement to obtain neighbor signatures and liability insurance posed additional challenges (Kainer). On the other hand, work in both Ottawa and Kingston reveal the active role played by municipal staff in various food initiatives, providing guidance and support around community gardening, farmers’ markets, and more (Shea and Gargaro, Garahan).

One federal policy decision that was recognized as enormously important in Kingston was the closure of the prison farms announced in 2010. This was seen as detrimental for several reasons, including the fact that it may lead to the loss of an abattoir in Joyceville, thereby further undermining processing capacity in the region (Stutt, Bryan).

Finally, it is also important to note policies that might potentially alleviate poverty and hunger. This research was focused on local food distribution, and less explicitly on hunger, but time and again respondents recognized the need to prioritize policies that
speak to social justice – making food affordable and accessible for all. To this end, social policy to reduce hunger through subsidies to nutritional, local food should be a priority for governments (Dowling). Some progress will undoubtedly be generated by grassroots initiatives from within community, even without government involvement, and this energy and momentum ought to be lauded. But as Belyea of Loving Spoonful in Kingston argued, governments should not only allow these initiatives to flourish, but actually facilitate and support them. In sum, governments at local and provincial levels must become more active and engaged players, alongside community development officers, and local food stakeholders (broadly interpreted), to critically examine regulations that will foster local food hubs that are just and sustainable.

**Recommendations to Funders**

Virtually everyone interviewed expressed a strong desire to see continued funding in the area of the food initiatives described in this chapter. Many, if not all, of the organizations have received some level of public sector or foundation support, and recognize the importance of this funding in achieving the gains they have made to date. Organizations would like funding support to help build infrastructure for distribution (Garahan), delivery (Simpson), greenhouses (EOLFC), and so on – the capital costs so often deemed ineligible in funding applications. Equally important would be funding support for core budget costs (most notably, staffing) – also similarly deemed ineligible in the overall shift towards project-based funding.

Several respondents argued that OMAFRA should play a stronger role with regards to funding and supporting local food initiatives, especially related to direct marketing. As one participant noted: “OMAFRA needs to incorporate what is going on and support initiatives that are already underway without running roughshod over them.” Another felt that OMAFRA might have made mistakes in the past because they are used to working with other types of farm issues: “There are skilled people at OMAFRA. They are focused on the production end, and [they] are good at what they do. But very few of them understand anything about marketing. They are not promoting farm income through direct marketing (e.g. farmers' markets).” Another respondent argued that OMAFRA must revise its funding eligibility to ethically and accountably build administrative costs into funding for the non-profit sector. They explained that the current situation forces non-profits to “make it work,” but places employees in a burnout position, with real financial vulnerability. In their view, the problem is threefold: First, OMAFRA offers no allowance for legitimate administrative costs. Second, applications often require matching funds (typically in a 50/50 ratio, involving mostly cash, and not in-kind contributions). And finally, costs must be paid up front, with receipts provided for reimbursement, and with only nominal advances. As a result, small organizations just don’t apply for funds. They cannot find the matching funds, or cannot function without some administrative costs covered, or they simply cannot pay for things up front. In sum, there is a critical need for core funding at the regional level for this type of food system work.
Many groups in the region hope that in the future OMAFRA will consult and include existing local groups as they move forward. Existing efforts and successful initiatives must be incorporated into new plans and projects for promoting local food and supporting local farmers in the region.

Regarding the entry of foundations into this realm (e.g. Trillium, McConnell, Heifer International), respondents were appreciative, recognizing that this has resulted in a big boost to the local food movement (e.g. Stutt). Respondents explained that the way these foundations fund projects makes it possible to do the work. In particular, longer-term funding horizons, reasonable conditions around accountability, and flexibility within funds to allow for the evolution of projects, were all key components. Still there remains much concern about the lack of long-term structural support and funding lines. Ideally, regional activities will be supported, strengthened and networked to optimize impact. Many would like to see government step in to provide more sustainable, long-term funding (Kittle, Mcfarlane).

At the same time, some have lost funding (e.g., the Peterborough network), or argued that working with funders can make a project too complicated and have thus chosen instead to pursue alternate funding paths (Lanark Local Flavour). However, their experiences with funding often (though, certainly not always) result in the following insight: the work entailed to get the money, and the timing and conditions that are imposed on the money, typically distracts from the project at hand. Also, as alluded to earlier, 50 cent dollars don’t work for rural communities, and more generally, for non-profits, because it’s simply too much work (or just impossible) to gather up half the money from groups of small funders. As one respondent ponders: Perhaps this requirement is easier to achieve in cities where they have access to larger chunks of money?

Respondents identified a number of other possible funders, including:

- Community Futures Development Corporations in Ontario: http://www.ontcfdc.com/frame1.asp
- County-level rural development funds
- United Way Canada: http://www2.unitedway.ca/uwcanada/default.aspx
- Canadian federal government (in particular, its emphasis on supporting small businesses in rural regions)
Conclusions
There is strong interest in food initiatives in Eastern Ontario, and they are generally growing fast, thanks to the hard work of many committed women and men. Across all five types of initiatives, a tremendous amount of new activity is encouraging and expanding the production and distribution of locally produced foods. Even food access programs appear to be moving more in this direction, by supporting holistic approaches that include community gardening and building connections with regional farmers, often inspired by the Community Food Centre model. Across the interviews, a sense of both urgency and optimism emerged, despite the many challenges facing local food initiatives. As Martinez explained: “The time is right. People want local food. […] We need to do it. We're losing too many good farmers. They're giving up.” Belinsky further noted that there is a “willingness to move forward” that “wasn’t there two years ago”. Across the various initiatives there is much talk and excitement about food hubs, physical infrastructure (e.g. commercial kitchens and freezers) (Martinez, Lavigne) and mobile markets. Some regions have already begun conducting feasibility studies [e.g. around mobile markets (Kittle)], trying to find out more about barriers (Puterbough), and generally collecting more data. Funding opportunities from key foundations and various levels of government have also generated a good deal of excitement and cooperation. Even initiatives that have been left unfunded by these two organizations have a vision and are actively seeking resources to bring their visions of creating new partnerships and building regional food hubs into reality (e.g. Haliburton, Peterborough and Just Food Ottawa).

References
Case Study 1: Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op
Prepared by Peter Andrée with Brynne Sinclair-Waters

Location: Vankleek Hill, Ontario

Phone interview with Sabrina Martinez by Brynne Sinclair-Waters (June 8, 2011)

Site visit (including participant observation) and interviews with Sabrina Martinez, Isabelle Perdigal, Francois Poirier by Peter Andrée and Brynne Sinclair-Waters (August 16, 2011)

Summary
• Recent but rapidly growing bilingual producer co-op serving several counties
• Based on successful “Oklahoma model” of on-line sales.
• Includes a farm apprenticeship program and is closely connected to a new privately-run farmers’ market

Overview

"The time is right. People want local food." (Sabrina Martinez, EOLFC)

Started in 2010, the Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op (EOLFC) is a rapidly growing not-for-profit cooperative that currently includes around 40 producers from the united counties of Prescott-Russell and Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry. Co-op members sell their food products through a weekly “on-line local farmers’ market”. They then bring a wide variety of pre-packed product (including fresh and frozen vegetables, frozen meats, cheeses, sour cream, quail and turkey eggs, cakes, preserves, etc.) to a warehouse each Tuesday morning where it is sorted into orders alongside other farmers’ products. The orders are delivered to about 200 individual, group and institutional customers in Eastern Ontario, including Ottawa. The EOLFC also runs a small farm apprenticeship program, connecting young people interested in taking up farming with producers who they can learn from. Finally, the co-op is closely associated with “Penny’s Market”, a privately run farm product, antique and livestock market. Established in 2011 by one of the EOLFC’s
members, the market takes place on the same property where co-op orders are sorted each week, thereby giving members another venue for selling additional product.

While the weekly market is only a sideline for the producers of the EOLFC, it is clear that having a single site where farmers meet every week has been very important for the co-operative from a social perspective. This social side of the co-op was highlighted by Martinez: “Farmers are often so alone in their world. It (the co-op) is a social thing. We can discuss things. We go through the same heartaches.” Francois Poirier (28 years old), one of the younger farmers that sells through EOLFC, is a recent graduate of Alfred College, a French agricultural college in Eastern Ontario that is associated with the University of Guelph. Francois now has three full time staff working on his 58 acre vegetable farm. He noted that he learns a great deal from his colleagues on his weekly visit to the co-op warehouse. There is also some sales between producer members of the co-op who buy from each other, including, for example, livestock and eggs for those who do not raise their own animals.

History
Sabrina Martinez started up the EOLFC because she was looking for new ways to sell all of the produce from her market garden. Between farmers’ markets and CSAs there still were not enough buyers in her rural area, so she was interested in trying to find buyers further afield including in Ottawa (approximately 100 km away). Around the same time, she was being approached by local restaurants and daycares to supply them with food. Martinez recognized that the demand was growing for “local food” bought directly from farmers, and in the winter of 2010 she began meeting with her partner Michel Pepin and a friend, Isabelle Perdigal to develop a plan. They were told by some that it would take years to get a co-op off the ground, but fortunately they came across the “Oklahoma model” of on-line sales, and were able to access the software used by that group (see: http://www.oklahomafood.coop/). This allowed the whole project to get off the ground in only a few months. By June of 2010 the EOLFC was incorporated as a not-for-profit co-operative and made its first deliveries. In November of 2010 it was awarded a Trillium foundation grant which has given the group a big boost (see below). In their first six months, the EOFLC grossed $70,000 in sales. In the first six months of their second year in operation, the co-op doubled those sales. As a result, several of the farmers that are part of the co-op have left other jobs to focus full-time on farming. The co-op hopes to be financially self-sufficient by the end of its third year of operations.

Motivations
Martinez is motivated to coordinate the co-op because she wants to make farming viable. She wants to sell her produce, to see farms grow and diversify, and get youth involved. She wants to show that farmers can make a living – that farming is not just a lifestyle choice. "We need to do it. We're losing too many good farmers. They're giving up", noted Martinez. From our site visit, it is clear that other producers who are part of the co-op share these values. Not only do they want farming to remain viable in the area, but they would like to see more small-scale processing as well. One producer pointed to the landscape of corn and soy that surrounds Penny’s Market and lamented the fact that these crops do almost nothing to support the local economy. He hoped that the co-op and the
market can help return the land of Eastern Ontario to a diversity of vegetables, grass-fed beef and much more.

**Human Resources**
The group was advised by other producer co-ops to “stay small”, but this has been difficult because it requires each person involved to take on a lot of responsibility. In their first year, all of the work needed to run the co-op was done on a volunteer basis. The Trillium Foundation grant awarded to the EOLFC in November of 2010 allowed the group to hire Martinez as a part-time coordinator and Perdigal as their website developer. The grant also helps pay for the gas needed to make deliveries, which are carried along five routes by co-op members in their own vehicles. The board of directors, made up of five producer members, is responsible for overseeing the overall operations of the co-op and is supplemented by the work of two committees: a grant writing committee and a standards committee. The standards committee is responsible for ensuring that producers adhere to their own rule of a 65% minimum of local content for processed foods. Finally, there are volunteers that help sort and pack orders every week. These are often producer members themselves, but occasionally customers too. The co-op has also had occasional volunteer assistance from members of a local environmental organization.

**Physical Infrastructure**
The EOLFC owns little infrastructure itself, but Penny’s Market is owned by farmers that are part of the EOLFC. It has a warehouse where the co-op packs orders and hopes to establish a commercial kitchen for the processing of local foods. The co-op’s only other physical assets are about a dozen coolers, which are used to keep some orders cool or frozen during deliveries. These were bought through a small grant from the united counties of Presscott-Russell.

**Natural Resources**
Penny’s Market is on five acres of land adjacent to Highway 417 between Montreal and Ottawa, thus offering lots of room for expansion.

**Financial Resources**
The group received $108,000 from the Trillium Foundation over two years. All farmer members of the co-operative pay a lifetime membership of $100. Consumers also pay a $50 fee the first time they buy from the co-op, but consumers do not become members of the co-op. The co-op decision-making structure is made up only of its producer members. The co-op also collects 10% of all sales from producers and 5% from consumers. Orders currently average about $40/week/order. Perdigal noted that it was surprising that order levels stayed high throughout the winter. As fresh produce became scarce customers started ordering more meats, preserves, cheese, pies and frozen fruits and vegetables.

**Community Resources**
Early in its development, the EOLFC received support from Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative (OVFC), a similar coop on the west side of Ottawa. From the OVFC they learned how best to freeze, bag, and transport product, in order to meet the expectations of health regulations. The EOLFC also has a partnership with Tucker House, a local
historic site, with whom they organized a canning and preserving workshop in the summer of 2011.

In general, the EOLFC actually has few formal local partnerships compared to many of the other food initiatives documented in this report. Those involved in the co-op believe that collaboration has been an issue because some other groups in the region have felt threatened by their initiative. In order to try and foster cooperation, the leadership of the co-op has made an effort to be as open and helpful as possible to other initiatives that are trying to get started up and Martinez has become a member of the Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Networks in hopes that it could contribute to building better relationships between local food initiatives and organizations in the area.

One of the resources that has contributed most to the success of the EOLFC is the computer software used to organize online orders, which came from a community quite far away in Oklahoma. The software is used by members for posting available products, by consumers for entering their orders on-line, and by members and volunteers again for printing labels that help to organize consumer orders. The software was shared free of charge with the EOLFC. The EOLFC is working on making the program bilingual by adding French. They are sharing the bilingual version with the Oklahoma Valley Food Co-operative, which hopes to translate it to Spanish as well, and which will continue to share it with others who would like to use it.

**Policy and Program Resources and Challenges**

The fact that they are basically doing “farm-gate” sales cooperatively means that regulations (i.e. regarding how processed foods are packed and labeled) are not as stringent for co-op sales as they might be for commercial producers and processors, or even as stringent as some of the regulations governing farmers’ markets. Similarly, even small EOLFC producers who do not own “quota” (which confers the right to sell these products through conventional market channels) can sell chicken and eggs to customers of the co-op because it is like selling from the farm gate. However, marketing board rules do restrict those eggs and chickens from being sold to restaurants and institutional buyers.

**Desired Assets**

It is clear that the group would like to see both its producer and customer base grow significantly. One producer noted that 1500 customers was a good target to aim for. They look admirably at examples from Oklahoma and Quebec, where similarly structured co-ops are grossing over $2M/year. It is notable that the group currently has producers on a waiting list, as they can only accommodate a few producers in each category (e.g. beef) until the customer base grows. The EOLFC is also currently seeking grant money to help establish a commercial kitchen, flash freezer and cold storage.

The group is keenly aware that stronger public awareness about the availability and nutritional benefits of fresh and local food is crucial for local food networks to be effective and continue to grow.

Finally, interviewees pointed out that governments can support local food networks in several ways: First by helping to get local food into public institutions and schools;
Second, by offering more funding to small producers (to help them establish greenhouses for season extension, for example) and to farmers’ markets; Third, by not shutting down small abattoirs. As Martinez noted, “they (government) are shutting down the abattoirs and they’re creating laws and regulations so the small to medium farmer can’t be one anymore.”

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**

Barriers to building effective local food networks include lack of co-operation among local food initiatives and financial constraints (i.e. advertising and start-up costs). Martinez has also sensed competition and some level of secrecy from other food initiatives and thus makes a point of being open and as helpful as possible to other initiatives that are trying to get started up.

**Successes**

It is difficult to judge the overall success of the EOLFC at this early stage, but they appear to be actively working to meet all of the key aims included in their mandate with regards to supplying more sustainably produced local food, building the local farm economy, creating internship opportunities, and through all of this helping to “establish the security and sovereignty of local food in Eastern Ontario”. A key part of their success to date appears to be the sense of community that the group has created among producers in the region by coming together at the co-op every week throughout the year.

One of the next items on the expansion agenda of the EOLFC is the commercial kitchen. Whether or not this will be successful at this particular stage is something that the EOLFC will have to carefully consider by looking at other projects and by preparing a suitable feasibility study.

**Relevance**

The EOLFC is working with a model that has clearly proven successful in other regions, and that model is likely to be relevant to many other local food projects across Ontario. Because the EOLFC is a producer co-op, with all the producers sharing the same interest in building market share for their own food products, and with quite a simple distribution model (weekly deliveries year round) it was able to get started up quite quickly. The rapidity with which the EOLFC was able to get going with relatively few resources is notable for other groups trying to strengthen local food networks in their own communities.
Cast Study 2: Food Down the Road
Prepared by Linda Stevens

Towards a sustainable local food system for Kingston and countryside.
A Community Engagement and Planning Project - Kingston
www.fdtr.ca

Interviewees: Ian Stutt (Former Committee member) and Andrew McCann (Former Coordinator)

Initial interview (Andrew McCann, August, 2011) completed by Linda Stevens; follow-up interviews (Ian Stutt, August - September, 2011) completed by Linda Stevens

Overview

Food Down the Road was an initiative of the National Farmers Union Local 316 (see www.nfuontario.ca/content/about) that sought to empower a broad range of local food system participants. The project was designed to: “look down the road towards a sustainable Kingston and countryside-towards vibrant farms and healthy food for our urban and rural communities. The initiative was intended to “engage people at a deeper level, making connections between farmers and eaters in order to transform our food system.” (Cumpson, 2007).

Food has been an area of interest in Kingston for many years, taking on various forms and permeating multiple sectors. The Food Down the Road (FDTR) Initiative was a concentrated effort to bring the multiple sectors together to learn, plan and work towards and improved and connected local food system The project, although continuous in outreach information sharing across the year, included a series of significant events to bring diverse topics and cross sector participation into to the food conversation in Kingston and area. Events included a Speakers Series, described in the Sharing Food Down the Road report, 2008 as “four very different gatherings held in four very different locations; each gathering looked at issues from different perspectives resulting in the effective sharing of a lot of valuable and fascinating information.” The Local Food Summit was the culminating event of the project bringing together over 400 people to connect, discuss, learn, and set direction for action around local food issues and opportunities in the area. The summit led to a local declaration.

Ian Stutt, a member of the FDTR project Steering Committee, a local producer, and New Farm Project Coordinator and Andrew McCann, former Project Coordinator and present developer of the Village Cooperative described the impetus for the project and its evolution. A number of organizations, groups and individuals in the area worked in their various roles and sectors towards the development of a systemic approach to identifying and addressing food system needs for a number of years. The work, although often connected across interested parties, lacked a collective and cohesive cross-sector approach to considering the local food challenges and assets across Kingston and area. Ian explains members of the various local food and food security interested organizations
were becoming aware that “there were many food and farm issues that were interrelated and we wanted to build a catchment for relationships in the food system; production issues, healthy food access issues, health and nutrition”, “We recognized that we needed to build the alternative from the grass roots up.” Food Down the Road was the culmination of the Kingston Community’s desire to “see food in a broad sense and engage eaters to farmers, from governments to NGOs in a year-long project to raise awareness and develop a sense of cohesion around this areas food system”. “Instead of years of work individually we wanted to have a broad sense look ahead to food security on the systems and household levels. The FDTR Project, pulled the varied and diverse sectors together to foster conversations, relationships and collective thinking to “cultivate an approach to ensuring that healthy affordable food is available to everyone”.

As the primary purpose of the project was to focus on building relationships and partnerships within our food system, the work of FDTR was structured and presented around pillars to summarize the wide range of objectives, activities, outcomes, and conclusions of the project. These included; Local Farmers and Market Opportunities, Engaged and Sustainable Participation, Communication and Coordination Capacities and Future Projects that Balance Policy and Practical Change.

**History**

Following a series of food community partners meetings in 2005 to 2006, funding was granted through the Agricultural Management Institute (AMI) to implement a series of momentum building events and a local food conference with the purpose of raising awareness and generating partnerships. Recognizing the project as a way to enhance farm business management, a strong farm and food network-building component was also included in the design of the initiative. This yearlong project was launched in 2006 under the administrative umbrella of the National Farmers Union, local 316 with significant partner support as Food Down the Road.

Food Down the Road was a broadly based community effort committed to nurturing the growth and encouraging the development of Kingston’s local food system to work better for everyone without damaging the environment on which it depends. The goal of the FDTR project was “to strengthen the connections between local farmers, food processors, distributors, retailers, social justice advocates, cooks and eaters of all income levels, so that each part of the local food system is in harmony with the other parts and with the whole for the benefit of all” (NFU Local 316, 2008). A long-range goal that grew out of the project was, to engage farmers and a broad range of food system participants in a long-term effort to develop markets that can support the farming, processing and distribution of locally grown food within a 100 km area. Food security and social justice were the lenses within which the project developed recognizing that the purpose of a food system is to “feed people, all the people” (NFU Local 316, 2008).

**Food Down the Road Outcomes**

Today, Food Down the Road as a project has ended, the philosophy of opening a new door as another door closes has held true. FDTR opened a number of doors spawning community initiatives and programs across the region that has successfully moved Kingston from the initial planning stage to action.
Food Down the Road has cultivated a number of now emerging or thriving initiatives in the region including but certainly not limited to:

- The NFU New Farm Project, a farmer education, training, and support program aimed at strengthening the Kingston region’s farm community and local food system. While emphasizing the benefits of production for local markets, the project also focuses on ecologically sound farming methods and supports participating farmers in making farm management decisions that will lead to long-term sustainability of their farms. Recipient of Premiers Award, Agri-food Innovation Excellence (see www.newfarmproject.ca). The project was developed and funding sought and achieved through Heifer International in recognition of the need for farmer training as identified through the FDTR Initiative
  - The continued publication of Local Harvest, now re-launched as Food Down the Road to maintain the spirit and focus that the FDTR Project ignited. Includes articles of relevance to participants across the food system from eaters to producers and includes links to Eating Close to Home Food Local Food Directory
- The Healthy Eating Working Group, established as a partnered initiative under the administration of the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (KFL&A) Public Health Unit and cross organization and sector partners, to oversee and achieve the establishment of KFL&A food charter and food coalition /council with municipal endorsement(s).
  - The Healthy Eating Working Group continues aspects of the work that the Food Down the Road initiated in trying to establish a local food council
- Loving Spoonful; a food security program that works to combat hunger and food waste by reclaiming surplus food from sources such as grocery stores, caterers, restaurants, hotels and farmers, – food that would otherwise go to waste and, with the help of volunteers transporting that food to local emergency meal providers. (See www.lovingspoonful.org).
- The Village Cooperative, a newly developing initiative to combine organic food retail/direct distribution by local producers, value added food production, and education and skills development opportunities all offered at the same site. Website is www.villageco-op.org
- A significant increase in CSAs, farmers market locations and retailers focusing on providing local food in the area

**Human Resources**

Food Down the Road was launched as an initiative under the National Farmers Union, local 316 and was directed by a volunteer Committee comprised of four NFU Directors.

The project was staffed by a 1.0 FTE Coordinator position, shared by two individuals that, as Ian describes it “had an enormous level of passion, commitment and energy for the work” enabling them to contribute as much in volunteer time as was provided within their paid roles. At the end of the first funded year for FDTR, the coordination role continued as a shared 1.0 FTE with two new Interim Coordinators joining the project during the bridging period as the AMI funding ended and multi-year funding was sought.
The project also included an impressive number of volunteers (estimated at 80) assisting with project activities and the extensive participation and partnering of community groups/agencies and organizations (estimated at 36) (NFU Local 316, 2008). Twelve consultants were also involved in various ways through paid and contributed “in kind” time.

A Community Council comprised of two NFU members and ten agency/organization based participants agreed to meet to provide continuity as the project transitioned into a new phase.

Staff salaries could not be maintained as funding through AMI ended and thus, so too ended the Coordinator role. The loss of this role affected the continuity of the collectively coordinated activities of the initiative. With the loss of coordination leadership, the Community Council eventually dissolved as well.

**Physical Resources**
FDTR operated with few physical resources, and the resources that did exist were largely contributed in kind to the project. Through project funds, FDTR had rented storage space and a funded webpage during the run of the project. Coordinators worked from home offices using their own equipment. St. Lawrence College contributed meeting and event space.

**Financial Resources**
FDTR received the majority of its funding through a one-year grant from the Agricultural Management Institute (AMI) allowing the project to be staffed and minimal resources to be available for project operations. The Agricultural Management Institute (AMI) recognized the Food Down the Road (FDTR) project as a way to enhance farm business management. The AMI provided funding for a four-part Speakers Series in the spring of 2007 to build momentum, followed by a Local Food Summit in the fall. The goal was to bring farmers, processors, distributors, marketing groups, retailers, experts, community organizations, local government and ‘eaters’ together to learn about local food success stories from across North America.

Additional financial inputs were gained through donations, from NFU Local 316, NFU Ontario, Heifer International, The Kingston Economic Development Corporation, Local Food Summit registration and sales, cash donations from the Speakers Series and sponsorship through small local businesses, the Royal Dominion Bank and Farm Credit Canada.

The project also benefited greatly from the in-kind contributions of many organizations and businesses, including provision of space, food, presentation supplies.

The hope was to accomplish multi-year funding to maintain the coordination needed to continue to bring people together and to support the project to move further towards developing activities and initiatives to meet identified needs. Coordinator efforts did go towards completing a funding proposal for Trillium funding, however, given the timing of the end of the AMI funding and the capacity required to complete the Trillium
proposal, funding was not achieved. This certainly had an impact on the ongoing work of FDTR, but the initial benefits of the connections and collective efforts to generate needs and opportunities and options held long after the end of the project run.

Community/Social Resources
FDTR by design worked through a network of connections and commitments to weave together an awareness and networking initiative. As described under Human Resources, significant volunteer efforts, community partner support and community contributed space (St. Lawrence College) supported the work of FDTR. OPIRG and Arch Biosphere Local Flavours and the KFL&A Health Unit supported the organization of the spring event series and a number of individual community members contributed to the writing of Sharing Food Down the Road, a summary report following the completion of the program reports. Close to 80 media print, audio and video articles/stories/segments were completed on the project.

Policy and Program Resources
FDTR no longer exists in the form it once did. Initial funding through the AMI was available as part of a bilateral funding program aimed at promoting agricultural business development. The initial funding ended and ongoing funding was not achieved, largely due to a lack of capacity to well develop and submit proposals to meet the funder requirements at the time. The unique community development nature of the project did not easily lend itself to funders requiring immediate and measurable results without the expertise to generate indicators to measure such things as relationships forged, attitudes changed or creativity ignited.

That said Ian and Andrew both believe that it is precisely due to the community development process underlying the FDTR initiative, that so many food initiatives addressing those areas of need identified through the work of the project, have since come into being. The FDTR initiative intentionally worked to connect different interests and diverse sectors to learn about options in local food from eater to producer and everything in between and to identify and work towards priorities in the cultivation of a vibrant local food system. The intention was that a long-term cultural shift around local food and activities related to both promoting the shift and existing because of it would emerge. Looking back over the 5 years since the project funding ended, that is exactly what happened.

The local food based networks, collaborations; ideas for projects and businesses initiated post-FDTR speak to the value in “having the dialogue in the first place”.

Although FDTR ended as a funded initiative, the Local Harvest quarterly publication, recently re-launched under the new title of Food Down the Road continued under the umbrella of the NFU and with the support of local businesses. The FDTR publication is provided both as an online and hard copy tool to continue educating and informing the public about local food system issues and activities including links to the local food locator “map” and events listings. Stutt explains that continuity of the publication under the FDTR banner is intended to “hold onto the collective activity and spirit that FDTR
launched” and allows continuity for and keeps the connections and awareness as grown by the FDTR initiative alive.

“A key element in the sustainability of any organization is that it has institutional memory so that it can pass on all that has been done and learned in the time of its existence” (NFU Local 316, 2008). The project also created two key documents, From the Ground Up: A Primer for Community Action on Kingston and Countryside’s Food System. www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/from-the-ground-up.pdf and Sharing Food Down the Road at www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/sharing-fdtr-june08.pdf

**Desired Assets**

FDTR has ended but those who were part of the project and many of those touched by the outcomes of it would like to re-ignite the coordinated collective planning and action role that FDTR held. The frequency of comments in response to scoping interviews associated with the initial work of this Local Food Networks project indicated enthusiasm with the impacts of coordination at the time and the ongoing need for this role in this community. Many interviewees also alluded to the challenges of finding a central body willing to take on and fund it in the absence of designated funder support. Clearly longer term and dedicated funding would benefit continued progress on well coordinated and thus, collaborated local food system development.

Ian, points out that coordination is an area of need that continues to come up and expects that the present Plan to Grow project will specifically identify the continued need for coordination around information sharing, networking and partnering across the many and rapidly forming local food initiatives throughout the region.

**Challenges**

“All community process that does not encounter setbacks, obstacles and redirections isn’t going anywhere at all. Some can be anticipated. Some appear out of the blue like an August hailstorm. FDTR is no exception” (NFU Local 316, 2008).

Sharing Food Down the Road, A report reviewing the FDTR process, identified well the challenges that a project implemented within a systemic and process driven initiative. The report suggested that the project held lofty aspirations around the number of participants and range of sectors it hoped to engage and the time required to implement the project design was greater than resources could support. This led to people being over-committed contributing to stress and unfulfilled plans. There were also issues of ownership and control, and tensions in situations of difference such as conventional verses sustainable practices, food security and farm incomes. Andrew identified that tensions across sectors and perspectives in a far-reaching project like FDTR were not unexpected and the airing of the differing opinions and perspectives and the ensuing discussions initiated a dialogue that continues in the area today. Andrew pointed out however that “you need to get to action at some point”. He explains that the conversations contribute to your thoughts on how to move forward but if you get stuck there, you may not get to the work of getting the work done.
Ian described the incredible amount of coordination required to identify stakeholders across the various sectors and bring them together as being a key challenge. Coordination proved challenging in terms of the organizing of events considering there was no shortage of support and thus multiple contributors and volunteers to involve and recognize in meaningful ways. Combined, the task of coordinated became a monstrous task.

The Sharing Food Down the Road at [www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/sharing-fdtr-june08.pdf](http://www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/sharing-fdtr-june08.pdf) report provides a wonderful overview of the challenges that the project experienced explaining that challenges are learning tools to help guide continued and future work that brings stakeholders together and that relies on multiple partners and participants to design and implement a process.

As the first year of the project drew to a close, ongoing funding to sustain the project became the key challenge that was not overcome. AMI provided additional funding to support the creation of the Sharing Food Down the Road report; however, Trillium funding to support continued coordination was not achieved. Despite the continued efforts of volunteers, central leadership for the project eventually eroded away.

Even without funding Andrew describes a sentiment echoed by many involved in the FDTR process that have continued forward to initiate food initiatives following the end of FDTR; “you simply need to get to the point where you feel like you are doing something regardless of waiting for funders to support it. You just need to make it happen with creativity and by working with others who are committed to local food. Waiting can just end in waiting”.

**Successes**

The Sharing Food Down the Road report outlines the many successes of FDTR both in terms of process and outcomes. There are many both hard and soft. These include, the high participation numbers and diversity of participants in both the implementation of the activities of the project and in terms of attendance at the many events, the Food Declaration that came off of the Local Food Summit, the many initiatives that grew from the FDTR project, the broadening of perspectives and the certainly the relationships forged.

“A key to the success of Food Down the Road will be strong partnerships” David Hahn, one of NFU Local 316’s Directors, 2007. (Hahn, 2007).

Important to note is that the key purpose for FDTR was to strengthen connections. Growing from the work of FDTR, a number of initiatives that actively and directly address food system needs in the community through connected action were able to achieve funding through a variety of sources.

In the true spirit of community development, the success of FDTR lies largely in how it ignited a collective energy in local food in Kingston, encouraging a flurry of activity around new local food initiatives, projects and ventures.
Certainly, with continued resources to support leadership there may have been more coordinated growth, but in the end there was tremendous growth as evidenced by the increase in local food initiatives, in local food focused business and in the continued collective activity around local food policy.

Relevance

FDTR as a community development initiative provided the impetus for partnership development, education and awareness promotion and priorities for action that launched Kingston forward into long-term local food system development. The project served to develop and evolve the social infrastructure required to pull sectors together to collectively identify areas for action and to initiate new programs/initiatives and actions to address areas of need using the methods and models brought to their attention through FDTR activities. The result has been the creation of a number of new “linked up” initiatives and projects that work through collective action to impact infrastructure, policy and awareness needs allowing Kingston and areas local food system to continue to evolve and to grow.

For more information on the Food Down the Road project, see: From the Ground Up: A Primer for Community Action on Kingston and Countryside’s Food System. [www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/from-the-ground-up.pdf](http://www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/from-the-ground-up.pdf) and Sharing Food Down the Road at [www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/sharing-fdtr-june08.pdf](http://www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/sharing-fdtr-june08.pdf)

References


Case Study 3: Just Food Ottawa
Prepared by Sarah M.L. Walker and Patricia Ballamingie

Location: Ottawa
Website: http://www.justfood.ca/

Personal Interview with Moe Garahan, Executive Director, September 6, 2011 (Sarah M.L. Walker and Patricia Ballamingie).
Personal Interview with Erin Krekowski, Food For All Policy Project Coordinator, June 24, 2011; Terri O’Neill, Community Gardening Network Coordinator, July 6, 2011; and Heather Hossie, Savour Ottawa Coordinator, August 17, 2011 (Brynne Sinclair-Waters).

Overview
Just Food Ottawa is a grassroots, community-based, non-profit organization that works with numerous partners to develop an equitable and sustainable food system. Just Food envisions a vibrant, just and sustainable food system in which:

- all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and culturally-acceptable food for an active and healthy life;
- the principles of ecological sustainability, sustainable livelihoods for food providers, and social justice for all are upheld;
- the local population actively participates in the decision-making processes related to food at municipal, regional, and national levels;
- people have the desire, opportunity, and means to actively engage in all aspects of the food system; and,
- food is celebrated as central to both culture and community.

While most of Just Food’s work takes place within the City of Ottawa, Executive Director Moe Garahan notes: “It is important to have some fluidity to work across sectors and regions, without losing track of goals and values, as there are so many influences on our local food system that demand work at the regional, provincial and national levels.”

Just Food’s ‘buy local’ initiative involves other partnerships that extend to the surrounding area, including Eastern Ontario, Western Quebec and beyond. The organization’s definition of “local food” refers strictly to food grown within a defined region, rather than within a specific distance, and includes the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Leeds-Grenville, Prescott-Russell, Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry, Frontenac, and the Outaouais – all understood as part of the City of Ottawa’s “foodshed.”

Just Food’s mandate is to support and link existing initiatives that help residents throughout the region obtain healthful food, while also determining where gaps exist and initiating new programs to increase access to food that is locally produced using ethical

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5 The food system consists of all processes and infrastructure involved in feeding a population: growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food and food-related items. It also includes the inputs needed and outputs generated at each of these steps.
and ecological methods. Staff work with both existing and new food providers, producers and processors to re-localize Ottawa’s food system. Just Food seeks to build the capacity of all actors within the food system, and to serve the interests of “eaters, with an emphasis on people marginalized by poverty and/or other factors”6 as well as supporting viable livelihoods for rural and urban producers. In order to meet its diverse objectives, Just Food has proposed to develop a Community Food and Urban Agriculture Hub on a National Capital Commission (NCC) farm property and abandoned nursery adjacent to Blackburn Hamlet, as an extension of the ‘hub’ role it has already played in Ottawa. The project is intended to provide a physical space in which Just Food can set up its headquarters while establishing an incubator farm program, and offering a range of programming that continues to support the development of food-related knowledge and skills within the community. While many of Just Food’s ongoing initiatives are project-based, the group also engages in research, public education and engagement efforts. For example, the group promotes participation in the Ontario-wide Put Food in the Budget campaign, which advocates for the implementation of a $100 Healthy Food Supplement for all adults on social assistance in Ontario. In addition, Just Food engages in community-based research and policy analysis at the municipal level through its Food For All project, at the provincial level through Sustain Ontario and the FarmON Alliance, and at the federal level through the national People’s Food Policy Project.

Within the National Capital Region’s boundaries lies a significant portion of farmland, including over 120,000 hectares of fertile agricultural land and approximately 1300 farms (City of Ottawa, 2011). Just Food has been in a unique position to effect change. In this context, the urban/rural binary comes into question, and Garahan notes that the term “urban agriculture” takes on a different significance in Ottawa, since there is so much rural land within the city’s boundaries. Garahan notes that the city has great potential to become a national leader in establishing sustainable food systems due to its municipal governance structures and natural resources:

… the Rural Affairs Department at the City of Ottawa is quite unique. The Green Belt within the City includes thousands of hectares of agricultural land... As a capital city, a visionary city, over the long-term, I would love to see Ottawa become a model for feeding itself to a greater extent. We have a unique opportunity to do so.

**Historical Context**

In the 1990s, Ottawa community-based networks began discussing food security issues, emphasized in 1999 with the Task Force on Poverty from the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (RMOC), highlighting the importance of alternative food initiatives, such as community gardening and community economic development projects, in promoting an equitable and sustainable future for the city. Garahan notes that at that time, Ottawa community organizers and city staff were very much influenced by the food security discourse of the late 1990s, which shifted toward directed intervention, community development and systems thinking. They were also influenced by the health

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6 These might include gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation, etc., and the unique ways in which they combine.
departments of Toronto and Waterloo, whose representatives gave presentations to Ottawa municipal staff. In the spring of 2000, the task force released a report recommending that the Region develop a food security policy in collaboration with community partners. That autumn, the Ottawa Food Security Group (OFSG) formed, and consequently received funding from the Health Department of the RMOC to conduct an inventory of food programs in the region. After publicizing their findings in the spring of 2001, the OFSG hosted a multi-stakeholder food security meeting, with a call for the creation of a multi-sectoral Food Council in Ottawa, and emphasized that the key to addressing food insecurity was to use cross-sectoral and holistic approaches to develop an equitable and sustainable food system. These recommendations culminated in the formation of the Ottawa Food Security Council (OFSC) through a Community-City partnership, and in February of 2003, the City awarded $20,000 core funding to the OFSC. The OFSC held its inaugural meeting on March 25, 2003, and hired its first coordinator in April of that year.

In 2004, the organization began to focus increasingly on project development, and launched the *Ottawa Buy Local Food Guide* and farmer-to-farmer training workshops in 2005. In 2006, the OFSC changed its name to Just Food. As Garahan notes: “the double entendre encapsulates food justice” and better reflects the group’s values. In addition, the new name was meant to be more accessible than the previous name—Ottawa Food Security Council—which, according to Garahan, could be “perceived as a regulatory body by farmers” and was potentially off-putting to people who were concerned about food issues but unfamiliar with food security concepts and terminology. It was also the year that Just Food began coordinating the Ottawa Community Gardening Network, launched their website, produced the second *Ottawa Buy Local Food Guide*, and worked with the City’s Health Department to produce *Food Link: A Directory of Community Programs and Services Promoting Access to Food in Ottawa*. In 2008, Just Food launched *Savour Ottawa* in partnership with Ottawa Tourism and the City of Ottawa in order to connect local producers with Ottawa’s supportive local restaurants and retailers. In 2009, Just Food partnered with the University of Ottawa to lead the community-based municipal policy project *Food For All*. One year later, Just Food began to develop a proposal for a Community Food and Urban Agriculture Hub and explored the possibility of locating it at a former NCC nursery in Blackburn Hamlet. Throughout 2010, and the winter of 2011, Just Food met with key stakeholders and engaged in community consultations to discuss the project proposal. In June of 2011, Just Food signed a 1-year lease with the NCC, established their office at a farmhouse adjacent to the proposed larger site, and began assessing the property to determine next steps in establishing the Food Hub.

**Projects**

Just Food coordinates a number of interrelated projects. First, the Community Gardening Network (CGN) of Ottawa provides information through workshops (on topics such as how to start a community garden, organic gardening, seed saving, and pest control), and resources through the Community Garden Development Fund ($76,000 per year), to support the sustainable development of community gardens within the City. The CGN also runs the Plant-a-Row, Donate-a-Row program, to encourage donations of fresh food to local food banks. Second, *Savour Ottawa* is a membership-based economic
development initiative that provides brand recognition (and verification) for local food in
the region. In order to use the Savour Ottawa logo, restaurants must commit to
purchasing either 15% or $25,000 per year of their food content directly from at least five
Savour Ottawa farmers. Micro-processors must ensure that either the first ingredient or
51% of their products before processing are sourced from a Savour Ottawa producer.
Program manager Heather Hossie explains the project’s significance as an economic
development driver: “farmers need to make a living at what they are doing or we are not
going to have any farmers left.” Third, Food For All is a joint community research,
engagement and policy initiative between Just Food and the University of Ottawa, funded
by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This 3-year project brings together a broad
range of stakeholders to develop an Ottawa food action plan and community food toolkit.
Fourth, the Community Food and Urban Agriculture Hub Project aims to create a
physical and cultural space to build upon these projects, animate new projects, provide
farmer training supports (using an “incubator farm” model in partnership with FarmStart
in Guelph) along with other community-based programming and workshops, and create
infrastructure needed for ongoing projects such as the Ottawa Buy–Local Food Guide
(available in print, and online at http://www.justfood.ca/buylocal/index.php), a
community seed bank, a food distribution hub, a commercial kitchen, youth entreprise
opportunities, etc.

Human Resources
Executive Director Moe Garahan has been active on food security issues in Ottawa since
1995, and originally worked as a community developer at Sandy Hill Community Health
Centre, where she was part of the founding teams for the Good Food Box, the
Community Gardening Network and the Ottawa Food Security Council. In 2004,
Garahan joined Just Food in the role of Executive Director, and brought with her a
commitment to build community partnerships, to “see food as a system, and to work
towards interventions that take that into consideration.” Garahan has been a leader in
organizing on food and farming issues at regional, provincial and national levels, and is
presently an advisor to Sustain Ontario. Just Food currently has four other staff:
Community Economic Development Coordinator, Heather Hossie, who has worked in the
non-profit sector for over a decade, works full-time and organizes both Savour Ottawa
and the annual Reel Food Film Festival; Community Gardening Network Coordinator;
Terri O’Neill, who is a graduate of Ryerson University’s Food and Nutrition Program and
works 4 days per week; Erin Krekoski, Food For All Policy Project Coordinator, who has
a farming background, as well as a Master’s Degree from Carleton University, and
experience working on community-based research, social justice, and food security
projects works 4 days per week; and Erin O’Manique, Operation Manager, working on
establishing infrastructure for the Community Food and Urban Agriculture Hub project,
who has 25 years of experience in international development, specializing in biodiversity
and sustainable agriculture policy and is working 4 days per week. Just Food additiona
works with students (through field placements), interns and other volunteers to
accomplish its mandate.

Just Food’s Board of Directors includes members with a diverse range of skills. Cliff
Gazee, Co-Chair from 2004-present, possesses expertise in community development,
community health, race relations, anti-poverty advocacy, and journalism. Cathleen
Kneen, Co-Chair from 2008 to the present, is also the Chair of Food Secure Canada and has a farming background. Other Board members include: Jason Garlough, who has served since 2007, and has a farming background, as well as computer expertise and marketing experience; Dr. Patricia Ballamingie, who is a professor at Carleton University, cross-appointed in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies & the Institute of Political Economy; and Elodie Mantha, who is a policy analyst, with knowledge of Aboriginal and stakeholder affairs, and community consultations on sustainability issues. Garahan emphasizes that Just Food uses a unique partnership-based approach where each of Just Food’s projects have their own advisory committees that steer the work and budgets of those projects. In addition, Just Food relies on community members who volunteer their time, energy and expertise to help carry forward Just Food’s many projects.

Physical Infrastructure
Until recently, Just Food shared office space with its organizational sponsor, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO). Currently, Just Food’s offices are located in an NCC farmhouse at 2389 Pepin Court. Just Food has signed a one-year lease with the NCC for the farm property, which includes a house, garage, and working barn, which they plan to use as a base of operations while conducting a feasibility study for the adjoining NCC property at 16 Tauvette St. The Tauvette site was once a tree nursery but existing infrastructure is in disrepair, and would require significant investment in order to make it serviceable for the Food Hub. Just Food must conduct an assessment of on-site facilities and equipment, including 3 glass greenhouses, 4 hoop houses, 1 commercial building (with offices, warehouse space and walk-in coolers), as well as irrigation infrastructure on the land. It is yet to be determined how much of the existing infrastructure is in working condition, or could potentially be repaired.

Natural Resources
Just Food is currently conducting a feasibility study for the NCC property at 16 Tauvette St. in Blackburn Hamlet, including soil and water testing. The property includes over 100 acres of land, and shows great potential as a possible site for Just Food’s proposed Food Hub.

Financial Resources
Just Food’s current key funders include, at the municipal level: the City of Ottawa; at the provincial level: the Trillium Foundation, and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA); and at the federal level: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Just Food’s core funding comes from the City of Ottawa, which provides $26,000 annually for the group from the City’s Community Funding Envelope. In addition, the City supports the Community Gardening Network (CGN), providing $40,000 annually, which serves as core funding for the CGN coordinator’s salary, along with $76,000 annually for the Community Garden Development Fund. Much of Just Food’s funding is project-based and non-continuous, for example, in collaboration with Farm Start (an organization based out of Guelph), Just Food received a three-year grant from the Trillium Foundation to act as the eastern hub for the FarmON Alliance, in order to initiate new farmer training in the region. The Food For All Policy Project has received three years of funding from the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR),
valued at approximately $100,000 per year. Savour Ottawa, received two years of funding through Ontario Market Investment Fund (OMIF) grants, each year approximately $100,000, with matching funds offered through farmers, farmers’ markets, City of Ottawa and Ottawa Tourism.

Community and Program Resources
The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO) has sponsored Just Food since 2003, subsidized its infrastructure by providing office space until 2010, offered financial management and acted as a specific sponsor on charitable applications. Just Food has a wide range of local partners, including many departments within the City of Ottawa (Community Funding, Rural Affairs, Economic Development and Sustainability Markets Management, Public Health, Parks and Recreation, Public Works), Ottawa-area farmers and restaurants, Ottawa Tourism, University d’Ottawa, Carleton University, the Ottawa Good Food Box, Ottawa Food Bank, Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres, USC, Canadian Organic Growers Ottawa Chapter, and many other community based organizations. (As an example, each of the 30 community gardens has a host of its own local partners.) Regional Partners include EcoPerth, Ottawa Valley Food Co-op, Kingston New Farm Project, OMAFRA Rural Economic Development Advisor, Farms at Work. At the provincial level, Just Food works with the farmers’ unions, FarmStart, Farmers’ Markets Ontario (FMO), Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA), Table de Concertation AgroAlimentaire de l’Outaouais (TCAO), Organic Council of Ontario, Ecological Farmers of Ontario, and Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training in Ontario (CRAFT). Just Food is an advising member of Sustain Ontario, and helped found the FarmON Alliance – both provincial initiatives. Just Food’s national partners include Food Secure Canada (Just Food was a founding member of this organization), the Canadian Cooperative Association, and the National Capital Commission (sponsor of the Ottawa Buy Local Food Guide). Furthermore, Just Food has developed positive relationships with many government representatives and staff, including bureaucrats at all levels, city councillors, MPs, and MPPs.

Just Food has an extensive network through which they disseminate information via farmer-based and community-based newsletters that are sent to over 2,500 people each month. In addition, the group engages in extensive outreach to local farmers and community members through their farming and gardening training programs, the Ottawa Buy Local Food Guide, the Community Gardening Network, Savour Ottawa promotions, the Community Shared Agriculture network, work tied to FarmON Alliance, and through community presentations/media. The Food Hub project in Blackburn Hamlet has generated considerable interest amongst various stakeholders, including NCC officials, local Councillor Rainer Bloess, the Blackburn Hamlet Community Association, local businesses and farmers, as well as many community members. Meanwhile, the Community Gardening Network has helped to establish 30 gardens in Ottawa. The Food For All Policy Project includes over 200 community-based researchers and has more than 15 partners including community groups and agencies such as Ottawa-based health centres, social service organizations and non-profits.
**Desired Assets**

While it is clear that Just Food is already connected to an extensive network of groups and individuals, Garahan notes that for the Food Hub to move forward, it would be helpful to strengthen the group’s connections to the strategic arm of the National Capital Commission.

When it comes to Just Food’s policy work, the group would also benefit from relationships with more powerful decision-makers at all three levels of government. Just Food hopes to make a successful recommendation to OMAFRA to continue funding the provincial local farmer verification program, which the Savour Ottawa program relies on for integrity of the local food brand. Garahan expressed that food-related groups across the province might benefit by coordinating policy requests, and that such an alliance could potentially be coordinated by Sustain Ontario. Just Food would also benefit from the presence of additional board members, specifically with fundraising, financial, and accounting experience.

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**

Securing stable core funding is an ongoing challenge for Just Food, as with most other groups in the non-profit sector. It is a constant struggle to fund the staff who coordinate Just Food’s many projects. For example, it would be tremendously beneficial if funding were available to cover the salary for a volunteer coordinator, since that in turn would allow the group to better leverage community skills and participation in order to more effectively achieve goals. Garahan points out: “so many people want to be involved, and we just don’t have the capacity to respond.” Other staff positions are dependent on finding new funding in one- to three-year cycles, which means that a great deal of time and energy must be directed toward grant writing in order to provide stability to successful programs. Chronic job insecurity and underfunding also means that it can be difficult to attract and retain experienced staff. Garahan emphasizes: “long-term issues require long-term funding—with accountability. Give us core funds, and we’ll leverage those funds to optimize the impacts.” Current funding trends that prohibit administrative costs are problematic, since they leave non-profit organizations financially and legally vulnerable. Inflexible and heavily bureaucratic funding requirements can also threaten to undermine non-profit groups’ ability to remain focused on their goals, as they sometimes face mandate drift as they attempt to meet the imperatives of funders. According to Garahan, the Trillium Foundation’s approach to funding has been extremely helpful. Specifically, they offer longer term funding, do not demand unnecessary or burdensome conditions, and afford flexibility within funds to allow for the evolution of projects. In addition, Just Food’s wide range of programs and huge network of partners has at times helped them overcome funding difficulties, since it allows them to tap into a wider range of resources (both financial and in-kind). Furthermore, by establishing strong relationships of trust with their partners, they have been able to develop an excellent reputation that in turn has helped them to gain further support.

Garahan notes that general attitudes towards the non-profit sector can be a challenge, and argues that the research and work of volunteer organizations such as Just Food can be scrutinized much more intensely than commercial and government sectors. While she
acknowledges the importance of accountability, she also points out that there needs to be a greater level of appreciation for the work being done by the non-profit sector to meet longer-term goals. For example, with *Savour Ottawa*, Just Food leaves itself open to criticism for having an overly economic and élitist focus, however, Garahan argues:

> Our goal is not to sell high-priced food to higher-end restaurants for higher-income earners, but the reality is that we have to start there because those restaurants have the most expendable budgets to purchase food, and we need to build supply and infrastructure in the area. We need to know what our long-term goal is and understand the steps needed for a successful, albeit slow transition into the mainstream.

**Successes**

In spite of financial and staff constraints, Just Food has grown steadily from an organization with one part-time staff, and $20,000 of funding in 2003, to their current size of five staff managing a dozen projects using approximately $600,000 funding. Their extensive networks have permitted them to undertake their own highly successful programs, while continuing to engage in policy work, and support the efforts of other food-based organizations at the local, regional, provincial, and national levels. Just Food has helped to draw attention to the importance of establishing a sustainable and equitable local food system for the Ottawa area, and through their producer-oriented projects, such as *Savour Ottawa*, *Buy Local Food Guide*, farmer-to-farmer training and the FarmON Alliance, they have helped increase the economic viability of local, small-scale farmers in the region. Hossie notes that at one *Savour Ottawa* event she heard a local farmer say: “Now I can do this, and send my kids to university, and we’re going to be OK.” Since the Community Gardening Network has been established, the number of community gardens in Ottawa has grown from a total of 4 in 1997 to a total of 30 in 2011. Garahan notes that in response to the local food movement, retailers have begun to include local food sections in their stores; she remains determined that one day local food will also be widely available in hospitals, schools, and households.

**Relevance**

Just Food is committed to a collaborative relationship with other food-related organizations, both in Ottawa, and in other communities. Garahan points out that she was trained at the Intervale Center in Burlington, Vermont, and at FarmStart in Guelph for the incubator farm project: “In the same way that we have benefitted from other initiatives, our goal is to disseminate our learning to other communities.” For example, Just Food plans to make its *How to Start a Community Garden* document available online, and would like to establish a Community Reading Room at their Community Food and Urban Agriculture Hub. Other resources, such as its *Co-op Community Business Plan* can be shared with organizations on a case-by-case basis, to support specific projects.

**References**

Case Study 4: Lanark Local Flavour
Prepared by Peter Andrée and Brynne Sinclair-Waters

Location: Perth, Ontario

Phone interview with Cheryl Nash by Brynne Sinclair-Waters (June 14th, 2011)
Follow-up phone interview with Cheryl Nash by Brynne Sinclair-Waters (Sept. 5, 2011)
Additional notes from interview with Jerry Health of Local Flavours by Linda Stevens (August 2011)

Summary
- Focused on public education on local food, including youth gardens
- Volunteer run and self-financed
- Innovative fund-raising including seedling sales and a solar array

Overview
Lanark Local Flavour is a small self-funded volunteer-run organization based in Lanark County, Ontario, that “works to link local farmers to local eaters, expand capacity and access to sustainably produced food, inform the public about food issues, and to celebrate the people who grow our food” (lanarklocalflavour.ca). Lanark Local Flavour has been in existence for twelve years and is centered on a core of five to seven individuals including Cheryl Nash, the main instigator of the group who we interviewed twice in preparing this case study. Rooted in a wider community of environmentalists and small-scale farmers, the group draws in other people as needed for their skills in relation to specific initiatives.

Working with very limited resources, Lanark Local Flavour focuses on those initiatives that they believe will have the largest impact. At the moment that focus is on developing food and gardening skills among youth. The group has been involved in starting four gardens at youth centers in the area. In 2011, Lanark Local Flavour also helped to organize and run three school gardens, two in Perth and one in the nearby town of Smith Falls. The degree of Lanark Local Flavour involvement in each of these gardens varies. In some cases, the gardens take off with little direct support. While in other gardens there is more direct involvement. For example, at one garden Nash provided weekly training sessions for gardeners over the summer because the growers had little previous experience.

Lanark Local Flavour also organizes a number of events over the growing season that celebrate local food and the farmers who produce it. In 2011, they had two local food events. One was a golf tournament for the County to which municipal staff, council members, and others were invited. Nash worked directly with the golf-course chefs to help them access locally produced food for both the lunch and dinner. In another case Lanark Local Flavour helped to arrange a local food “cookoff” for an Ottawa television station. As Nash noted, “The status quo is changing… It’s them deciding that they need to walk the walk. These are one-off events, but they are becoming more common.”

Lanark Local Flavour also hosts a website that allows people to identify local CSA farms, farmers’ markets, farm gate stores, and other places to buy local produce. In addition, Lanark Local Flavour organizes educational workshops on various topics each year. In
2011, for example, they hosted a workshop on “chicken basics” for people interested in raising their own fowl. Lanark Local Flavour also has a representative (Nash) on Lanark County’s Agricultural Advisory Working Group.

As a mostly self-funded organization, Lanark Local Flavour also works with EcoPerth and spends time organizing fundraising initiatives that raise revenue for their outreach activities. These initiatives include an annual seedling sale and setting a solar panel on the town’s library (see Financial Resources below).

**History**

Lanark Local Flavour is an EcoPerth. EcoPerth was initially developed to see what a small community could do about climate change. In the beginning, EcoPerth had a number of open houses and public consultations to ask people where they would want them to focus their efforts. Local food initiatives were a very popular request. Lanark Local Flavour has now developed a strong presence on its own, though it continues to be overseen by EcoPerth. For example, EcoPerth remains the organization with the fundraising, capacity although much of the funds raised contribute to Lanark Local Flavour initiatives.

**Motivations**

The main motivation behind Lanark Local Flavour is to develop community resilience in the face of climate change and dwindling global supplies of oil, food, and other resources. They recognize that they live in a poorer agricultural area than other parts of Ontario, but still believe that by supporting their own farmers and the productivity of their region that they are supporting themselves and making their community stronger.

For Nash, the coordinator of Lanark Local Flavour, much of the motivation for the work she does comes from a recognition that we are in a time where we are going to need to be able to feed ourselves a lot closer to home. Her work is a response to the shortsightedness of many decisions being made by governments and other actors. For example, when the CanGro plant close to Niagara on the Lake got shut down it was the only canning plant for tender fruit left East of the Rocky Mountains. The plant was closed just as interest in local food was building. Although “[governments] say they support agriculture,” Nash says that “they don’t support the farmer.” Governments have taken important steps to protect the land through zoning policies that ensure that farmland stays in agriculture. Nash points out, however, that when processing plants are shut down many farmers are no longer able to get a good price for their produce. Left with nowhere to sell their produce and few options for selling their land, farmers are in a difficult position with few options for making a good living. Nash sees her work as part of an effort to make sure that local farmers receive the support they need to continue to grow for and feed people living in their region.

In light of this larger goal of building agricultural capacity and resilience in their region, Lanark Local Flavour’s attention towards youth and gardening came about as a response to the disconnect young people have from farming and growing food. This focus on youth has been very rewarding, and these rewards are clearly another strong motivating factor. Nash describes their work at the youth centres as “the most rewarding work” she has ever done. Over time, they have seen that the youth gardens they established were
doing exactly what they were supposed to do: “They (the kids) are understanding things about crop rotation and potato bugs… and they have memories and experiences about (growing food). The kids are engaged.”

**Human Resources**

EcoPerth has a board of directors that guides their decision-making and ensures that their organizational direction is approved by a group of people with strong ties to the community. In a small community it is especially important to stay connected with community members, to reach out and ensure continued broad-based community support. The board is able to help create and maintain these kind of connections and support. Lanark Local Flavour does not have its own a formal board separate from the EcoPerth board, but there are a multitude of groups and citizens that it calls on for advice and guidance. They are also fortunate to have members with important skills such as graphic design and grant-writing.

**Physical Infrastructure/ Natural Resources**

Lanark Local Flavour has little infrastructure of its own other than a display panel, which they share with the local farmer’s market, and access to the EcoPerth office where they can use the photocopiers, printers and have graphic design capabilities. Funds raised by Lanark Local Flavour also pay for things like garden beds and tools at the youth centre and school gardens, but those assets become the property of those organizations.

**Financial Resources**

Lanark Local Flavour is made up entirely of volunteers. Occasionally they apply for grants. Their experience with funding, however, is that the work it entails to get grants and the timing and conditions imposed on the money will often take the project away from them. For example, one year they received a grant for developing and encouraging marketing for that summer’s growing season, but they did not receive approval for the funds until August and it had to be spent by February. They have found it especially difficult, as a rural organization, to apply for grants that are “fifty-cent dollars”, such as OMIF grants (which means that they have to find the other fifty cents for every fifty cents provided by government), because they are less likely to have access to larger pots of money to leverage the funds. Because they are in a rural area with many small municipal councils, last time they applied for a “fifty-cent dollar” grant they had to go to ten different funding sources to get $20,000. Overall getting external funding has often not been worth the effort that it entails.

Lanark Local Flavour does have an anonymous contributor that is part of a larger family foundation in Southern Ontario. This contributor has donated between $3000 and $5000 a year, which in recent years pays for all of their garden work. This year it paid the start up costs of two and a half new youth gardens.

Funding also comes from two fund raising initiatives: seedling sales and a solar array on the town library’s roof. The seedling sale started as an annual event, but now takes place every other year. They buy seedlings at a good price from the Ferguson Forest Centre in Kemptville and then resell them in the community. This raises $5000 or $6000 a year.
The solar panel is on the roof of the library. It’s a 10 kilowatt system. The solar panel is owned by EcoPerth with three other partners. They pay a small amount to the town for the roof rental space and pay commercial rate insurance on it. Thanks to the Ontario Governments Feed-In-Tarriff, it will bring in revenue for the next 20 years at 81 cents a kilowatt hour, which is about $400/month. Bob Argue oversees the solar panel for EcoPerth. Being financed partially through solar energy is unique and may not be replicable in other communities, but has been successful for EcoPerth.

**Community Resources**

For local food networks to be most effective, Nash believes that it is essential to integrate them into the community by including as many different people and partners as possible. Especially because the area they cover is made up of many small communities (Perth, Smith Falls, Carleton Place and more), they have tried to diversify their work so that there is something in it for everyone.

One of the ways that LLF realize this philosophy is by supporting other, similar groups in nearby communities. Initiatives in both Sharbot Lake and Leeds and Grenville have received support and guidance from Lanark Local Flavour in their start up. One organization modeled on LLF is Local Flavours based in Leeds Grenville ([www.localflavours.org](http://www.localflavours.org)). According to our interview with Jerry Heath, coordinator of Local Flavours, it also aims to promote local farmers, farmers’ markets, and related events, with a particular focus on the Frontenac Arch Biosphere reserve region in southeastern Ontario.

**Policy and Program Resources and Challenges**

Barriers to building effective local food networks include lack of funds, lack of communication and understanding between the farming community and the rest of society, and competing visions between governments and people involved in local food initiatives. In order to support local food initiatives, governments should develop scale appropriate regulation, bring back OMAFRA extension services, institute local procurement policies, and find a mechanism to value the farmer.

Most importantly, Lanark Local Flavour and other groups in the region hope that in the future OMAFRA will consult and include existing local groups as they move forward. Existing efforts and successful initiatives must be incorporated into new plans and projects for promoting local food and supporting local farmers in the region.

**Relevance**

Lanark Local Flavour is fairly unique in its ability to be sustained with very limited financial resources. Their ability to do this is due in large part to the ability of their coordinator to work without pay. The dedication of a few core volunteers and the relationships that they have been able to build within their community are central to their many successes. This organization shows how much can be accomplished when a small group of people with vision and skills build links within their communities and commit to promoting positive change.
Case Study 5: Wendy’s Country Market and Mobile Market
Prepared by Linda Stevens

Location: Lyndhurst

Interviewees: Wendy Banks (Owner/Operator)

Initial interview August 26, 2011 (Interviewer Linda Stevens), Site visits: August 16, and September 16 2011. (Interviewer Linda Stevens)

Overview
If you were to ask people in central eastern Ontario about what a successful food hub looks like the response you are likely to hear would be “Wendy’s”. The reason? Wendy’s Mobile Market has fostered numerous connections across producers, processors, and consumers both retail and commercial by recognizing the area’s demand for local food, addressing accessibility challenges and turning the whole package into a growing family business.

Wendy lives by her motto “Think Local”. Wendy’s Mobile Market is a business that specializes in door to door the delivery of locally grown and produced products from over 70 producers within an approximate 100-mile radius of her home Country Market in Lyndhurst. Wendy’s markets offer a variety of seasonal, organic produce including heirloom varieties that Wendy grows herself, along with vegetables from her parents’ farm, Corn Acre Farms. Also available are dairy products such as organic free-run eggs, artisanal cheeses and handmade ice creams; gluten-free products; baking and preserves; seasonal fish; meat; poultry; and game and venison such as elk, bison, duck, rabbit, goose, water buffalo and wild boar.

With a user-friendly website, www.wendysmobilemarket.com, residential and commercial consumers can place their orders and receive door-to-door delivery across Merrickville, Picton, Westport, Brockville, Napanee, Gananoque and Kingston. Not only does the Mobile Market offer delivery to customers, a convenience that attracts a loyal customer base, but it also facilitates pick-ups of product from local producers. This service enables ease in distribution for small farms that are at times hard pressed to get their products efficiently out to the multiple small retailers.

The Mobile Market grew out of Wendy’s Country Market, a retail location in Lyndhurst. Unlike the areas farmers’ markets, and farm-gate and roadside stands that are typically only open during the growing and early harvest seasons, Wendy’s retail store, is open year round. The store and the Mobile Market order through the same producers thereby enhancing efficiency. The Mobile Market has allowed Wendy’s to expand their sales outlets by going to customers instead only having the option of customers coming to their Country Market. Wendy’s Country Market, along with the produce it offers, has its own ways of attracting people. The Country Market is host to an old-fashioned “hoe down” on the farm on the last Sunday of the month from April to October. These monthly events offer opportunities for local farmers, chefs and artisans go to display and sell their
products celebrating local food, family and farming. A recent addition to Wendy’s Country Market is a mobile kitchen where Wendy’s Market Meals are created using the same local ingredients that supply her Markets.

Wendy is active in activities that advocate for local food systems. She promotes buying locally to help create local economic sustainability. Wendy points out that a key and attractive feature that appeals to her customers is that the food available for purchase through her business is easily traceable. Food traceability (knowledge of knowing where the food is produced and how it is produced) is a value that Wendy believes strongly in and thinks consumers have the right to have traceable food available to them. Her commitment is that “We will provide our customers with knowledge on all our products. In turn our customers will reap the rewards of a healthier local food system.”

**History**

Wendy struggled with health concerns for a number of years and developed a compromised immune system along with a number of allergies. In order to improve her health Wendy began educating herself on the foods she consumed and as she began eliminating many processed foods including unnecessary additives and preservatives from her diet her health started to improve. In attempting to increase her nutrition intake, it became obvious to Wendy that local food provided more nutrients than food shipped long distances. With access to fresh vegetables and hormone and antibiotic free beef from her parent’s farm, Wendy laid the foundation for her meals. Simultaneously, she started growing her own chemical free heritage tomatoes and herbs to use. Searching for other local food to add to her meals, Wendy was surprised to discover a wealth of healthy nutritious foods available locally in searching for variety in her own meals. As Wendy’s health improved, her list of local producers grew and family and friends started showing a strong interest in purchasing foods from the many producers with which Wendy had contact.

With a background in agriculture, a desire for improved health and a strong interest in purchasing local products Wendy became involved with the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve by attending meetings on local food initiatives. Members of the organization focused on the problem that local producers faced regarding distribution of their produce and lack of consumer awareness. With a strong commitment to helping local producers reach new markets with their produce and a desire to educate others in our community on the natural health benefits of eating local farm fresh produce it became obvious to Wendy and husband Rick that they could provide the necessary link between local producers and local consumers.

**Human Resources**

Wendy Banks and husband Rick Trudeau operate the business seven days a week with two full time employees. Wendy is a sixth generation farmer with a background in Horticultural studies from Algonquin College. Wendy’s previous experience included owning and operating a successful greenhouse operation in the past. Rick has a background in transportation from the Canadian Forces and as a delivery driver. One of the full time employees is Wendy’s daughter Leigha who works as a salesperson on weekends and packs orders at night working around her school schedule. The other full
time staff member is Laura a chef who works in the new mobile kitchen creating entrees and bake goods using local ingredients. Part time staff is required during the summer months. Students are hired to help in the store with packing orders and sales.

**Physical Resources**
The business is a partnership owned by Wendy and Rick. The retail store in Lyndhurst is situated in an old school house (circa 1880s) owned by Wendy’s parents Neil and Gale Banks. A new mobile kitchen for onsite food preparation has recently been added to the building. The building has on site cold storage facilities. An on-site greenhouse is also available for the starting of plants for their own vegetable production.

The Mobile Market is facilitated with two delivery vans owned by Wendy and Rick. The vans are fitted with cooling and on board freezers. One van has been converted to be powered by used vegetable oil in the warmer months.

The utilization of on line communication technology is vital to receiving and processing the orders (e-mails and web site).

**Natural Resources**
A small plot of farmland is owned and available for growing their own produce.

**Financial Resources**
Wendy’s Country Market and Wendy’s Mobile Market together are a business venture and are supported through income from sales and personal financial resources that include a line of credit and credit cards. The business is also supported by the New Farm Program rebate and Premier’s Award winnings.

**Community/Social Resources**
Wendy’s is connected to a number of supportive organizations that help promote her business including, memberships with the Local Flavours/ Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve and the Brockville Chamber of Commerce. Wendy is also a member of Local Farmer’s Union and OMAFRA and has been involved with Lyndhurst Rejuvenation Committee.

Through the business, she is involved with over 70 local producers, numerous local restaurants, bed and breakfasts etc. Wendy has also participated with the Local Food Local Chef Initiative, a business development project that highlights local producers through events with local restaurateurs cooking with locally produced foods.

Media attention including national magazines (Homemakers, Union Farmer Monthly, Ottawa Magazine, Food Down the Road and others) has helped propel the business into the commercial sector. On-line media attention including blogs and local on line news coverage encourage increased awareness of the benefits of local and sustainably produced food and of her business.

Building community connections is a big part of what Wendy hopes to achieve. As described in the organizational review, community events are held at her Country Market
bringing together food, music, art and community. Wendy has promoted and advocated in support of the local food system as a regular speaker for various schools, organizations, round table meetings, conferences and awareness events.

**Policy and Program Resources**

As a small and growing business offering benefit to the local community, Wendy’s believes her business would benefit from the availability of low interest financing options. Increased programs to support innovative businesses to allow them to grow without having to rely heavily on personal and higher interest financial resources would allow a faster return on investment and would encourage the growth of small and local businesses.

**Desired Assets**

The Mobile Market is a lot of work. Access to volunteer workers to help with packing and preparing delivery orders would be beneficial. Wendy also feels that having a network or centre within communities that would allow multiple food deliveries to be delivered to one site would support her business in that it would save on fuel costs and minimize scheduling conflicts.

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**

As a small, family run business, Wendy explains a big challenge is the demanding schedule of operating a business seven days a week. It is difficult to manage with such a large number of pick up and deliveries required within a limited and inflexible time frame. Workings around holidays are particularly difficult due to decreased time producers are available. The costs associated with ongoing resources can present challenges as well. The increasing costs of fuel limits delivery destinations and increasing hydro and produce costs roll into how pricing has to be set to address rising costs. It is a balancing act.

Wendy explains that a key challenge has been keeping up with consumer demand for more products. This creates financial strain due to the need for more storage space and the additional staff required. The retail store, Wendy’s Country Market, allows an option for providing consumers a place to shop other than just on line and also allows for more space for storage which alleviates some of the space strain The addition of the mobile kitchen provides a value added option to increase product variety.

The business is growing but with growth comes the need to invest in the business, which limits seen profits. An article prepared for Food Down the Road by Valarie Ward explains that as successful as the venture is, it has yet to turn a profit and remains mostly family-run. Wendy and her daughter Leigha manage the store while Rick does deliveries, and the three of them average work days of 10- to 15-hours, seven days a week, year round. Revenues help pay for new equipment and storage to handle increasing business (Ward, 2011). It has never been about getting rich, Wendy says. Instead, it’s about finding an alternative to the industrial food system, one that nurtures community and supports family farmers. “We need to move away from agriculture run by corporations and government and put it back in the hands of farmers who really care about what
they’re growing,” she says. “We also need to be sustainable, using our own resources and keeping money in our communities” (Ward, 2011).

**Successes**

Wendy has had a significant impact in the local food system through her multifaceted approach to building her own retail business, but also in how the Mobile Market has fostered a network that connects players in the local food system through accommodating their access and distribution needs. The community *hoe down* events held at the Country Market site brings people together in a way that connects food and community and builds the relationships that support the local food system.

Wendy views the constant increase in consumer demand as an indication of steady success. Ward explains in her article that since Wendy and Rick launched the business a little over four years ago, it has grown a remarkable 400 percent. In the process, it has helped to connect local producers with new markets and to educate customers about the benefits of locally farmed food (Ward, 2011).

Wendy’s success follows from her ability to tap into the growing demand for healthy, local foods by finding creative, sustainable ways to source, sell and distribute them. Her success is shared with area farmers. As additional producers are added to the supply list for the Wendy’s Markets, more farmers are able to increase their income. Wendy points out that Wendy’s Markets “have not only created immediate benefits to our community with our delivery service, but long term benefits by improving consumer health and safety, while increasing demand for local products. With an increase in agriculture income and more job creation there will be an increase in local spending which creates a more sustainable community”.

Wendy has been recognized for her approach and for the large impact that this small business has had on the community around it. In 2008, Wendy won the Leeds and Grenville Premier’s award for Agri Food Innovation Excellence in recognition for her hard work and dedication to both producers and consumers. Wendy’s Mobile Market was selected as a finalist in Scotia Bank Challenge this past summer (2011) for having a big impact on their community. Wendy’s Mobile Market was recently praised as a powerful model for local food enterprise in a recent paper from the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance and Sustain Ontario.

Wendy is happy to point out the additional environmental benefits of the mobile market including that keeping it local and having the Mobile Market deliver to you, results in less greenhouse gases, fewer vehicles on the roads and less distance travelled.

Through the growing success and increased recognition for her innovation and efforts locally Wendy notes that her personal sense of satisfaction comes from; “just knowing that more people are eating healthier”.

**Next Steps**

With the recent addition of the mobile kitchen, Wendy looks forward to having some time over the winter to develop more gluten free products to add to their growing list of products available to purchase through their web site and at their store.
Relevance
The potential exists for Wendy’s Mobile Market to provide a prototype for other regions across Ontario and throughout Canada to develop a distribution system with a similar format. Mobile Markets in particular are gaining recognition as an effective way to create and connect markets across local communities. Wendy’s has been an example of what a significant impact a small business can have on the local community while still working within one’s passion. It is possible for others to implement a similar business by following Wendy’s lead, learning from her challenges and sharing in the successes such a community-linked business can produce.

In her submission to the Scotia Bank Impact Challenge, Wendy suggests that “we would recommend this approach to other businesses. “Our advice to those wanting to start a business would be to choose to do what they are passionate about because you will not only be successful in finding job satisfaction, but you will inspire others to become involved with what matters to you. Of course, we recommend that a person starts by doing their research and by filling a need. Do not be afraid to start out small and continue to grow as consumer demand increases. We started out with a search for better health and more local food sources and ended up developing a unique door to door year round delivery service.”

Resources
www.wendysmobilemarket.com
www.localflavours.org

References
Ward, Valerie. (May, 2011). Profile: Wendy Banks, farmer and local food innovator. Food Down the Road, 3. Available at: www.fooddowntheroad.ca/?q=node/16
Chapter 3: The Golden Horseshoe

Lisa Ohberg and Sarah Wakefield

Summary

• Local food initiatives abound in the region southwest of the GTA encompassing Hamilton, Halton, Brant and Haldimand: all regions in the study area had developed some sort of local food branding or local food map, most had a community food committee or council, most had a good food box program operating at the time of study and all had at least one farmers’ market. Even counties with less developed local food networks were quickly increasing community mobilization and awareness at the time of this study.

• Emphasis is on: cross-sector collaboration, ever more public awareness and education, social justice for low-income cohorts and farmers, community and individual health and nutrition, unifying capacity of food, ecological sustainability, and community empowerment through food.

• Concerns are: lack of secure funding, lack of financial and physical accessibility of local food for consumers, lack of market access for producers, need for greater public awareness, declining local processing capacity, regulatory framework designed for the industrial model, and land use planning (food production in competition with other sectors).

• Identified needs are: more sustainable funding particularly for operational costs (e.g., staff), regional processing infrastructure, government and intuitional local procurement to support local farmers, more facilitation of knowledge sharing and communication between initiatives, and more supportive policy environment

• Regional characteristics are: climate favorable for mixed agriculture, a mix of sandy soils suitable for horticulture and clay soils better suited for livestock rearing and commodity cultivation, mostly rural and suburban settlement patterns, more densely-populated areas such as Hamilton and Halton Region in the north.

Background

This chapter summarizes the results of research conducted in Brant, Haldimand, Halton, and Hamilton, Ontario. These regions are located to the south and west of Toronto. Climatically they are well-suited to agriculture – if not quite so temperate as the adjacent region of Niagara – and are within easy driving distance of the large populations within the GTA and the City of Hamilton. As such, farmers in the area have access to a large consumer base.
There is considerable diversity within this area. Brant and Haldimand are large, primarily rural regions, with populations of less than 33,000 and 44,000 respectively. Brant is on the outer edge of the GTA commuter belt; some farmland is under pressure from suburban expansion (particularly around the City of Brantford). Brant is also home to the Six Nations of the Grand River first nation, which comprises a large land parcel to the southwest of Brantford. In addition, there are active Six Nations land claims outside of the reserve, including areas of Haldimand adjacent to the Grand River. Haldimand for the most part is free from farmland conversion pressures on a large scale, but is bordered on one side by Lake Erie (resulting in some intensification along the shoreline and the possibility of land use conflict).

Halton (pop: just over 400,000) and Hamilton (pop: just over 500,000), while still primarily agricultural in terms of overall land use, have large urban and suburban populations. Halton has, on average, one of the most affluent populations in Ontario, and includes substantial areas of commercial and light industrial land use, as well as serving as a ‘bedroom community’ for Toronto. Hamilton, in contrast, has long been a centre of heavy industry in Canada, but declines in the manufacturing sector have reduced employment in this area and have left urban Hamilton with some of the most geographically concentrated poverty in Ontario. Both Hamilton and Halton face
considerable farmland conversion pressures due to suburbanization, but these have been mitigated by Ontario’s Greenbelt legislation, which protects most of Hamilton and Halton’s remaining agricultural land from conversion (albeit at some cost to existing farmers’ livelihood opportunities).

This is a mixed-farm region, with grain and oilseed, beef, and dairy operations predominant, but with a large number of farms growing vegetables, fruit, poultry, and a variety of specialty crops at a variety of scales. Much of the agricultural land in Haldimand consists of clay soils, which are better suited for livestock and dairy production than the sandy soils that lend themselves more easily to vegetable production in areas of Hamilton, and parts of Haldimand in the Dunnville area.

Participants
72 initial contacts were made in these regions, resulting in 33 interviews. Interviews were conducted with representatives from public health departments (5), emergency food access and (re)distribution agencies (4), producer associations (4), Community Supported Agriculture organizations (CSAs) (3), community-engaged academics (3), economic development officials (3), Good Food Box programs (3), Farm to School programs (2), other food-related community initiatives (2), a Community Health Centre (1), a farmers’ market association (1), a native reserve community food program (1), and local branches of OMAFRA (2).

Common Accomplishments
Most regions within the study area had successfully created (or were in the process of creating) committees or coalitions of community stakeholders to begin dialogue and collaboration (e.g., the Halton Food Council, Brant Community Food Systems Coalition, Hamilton’s Community Food Security Stakeholders Committee). These vehicles for networking, communication and partnership were seen as important to developing future work in this area. In addition, many new programs and initiatives related to local food have begun in recent years, and these programs have experienced rapid growth and success over a relatively short period of time. For example, the Hamilton Good Food Box program, which started in 2011, has been expanding rapidly. While it is impossible to estimate how many people were involved as employees, volunteers and clients/customers across these initiatives, it was clear that participation rates were steadily growing across categories – for instance, farmers’ markets contacted in some regions reported having long wait-lists of new vendors who wished to rent permanent stalls.

A number of these initiatives were either planned or underway with the intention of creating opportunities to sell local produce ‘locally’. However, many initiatives found that inter-regional trade between counties allows the scale and variety required for successful business operations (whether farmers’ markets or CSAs) without losing the essence of local or posing insurmountable logistics and distribution barriers to medium and small scale enterprises. For example, the City of Hamilton and the Region of Niagara recently embarked on a joint investigation of the potential for a ‘local food distribution
initiative’ (including but not limited to a shared bricks-and-mortar local food terminal). In addition, Plan B, a Hamilton organic farm, not only sells its produce to consumers in Hamilton, Halton, and Toronto through its CSA and farmers markets, but also sources additional produce (to supplement their own on-farm production) from growers around southwestern Ontario. This approach recognizes the diversity of climatic and soil conditions within the region – it was a widely held view, for example, that growers in most of Hamilton had significantly different growing conditions than those in the tender fruit belt of Niagara, and so their time would be better spend producing food that made the best of local conditions rather than trying to compete with Niagara fruit (and further, that growers from Niagara and elsewhere with specialty product would be welcome in ‘local’ retail such as farmers’ markets and specialty stores).

All four municipalities in the study area have undertaken some form of awareness-raising campaign for local food, from local food branding (Bountiful Brant, and Harvests of Haldimand) or a map of local farmers doing farm-gate sales (e.g., Hamilton Eat Local’s Farm Map and Directory, and Halton Region’s ‘Simply Local’ initiative). These efforts have been taken on by different actors in the different municipalities, with some led by municipal government departments, others by producer organizations, and still others by environmental organizations.

The local food initiatives in this region have identified some innovative ways to create financial sustainability and overcome logistical challenges. Interesting approaches include the ‘bundling’ of a low-cost or no-cost food initiative with a for-profit initiative (such as the planned development in Hamilton of a reduced-cost Good Food Box for low income households through profits from a ‘gourmet’ local food box available through workplaces); growers working together to enhance distribution efficiencies, create economies of scale, and provide a wider range of product options to consumers; and drawing on funding from charitable foundations and other sources to provide start-up resources for initiatives. Many of the programs in the area were initially funded through grants from foundations or other donors.

Common Challenges
The most prevalent challenge was the financial sustainability and self-sufficiency of the local food distribution initiatives being created. In many cases, it was noted that the initiatives were dependent on other organizations (often municipal departments or non-governmental organizations) for core funding to support their operations. While grant funding from foundations, etc., had been useful in the start-up phases, this funding was often one-time-only and did not support program sustainability over time. Thus, while there was funding available for new initiatives, expansion or change, there was limited funding for the continued operation and maintenance of successful pilot programs. Interviewees expressed frustration at the lack of continued funding opportunities to maintain their good work, as the funding structure is set up to support only new initiatives but not sustain existing ones unless they are expanding or implementing new programs.
The difficulty of sustaining existing initiatives and projects was seen as an even bigger and more important challenge. Given the current fiscal climate, there were few organizations that were in a position to assimilate initiatives – even those that were working well and having positive impacts – into their operating budgets once the initial funding period was over.

Some initiatives (particularly but not exclusively for-profit initiatives and social enterprises) were set up according to a business model that accounts for all the costs of production and distribution through the prices being paid for the products. However, it was noted that what consumers are willing (or able) to pay may not match the cost of production and distribution within the localized food system, limiting the potential consumer base for local food, and the ability for farmers and others in the food chain to develop sustainable livelihoods.

This was related to another central concern, that of labour and the reasonable remuneration of labour. Many of the local food distribution initiatives reported difficulties associated with paying people fairly for their work. Farmers reported routine self-exploitation, working long hours on the farm and in distribution-related activities (managing a website, staffing in a farm store, and participating in farmers’ markets). Various other activities (such as good food box packing and gleaning) require large numbers of volunteers. In addition, most farmers interviewed reported having interns and volunteers such as WWOOFers\(^7\) to help with labour-intensive activities such as weeding and harvesting. Most – although not all – of these workers live as well as work on the farm. While many workers receive minimal reimbursement for their labour (ranging from room – or sometimes a tent – and board only to minimum wage and above), farmers have difficulty providing these reimbursements out of their (already very minimal) profits. Similarly, food distribution organizations that rely on volunteers do so because there is no funding available to pay workers. Many volunteers and interns choose to participate because they enjoy it, learn valuable skills, and feel that they are making an important contribution to their community; at the same time, the inability of local food initiatives to provide suitable reimbursement for time worked is a key challenge within the sector.

Overall, many organizations reported being ‘stretched thin’ in trying to build an alternative food system and meet the needs of different stakeholders with extremely limited resources. Many organizations recognized that they are working on one piece of an important whole, and would like to participate more actively in addressing different needs (particularly, bridging urban and rural needs). However, they felt that while they share the broader goals and ideals of community food security, they do not have the resources to do even a small part of what would be required. For example, emergency food access organizations would love to provide local fresh fruits and vegetables to clients and thereby support local farmers, but they do not have sufficient resources, neither the money to make fruit and vegetable purchases, nor the time to track down and coordinate local donations. Similarly, while growers want to contribute to reducing food

\(^7\) WWOOFers are volunteers recruited to work on farms around the world through an organization called World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms. These volunteers work on the farm in return for “food, accommodation, and opportunities to learn about organic lifestyles” (WWOOF Canada, 2011).
insecurity in urban areas, they cannot make large donations of produce while they are struggling to make ends meet. Organizations feel they need to prioritize their original mandates first in that context, and so a more holistic approach to food systems is difficult.

Another common challenge was accessibility – both financial accessibility (being able to pay for food) and physical access to retail opportunities for farmers and consumers. In all of the study area, but in the area’s urban centres in particular, it was noted that many people cannot afford adequate food, and that this is exacerbated for vulnerable populations such as newcomers. In urban areas, it was particularly difficult to access healthy and fresh (let alone local) food. However, farmers are in a cost-price squeeze, with the costs of their inputs (such as fuel and labor) increasing, and so cannot price food to make it affordable to the lowest income consumers. In addition, it was felt that it was not possible to charge a full-cost price for local food, because consumers, regardless of income, are used to a ‘cheap food culture’ that provides them with food at extremely low cost.

In terms of the physical accessibility of local food, it was noted that many urban consumers were unable or unwilling to travel to purchase food at a farm gate, a farmers’ market, a good food box drop site, etc. This is often due to the lack of vehicle or public transit routes to the location, or it could be due to time constraints. Farmers also struggled to find time and resources to make deliveries to food box and school food programs, not to mention the additional time and resources required to be at a number of different farmers markets.

It was also noted that local food may be psychologically inaccessible and unfamiliar to consumers, particularly urban consumers, who may be unaware of the seasonal rhythms of the farm or the vagaries of local microclimates and soils, and expect food to be uniformly and consistently available throughout the year and from place to place.

A lack of local food procurement from the public and institutional level was also seen as a challenge – since procurement contracts can provide growers with long-term stability, the failure of large local institutions (universities, governments, etc.) to enter into procurement contracts – either directly or through wholesalers – with local growers was seen as problematic.

**Other Common Themes**

Many participants found the concept of ‘food hubs’ difficult to identify with, in the absence of a clear, generally recognized existing definition and examples. They felt they had little experience with what a hub might be or could look like, and were unsure of the extent to which their own activities constituted real food hubs. In particular, participants were unsure whether food hubs were primarily intended as mechanisms to generate markets for local farmers (e.g., CSAs), or whether they were intended to support local community food security (e.g., the Stop Community Food Centre model). They were also unclear about whether a food hub required a concrete location or could be a distribution system, such as an online ordering system. While a lack of conceptual clarity can allow
flexibility and inclusion, at the same time the range of activities being considered was baffling to many respondents. While all food hubs discussed had food access – in one way or another – as a central theme, discussions of access for whom, and with what goals in mind, elucidated major differences in perspective amongst participants.

As was noted earlier, the divide between social justice and agricultural/rural development goals was difficult to bridge. On the one hand, growers articulated a concern about social justice, but this was primarily focused on the growers themselves and their difficulties in securing a livelihood. Some growers expressed concerns that food hubs focusing on meeting the needs of low-income communities might feed people who were hungry, but would not create sustainable local food systems. They felt that there was a need to build local food systems by developing distribution relationships with consumers who could afford to pay a premium for local food, and then once initiatives are successful to start to identify ways those programs could be expanded to include low income consumers. On the other hand, those working in anti-hunger organizations felt that income insecurity, and the resulting food insecurity, needs to be addressed before they could contribute meaningfully to the development of sustainable local food systems.

At the same time, some of the more innovative programs in the study area were attempting to bridge this gap through approaches that attempt to enhance low income populations’ ability to eat local right off the bat, in an attempt to solve both issues. These types of initiatives, however, were likely to depend heavily on volunteer labour (e.g., Good Food Boxes, gleaning) and on community-based self-provision of food (e.g., community gardens and fruit tree projects which, while important, do not contribute to rural development), and to rely on low-cost food (e.g., donations, food from the Toronto Food Terminal). It was noted that successful models exist in other areas that successfully combine the goals of rural development, sustainable agriculture, and social justice; however, projects in this area struggled to achieve them in concert. A fundamental question for the future, then, is to what extent these multiple goals can – or should – be pursued simultaneously, and how this relates to what a food hub is, or should be.

References


Case Study 1: Grand River Community Health Centre (GRCHC)

Location: Brantford (Brant County), ON

Interviewees: Sarah Gill, Health Promoter and Gloria Ord, Community Garden Facilitator

Phone Interview (with Sarah Gill) July 11, 2011 (Lisa Ohberg), site visit August 17, 2011 (Lisa Ohberg)

Reviewed and Approved by Interviewees

Summary
- Community health centre with a food systems focus on health promotion
- Builds community capacity to manage their own food security programs by facilitating initiatives and transferring ownership to the community
- Since 2009, initiatives have included: the Community Garden Project, the Community Food Advisor Program, and the Community Food Systems Coalition

Overview
The Health Centre
The community health centre model of care combines clinical practice with health promotion and community development. Physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, and health promotion and community development staff serve primarily priority populations and work in the community to address community health needs in a holistic way. The Grand River Community Health Centre (GRCHC) was created in 2009 after community stakeholders in health and social services identified a need for this model of care in Brantford.

The Health Centre has been involved in the Community Garden Project since the Centre’s inception in 2009. The garden project is one way that the Centre’s health promotion staff addresses the issue of community food security as a social determinant of health. Involvement in the garden project “led to Grand River really looking at and supporting food security as a major focal point in the work that we do in health promotion”, says Gill. Two staff members dedicate their time to community food issues as a part of their health promotion portfolios, improving the Garden Project in the last two years and recently being involved in facilitating the creation of the community food systems coalition.

The Projects
The Community Garden Project was originally “created by community members and supported by the local Brant-Brantford Poverty Roundtable, “says Gill. The garden
created by that initiative was originally on leased private property. Gill explains that “having a social determinants of health focus”, the GRCHC “saw a community garden as a way to be progressive on the food security landscape and therefore supported the lease of the private owner’s land [on which the garden was built] so that the garden could be created”. In the next year of the project the original garden’s lease expired and the GRCHC took up the position of project manager. At this time the GRCHC decided they could manage the project and its resources more effectively by assuming the role of consultant, resource allocator, and educator “so that the community could create their own gardens”, explains Gill. Ord, the Community Garden Facilitator is responsible for “resource allocation, the workshops, the teaching, [and] the liaison with the actual gardens”, while Gill manages the program’s administration and finances. “The onus is on the community to create the garden with our support,” explains Gill. In their first year the project only worked with a single garden, but now supports 12 gardens and continues to support new gardens.

Through her work with the community garden project as an employee of the GRCHC, Gill became interested in community food security in Brant. As part of the requirements of her Master’s degree in Health Promotion, completed part time via correspondence during her employment with the Health Centre, she researched and compiled a Community Food Continuum for Brantford and Brant County. The continuum document presents an environmental scan of all food related assets in Brant, organized along a continuum of short-term, emergency access needs, and long-term, food system sustainability needs. The continuum also identifies gaps at each stage. One of the gaps identified by the continuum was a “mobilization of community support through food systems networks”.

The GRCHC’s most recent food initiative is supporting the establishment of a group of stakeholders who are representative of community food needs at all stages in the continuum to begin a dialogue on community food issues in Brant. The group is referred to in this report as the Community Food Systems Coalition though the initiative is still in its infancy and the name has not yet been finalized. Stakeholders are still being identified and invited to the table. The group aims to define and discuss community food goals and work on action projects.

The Health Centre also facilitated the revitalization of the Community Food Advisor training program. Thirteen new community food advisors have been trained and join two long-time community food advisors to educate the community on healthy, nutritious and safe food practices.

Human Resources
The Grand River Community Health Centre’s most important human resources are the employees who work on community food security issues, namely Ord and Gill. Ord’s staff time is divided equally between client advocacy and work as the Community Garden Facilitator. As a full time health promoter, Gill is responsible for the rest of the Health Centre’s community food initiatives: “the largest part of my portfolio is food security. This is one piece of a food security pie, I also manage the community garden project, I also manage the community food advisor project. So there is a bunch of food...
system initiatives that we’ve initiated as part of that continuum that we’re trying to fill gaps... as well as looking at the very long term and getting that facilitation along the way”.

In addition to the dedicated staff at the GRCHC, Ord pointed out that the commitment of community members involved in the different food projects is paramount to their success: “The people that come to the table... there’s a lot of dedication. There may not be a huge amount of people (although when they all get together there’s a fair amount) but they’re very dedicated as well to the project and seeing the project evolve”.

**Physical Infrastructure**

At present the clinical and health promotion staff work in adjacent buildings due to renovations but, “in a year when our final building is done we will all be under one roof” says Gill. In the new space, clinical health practitioners will work side by side with health promotion staff in the same office space. This proximity facilitates conversation and knowledge sharing between clinical staff and health promotion staff about community health needs and issues.

**Natural Resources**

Although each community garden is responsible for its own creation and maintenance, the Health Centre has developed helpful partnerships with community businesses to provide resources such as seed and soil to gardens at lower costs. The Garden Project helps connect potential garden facilitators with such resources. The Garden Project, primarily through Ord (a seasoned gardener herself) provides gardeners with knowledge on organic gardening methods, which are promoted by the Health Centre.

**Financial Resources**

The Grand River Community Health Centre provides the salary for the 1.5 staff dedicated to food initiatives (comprised of Gill’s employment as a health promoter and the half of Ord’s staff time spent on Community Garden Facilitator duties). Although staff time is funded by the GRCHC, funding for the work related to the Community Garden Project is obtained from “outside resources from the GRCHC”, explains Gill, including funding from the community, grants, and fundraising. This funding is used to provide workshops on various garden topics and to purchase supplies. When needed, the Community Garden Project will provide start-up monies to community gardens that come from these external funding sources or donations solicited from local businesses.

**Community Resources**

Some businesses in the community have played an active role by sponsoring the community garden program and providing funding or resources “McKenzie Seeds donated five hundred dollars worth of seeds; we had Lowes that came in and built several gardens for us, smaller companies that gave us the soil at a lesser cost and threw in the delivery free, and so all these kinds of things keep the cost [of supporting 12 community gardens] quite low”, explains Ord.
The Community Food Continuum

As a part of her Masters degree requirements, Gill embarked on the environmental scan of the food system in Brantford and Brant County that resulted in the creation of the Community Food Continuum. Gill identified this document as a resource in itself in moving forward with the coalition and other food security initiatives: “doing some of the evidence-based work has really grounded the credibility of the work that we do, both within the community and with Grand River continuing to support it”.

Policy and Program Resources

The GRCHC became interested in food security health promotion activities such as the Community Garden Project because the community health centre follows an alternative model of care that has a ‘social determinants of health’ focus. “Community Health Centres tend to come out of grassroots movements,” explains Gill, and “it’s a long road to actually get the community health centre started, but there was [support for this model] through the Minister of Health who made a commitment to increase the number of community health centres”. Without the Ministry of Health committing to the Community Health Centre model, the Brantford community may not have been successful in their campaign to create a community health centre. This policy support for community health centres was crucial in creating an organization whose holistic view of healthcare lead it to focus on community food security, and that is able to provide sustainable staff and financial resources to these initiatives.

Desired Assets

The community food systems coalition is still in its infancy, and was still in the process of obtaining stakeholder input at the time of writing. Further representation from some community stakeholders was still desired including, for example, input from the municipality of Brant County and land use planners. This input will be sought as stakeholders continue to be identified in the ongoing process of developing a stakeholder profile.

Constraints/Overcoming Them

The Community Garden Project was originally structured in a way that “was not sustainable”, Gill describes. However, by shifting the role of the project manager to one of education, consultation and resource allocation, the GRCHC was able to overcome this structural barrier and has successfully supported the creation and maintenance of many more gardens in the community.

With respect to the food systems coalition, Gill notes that the work is very heavily ‘relationship-based’, adding that she had built relationships with food stakeholders in the community when doing her prior research on the Community Food Continuum that made it easier to begin assembling a stakeholder profile for the coalition. One challenge this initiative faced at the time of writing, was that Gill’s temporary maternity leave replacement must now begin building these stakeholder relationships and trying to begin a food security dialog. Gill noted that one way she attempted to preemptively overcome the constraints this temporary transition might bring was to actively seek out a temporary replacement staff member who had the capability to continue the task of building relationships with community members.
Having the coalition achieve small successes or tangible outcomes early on in order to maintain the support of the community stakeholders is a challenge that Gill anticipates in the future of the coalition. To overcome this, Gill has suggested that one of the coalition’s (which the GRCHC facilitates but the stakeholders and participants are responsible for) first activities should be to identify a few priority community food needs and then work on action projects to address these needs.

**Successes**

In regards to the community garden project, Ord and Gill found that they could be more efficient and useful in a support role, rather than being responsible for running an individual garden. They attribute the project’s current success to the fact that they “run on minimal funds to create multiple gardens in a year because the onus is on the community to create the garden”.

Gill emphasizes that the key to success in all the food initiatives that the GRCHC is involved with is the ability for the GRCHC to assume the role of facilitator, but to allow the community to drive the initiatives: “The whole thing that underpins it, whether it’s the community garden or the community food advisor program or the food systems coalition, is building capacity, you’re just building it at different levels…Our role is that of stable facilitation of continuing to build capacity within the community so…you take [the community] to a certain point and then [the community] owns it and takes it further”.

**Relevance**

When asked about how the GRCHC’s experiences working with community food systems initiatives would be relevant to other organizations, Gill and Ord responded, “everything is relevant!” “If you want to do this work,” Gill explains, “you’re going to have to learn from other people’s successes and challenges, and your community is going to have their own, but hopefully you can curtail some of the challenges up front, or you can bring foundational knowledge to a group”.

The GRCHC clearly has some unique assets that have contributed to the success and sustainability of its community food systems initiatives. Notably among these are the sustainable funding for dedicated staff time to address food security issues and the rich human resources provided by the particular staff that currently work on GRCHC’s food portfolio. The staff dedication to food security was made possible in part by the organization’s ideological commitment to the social determinants of health, which encompasses food security issues. The particular choice to dedicate resources to food security was driven by the early involvement of the GRCHC with the Community Garden Project, the relevance of food security as an underlying cause of health issues in the Brantford community, and, finally, by Gill’s interest in food security and ability to conduct research into the community food system afforded by her simultaneous employment and education in health promotion.

The GRCHC community food security model also has many transferable success factors relevant for other organizations. Linking food issues to social and public service organizations that are well funded (such as health in this case) can be one way to
overcome the lack of financial sustainability that non-profits and grassroots initiatives often find in trying to employ the necessary staff for a successful food endeavour. Both Gill and Ord emphasized the importance of research – both initiative specific and community specific – that allowed them to build stakeholder relationships in the community, learn about other communities’ successes and challenges in similar endeavors, and gain credibility and support for their initiatives both within the community and from the Health Centre.

Finally, Gill stresses the importance of building community capacity for the community to take ownership of its own food endeavours. The GRCHC’s most successful food security initiatives (and the model they continue to use with new initiatives) are those where they first initiate a project as a facilitator and administrator, bring together key stakeholders and resources, and provide knowledge and education. Then as the community becomes more involved and confident, the GRCHC’s role shifts to one of continued support while the ownership of the initiative is transferred to the community itself. This model balances the need to provide a starting point and a resource base for an initiative to the community with the need for sustainability that can be achieved when the community itself defines an initiative as important and takes charge of maintaining it.

**Case Study 2: Good Food Box Network**

*Location: Hamilton*

*Interviewees: Karen Burson, co-founder/operator, Crystle Numan, co-founder/operator, Kiera Aynes, volunteer*

*Phone Interview June 27, 2011 (Lisa Ohberg), Site Visit August 17, 2011 (Lisa Ohberg)*

**Summary**

3. Good food box program that grew from supplying a few boxes to a hundred in a few months
4. Development trajectory that will include multiple types of boxes targeted at different demographics throughout the food box network
5. Developing through a model designed to create financial self-sustainability

**Overview**

*History*

Good food box programs try to connect people with healthy, fresh produce at an affordable cost and exist across Ontario. Interested in starting a good food box in Hamilton, Burson conducted research on this model particularly looking at Foodshare’s good food box in Toronto. A good food box program had been operating successfully in Hamilton by the Grace Lutheran Church for a many years explains Numan, “but of course they could only serve their area, their vision was not to get much bigger…Grace Lutheran was getting to their capacity for their produce provider and their ability to deliver their boxes”. When the food box started, Numan worked at the Welcome Inn
which serves people “who have problems fully purchasing and accessing enough food” through their food bank and so the goals of a food box “very much fit” with her work.

Burson and Numan started the good food box program working on a volunteer basis in January 2011, with the Welcome Inn as one of their “anchor depots”, explains Numan, “while writing a grant [application] in order to expand it” under the organizational umbrella of Environment Hamilton, where Burson is employed. Through the process of writing the grant, Burson and Numan developed a bigger concept to include a mechanism in the food box program to allow it to be self-sustaining, as Burson had found in her research that the “sustainability [of the food box program] becomes difficult if its not part of something a little bigger”, explains Numan.

The Network
At present the food box is distributed through a few targeted depot locations in the community. The pick up locations correspond with other community services such as the St. Joseph Home Care and the Welcome Inn to target those populations that face challenges accessing enough healthy, fresh produce in a non-stigmatizing way. Customers pay an affordable price for their box, but the entire fee is used to purchase the produce. Staff time, space and other resources are volunteered. The box is distributed monthly, and volunteers meet at a church hall to pack the produce delivered by their supplier and load the boxes into the truck.

Burson and Numan were successful in their grant application and have received a Grant from the Healthy Communities Fund from the Ontario Ministry of Sport and Health Promotion to expand the good food box network. The expansion work will occur over the year 2011-2012 to correspond with the duration of the grant. Burson and Numan hope to include a second good food box that emphasizes locally grown produce. This box will cost more than the standard box to reflect the higher prices required to pay a fair price to local farmers, as well as the premium for receiving a higher percentage of local produce. Pick up locations or depots through which the local boxes will be distributed are intended to be large companies or places of employment in order to target the demographic that is money rich and time poor, so to speak. This box will appeal to the middle working class who would like to support local farmers but do not have the time to shop at farmers’ markets or farm gates and cannot find local produce consistently in the supermarket. The higher price charged for the local food box will generate a profit in addition to the price of the produce that can be used to fund the staff time or other necessities to run the food box network.

Burson and Numan would also like to offer a third box, one that would include pre-portioned and prepared servings of produce, targeting time-strapped, health conscious clientele or those who might have difficulty with home food preparation. “In the ‘cut up’ box,” explains Numan, “hopefully we’re also going to be able to make that a social enterprise that’s going to provide paid work for people” by stimulating the need for this type of food processing capacity in Hamilton.
Human Resources

Burson and Numan themselves are indispensible resources to the food box network. Burson’s vision and dedication along with the willingness of both Burson and Numan to dedicate their unpaid time to the food box allowed the project to materialize. In addition, Burson’s history as a employee of Environment Hamilton as the coordinator for their Eat Local Hamilton project has meant that she has a large number of contacts in the city relating to local food. Similarly, Numan’s work with the Welcome Inn had provided her with many contacts relating to emergency food access. This plethora of community contacts has greatly eased the implementation of the local food box network. Volunteers make the food box possible, as it is volunteers who pack the box each month. The driver also volunteers his time out of support for the food box network and “like-minded thinking” explains Numan.

This summer, the food box network also had the time of Aynes, a Katimavik intern working with the good food box network through her volunteer placement at Environment Hamilton. Aynes had been working to create a website and brochure content that will provide information for potential food box customers relating to how they can purchase a food box and where they can pick it up. The website will also have a “site coordinator’s package”, explains Numan, “so that people who would like to be depot sites know exactly what they need to do and how to get started”.

Originally, Burson and Numan approached the supplier of the food box program run out of Grace Lutheran Church to supply the good food box network. That supplier was at his capacity supplying Grace Lutheran’s food box, but referred Burson and Numan to their current supplier, who is a “small scale produce distributor”, and who “also understands local food”, says Numan. The supplier has made connections to local farms and “understands our desires to have as much local [produce] as possible”, says Numan, but also has the capacity to purchase from the Ontario Food Terminal in Toronto if need be. The supplier’s existing warehousing capacity and distribution logistics means that the capacity exists for him to “scale up when we need to”, explains Numan.

Working with a local supplier enhances and reinforces the increased business the food box will bring to Hamilton. The food box, Numan explains, “is a great way to increase [the supplier’s] business by us starting to buy from him, helping and even encouraging him to develop more connections with farmers, [which] means more jobs in Hamilton that are local jobs…we’re paying [the supplier] fair value…because we don’t want him to go out of business to support this; we want to be supporting local businesses”.

Physical and Natural Resources

Currently the food box is packed monthly in St. Luke’s Parish Hall in Hamilton. St. Luke’s provides the space free of charge for this purpose. The boxes are currently packed in reusable IKEA bags, which are reused for packing and delivering the boxes month to month. Hamilton’s soil and climate are favorable to the cultivation of a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, and is within close proximity of other regions in Southern Ontario that grow produce for a fairly long season. For this reason it is easier for the food box to obtain a variety of fruits and vegetables as well as source a fair amount of it locally. Once
the food boxes are packed, they are delivered to the pick up depots in a truck that belongs to the North Hamilton Welcome Inn for use by its Food Bank to pick up donated food. The truck is not used by the Welcome Inn on Wednesdays, so the boxes are packed and delivered on Wednesdays and pays mileage to the Welcome Inn for the use of its truck to do so.

**Financial Resources**
Burson and Numan applied for a Grant from the Healthy Communities Fund under Environment Hamilton, the non-profit organization for whom Burson works full-time as the program coordinator for the Eat Local Hamilton project. They were successful and obtained a one-year grant for which payments started in June 2011. The grant funds Burson and Numan’s staff time. Numan explains that the Good Food Box is also receiving, “gift in kind time from Trivaris, which is a…business consulting firm that also does social enterprise focuses”. Trivaris will work with the Good Food Box Network to help them “develop a business plan for what actually is possible” in order to help them realize their goals to expand the Good Food Box into a network of financially self-sustaining box programs.

**Community Resources**
“Churches are a great resource,” says Numan. St. Luke’s parish provides the space for the monthly box packing, free of charge. The Grace Lutheran Church runs a food box “as a ministry, which adds to its sustainability there”, explains Numan but which is operating at its capacity. The coordinators of the food box at the church provided knowledge and support when Burson was researching the food box model, sharing their expertise. In addition, their supplier provided the connection between the Good Food Box Network and its current supplier.

The North Hamilton Welcome Inn facilitated connections to other needed community resources through Numan’s work with them. The Welcome Inn provides the food box with its truck, for example. St. Luke’s Parish Hall is already used for one of the Welcome Inn’s community programs, therefore St. Luke’s was willing to allow the good food box to use the space as well.

Numan identified that the well established network of community resources in Hamilton was instrumental in the success of the food box: “Hamilton likes to work together, likes to connect and collaborate and there are neighborhood hubs all across the city that are already working and strengthening and being in communities that we just can drop and say, ‘would you like to be a drop site [for food box delivery]’ and they’ve got people there that who make it happen.”

**Policy and Program Resources**
The Healthy Communities Fund from the Ontario Ministry of Sport and Health Promotion was a program resource that Burson and Numan were able to tap into through their successful application for a Grant.
Desired Assets
Although the remarkable amount of community connectedness that exists in Hamilton was acknowledged as an asset, Numan expressed a desire to continue to create and further those connections, and strengthen the network of community resources in Hamilton. The Hamilton Good Food Box Network is extremely grateful for the in-kind support provided by St. Luke’s parish by allowing them to use their parish hall free of charge for monthly box packing. If the box program were to expand, however, a larger space potentially better equipped to handle food box packing and logistics might be desired.

Constraints/Overcoming Them
When asked about constraints, Numan identified working within a space not ideally suited to food box packing as one: “we need to look at what is the best facility space and how we can get that for a cost that is possible, whether that be in-kind or if we need to pay. The space is not bad, but it has stairs…but we’re making it work because for now its very cost effective for us”.

The food box network has been operating for a relatively short time (at the time of writing) but with each month the box is distributed, Burson and Numan strive to improve the process and the box: “[their supplier] has been learning with us,” says Numan, “of what works and doesn’t work in the boxes, what kind of quality is needed, and how to make it the most amount of food that we can get at a quality that is needed”. When they received feedback that the clients did not know how to cook a particular fruit or vegetable and thus were not getting their full benefit from the box, they stopped ordering that item.

A continuing challenge is the amount of staff time available to dedicate to the organization of the box. This obstacle was partially overcome by receiving Healthy Communities Fund Grant funds, which secured Burson and Numan’s staff time in a part-time paid capacity instead of a volunteer capacity. Even part-time, says Numan, “its hard to make sure that everything is being kept on track and we’re still developing our systems and so sometimes there’s missteps with ordering or with how many boxes left, and so we’re working on double counting, making sure that we have the exact number that needs to go out on the truck.”

Successes
The good food box network has grown in a very short time, going from supplying just a few boxes in January 2011 when it started, to approximately a hundred (with monthly fluctuations) six months later. When asked about the successes the food box network has had Numan said, “we’ve grown, and we’ve been able to manage it and we’ve been nimble enough to adjust when people say ‘well you really shouldn’t put this in the box because nobody knew how to eat it’…. so we’ve been able to adjust and grow.” The ability to adapt to the needs of the community is critical in the long-term success of the food box program.

Relevance
When asked what the relevance of the local food box network is to other local food initiatives, Numan emphasized the importance of building and utilizing a supportive
network of community connections and resources. Numan stressed the importance of “building those connections if they’re not already there, using them if they are there, and really developing them as much as you can at the beginning so that it’s a community box you know, its something that the community is doing”.

Secondly, Burson and Numan are striving to create the good food box network in a way that emphasizes “the sustainability piece” in that it has the ability to be financially self-sustaining. Burson’s vision of a food box network that offers multiple types of boxes and targets different demographics through depot site choice is one part of the solution. The vision also includes a model for producing revenue that will support the entire endeavour, such as the local food boxes administered through places of work subsidizing the costs of the affordable box, and the pre-portioned box creating stable jobs in processing.

The second way in which Burson and Numan’s model for creating the good food box includes “the sustainability piece” is through the creation of a business plan. By working with Trivaris, Burson and Numan will develop a business plan to identify what is feasible within the above-mentioned vision and what the network needs to do for the operation to be financially self-sustaining. “They’re [Trivaris] going to be key, I think, for helping us find out what is the sustainability point, and how do we get from where we are to there,” says Numan.

Figure 3.2: Good food box with newsletter (left) and packed food boxes ready to be loaded into the truck! (right)
Case Study 3: Plan B Organic Farm

Location: Hamilton

Interviewees: Alvaro Venturelli, Co-owner/operator; Melanie Golba, Co-owner/operator

Phone Interview August 5th, 2011 (Lisa Ohberg), Site Visit August 16, 2011 (Lisa Ohberg, Sarah Wakefield), Email Correspondence (with Melanie Golba)

Summary
- CSA operating successfully and financially self-sustaining for 13 years
- Short supply chain emphasizing regional trade with small local producers and direct sales to consumers
- Physical distribution and redistribution hub supplying produce from their farm, other small producers, and another producer/re-distributor directly to consumers
- Market only through alternative retail models such as the CSA and farmers’ markets

Overview

History
Plan B Organic farm was started 13 years ago by Venturelli and his family. The farm is organized around principles of agro-ecology, and grows certified organic produce. The farm started out small, selling only the produce they grew through a small CSA (community shared agriculture). The operation has expanded in the last decade, and Plan B now acts as a food distribution hub and redistributor as well as a primary producer and direct seller in the system (see the schematic at the end of the document for a relational sketch of the Plan B supply chain). Their organic CSA delivers 700 to 1000 boxes a week, and includes produce from their farm as well as a number of other small producers in Southern Ontario and, in the off-season, organic produce imported (through Pfennings, see below) from warmer climates.

The Supply Chain
Plan B is involved in every stage of the agri-food supply chain for fresh produce; their “grower supply chain is a chain but a short one”, explains Venturelli. The farm grows its own produce, and purchases produce from Pfennings Organic Farm (a farm, importer and redistributor of organic produce in Southern Ontario) as well as from small producers directly. Purchased produce and the majority of produce grown on Plan B is used to supply the CSA boxes distributed weekly to Plan B’s 700 – 1000 customers. A small portion of the produce grown at Plan B is sold fresh at three farmers’ markets in the area, and any leftovers are sold back to Pfennings, which does not sell direct to customers but to the retail market, supplying grocers such as Fiesta Foods. (See the schematic at the end of the document for a diagram of the Plan B supply chain.)

The CSA has “37 [pick-up depot locations] in the Golden Horseshoe”, explains Venturelli, as well as a home delivery option for an additional fee. The delivery fee in the past was the same regardless of the customer’s location, but is now differentiated based
on proximity zones, to reflect the rising cost of fuel. The routes taken by Plan B’s driver are carefully planned to be as efficient as possible, delivering boxes to depots and hitting home deliveries on the way back, for example “in a very tight route”, says Venturelli. Since the driver is not going out of his way to make home deliveries, the transportation fees actually make home delivery a very economical choice for Plan B, providing the income to cover transportation costs for all deliveries.

**Human Resources**

Plan B operates as a business partnership, with Venturelli, his wife and his brother running the farm. His parents were important resources in providing a lot of the start up capital to build the farm 13 years ago. These family-business relationships have been fundamental in operating the farm successfully. In addition to the stable dedication of the Venturelli family, Plan B relies on the labor of 1.5 to 2 full-time staff positions, as well as 5-6 seasonal laborers made up of waged workers, volunteers and interns. Interns sometimes receive different compensation depending on the program within which they intern at the farm. Some are unpaid interns, sometimes second year interns receive a salary, and student interns from the local high school program require minimum wage.

Venturelli admits that the interns can at times be considered “underpaid to an extent” but at the same time the interns gain valuable education through their placement at the farm and are sometimes interning to fulfill the requirements of a certification program. The interns are also provided room and board on the farm during the working season. These relationships highlight the complexity of labor questions on a farm. Interns are not the highest paid workers in the economy and often work long hours, and labor costs (such as minimum wage) continue to rise, but vegetable farmers are unable to charge more for their produce to recoup these costs. Venturelli’s strategy to address this question has been to try to “build [full time] positions as the business grows and make those stable conditions…to have a stable workforce” made up of fewer interns and more full-time workers.

**Physical Resources**

Plan B has a warehouse on premises as well as two houses, in addition to a van and a truck for deliveries. A quarter of the warehouse space is used for packing CSA boxes, and the rest is used for storage, both of Plan B’s produce and some of the produce purchased from small producers. Warehouse space is a critical resource in this supply chain. It allows Plan B to purchase crops from small producers who lack warehouse space, and store them until they can be used in the CSA boxes. This benefits the small producers as Plan B can often offer them a better price than major wholesalers (who might be able to purchase a comparable quantity). Pfennings’s extensive warehouse space is a resource that benefits both small producers and Plan B, which purchases from Pfennings and sells surplus from their farm back to Pfennings when they have it. As the Venturellis and many of the seasonal workers live on the premises, two houses is also an important physical resource.

**Natural Resources**

Plan B had an analysis done of their farm’s agricultural resources to evaluate which crops they could grow most efficiently given their climate, soil and water resources. Their
strengths include having “some labor, good water, decent soil” says Venturelli. In addition, they practice an agro-ecological farming method that builds natural fertility cycles in their soil. They have used the results of this assessment to focus on growing what thrives given the resources they have available (including annual vegetables, garlic, onions, cooking greens and carrots), which is better for the soil, and more efficient. Their partnerships with other small farmers in the area and Pfennings allow them to fill in the gaps of what they do not grow themselves for the CSA. In this system, producers grow what is most efficient for them to grow, and through regional trade achieve the sufficient variety to attract and hold enough CSA customers to be profitable.

Financial Resources
In 1997, when Alvaro & Melanie decided they wanted to start an organic farm but had no way to start that, they created a summer youth project called "Plan B Organic Farms". They received a $150,000 HRDC grant from the Canadian government through a Youth Entrepreneurship program for that project that paid themselves and 6 youth for the season to learn how to run a small CSA farm. With the grant, they hired a mentor farmer, each youth received a $200 stipend/week, and they paid for a business training course. Venturelli’s parents also contributed funding for the farm. The first season, Plan B sold 75 shares and used those funds to purchase a walking rototiller, seeds, row covers, and the hand tools needed.

Aside from the initial funding for start-up costs, Plan B has not received any additional funding. The operation is completely financially self-sustaining. The operation, “became financially viable at around 500 to 600 shares”, explains Venturelli, and they have been able to expand to 700 to 1000 shares at present through positive press and word of mouth. Customers purchase shares at the beginning of the season, and they guarantee the farm a market and a set price for their product. In addition, the share system allows Plan B to know in advance exactly how much produce they will need, allowing them to “grow only what we need” and reduce losses, explains Venturelli. The success of the CSA has been the key to Plan B’s sustainability.

Community Resources
Plan B “partner[s] with about probably twenty-two growers, [and] also Pfennings…to be that culturally appropriate box”, says Venturelli. When the CSA first started, Plan B actually lost customers because as Venturelli explains, “people have habits which are everybody goes to the store…[and we] couldn’t provide people with culturally appropriate [variety]” that they had come to expect from the experience of shopping at supermarkets. In order to achieve variety in their product that would allow them to maintain enough customers to be profitable, Plan B “started to work with other farmers in southern Ontario to create our own food system”, Venturelli explains.

To supplement their own produce in the CSA boxes, Plan B buys directly from small producers specializing in products that Plan B cannot grow as efficiently, as well as from Pfennings, and include some imported organic produce. These community business partnerships are mutually beneficial relationships; Plan B can often provide small farmers with a better price than what a wholesaler is willing to offer, and the box variety achieved by so many suppliers keeps Plan B in business.
Good press from the CSA customers and word of mouth in the community have helped Plan B expand its customer base and exceed the number of shares needed to break even. Plan B used to rely heavily on CSA customers outside of Hamilton (in Toronto for example) for income, but positive press from customers within the Hamilton community has recently allowed them to secure the support of more customers in their own community.

Policy and Program Resources
Venturelli has found that there is not a lot of funding for interns. As mentioned earlier, Plan B also received some of its initial funding through the Youth Entrepreneurship program, which they used to train under an organic farmer and grow their first season of shares. Golba expressed a need for policy and program resources that specifically addressed the needs of small-scale fresh fruit and vegetable producers:

I think there is a need for organization and funding of fresh vegetable/fruit producers, especially small scale. What we need is access to funds precisely for capital purchases to develop the very costly infrastructure needed on farms that handle fresh produce. Small vegetable farms need proper cold storage facility, refrigerated delivery vehicles, and also develop proper kitchen space on farm for value added production. These 3 key things, if small farms could have help with access to funding to develop these [they] would be doing much better and we would see more of them survive in this market.

Desired Assets
Venturelli expressed a desire to have a multi-level policy environment more supportive of small farmers and biological organic production methods, which, he says, “are the only way you ever build soil”. At present the market concentration by large corporate farming operations is preventing small producers from accessing consumer markets. “One of the barriers to instituting a local food system,” he says, “is that we don’t have access to markets as local farmers.”

Venturelli explains how broad trends in global agriculture are affecting local producers and regionalization efforts: “the biggest issues are seeds, water, and land and whether or not small holders and people are allowed to just live. Three quarters of the world still feed themselves and small scale agriculture is feeding most of the world”, but “alternative land use pressures” and corporate “market concentration” threaten the livelihoods of small farmers everywhere.

Constraints/Overcoming Them
Venturelli emphasized the constraints facing small producers in Ontario because of the dominance of large corporate farms monopolizing access to markets and government programs. Plan B overcame this constraint in part by obtaining start-up capital for the farm through social equity; his parents put their life’s savings into the farm.
When they first started out, Plan B’s CSA consisted only of produce they grew themselves. They lost customers after a season because they could not meet the demand for variety and diversity in this way. The regional trade partnership supply chain model they devised to overcome this barrier has been incredibly successful for several reasons. Firstly, the partnership allows each participant to be most efficient, growing what is suitable to the resources they have without being dwarfed by large corporate operations or global competition. Secondly, the partnership benefits the small producers Plan B (and Pfennings) purchase from because the storage space of the latter two allows them to purchase large quantities and provide a fairer price than competing wholesalers. Thirdly, the variety and diversity that Plan B can now offer its customers retains their customers’ business and allows them to serve enough customers to be self-sustaining.

**Successes**

When asked to share some of the successes that Plan B has had Venturelli responded that they’ve “managed to build a farm at a time where farms are going out of business, managed to do it organically, [and] managed to give people better prices [although they can’t always guarantee that] both for the farmers and for the consumers”.

**Relevance**

When Venturelli was asked why Plan B has managed to be successful despite the constraints faced and the hostile socio-economic environment for small producers, he identified four main transferable business strategies: i. diversity afforded by regional trade partnerships, ii. non-speculative production, iii. access to social equity, and iv. knowing and exceeding the break-even point in sales.

“We had [customers] abandon us when it was us alone as a CSA”, says Venturelli, because Plan B alone could not provide customers with the variety and diversity of produce that they expect. Purchasing from small local producers and Pfennings Organic Farm allows Plan B to secure a greater variety of produce for CSA customers and in turn retain those customers. It also allows each producer to grow the mix of crops that is most efficient for them to produce based on their available resources and microclimate.

The CSA model allows Plan B to practice non-speculative production, since customers sign up for shares ahead of time, explains Venturelli; “we know what we’re growing and for who”. By not growing any more than they need, they reduce waste. Access to social equity when starting the operation was critical in allowing the farm to obtain the start up capital they needed, says Venturelli, “if my father and mother hadn’t put their life’s earnings into this farm it wouldn’t be here,” adding that, “banks laughed at us”. Banks and agricultural programs will not accept mortgages for farmers below a certain sales threshold, making access to capital a very difficult hurdle for small producers to overcome. Accessing social equity was the only way for Plan B to overcome this barrier in their formative years.

The farm is now financially self-sustaining; “we have been earning our money from growing vegetables and selling vegetables,” says Venturelli. The key was to identify what the break-even point was to recoup the costs of operating; explains Venturelli, “we became financially viable at around 500 to 600 shares, and are now at 700 to 1000” with
more shares in the summer season than winter. Being able to offer customers variety in their box as well as a good price are two points that have allowed Plan B to retain enough customers to be self-sustaining. Another is good press in the local media and advertising through word of mouth.

Figure 3.3: From left: mixed colour carrots; a field of freshly cultivated green beans; and a fall share

Case Study 4: FoodShare
Prepared by Fiona Yeudall and Bronwyn Whyte

Location: 90 Croatia St., Toronto, ON
Website: www.foodshare.net

Interviewee: Debbie Field (Executive Director), with additional information provided by Robyn Shyllit (Communications Co-ordinator)

Initial interview by Bronwyn Whyte

Summary
• Canada’s largest food security organization, founded in 1985 to address hunger and food system sustainability in Toronto communities
• Long-term approach rooted in universal programs, community development partnerships and social enterprise with a strong social justice focus
• Pioneered the Good Food Box and its distribution model with 40 boxes in 1992, now reaching more than 4000 families monthly
• Multi-sectoral food centre reaches over 155,000 children and adults monthly with programs including direct fresh produce access, childhood nutrition and education, urban agriculture and community cooking and skill development

Organizational Overview

“FoodShare is a Toronto non-profit that works at the grassroots level to build a food system that is both just and environmentally sustainable. They run a program for every link in the food chain, from the growing (they oversee an urban farm on the grounds of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health that produces vegetables for sale at farmers’ market), to the processing (they offer small food-business start-ups access to industrial kitchens), to distribution (their Good Food Box program provides fresh fruits and vegetables to people of all economic backgrounds who subscribe)” (Elton, 2010).

FoodShare works to empower individuals, families and communities through food-based initiatives and advocates for supportive public policies. Their programs now reach over 155,000 children and adults across the City of Toronto. Current activities can be traced to recommendations in a 1985 City of Toronto Executive Committee Report that established FoodShare to address food poverty. In addition to provision of space and telephone infrastructure, and pilot funding of $40,000 in the first year, the report recommended formation of a steering committee that included the Medical Officer of Health and agencies leading the fight against hunger. Many of the recommendations resonate today, reflecting demands for physical and economic access to safe, healthy food for all citizens, increased information on the foods we eat, and alternative, more sustainable food systems.

Emergency Food Access: The first mandated activity was to establish the volunteer-operated Hunger Hotline to serve citizens seeking emergency food assistance. In 1997 it became the Foodlink Hotline and also provided information about community gardens, Good Food Box stops and other community food programs. It now operates in partnership with 211 Toronto, which provides information services citywide and answers calls outside of FoodShare hours.

Social Enterprise Food Hub: In 1992, the Field to Table Traveling Food Truck began, inspired by Brazilian Sacalo Markets’ focus on fresh produce and universal program delivery model. In 1994 it became the Good Food Box, one of FoodShare’s best known and most replicated programs. From an initial 40 boxes, today more than 4,000 boxes are distributed monthly to 200 neighbourhood drops. Produce is purchased from 25 local family farms and the Ontario Food Terminal. The centralized buying and coordination provides cost and time savings to customers, and benefits from subsidies for infrastructure costs through grants to FoodShare. Bulk Fresh Produce to Schools and Agencies was established to meet demand for quality produce in student nutrition programs in 1994. In 2005, Good Food Markets began selling high quality, affordable produce in underserved neighbourhoods, where farmers’ markets were not likely to be economically viable. In 2012, in partnership with Nishnawbe Aski Nation, the Fort Albany Good Food Market began supplying high quality produce sourced from FoodShare’s warehouse that travels by truck, train and plane to reach the northern Ontario community. Since 2012, the Mobile Good Food Market has been selling quality,
affordable produce in neighbourhoods with limited access to fresh produce. FoodShare promotes buying local as the best way to support a resilient local food economy and, for social justice and individual health reasons, also sources imported produce.

**School Food and Food Literacy:** Since 1992 as a founding member of the *Coalition for Student Nutrition* in 1992, FoodShare has been on the front lines advocating for universal school nutrition programs. FoodShare led the Community Development Team of *Toronto Partners for Student Nutrition* in 1998, a partnership with Toronto Public Health, local School Boards, their Foundations and community agencies. The partnership supports over 685 programs serving approximately 144,000 healthy, nutritious meals and snacks to school age children and youth each school day. Since 2002, FoodShare’s *Salad Bar*, adapted from California’s program, has worked with schools to provide students a lunch of cut-up vegetables, fruit, proteins and carbohydrates. Launched in 2006, *Field to Table Schools* promotes food literacy using curriculum linked hands-on activities and workshops for students from JK-12. The *Good Food Café*, in operation since 2010, is a healthy lunch program for middle and high school students pioneered in Toronto’s French School Boards that demonstrates students taste buds are the not the barrier to healthy food. *Field to Table FoodShare Academy* was launched in 2012 as a social enterprise whereby educators and community members pay a fee for training workshops.

**Urban Agriculture:** The *Community Garden Program* established in 1989 became the *Urban Agriculture Program* as activities expanded. A rooftop demonstration garden was added to the Eastern Avenue Field to Table Centre in 1997, joined by midscale composting and beekeeping in 2000. *Community Food Animation*, in partnership with AfriCan Food Basket, the Stop Community Food Centre and Second Harvest, started with funding from the City of Toronto in 2004 and still facilitates projects in Toronto Community Housing, Co-op Housing buildings and Toronto Parks. *Market Gardens*, producing at a larger scale, started in 2002 at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health’s Sunshine Garden, and most recently includes the Bendale Business and Technical Institute. Demonstration community and school food gardens, a greenhouse and midscale composting can be found at FoodShare’s current location at 90 Croatia Street.

**Kitchens & Cooking:** Since its inception, FoodShare promoted *Community Kitchens*. The *Baby Nutrition/Healthy Babies Eat Home-Cooked Food Program* started in 1996, and provides support to new parents to make baby food from scratch. *Cooking out of the Box* started in 2004 to provide easy and delicious recipes for the contents of the *Good Food Box*, and was joined by *Good Food for Life* in 2005 and *Kate’s Kitchen* in 2006, with recipes for meals for women living with breast cancer during chemotherapy, radiation and recovery. In 2011, in partnership with Aboriginal organizations, *Community Kitchens* was established with an emphasis on diabetes prevention and outreach to youth and parents. *Field to Table Catering* began in 1996 as a social enterprise providing healthy, affordable meals while the *Toronto Kitchen Incubator* offers a well-equipped professional facility to individuals or groups at affordable rental rates. Since 1998, the *Power Soup Project* has prepared and provided thousands of cups of tasty and nutrient dense soups at a subsidized price, or free of charge, to local shelters in the winter.
Focus on Food Training: Provincial funding in 1995 was a catalyst for the establishment of the Focus on Women Food Training, followed by the federally-funded Focus on Youth. The latter equips youth who are marginalized by systemic inequalities with skills to help navigate the employment and community sector. Ten youth interns work full-time for six months in the Kitchen or Good Food Warehouse and build skills through on-the-job learning, mentoring, workshops and training.

Human Resources
Starting with one half-time staff in 1985, FoodShare now employs 62 full-time staff. The organization is committed to non-discrimination and conflict resolution personnel policies that encourage staff training and capacity building. The organization’s goal is operational excellence through efficiency of operation and strong customer service while providing a healthy workplace for all staff. Community impacts are multiplied through hundreds of volunteer hours. FoodShare creates meaningful opportunities for community, corporate and student volunteers to contribute to fostering civic engagement and capacity building.

Physical Infrastructure
FoodShare has always operated in government-owned spaces. FoodShare’s first home was a City-owned building on Shuter Street, then at 238 Queen Street West (1992), followed by a City-owned warehouse on Parliament (1995). The Field to Table Centre was established in 1996 in a provincially-owned abandoned warehouse at Eastern Avenue as an integrated food distribution hub with an industrial kitchen, mid-scale composting facility, Toronto’s first urban beehives, meeting rooms and offices. When FoodShare was housed in two locations (238 Queen and 200 Eastern), it was apparent how crucial it is to have the entire organization under one roof. In 2006, the organization moved to an underutilized Toronto District School Board property at 90 Croatia.

Lunch is provided to staff as an employee benefit, paid for by each department, in recognition of the value of healthy eating and networking among staff, volunteers and visitors. The organization has outgrown its space at 90 Croatia, and is seeking a permanent home to house expanded food distribution, composting, kitchen programming, networking and special events. In terms of community infrastructure, FoodShare’s food distribution programs have benefited from access to the Ontario Food Terminal (OFT), where FoodShare’s buyer gains access to the highest quality produce, both local and imported, at the best wholesale prices.

Financial Resources
FoodShare’s operating budget has grown from $40 000 in 1985 to almost $6 million by 2012. Major government funding has acted as a catalyst for increased activities, including 1989’s Food Action Project (City of Toronto), 1995’s Focus on Food (Federal), 2004’s Community Food Animators (City of Toronto) and 2008’s Student Nutrition funding (Provincial). Foundation funds have also been key, including Atkinson Foundation’s Food 2002 funding, and Sprott Foundation funding beginning in 2009. In 2010, FoodShare identified the need for its own dedicated fundraising event, and hosted the first Recipe for Change, an event including more than 30 top chefs, coupled with
local beverage partners. Third Party events at Quince (2011), Ontario Food Terminal (Fresh Fest 2012), and St. Lawrence Market South (2012) have become important sources of revenue.

FoodShare has developed a successful sustainable funding model with a third of its annual budget coming from income-generating programs (produce, catering, honey, compost, cookbook and manuals), a third from Foundations, a sixth from government and a sixth from private donors. FoodShare accepts donations from individuals and companies, but only enters into co-branded partnerships with like-minded corporations approved by the Board of Directors.

**Community Resources**
Active engagement in networks and coalitions has been a key factor of FoodShare’s success. The initial steering committee was a coalition of community organizations and government agencies, and FoodShare has continued to provide leadership and support to many local coalitions, regularly working with partners to host workshops, conferences and training sessions. At the municipal level, FoodShare is active in Toronto Public Health and Toronto District School Board committees and supported the 1991 creation of the Toronto Food Policy Council. Engagement with university researchers and students has been facilitated through funding, and participation in the Food for Talk and its predecessor seminar series. Coalition activities have focused on school food at the provincial level, and Food Secure Canada and the Canadian Association for Food Studies at the national level.

**Desired Assets**
To achieve the goal of society putting ‘food first’ and prioritizing healthy, affordable, sustainably-produced and local food, creation of a Minister of Food Security and funding for a National Student Nutrition Program by the Federal government is encouraged. More investment is needed at all levels of government for food programs, hubs and centres, including physical spaces to house them. Growing consensus that a local food system centered on food access in Ontario needs to be supported with infrastructure investment to support local food procurement, particularly for schools. A Food Justice strategy to combat the current food system’s exclusion and discrimination against First Nations, Inuit and Metis, immigrants, low income and communities of colour is also required.

**Constraints**
FoodShare, like the rest of the food movement in Canada, is constrained by limited resources. To combat this, stable funding, including access to affordable space, is needed in response to community need. A key challenge for the future is how FoodShare can balance its historic focus of working in low income and marginalized communities and schools - those who currently do not have adequate access to healthy food - while, at the same time, implementing its vision of Good Healthy Food for All.

**Successes**
FoodShare’s Food Hub at 90 Croatia is both a successful non-profit food distribution centre, selling $2 million in produce annually, and a warm and inviting food centre, where
people of all backgrounds get involved in programs, volunteering, sharing meals and building a food movement for change. FoodShare believes that expanded funding and revenue streams and having a common physical space have been essential. Strong community relationships and partnerships are valued as central to success, whether it be a local school program or a Good Food Box stop. FoodShare honours the community leaders who make those projects happen on a daily basis and sees its role as supporting these communities.

**Relevance**
FoodShare has successfully pioneered community-based food programs. Valuing a community development model, FoodShare readily shares their experiences and lessons learned so other communities can adapt them to their local reality. The first Ontario group involved in community gardens and kitchens, FoodShare pioneered the Good Food Box and Healthy Babies Eat Home-Cooked Food Programs, and supported others in starting their own community-specific programs with manuals and open-sourced dissemination models. One third of annual operating revenues are generated by Social Enterprises. Among the first to be involved in Student Nutrition programs, FoodShare recommended a universal, as opposed to targeted, charity approach to feeding children, and Field to Table Schools’ food literacy student engagement approach is increasingly seen as the model in Ontario. Committed to Social Justice and a Dismantling Racism perspective, FoodShare suggests program models in which communities lead programs. From the beginning, FoodShare has employed Propositional as well as Oppositional strategies - on the one hand creating programs such as the Good Food Box that improve people’s access to healthy food now through subsidized food distribution while, at the same time, opposing cuts to social assistance and growing income disparity.

**References**
Chapter 4: Southwestern Ontario

Erin Nelson, Irena Knezevic, and Karen Landman

Summary

- The Region of Waterloo and the County of Wellington have perhaps a longer history and more developed projects, but all Counties have food projects underway.
- Food projects in this landscape are highly networked and collaborative; food producers are especially linked in, and producer perspectives are highly valued.
- Many food initiatives have achieved some measure of financial stability, although funding remains an ongoing concern.
- There is a significant increase in the number of farmers’ markets, in the use of local food maps, and in the popularity of the CSA model.
- The greatest challenges are in the overall societal choices that favour the industrial large-scale and low-priced approach to food production and choice.
- The greatest frustration expressed is towards the policy and infrastructure that inhibits small-scale production and local distribution.
- Particularly difficult are policies and regulations that are not small-scale sensitive, such as with abattoirs. A lack of infrastructure to facilitate the distribution of local food is seen as a second significant barrier.
- There is a desire to see OMAFRA shift efforts from the current heavy emphasis on marketing to an effort to increase local food supply and to an expansion in local food distribution by investing in scale-appropriate infrastructure.
- Organizations and producers are concerned that there is more and more competition for scarce funding that is dedicated to local food projects.

Background

Oxford County has 1,990 farms listed in the 2006 census and over 100 commercial and industrial agri-business ventures. In the County, 61% of all farms are classified as commercial farms, compared with only 46% of all farms in Southern Ontario. Farm cash receipts for main commodities totals at $658.4 million. Oxford produces 20.7% of the province’s white beans and 23% of turkeys. Dairy, hog and tobacco farms account for nearly half of the farms. Cash crops, poultry and specialty products such as emu, ginseng, fruits, vegetables, maple syrup and garlic are increasingly popular in response to recent niche-market and value-added trends in agriculture. Agri-tourism is also on the rise.

For Perth County, agriculture, value-added agriculture and local food are considered the drivers of economic growth and job creation in the community. In 2006, Perth County had 2,438 census farms and 201,600 hectares of farmland. In 2009, farm cash receipts for main commodities totaled $604.9 million. Dairy receipts led the way at $190 million.
Pork producers were second highest in farm receipts, at $114.1 Million. Perth County accounts for 30% of the province’s bean production. There are 7 Farmers' Markets, approximately 20 food processing companies, and there are hundreds of value-added food producers offering products at the farmgate.

Figure 4.1: Map of the Southwestern Ontario Region

Waterloo Region has one of the most economically-productive agricultural land bases in the province. Each of the individual municipalities/townships in the region exceeds the provincial average in terms of total farm receipts per farm and per acre. In 2000, Waterloo Region reported an average of $1,681 in farm receipts per acre of farmland, making it the second highest producing region on a per acre basis in Ontario (exceeded only by the Niagara fruit belt). Net revenue per farm in 2000 was $39,000, almost twice the Ontario average of $21,534. In 2001, the average farm size in Waterloo Region was 156 acres, compared to the provincial average of 226 acres. The high productivity of these smaller farms is largely due to the high concentration of livestock farms in the Region, which tend to be smaller than crop production farms. Census data from 2006 indicates that there were 1,444 farms in Waterloo Region. With 282 farms, beef producers are the most numerous in Waterloo Region, followed closely by 263 farms reporting dairy as their primary focus. Together, dairy and beef farms account for 38% of
all farms in Waterloo Region. Another 523 farms report their main industry to be hogs, pigs, poultry (and eggs), goats, sheep and other animals. Altogether, animal farms make up 74% of all farms in Waterloo Region. Chickens (2.5 million) and hogs (140,000) top the list for population numbers when it comes to farm animals. The remaining farms produce field crops, vegetables, fruit, and specialty products. According to Statistics Canada, production of total vegetables (excluding greenhouse vegetables) increased by 129.1 % in Waterloo Region between 2001 and 2006 while the provincial and national data indicated decreases for these crops during the same time period: - 8.6 % in Ontario and - 6.5 % in Canada. While not a significant contributor to the provincial total, Waterloo Region’s greenhouse industry continues to grow, accounting for 62,000 square meters of food and nursery stock under cultivation in 2006. Grain corn, soybeans, and winter wheat are also important cash crops for farmers in Waterloo Region.

Wellington County agriculture plays a key role in the local economy, with a diverse farming community that includes 2,588 farms on 196,621 hectares of land. Farm cash receipts in 2009 for main commodities was $511.3 million. The County's agriculture is evolving and has exceeded provincial growth for the last few years. Wellington County and the City of Guelph also have a large agricultural support network, including mills, suppliers, distributors and service providers for the agricultural industry. The farms that are represented on the Guelph-Wellington Local Food Map are as diverse as the landscape including small scale, horse-powered production to larger farms that specialize in specific crops.

Agriculture has been historically important for Dufferin County. Although a portion of Dufferin's economy still depends on agriculture, the economy is diversifying. With recent influxes of population, industries related to residential and commercial construction have grown. Manufacturing, although suffering somewhat in the recent economic downturn, is also an important sector of Dufferin's economy. Tourism is becoming significant, as the County takes a more proactive role in attracting visitors to the area through groups such as the Headwaters Country Tourism Association, featuring farmers’ markets and pick-your-own operations. Farm case receipts for Dufferin Couty in 2009 totaled $86.6 million and there were 893 farms recorded in the 2006 census, which are based on 77,136 hectares of land. Dufferin produces 15% of Ontario’s potatoes.

The Grey Bruce Regional Economic Development Partnership has developed an Agri Value-Added Strategy for the two counties, focusing on diversifying the agricultural economy. Grey County has 2,687 farms based on 229,543 hectares of land. Grey is the number one producer for hay, apples, sheep and lambs and the number two producer of cattle in Ontario. Grey County farms produce 10.15% of the barley and 15.42% of mixed grains in Ontario, as well as more exotic foods like buffalo, emu, wild boar and rare mushrooms. Honey, maple syrup, fruits and vegetables, organic produce and various other home grown/made products can be found at farmers' markets and farm-gate and roadside stands. Farm cash receipts for main commodities in 2009 were at $243.5 million. Bruce County farm cash receipts for main commodities in 2009 was $359.7 million. there were 2,259 farms reported in 2006, based on 248,136 hectares of land. Bruce accounts for 8.13% of the province’s beef cattle farms, 10.05% of mixed grain and 10.93% of dry white beans.
Huron County is the most agriculturally productive county in Ontario. It has more farms (2,738 listed in the 2006 census), more hectares of farmland (292,803) and more gross farm receipts ($728.0 million) than any other county or district in the Province. New employment and economic opportunities can be found within and related to the development of agriculture and agri-related industries. One of Canada’s largest inland grain handling facilities is in the Village of Hensall, with three major grain handling/processing companies. There is additional grain handling capacity at several other inland facilities throughout the county, as well as Goderich Elevators Limited located at the Port of Goderich, on the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Seaway. The County also has a growing livestock sector, housing 165,000 cattle (beef and dairy), 630,000 hogs and 5.2 million poultry. Huron produces 32.08% of the province’s white bean harvest.

Participants
A total of 25 interviews were conducted; those interviewed represented organizations or initiatives in the following categories: municipal government; public health; producer organizations; food system networking initiatives; producers; retailers; farmers’ markets; OMAFRA; Premier’s Award winners; universities; and food hub and community food centre projects. It is difficult to clearly state how many participants fit into each category, as there tended to be a significant amount of overlap. Based on the 25 interviews conducted, brief summaries of 18 food hub or local food network initiatives and/or organizations are provided below, along with three in-depth case studies that are each based on additional interviewing and site visits.

In general, the interviews were fairly evenly distributed across the 7 counties included in this region. The notable exception is Dufferin County, where only one interview was completed with Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. Attempts were made to conduct interviews with people from a number of other initiatives in Dufferin, including a farmers’ market and a conservation group recently engaged in food security work; however, these efforts proved unsuccessful. The challenge in finding study participants in Dufferin County is perhaps indicative of the relatively-quiet local food scene, when compared to other counties in the province.

Common Accomplishments
By far the most widely-cited accomplishment of the various organizations and initiatives from Southwestern Ontario that participated in this study was the building of bridges between actors, and the creation of collaborative working relationships and coalitions. In the words of Gueph-Wellington Local Food coordinator Kate Vsetula: “Networking and creating linkages is key…and making sure plans are going to be win-win for all the different actors involved.” Many participants highlighted the particular importance of ensuring that the producer perspective is represented in any initiative, and the efforts to do that across the region were considered a special accomplishment.
Another significant accomplishment is the fact that so many local food initiatives have managed to achieve some measure of financial stability. While finding funding remains a challenge for some initiatives, others are realizing profits, particularly as new opportunities are created to foster increased sales of local food to individual, business and institutional consumers. These opportunities include a boom in local farmers’ markets, the widespread adoption of the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map concept (initially spearheaded by Waterloo Region’s Foodlink), and the increasing popularity of CSAs and other direct marketing models. In the opinion of Theresa Schumilas, who runs a CSA, consumers are responding to the message about local food because it represents “a positive marketing strategy in the middle of a doom and gloom message about destruction. I think people respond to positive things; they’re not motivated by fear.”

**Common Challenges**

The most general challenge discussed by many research participants in the region was an overall societal, systemic preference for a food system model based on large-scale, highly specialized, industrialized production and export-orientation. The flip side of this problem was frustration at the lack of systemic support for small-scale ventures, particularly those with a focus on local production-consumption chains.

In terms of specific manifestations of this perceived systemic bias, the most frequently cited example was a regulatory structure that tends to inhibit the development of small-scale production and local distribution. In Oxford County, one person working to promote local food explained that “one of the county’s most prominent small-scale meat producers just went under as a result of regulatory strangulation.” The strangulation metaphor was repeated by someone involved in a small-scale farmers’ market, who felt that more markets could easily be viable – potentially with more regular hours - if zoning bylaws were not prohibitive. In addition to challenges associated with zoning, the need to conform to public health standards designed for large-scale production facilities was the most important regulatory challenge cited by participants.

A second specific barrier to the development of local food initiatives, that is reflective of the same systemic bias, is a lack of infrastructure to facilitate the distribution of local food. One illustration of this issue is that fact that a great deal of produce grown in Grey is shipped to the Ontario Food Terminal, only to be sent back to Grey for sale in supermarkets. According to Waterloo Region organic producer (and packer-distributor) Wolfgang Pfenning, a big part of the distribution challenge is that supermarkets “want to buy full tractor-trailer loads out of the US because they can buy all year round from the same supplier.”

At the policy level, participants identified challenges beyond the aforementioned regulatory issues. Notable examples included a lack of tax incentives and/or subsidies for small-scale production aimed at the local market and a lack of public procurement policies that would favour local food in most jurisdictions. In the case of OMAFRA more specifically, there was a fair amount of consensus that, although the work it has done to promote local food has been appreciated, the heavy focus on marketing should be shifted.
to a focus on how to grow supply and, even more importantly, ease distribution - for example, by investing in local food infrastructure.

One final demonstration of the challenges associated with a food system that undervalues local food is the fact that, although consumer awareness and interest has increased rapidly in recent years, recognizing the value of buying local, or participating in other food-related activities, has not reached the mainstream in all communities. This seems to be a particular barrier in more rural areas of the region, such as Huron County where one local food promoter explains that some people “just don’t have the education necessary to appreciate local food, or a food hub. [They] don’t see a problem just going to the grocery store...They don’t think about the implications of it.” In Oxford County, another local food activist suggests that “it’s shocking how relatively few people are involved, even in a successful initiative.”

In addition to the barrier of insufficient consumer support for local food, some participants also raised the issue of insufficient funding for local food projects, particularly as the movement grows and increasing numbers of organizations must compete for scarce resources. Several participants suggested that a lack of funding to develop local food projects is even more of a problem for producers, who do not tend to be eligible for many grant programs designed for non-profit agencies.

Case Study 1: Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre

Location: Hillsburgh
Website: http://www.everdale.org

Interviewees: Brendan Johnson (Executive Director) and Gavin Dandy (Farm Director)

Initial interview (Brendan Johnson only): July 11, 2011 (Irena Knezevic)
Site visit: August 16, 2011 (Erin Nelson)

Overview
In the late 1960’s and early 70’s, the land where Everdale Organic Farm and Education Centre is located was known as Everdale Place, where a free school was operated. Following the closing of the school, the land was used for many different purposes, though none took hold. Then, in the 1990’s, Gavin Dandy, Karen Campbell, Wally Seccombe, and Lynn Bishop decided to build an organic farm and learning centre on the property.

Today, Everdale is a registered charity. One of Canada's most established and well-known farm-based local food hubs, it is a working farm that produces not only food, but also education and new farmers, and its work helps build bridges between rural and urban interests. Everdale runs a CSA providing organic food to approximately 300 people in the
surrounding communities and in Toronto; however, Executive Director Brendan Johnson points out that “the real niche Everdale fills is education.”

Every year, the farm hosts students from kindergarten through high school. An emphasis is placed on repeat visits over the years, so that learning can be graduated. Everdale also has a farm intern program that sees new and/or aspiring farmers spend a season gaining practical and theoretical knowledge about the production and business aspects of running an organic farm. As part of this program, Everdale tries to help those looking to obtain land connect with people who have land available.

In addition to the school visits and farm intern program, Everdale also runs a number of workshops and events throughout the year designed to get the general public engaged in, and excited about, organic farming.

**Human Resources**

Everdale is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors, with Johnson pointing out “how challenging it is to get Board members. I’m always grateful when people are willing to do that.” In addition to the Board members, Everdale also sees a lot of volunteers, especially during harvest time. These volunteers tend to be young people, many of whom come as part of the program Willing Workers on Organic Farmers (WWOOF); however, Brendan notes that “we get some Bay Street people too.”

In terms of paid staff, there are 8 regular full time staff members, including Johnson and Dandy, along with a number of part time and seasonal positions. During the 8 month farm season, there are usually approximately 6 full time interns at the farm as well. Staffing is always a challenge, because it tends to be very difficult to find grant funding to pay salaries.

**Physical Resources**

As is the case with staff salaries, finding funds to pay for physical resources has proven to be a challenge. “It’s hard,” explains Johnson, “because no one wants to fund a roof.” As a result, the buildings that exist at Everdale (which include a strawbale construction used as office space and dorms) have been built gradually over time, as fundraising efforts have permitted.

When it comes to communication resources, Everdale takes advantage of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and also publishes a newsletter and manages a website. Using social media for marketing has been great, because it means that “marketing resources are next to nothing” – an advantage given that “we can’t buy ads, we can’t do that kind of stuff.”

**Natural Resources**

A very important key to Everdale’s success has been that they are able to use the land they are on without having to purchase or lease it. Rather, it is held in trust by Everdale Place, and loaned out with no charge. “We’re very lucky to have this land” notes Johnson.
Financial Resources
The CSA shares generate some income, and some educational program costs are offset at least partly by small fees, but the bulk of Everdale’s work is financed through grant funding from foundations such as Heifer, Trillium and Metcalf, and private donations. Johnson explains: “We do a lot of grant writing, and then have individual donors. We do some events, but it’s mostly grants and donors. That takes up a good chunk of my time, and I have another woman who works on it with me.” He goes on to note that “stewarding donors is important, inviting them here to get them to see what’s happening. I find…if they get here and they see kids here…they can see what happens and how transformative it is. You can tell them and they get it, but when they see the kids, it’s like ‘ah, there you go’, or you meet the interns and see how excited they are, and the learning they’ve gone through, it’s really nice. So we try to get them to come for a farm lunch, to connect with the place.”

Community/Social Resources
Building community connections is a big part of what Everdale does. For example, a wall of photos in the farm shop provides profiles of CSA members and Everdale staff and volunteers as a way of introducing people to each other. In the words of Johnson: “It’s about seeing who we are, what we do, as members of a community. So you can say, ‘I rub shoulders with you every week’, and now I see you’re a graphic designer, or something, and people get to know each other like that. Our community food hub idea is kind of like that, connecting people, doing activities to get people congregating.”

When it comes to organizational networking, Everdale works closely with local school boards, and educational institutes such as Sanford Fleming College, where Dandy teaches. It also participates in Taste Real and the Guelph-Wellington Food Round Table, donates food to the East Wellington Food Bank, and worked with Guelph-Wellington Local Food to develop a funding proposal for a food hub project focusing on new immigrants and social justice. For Johnson, that kind of networking “is huge for all of us.”

Policy and Program Resources
Everdale gets no direct support from government sources. However, both Johnson and Dandy notice that “OMAFRA is starting to get what the local food movement is.” Part of OMAFRA’s perceived new recognition for the work of places like Everdale is because it is becoming increasingly clear that the local food movement is “not just a blip” or “something cute”, but rather a sustaining, viable movement, full of success stories. On the other hand, Everdale has also evolved, for example by introducing a business planning course.

Desired Assets
The organization would like to achieve sustained funding. It also sees developing closer connections with faith communities, and potentially acquiring accreditation for some of its programs as useful future assets. In broader terms, Everdale would like to see OMAFRA provide some substantial support for the development of local food hubs, for example by potentially creating a pool of money that could be used to fund projects that would be vetted by an overseeing committee.
Constraints/Overcoming Them

Dandy explains that “the main challenge is financial. There is no shortage of other support. The ideas we’re developing and that other people are bringing to us from the community are great ideas, and they make sense in every way except financially, because they essentially challenge the current financial system, so it’s no surprise that there’s no money in what we do…” A related challenge (that both Johnson and Dandy are quick to point out is also an opportunity) is the current explosion of new local food projects, as everyone is competing for very limited amounts of funding.

The main way that Everdale confronts the challenge is to make it clear what niche they serve (i.e. agriculture-related education) and why it is important. “We really try to focus on communicating what we do” explains Johnson, “so that’s educating kids to be future consumers, getting young kids learning about food and farming and sustainability, and the other part is training farmers and getting them farming.” Getting donors out to the site is essential, and collaborative proposals – such as the one recently submitted with Guelph-Wellington Local Food – are also a useful strategy.

Other challenges include high land prices, which make it challenging for Everdale internship graduates to start their own farms, and high municipal taxes for new buildings on-site.

Successes

There are too many individual success stories of people impacted by their experiences at Everdale to tell them all in this report. One of many examples provided by Johnson: “One of our interns last year was someone who had visited as a kid, and his parents had been part of the CSA, and then he did the internship, and now he’s going to chef’s school.” In another case: “There was this woman, and she was working on Bay Street, and she always wanted to farm, so she came to volunteer for a month, and ended up staying five months, quit her job, bought a farm, and took our planning course, and now she’s helping administrate that planning course.” Johnson cannot say enough about how important these – and other – individual stories are, or about how excited CSA members are when the season starts, and how rewarding it is to be a staff member at Everdale.

In more concrete terms, Everdale feeds more than 300 people, and its programs have educated countless students, and trained 40 currently practicing organic farmers. They have also provided support to groups in other parts of the province seeking to develop sustainable food system programing, and they have made some inroads with government bodies such as OMAFRA in terms of achieving recognition for the local food movement. After years of work, and a trend towards ever higher levels of professionalism, Dandy notes that “now when we go to [OMAFRA], or go to the Agricultural Management Institute, and say we have this business planning course, and it’s for people who are new entrant farmers who have never farmed before they don’t just say ‘Are you kidding me, that’s a joke’, they say ‘we know about those people, we’ve heard about those people, and we feel that we want to connect with them somehow, because right now our policies and programs don’t connect with those people, so tell us more’.”
Relevance
For Johnson, “it is really important to get other organizations across the province doing similar work [to that of Everdale], because 40 farmers is great, but we’re not going to do everything with 40 farmers.”

When it comes to thinking about how the Everdale experience could be relevant to others, one of the main messages is its focus on the positive, and on demonstrating success. At Everdale, Johnson explains the work is not just about critiquing a system that doesn’t work. Instead “we’re talking about how to make things better, and people come here and feel like there is some hope.” Offering tangible success stories could also be important when it comes to influencing actors such as OMAFRA. Dandy notes that “OMAFRA really responds when you can give a case study of Joe farmer, or Jane farmer who did this or that, they light up.”

The sustained success of Everdale, as well as the flurry of activity around new local food projects, helps to demonstrate that, in the words of Dandy: “The local food thing is not just a flash in the pan…It’s based on so much rational analysis of the world at large, it’s becoming an undeniable phenomenon, that is not just a cute thing…like ‘oh wouldn’t it be nice if we could all eat food that’s grown a block down the road’. Well not only would it be nice, but it’s actually essential, based on every benchmark you can think of, whether it’s environmental or financial or social or whatever, it’s essential that we do that.”

Case Study 2: Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Market Initiative

Location: Waterloo Region

Interviewees: Sanjay Govindaraj (Waterloo Region Public Health), Judy Maan Miedema (Waterloo Region Public Health), Mary MacKeigan (Opportunities Waterloo Region), Karl Kiefer (City of Cambridge Ward Councillor), Pauline Faul (Preston Market Volunteer/Treasurer), Sariah Rattana-Middleton (Preston Market Coordinator), Barbara Paul (Old Chicopee Market Coordinator), Karen Taylor-Harrison (Highland-Stirling Community Group Administrator), Laura Callum (Community Nutrition Worker), Joanne DeSouza (Mill Courtland Community Centre Coordinator)

Initial interview (Sanjay Govindaraj and Judy Maan Miedema only): July 5, 2011
Site visits: August 24 and 25, 2011 (Erin Nelson)

Overview
In 2006, Region of Waterloo Public Health led a food system planning process that included consultation with a wide variety of community stakeholders. One of the resulting recommendations was to develop markets for fresh produce in neighbourhoods where access was limited due to either geographic or economic factors. Public Health partnered with Opportunities Waterloo Region – an organization dedicated to poverty reduction – and obtained a grant from the Lyle Hallman Foundation, which allowed for the opening of two pilot project markets in 2007 and another three in 2008. These
markets sourced food from the Elmira Produce Auction, and sold it at a slight mark-up in the neighbourhood markets.

Today, three markets continue to operate – two in Kitchener and one in Cambridge. Public Health maintains a connection to the markets, but has largely stepped back in terms of its involvement, leaving management in the hands of neighbourhood organizations. In Kitchener, produce is now sourced from Jay West (a local food broker), with a number of other vendors selling processed foods, while at the Cambridge market the majority of the vendors are now farmers engaging in direct sale. The primary goal of all three markets remains to increase the accessibility of fresh, nutritious, local foods to marginalized populations (including low income community members and senior citizens); another main goal is to ensure support for area farmers.

The markets range in size. The smallest has entirely volunteer vendors and serves an average of approximately 60 consumers/week, while the largest has between 12-15 vendors engaged in direct sale of their products and sees an average weekly traffic of approximately 600 community members. In addition to the buying and selling of food, the markets also have community nutrition workers who help teach consumers how to prepare the food they buy in a healthy way (e.g. by providing recipes and samples of prepared meals) and performers who provide music and entertainment. They also sometimes host special events, such as a competition in which neighbourhood restaurants competed in a taste-off using recipes made with market products. To increase affordability, market vouchers are provided to pregnant women who participate in the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program\(^8\) and people served by Community Outreach Workers\(^9\).

**Human Resources**

Each neighbourhood market is coordinated by a part-time staff person who is employed for the market season. Volunteer support is a much greater part of market operations, even in the case of paid staff. In addition to the coordinators, a small number of staff hours are provided by people who are able to incorporate market activities into their positions – for example, a Salvation Army employee who serves as the Community Nutrition Worker at one market, or a City of Kitchener Community Resource Centre employee who is able to do some market support work.

The most important human resource for the market work has come from volunteer hours, on the part of paid staff such as the aforementioned coordinator, and also by people who are not paid at all. Each market has approximately 12-15 core volunteers, who fill the

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\(^8\) The Canada Prenatal Health Program is for pregnant women who want to have a healthy baby, but may be financially disadvantaged, new to Canada, or socially isolated. Program participants attend weekly meetings that provide opportunities for social interaction with other pregnant women, free childcare bus fare, education about healthy pregnancies, nutrition and cooking, a healthy snack, and a free bag of groceries.

\(^9\) Community Outreach Workers are funded through Social Services and work with individuals, households, and groups to see that basic needs are met and to build on and develop capacity and new skills. They provide information and connect them to community services as needed and are located at 25 community centre sites across Waterloo Region.
roles of vendors, organizational committee members, and do other necessary tasks, such as set-up and take-down on market days.

The role of the business vendors who participate in two of the three markets is another important human resource, and coordinators of both markets note that, so far, no vendors have left the markets. As one explains: “They like the atmosphere here, that’s what everybody says to us.”

**Physical Resources**
Each of the three markets relies on space provided free of charge by the City of Kitchener and City of Cambridge (in two cases, community centre parking lots, and in the third a public park). Other market necessities, such as tables and tents, have been acquired through a combination of donations and purchases made with grant funding.

**Financial Resources**
Small amounts of money for the markets have been provided by, for example, the City of Cambridge, Together for Health, TD Friends of the Environment, United way of Kitchener/Waterloo, and the Preston BIA,); however, the main financial resource for the markets to date has been funding from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, which provided start-up money, as well as some follow-up funds to pay for, among other things, part-time coordination staff at each market. The Hallman funding proposals have been submitted over the years by Public Health. Because that organization is attempting to decrease its direct involvement in the project, it is likely that future funding will have to come from other sources.

**Community/Social Resources**
The community and social resources that have been mobilized around this project are perhaps the most important element of its success to date. So many community partnerships have been developed as the work has progressed that it would be impossible to outline them all here. Some key community collaborators and leaders – in addition to Waterloo Region Public Health and Opportunities Waterloo Region, who initially spearheaded the project – include the Preston Business Improvement Association, St Clements Parish, Grand View Baptist, Langs farm Village association, Alan Reuters Seniors Center, Highland Stirling Community Group, Mill Courtland Community Center and Centerville Chicopee Neighbourhood Association, the City of Cambridge, City of Kitchener, Waterloo Region Social Services, Mosaic Counseling and Family Services, The Working Center and the Salvation Army. These organizations have worked together to, among other things, provide the markets with community nutrition workers, volunteers, in-kind donations including phones, tables, office space, storage space, and staff hours, and the use of charitable organization status for money management.

**Policy and Program Resources**
It would be impossible to overstate the role that Waterloo Region Public Health has had in the development and implementation of the neighbourhood market initiative. Waterloo Region Social Services has also provided assistance, as its Community Outreach Workers have distributed market vouchers to vulnerable populations that can be redeemed for
market products. The markets were also the beneficiaries of a Health Innovation award given out by the provincial Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

In spite of those examples of assistance however, the markets do not have any significant long term, sustained support or access to resources through government policies or programs.

**Desired Assets**
The main desired asset identified by people involved in all three markets was increased – and sustained – funding, particularly to pay for year-round market coordination, but also for items such as refrigeration units, and for more programming, for example around nutrition and health-promotion. The two locations that do not currently have farmers involved in direct sale would also like to develop closer relationships with local producers, though they note that this will be challenging because their markets are so small. One final important desired asset is increased partnerships, as well as the maintenance of existing collaborative relationships. For example, it would be useful to bring the YMCA and Immigrant Services into the project.

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**
One of the main challenges facing the neighbourhood market initiative is “bridging the affordability gap” to make the markets accessible to the target population – low income or otherwise vulnerable community members. This has been particularly challenging as there has been equal valued placed on the goal of increasing access to those with low incomes with a desire to support local farmers by ensuring they are paid fairly for their work. As one person involved in project coordination puts it: “You want to bring fresh and locally grown fruits and vegetables to the community, and especially to low income people…but at the same time you’re also trying to pay the farmer fair value, and if we have to become self-sustaining, we have to make a profit. So how do we sell so that we can support people of low income…but also farmers?” One part of the answer has been the voucher program, mentioned above, which provides gift vouchers in 5$ denominations that can be redeemed for market goods.

Complying with public health standards around food safety, dependence on good weather, ensuring that the supply available meets people’s basic needs, and getting enough local consumers to attend the markets have been other challenges. The coordinator of the smallest of the three markets notes they get 35-75 people per week: “You don’t want to do it unless you have people coming…so the promotion is huge…We try to educate people when they come. We have recipes to give them, to tell people what to do with the vegetables. But the key is, we can only do that education if they come…Our biggest thing we’re doing on that is more signs and word of mouth, and every year is getting better as far as numbers.”

**Successes**
The markets have been very successful at increasing access to healthy local foods, particularly for the elderly and low income people. In the opinion of one person closely associated with the project since its beginning, the biggest success has been “exposing people in the community to fresh fruits and vegetables, and promoting the whole local
thing.” Not only are people accessing good food, but as a representative of Opportunities Waterloo Region points out, “people are learning how to cook with the food too.”

Equally, if not more important, has been the community-building impact of the markets. A Cambridge City Council member who sits on one of the market organizing committees explains that “it’s not just a health thing, it’s a social thing.” Everyone seems to concur. One market coordinator suggests that “we don’t just want to be a farmers’ market, we want to be a part of the community”, and another notes that “the huge thing…is that it brings people together…I live in an apartment building three doors down and everybody can’t wait for the market.” The bringing together of people through market participation has added benefits, as it helps them access resources they might not otherwise have discovered. A community centre staff person finds it “nice to see all the people coming in who had never been here before, and they come for the market, but find out about our programs”, and an Opportunities Waterloo Region representative points out that “relationships are so important, because that helps lead people to other supports and services, and it strengthens peoples’ whole social network.”

Relevance
One of the lessons that can be taken from this project is the importance of having a strong champion to push an initiative forward in its early years. “It’s time consuming at first” explains one of the project co-founders “to get something like this going, and it took a lot of support from Public Health at the beginning, not just the first year, but the first few years.”

While an early champion is key, it is also essential for that actor or actors to develop community buy-in and build strong, lasting partnerships with members of different sectors. An Opportunities Waterloo Region representative suggests that one of the earliest advocates for the project was “a master at community engagement and community development…there has to be that person…to build that relationship with business, with government, with non-profits…it takes a servant kind of leadership to do this kind of work…you don’t take credit…you bring people up, and then you step behind.”

Funding, particularly in the early years, is also essential for success. As the Waterloo initiative seeks to become less dependent on external funding sources, one potential strategy forward is a vision to eventually take revenues from markets that are profitable and invest them into the markets that are struggling to break even. That kind of model would take a lot of work however, “and require a lot of business planning…and you have to ask how many you can balance…do you need three for-profit markets for every two that are just maybe breaking even, or what is the balance? We need more of that kind of planning” explains one person involved in the project.

Regardless of what happens with funding in the future, the high levels of community buy-in and participation that have been achieved in Waterloo Region have created a sense that, even if funding is discontinued, the project will continue. One early organizer explains that “it has reached a critical mass now, so I don’t think it will end, even if the funding ends.” A community group administrator agrees, noting that she recently
discussed the possibility of an end to external funding with her Board Chair, who responded: “I don’t care. We’ll find a way to fund it.”

**Case Study 3: Herrle’s Country Farm Market**

*Location: St. Agatha  
Website: [http://www.herrles.com/](http://www.herrles.com/)*

*Interviewees: Trevor Herrle-Braun, Joanne Herrle-Braun, James Herrle, Michelle Herrle*

*Initial interview (Trevor Herrle-Braun only): July 11, 2011 (Erin Nelson)  
Site visit (Joanne Herrle-Braun, James Herrle and Michelle Herrle): August 31, 2011 (Erin Nelson)*

**Overview**

An engraved stone at the entrance to the parking lot of Herrle’s Country Farm Market notes that the Herrle Homestead was originally established in 1858. Since then, generations of Herrles have grown crops – primarily sweet corn – in Waterloo Region. During the first half of the 20th Century, the Herrles brought their production to the Kitchener Farmers’ Market. Then, in 1964, Howard and Elsie Herrle began selling goods at the farm gate. The popularity of the farm gate sales grew quickly and, eventually, the family stopped attending the Kitchener Farmers’ Market and began to focus almost exclusively on farm-based retail, opening their first on-farm store building in 1988.

Today, the farm and market operation is managed by Howard and Elsie, along with their three grown children (Karen, James and Joanne) and their spouses (Michelle and Trevor). The various plots of land they farm total 250 acres, and the primary crop remains sweet corn, though a wide variety of other fruits and vegetables are also produced. In addition to what they grow themselves, the Herrles also source goods from a number of area farmers for sale in their retail space. In order to extend seasonal availability, and the variety of their supply, the family does source from a small number of American growers; however, they place a strong emphasis on promoting local food, grown within a 100 mile radius of their farm. The majority of goods sold are fresh, though they also offer a selection of processed products, including baked goods and preserves. The market is a seasonal business, open from June to October 31 each year.

Since the beginning of their on-farm sales, in 1964, Herrle’s motto has been “Freshness makes the difference”, and that attitude permeates all aspects of the operation, from the family’s own production, to their decisions about what products to source from other producers, and how to store and market the goods they sell. For example, customers are informed by signage throughout the store of the origin of each product. This kind of consumer-friendly information does not end with product labeling, but extends to educational displays on the farm history, the benefits of local production, and nutrition. Indeed, keeping consumers informed, both through displays and personal contact and
communication, is an important priority for the Herrles, as is maintaining a family feeling and sense of pride in their work. As Joanne Herrle explains: “We are family owned and operated...We strive to be people of integrity, and to run our business the same way.”

**Human Resources**

The backbone of Herrle’s Country Farm Market is the human resources provided by the family members involved in the operation. Now 81, Howard Herrle still works 60 hour weeks, and his wife Elsie regularly attends the Elmira Produce Auction, among other activities. Eldest daughter, Karen, manages the company’s accounts, while her brother James holds the position of Farm Director, and sister Joanne runs the bakery and organizes scheduling. James’ wife, Michelle, is primarily responsible for human resources, and Joanne’s husband, Trevor, is involved in production, retailing and promotion. Michelle explains that each family member has carved out a niche role for themselves, engaging in a broad range of activities that are well-suited to their unique personalities and abilities. None of them possess formal training in agriculture or business, but have amassed a wealth of practical experience over their years of work, and have supplemented that experience with extensive reading and participation in courses and workshops.

In addition to family members, Herrle’s employs approximately 50 market staff, and 30 field workers on a seasonal basis. Human resources manager Michelle notes that her family is very proud of its staff return rate of 80%, which she suggests is reflective of Herrle’s emphasis on treating staff well. For example, they organize events, outings and parties for employees – “small incentives to keep them excited about their work, and connecting with one another” – because they recognize that “an organization or business is only as good as the team that supports them.” The Herrles also conduct performance appraisals, and meet with staff members to try and ensure that they are able to grow over their time with the business, and find work that is meaningful to them.

**Physical Resources**

In addition to 250 acres of farmland, and the equipment required to work it, the main physical resource involved in the operation is the market building. First built in 1988, an addition was added in 1996, and another in 2005. All investment in physical resources for the business has been made by re-investing profits, with the Assistance of Farm Credit Corporation (FCC).

In terms of advertising, Herrle’s has a website, which includes a blog, as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts. They are also featured on Foodlink’s Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map. However, word of mouth has been by far their most important marketing and communications strategy. As Joanne puts it, “satisfied customers are what we rely on.”

**Financial Resources**

Herrle’s Country Farm Market is financed by continuous re-investment of the profits made by the business.
Community/Social Resources
When it comes to community and social resources, by far the most important thing for Herrle’s is its loyal customer base. Michelle stresses that “our community has supported us amazingly well”, with families passing on the tradition of shopping at Herrle’s over generations, and promoting the business actively amongst friends and neighbours. Joanne adds that a Herrle family member is almost always available at the market to talk to customers, answer questions, or provide information, and that helps maintain strong relationships. “We know many of our customers” she says, “and are available to them. They appreciate that.”

In addition to loyal customers, Herrle’s has benefited from relationships with the Farm Fresh Marketing Association, which Joanne points out provided the family with “a wealth of knowledge”, particularly in the earlier days of their growth, and with Foodlink Waterloo. With Trevor sitting on the Foodlink board, the entire family agrees that the organization is an active promoter of local foods in the community, which inevitably helps the business.

Finally, Herrle’s has built connections with local area schools, offering fall tours for students, they donate produce to the Waterloo Region Food Bank, and they do a fair amount of business (primarily buying, but also selling) with the Elmira Produce Auction.

Policy and Program Resources
Although government policies and programs have not been a key factor in the development of Herrle’s Country Farm Market, James acknowledges that the work done by Waterloo Region to promote local food has certainly been helpful in terms of encouraging people to seek out options for purchasing from local producers. Herrle’s also takes advantage of the federal AgriInvest program, and in the past, has participated in the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program (CAIS). They have also received funding from the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) and the Environmental Farm Plan for environmental initiatives such as erosion control and tree-planting.

Constraints/Overcoming Them
The Herrles tend to focus much more on successes and opportunities than on challenges, but one thing they do note has constrained development has been municipal zoning regulation that is prohibitive to on-farm retail, particularly when it comes to larger-scale operations such as theirs. James explains that, in the township, “there is a preference for a small-scale, picnic table at the end of the road type of on-farm sale, but you can’t make a living at that.” The issue became particularly important in 2005, when the family built the most recent addition on their market building. At the time, zoning regulations dictated that none of the new space could be used for retail. While the added room for storage has been useful, the business has grown so quickly over the last 10 years that expanding the retail space is becoming increasingly necessary. The main strategy for overcoming this challenge has been maintaining open communication with local officials; however, James notes that, when the time comes to apply for a new addition, “it’s going to get pretty sticky whether or not we’ll get what we’re looking for.”
Another challenge is presented by the cheap produce available at large-scale retailers such as Walmart. While some products sold at Herrle’s are priced comparably, it is impossible to compete with the pricing of so-called loss leaders. For example, James explains that Walmart can sell peaches for $2 per basket, and feature sweet corn at a price three times less than what it sells for at Herrle’s because they can afford to lose money on those items. However, he adds that “there is going to be a huge difference in quality.” Indeed, according to Michelle, customers at Herrle’s rarely – if ever – complain about price, and are instead far more likely to comment on quality. In Michelle’s words: “What we hear most of the time is ‘this is so fresh’. We hear that countless times a day.” Beyond simply providing a good product, taking the time to engage in conversation with customers, and to educate them about local food and its benefits, is key to ensuring long-term loyalty, and to combating the potential problem of higher prices.

**Successes**

In Joanne’s opinion, Herrle’s “big success is reaching a lot of people, educating them about agriculture, and making local food available for them.” Michelle adds that “we’re all about freshness, and being a welcoming place, with a nice atmosphere…and we have really great staff.” The strong feeling of attachment to the market on the part of consumers – that amounts to an almost emotional connection – is a big part of why they have been able to serve an estimated 100,000 customers this year, many of whom might come to buy corn, but end up leaving with a wide variety of other high quality, primarily nutritious goods as well.

**Relevance**

James suggests that so many small things have contributed to the overall success of Herrle’s Country Farm Market that it is impossible to pinpoint exactly what factor has been most important. Nevertheless, a number of issues were raised repeatedly. The first, reflected in the business motto, is quality and freshness. Important for maintaining that quality has been focusing attention on production of a niche crop – in the Herrles’ case sweet corn – and supplementing the retail operation by sourcing from farmers who have their own expertise in other crops. In James’ words: “We grow what we grow well, and source from other farmers who grow what they grow well.” Joanne points out that being willing to pay a fair price to get top quality produce from other farmers has also been essential.

The quality of the goods for sale helps contribute to customer loyalty; however, the Herrles do not rely on the produce to speak entirely for itself. Instead, they work actively to cultivate and maintain close relationships with their clients, offering them a number of opportunities to become educated about the benefits of a local food economy. Customers also genuinely appreciate seeing the face of the farmer that produces their food, so maintaining the family-run feel of the business has been highly beneficial. “There is always a family presence in the market” explains James, “from open to close, so there is a connection.”

Another important piece of advice that the family would offer to anyone trying to build a similar operation is to grow slowly. As Joanne puts it, in their case, the business started on a very small scale, and has been built through “years and years of hard work, and
taking some small risks, and big risks too. It has just been a very gradual thing.”
Expansion has been based on conducting yearly evaluations of what is working and what is not, and assessing market trends. For example, when it became clear that time-saving was a priority – particularly for female consumers – Herrle’s began to offer quick and easy menu planning ideas that were accompanied by prepared shopping lists. They have also gradually built their supply to include all the products that someone would need to make a summer meal, including meat and dairy. That way, they ensure that customers do not have to visit another grocery store after attending the market.

In spite of the importance of everything mentioned above, James acknowledges that “you can’t discount location. We could do all the same things we’re doing, and be 15 minutes farther away, or even 5 minutes farther away on a back road, and we could never do it.” The proximity to a large, relatively affluent, well-educated population has helped allow Herrle’s to grow its client base, and living in a Foodlink region, has only further facilitated that growth.

Finally, it is abundantly clear that the Herrles love what they do, something that Trevor points out is key to their ability to be innovative and successful. “To see the joy and happiness on peoples’ faces when they enjoy something you’ve produced” he says, “that’s why we love what we do.”
Chapter 5: Southern Ontario

Irena Knezevic and Erin Nelson

Summary

- All counties have developed some sort of local food branding along with a local food map, models that have been proven successful are being emulated, community support has generally been garnered, and great examples of innovation can be found in this region.
- Emphasis on: collaboration and cross-sector partnerships, taste, biodiversity, need for local solutions, unifying capacity of food, farmers' markets as social and cultural hubs, holistic perspectives, sense of personal investment.
- Concerns: cost of farmland and concentration of ownership, corporate disengagement, food waste, still better public awareness, lack of steady and secure funding, regulatory framework designed for the industrial model, land use planning (food production in competition with other sectors).
- Identified needs: change of government and corporate policies – more substantial entry of local food into the institutional and large distribution chains.
- Regional characteristics: proximity to Toronto and to several large US cities, synergies between wine and local food and culinary tourism, decline of manufacturing and increase in income insecurity (including farmers' income).
- Other highlights: use of social media, need to do away with guilt-driven environmentalism, emphasis on economic sustainability rather than profitability.

Background

For the purposes of this study the region of Southern Ontario included the following counties: Elgin, Essex, Kent, Lambton, Middlesex, Niagara, and Norfolk. Its southern positioning means that this region enjoys the longest growing season in Ontario, and the vast majority of the land is zoned agricultural. Although the entire region's economy has always heavily relied on agriculture, Essex, Kent, Lambton, and Elgin have also been highly dependent on manufacturing. As such, the region has been greatly affected by the decline of manufacturing and particularly the decline of automotive industry. For instance, Windsor-Essex has had the highest unemployment rate in the country since 2007.

Southern Ontario's agriculture is characterized by large operations, many of which are not primarily producing for local consumption. Norfolk County, for instance, produces an impressive amount and array of food, but much of that production goes to supply fast food chains. Leamington in Essex County is home to over 1500 acres of greenhouse production, which accounts for some 60% of all greenhouse production in Ontario. Three quarters of the greenhouse produce there, however, is grown for the US market. This
trend is affected in part by the proximity to the US border and the fact that the region is a part of the North American free-trade “superhighway” with five major border crossings.

Once dotted with food processing facilities, the region is also characterized by a processing void. Of the 3300 food processors in Ontario, more than half are situated in the “Golden Horseshoe” region around Toronto, which combined with the location of the Ontario Food Terminal means that much of the food produced in Southern Ontario is headed either for the US or for the Golden Horseshoe. There are some notable exceptions – Heinz plant in Leamington for instance has stayed in the town where it has been operating for over 100 years. Similarly, the town of Wheatley in Kent County is still the largest freshwater fishery in North America and most of the fish caught there is processed in one of Wheatley's several fish plants.

Figure 5.1: Map of Southern Region

Participants
78 initial contacts were made resulting in 21 interviews conducted in this region. The interviews included conversations with farmers' market managers (4), OMAFRA representatives (3), economic development officials (5), community initiatives (4) producer associations (2), producers (3), co-ops (2), a winner of the Ontario Premier's
Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence (1), and environmental services program participants (2). While it is impossible to estimate how many people were involved as employees, volunteers and clients/customers across these initiatives, it was clear that participation rates were steadily growing across categories – for instance, farmers markets were experiencing steady growth in both vendor numbers and customer numbers.

The region's local food initiatives are largely of rural and county-level type, with the exception of London (Middlesex) and Windsor (Essex) where there were a few urban initiatives and several rural/urban mixed projects. London and Windsor are the only cities in the region with populations of over 100,000 and the initiatives in Middlesex and Essex showed a more pronounced concern with social justice and accessibility. In the other counties, supporting local economies was the primary driver for this work, and the extent of local food initiatives was limited. Elgin, Kent, Lambton, and Niagara counties all proved to be somewhat difficult for recruiting interviews – partly because the initiatives were few, and partly because potential participants often felt that their regions were still in the early stages of such work and that they would have little to contribute. This was sometimes accompanied by a sense of insignificance in scale, and being overshadowed by what is taking place in the larger centres. Nevertheless, even those counties proved to offer some fascinating examples of creativity and enthusiasm around local food.

**Common Accomplishments**

Collaboration and cross-sector partnerships were identified as fundamental to the work and success of all initiatives. Consequently, the interviewees were often able to discuss initiatives they were not directly involved with. Some also noted that such collaborations are promising and necessary if changes to the food system were to take place. Joe Byrne, a lawyer, farmer, and community development official in Windsor-Essex, encouraged farmers and community groups alike to join co-ops, create coalitions, and act in unison, indicating that such close collaborations bring about “strength in numbers” but also allow for a diverse set of skills to come together.

All counties have developed some sort of local food branding along with a local food map. The campaigns have all involved county level, cross-sector collaborations, and all have been described as successful – to varying degrees but without exception. As a rule, they have been very effective in connecting local consumers with the producers, and have brought a variety of actors on board. Lana Drouillard, Director of Marketing and Communications with the Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation, developed the “Grown Right Here: Look for Local” campaign for that region and noted that there was still concern around how the distribution chains can be adjusted sufficiently to support local and small scale producers. Nevertheless, their campaign was launched at the Downtown Farmers' Market in Windsor in 2009 and at a Sobeys store in 2010. They also managed to get some local produce into the Sobeys store. Another partnership was formed with the Dairy Council. The “Grown Right Here: Look for Local” campaign lacks the resources to enter into the education system, but the local education collaboration with the Dairy Council now includes “Grown Right Here” into
school presentations. While such achievements are just small steps towards strengthening local food, they are not insignificant and are palpable symptoms of the changing tides.

The proximity of the region to both Toronto and to several large US cities, has made Southern Ontario a popular tourism destination. The food maps have thus also been excellent tools for culinary tourism. The region has worked extensively with the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance and the Ontario South Coast Wine. Consequently, Culinary Trail projects in Niagara, Norfolk, and Elgin have all been instrumental in promoting local food and southern Ontario's travel destinations. The flourishing wine industry in Essex and Niagara, and the budding wine production in the rest of the region have played an important role in attracting tourists and promoting local food. Ontario South Coast Wine, for instance, is working towards meeting the requirements to become a Designated Viticultural Area (which would include Brant, Elgin, Norfolk, Middlesex, and Oxford), and has worked tirelessly to also promote local food by ensuring that their wine events feature local food wherever possible. According to Judy Buck with Ontario South Coast Wine, this is partly because fresh, quality, local food enhances the wine experience, but also partly because small local producers are eager to support and promote one another. In Essex and Niagara, the well-established wine routes have long been collaborating with food producers and a number of the actors in this sector are involved in both wine- and food-related work.

Most of the interviewees spoke enthusiastically about the support of local communities in strengthening the local food system indicating that if affordable, local food is generally the preferred option. The number of people engaged (rather than profitability or any other factor) was most commonly cited as the measure of success. This was particularly highlighted with community initiatives (such as community gardens) that gave community members sense of agency. Municipal support for local food initiatives has been very good in cases of branding, food maps, and promotion of economic development. Several informants also pointed out that the enthusiasm in the local food movement has meant that large projects can be tackled with few resources. Community development was repeatedly noted as a, in some cases unforeseen, positive outcome of local food initiatives.

Food issues were repeatedly remarked upon as having immense power to rally entire communities and bring people together into the realm of determined and purposeful work. Initiatives like community gardens were described as empowering, satisfying, and in some instances transforming. Joe Byrne described one such instance: “I had a group of young offenders visit the farm and we didn't really do much - we just walked around the vegetable patch and talked about it and had a little lunch – and you could see the worry and strain on their faces when they first came to the farm, but within an hour or two they were just kids again and they talked about their rural backgrounds, and they asked questions and they were engaged.”

Farmers' markets in particular were often described as hubs of social activity. Shawn DeVree who manages the Market in St Thomas: “Farmers' markets are incredibly social and that cuts across age groups. I have girlfriends who come out with strollers and chat in
the little cafe area, and next to them are the seniors with their grandchildren, it's definitely a social function for many.” Victoria Rose who runs a local food blog and assists with the Downtown Windsor Farmers' Market similarly stated that this relatively new market (only in its third year) has already become the focal point for downtown Windsor – showcasing local art and community initiatives and providing a place for socializing while supporting local producers. Interpersonal trust was also frequently identified as both a motivator behind local food momentum, and one of the outcomes of such work.

Food resonates with everyone, and local food issues bring a number of wider social concerns into focus – economy, trust, community, health, social justice, and environment. Majority of our respondents discussed this complex nature of food issues and most strongly identified their perspectives as holistic. When asked to discern their most important motivating factors, they could sometimes identify one priority, but the answer was commonly along the lines of “they are all important” or “you cannot have one without the others.” Institutional priorities sometimes helped identify their top motivation – those working in economic development, for example, typically ranked local economy as their primary concern – but even then, their work addressed more than one concern, and all seemed adamant about the fact that one priority did not mean that the other concerns did not matter.

This southern region of Ontario proved to be a place of innovation in both rural and urban areas. In Norfolk County we found Spring Arbour Farm – Canada's first CSA that started delivering organic produce boxes as early as 1991. Norfolk is also home to Ontario's pilot program for “Alternative Land Use Services” (see below). The county that used to rely heavily on tobacco production turned the loss of tobacco markets into opportunity and a chance for creativity. Other innovative approaches were really responses to such perceived barriers as regulation (industry and government) and inadequate accessibility. David Cook, the owner of the Western Fair Market in London deliberately chose to not join Farmers' Markets Ontario as he felt that some of their policies around sales were serving as barriers to both producers and consumers. The market's independence allowed him to welcome resellers who bring in produce from several different farms (properly labelled) who would otherwise be unable to come to the market – something Cook would not be able to do under the Farmers' Markets Ontario umbrella. Similarly, Steve Green with the Windsor-Essex Community Supported Agriculture helped create an egg co-op after efforts to change the urban hen regulations in the city failed. Rather than giving up, community members decided to find ways avoid the complex regulations around eggs – they now own 24 hens collectively, share responsibility of looking after them, and share the bounty of the eggs. Green's work is also of note as his community garden and egg co-op project started with him posting an ad on Kijiji asking for access to free farmland. He received a response immediately from a family that was renting out farm land and was willing to provide space for him.

There was also a great deal of effort to consider and emulate some of the successful models found elsewhere. The Stop Community Food Centre and Savour Ottawa were two examples that were repeatedly praised. Linda Grimo of the Niagara Local Food Co-op discussed how the co-op was built on the Oklahoma Local Food Co-op model (see
below). Adam Vasey (Windsor-Essex) also spoke of the models like the Stop, as well as the Forgotten Harvest project in Michigan (food rescue and recovery organization that, among other things, takes 'seconds' — or second grade produce — from greenhouses in Essex County). Based on several models from Canada and the US (including the Denver Food Hub), a group in Essex County has recently submitted a funding proposal to develop a local food hub to supply school nutrition programs in the area.

Whereas many of the initiatives struggled to secure funding, several sources of funding were identified by more than one informant, including the Ontario Market Initiative Fund, Trillium, and private foundations like Metcalf and McConnell. The range of other sources identified was wide and it included community development funding like the Green Municipalities Fund, community businesses (particularly community-based entities like credit unions), faith communities, Farm Start, Savour Ontario, and activity-specific funders like the Ministry of Health and self-employment programs.

**Common Challenges**

Regulation and land use planning were most frequently identified as barriers to the success of local food initiatives. Food production was seen in competition with other sectors. Hence, despite the commonly cited municipal support for local food branding, several informants noted that corporate influence over municipal politics made municipal governments and bureaucracies less supportive than would be desired. Lynne Phillips of the Food Advisory Working Group in Windsor indicated that in Windsor-Essex land is often considered more valuable if set aside for development than for food production and that there was a general absence of municipal planning considerations for things like edible landscapes and local food supply.

Several interviewees spoke about the regulatory framework as designed for the industrial system, which makes it difficult for small producers to compete, and for community initiatives to succeed. This was further complicated by the fact that some of the regulation is subject to interpretation so that the enforcement of the rules varied between municipalities. This was particularly the case with farmers' markets and production. “Red tape” was seen as frustrating and even debilitating. Cindy Vanderstar with Norfolk Tourism and Economic Development puts this into perspective “There was a recent article in our local paper about the amount of red tape farmers have to deal with. They spend a large portion of their time doing paperwork. There is food safety and pesticide inspections, zoning issues, health and safety then there are so many insurance issues – farmers don't want on-farm tours because of liability.” Similarly, Mr. Kim Cooper with Economic Development Services in Chatham-Kent noted: “We need safe food, but we also need a balance... farmers are sometimes discouraged to get into 'value-added' work because processing also means added red tape... they basically need to hire someone just to do their paperwork.”

Cost of farmland in Ontario was also frequently cited as a barrier along with the concentration of land ownership. Concentrated land ownership was a concerning trend even where the cost of farm land was still relatively reasonable. Bryan Gilvesy (Y U
Ranch, Norfolk County) really drove this point home when he noted that one of his neighbour's was cash crop farming 12,000 acres with five employees because this is what the current agricultural system favours: “I understand why someone would run an operation like that, but I also know that this could be 120 farms of 100 acres – supporting 120 families.” He also added that such operations were not necessarily in the business of producing food since much of what they produce ends up in industrial and ethanol production chain. The system that supports such a model ignores the fact that small farms can be both sustainable and economically viable. He gave an example that he recently learned about – a small organic market garden farm outside of Toronto grossing some $21 000 per care. To make that an economically viable operation, the farm would need to use only 7 acres of land, whereas for industrial production a 12 000-acre farm is what is needed for viability.

Celso Oliveira (Windsor-Essex) identified corporate disengagement as one of the main barriers – he did not put blame anywhere, but merely indicated that the community in Windsor-Essex had not sufficiently engaged the big food producers. The big producers give charitable donations but still export most of what they produce, so that the local food system is merely a peripheral concern for them.

Sandy Mason, Petrolia Farmers' Market Coordinator (Lambton), expressed her disappointment with the amount of food that gets wasted while some emergency food services are still unable to accept perishables. Like Oliveira, she did not put blame anywhere, but merely observed that ways needed to be found to more efficiently use our food supplies and at the same time provide better food through food banks.

Public awareness is improving greatly but still needs work. As Cooper noted, many still don't recognize how important agriculture is “in the big picture... we have a cheap food policy and people have come to expect cheap food.” One study participant similarly stated: “Many people just don't care... they just want cheap food.” Adam Vasey thought that, although many interested individuals and groups are gaining momentum and he did not want to minimize the many recent accomplishments, there was still not enough “resonance with the broader public, not enough to create political pressures... so the lack of political will and even interest continues.” Linda Grimo would agree as she described how the Niagara Local Food Coop had no problem getting new members as most people support the co-op as an idea. However, even though the co-op is sustainable, getting the members to shop is a bit more difficult – there is really only a smaller core group that shops regularly.

Bryan Gilvesy, who is actively involved with food literacy initiatives, also noted the importance of education, but he also underlined the need to do away with the guilt-inducing environmentalism. He added that doing ecologically sound things does not have to imply loss of income insisting that the ecological services and economic sustainability can complement each other, and ALUS was just one example of that. He elaborated that the quadruple bottom line – a balance between ecological, economic, community, and cultural sustainability – was possible with some innovative effort.
One of the participants touched on another major barrier “We need to find ways to get local food into the big distribution chains... We have to do that if we are going to have any impact.” Another participant, Lana Drouillard recognized that one of the big barriers was not unwillingness on the part of distributors, but the fact that making that change would be costly and “everybody seems to be waiting for someone else to make the move.... retailers want producers to say 'we have what you need' and producers want the retail to make the first move and say 'we'll buy what you have'.”

Kim Reep with OMAFRA in Niagara thought that incentives to grocery chains could perhaps help in creating partnerships between those chains and local producers. Kate Burns with the Economic Development Office in Elgin indicated that, although some barriers still existed in the distribution system, great strides had been made and wholesalers and distributors had really taken on an important role in supporting and even promoting local food. Nick Kinkel pointed that the issue was more complicated – that the distribution opportunities existed, but once looked at relative to profitability they proved to be limited. This, he felt, could be frustrating to both distributors and producers – horticultural producers with large operations cannot be supported sufficiently by supplying a high-quality low-volume local market. “Selling from the roadside and delivering small amounts to restaurants is costly and a lot of work compared to selling large quantities in one place... 100 Mile Market, for example, is a good supplementary customer for farmers but the volumes they buy are not enough for the farmer to be sustainable. As a result the small buyers become frustrated knowing that the farmers have other priorities.” Joe Byrne called for a more direct solution: “This is not a knock at the wholesalers – they do what they need to do to survive in their business and they are very good at this – but there has to also be a way for a small producer to sell to wholesalers... what would really help in this area is to have a wholesaler that bought largely from small producers.”

The decline of manufacturing in the region also appeared to be a barrier to local food in that the growing number of those experiencing income insecurity (unemployed, underemployed, and low-wage) had other priorities with respect to food. This was particularly pronounced in Windsor-Essex where food bank use more than doubled between 2006 and 2009, and where even the university campus had to start a food bank. Colleen Mitchell with the local United Way explained that “food banks are no longer a part of an emergency system; they are now essentially another distribution system.” But rather than seeing local food as less important because this growing need, Mitchell thought that this actually heightened the need for local solutions, particularly projects that empower and build capacity – like community kitchens and gardens – “because, if you take a value-based approach, you know it's not just about poverty and access, but about access with dignity, about having a say when it comes to your food.” Sandy Mason similarly thought that emergency food services should somehow be enabled to provide better quality, fresh food, as the need to acquire food through food banks does not diminish one's the need to eat healthy. Mason felt that this was a public health issue as much as it was a poverty alleviation concern.
Lastly, lack of steady and secure funding was a common theme across these interviews. Many of the initiatives that were lucky enough to get some funding, would find themselves in a bind once that funding ran out. Although many participants commented on how much they were able to accomplish with sometimes really small amounts (sometimes grants of no more than $5000), there was also much anxiety about initiatives dying away when the resources dried up. This was as much the case with community groups, as it was with community development marketing campaigns – the problem cut across sectors.

**Other Common Themes**

Several of the participants indicated that their dedication to local food had a very personal overtone, namely, that they wanted their families and particularly their children, to eat good and healthy foods. Some identified the birth of their children as a turning point. Ken McMullen from Spring Arbour farm in Norfolk confirmed this stating that many of his CSA members joined during pregnancy with their first child deciding that they needed to eat more responsibly. Some of that concern was the immediate issue of food safety and the discomfort around foods imported from far away places with different regulations. But for most of our informants the idea of healthy food was more holistic and included concerns about future of local farming, community and environmental health, health of local economies, and the need to have more input into how our food system operates. Steve Green of Windsor spoke of his conviction that the current food system had already failed us by being neither sustainable nor just and stated “We don't really have any food security with the global trade of food... I want have more control over my bread basket, I don't want to be completely dependent on that system.”

In the two urban areas the perception of the current food system as inadequate was noticeably more pronounced, as several informants from Windsor and London spoke about the presence and awareness of poverty and it effects on food accessibility. David Cook, a market owner in London passionately defended his choice of allowing resale of produce indicating that his market “has the more expensive local strawberry for people who are looking for that and don't care how much it costs, but also has the 99c strawberries for those to whom those strawberries may be the only ones they eat this year... We often get slagged for allowing [Ontario Food] Terminal produce, but a study on the Western Fair market showed that by locating this particular market in East Village [in London] we were able to significantly reduce the average grocery bill for someone on fixed income and without a car.”

Adam Vasey who works on poverty issues in Windsor-Essex, noted that when we talk about poverty we have to keep in mind that “farmers are also living in poverty...” so support for local agriculture need also be part of poverty alleviation strategy.

There was a general recognition that food production had to be economically sustainable, that producers cannot be expected to provide good but affordable food, protect the environment, support food security initiatives, and yet not be able to earn an income. As Judy Buck noted, “environmental and economic sustainability have to be considered
together, we have to remember that most producers are just trying to make a living.” It is of note that most of the informants, including those working in food production, spoke of economic sustainability rather than profitability. There was also an understanding that even small-scale production can take place in diverse ways. Nick Kinkel, Agricultural Economic Development Advisor with OMAFRA in Simco suggested: “There is a lot of potential for what you could call 'backyard gardeners', who have an acre or five and love gardening. There are huge opportunities for supplementary family income that can contribute to a small-scale supply chain – such as small restaurants and bed-and-breakfasts for example.”

McMullen, Gilvesy, and Byrne, all experienced farmers, also discussed the importance of biodiversity. They indicated that what was produced on the farm needed to be diverse to make for healthier, more resilient farms. They also pointed to diverse farms contributing to diversity of ecosystem in which they operate.

Another common theme was the need for provincial and federal policy that would do more to institutionalize local food. Some public procurement policies have been commended but seen as somewhat symbolic and insufficient. Several participants thought that there was much duplication with municipalities developing their own food charters and strategies, and that a province-wide policy change would have a quick and general effect on how we understand our local food systems and their role in community life. One of our interviewees drew a parallel between the province-wide efforts to allow chickens in the cities and the clothes line ban in Ontario, indicating that lifting that ban across the province shortcut municipal debates for something that was already inevitable. Allowing hens in urban areas would end the frustrating debates that are taking place in the various municipalities.

Local food blogs were credited with contributing to popularity of local food, and in general the use of social media and other communication technologies was seen as beneficial, as the 21st century's version of word of mouth. Many initiatives relied on Facebook and blogs to keep the public informed and connected. Several projects are based in virtual space – the Niagara Local Food Co-op and Essex County's County Connect are both virtual markets that connect consumers with local producers.

Finally, taste was mentioned by several interviewees, even suggesting that all the other benefits of local food can be jeopardized if that food is not fresh or does not taste good. This was very much noted by those who work with culinary tourism initiatives. However, it was also mentioned by those who were concerned with accessibility. David Cook noted that “everyone should be able to access food that tastes good” and Lynne Phillips stated “it is still not common to hear discussions of food access that include considerations of taste – it's almost an assumption that people with limited access to food have no taste, or should not have it.”
Case Study 1: Spring Arbour Farm

Location: Walsingham (Norfolk County), ON

Interviewee: Ken McMullen, Owner/operator (recently retired)

Phone interview June 13, 2011 (Irena Knezevic), site visit August 15, 2011 (Erin Nelson)
Photos by Erin Nelson

Summary

- First CSA in Canada
- One-person enterprise that maintained economic sustainability over 20 years of operation
- Winner of the Ontario Premier's Award for Agri-food Innovation Excellence
- Versatile operation with biodiversity as its main organizing principle

Overview

History

Ken McMullen was at the helm of the Canadian Organic Growers in the 1980s, when he first became involved with plant patenting legislation debates. At the time, he was in management consulting in the area of diversity (working largely with issues of multiculturalism and diversity in the workplace). He made links in his work as he saw the contemporary agricultural practices, including patenting, as posing risks to plant genetic diversity. On the other hand he had also worked on issues of public health and community housing and witnessed the power of community gardens.

“The underlying institutional structure, business model in agriculture, is based on monoculture, and the loss of genetic material, the transportation routes, the use of chemicals are actually bandaids to prop up a system that wasn’t really working, which is monoculture, and therefore there needed to be a business model for farms that were based on diversity rather than uniformity. So, I put all of those things together and designed Spring Arbour Farm to be an integration of a large gene pool, and a customer base that would support the farm.”
The Farm
Spring Arbour was founded as Canada's first CSA in 1991 with 10 shares, and it operated for two decades with McMullen only retiring earlier this year. In the last year of operation the farm was supplying to 100 families (3 of the original 10 still being shareholders), or approximately 300 people. In 2009 McMullen was a recipient of the Ontario Premier's Award for Agri-food Innovation Excellence.

Having lived in Toronto, McMullen had personal connections in the city and the vast majority of his CSA customers over the years were Toronto professionals. He credited the loyalty of his customers to the development of personal relationships with them, having an annual open house at the farm and being transparent about his production practices.

Other commercial components were added over time, so that the farm became financially sustainable because “Each crop is expressed five different ways: I sell fertilizer at the beginning of the year, then seed, then transplants, then fresh produce, and then any surplus is used for preserves... taking the same crop and selling it multiple times.” This gives him sales from May through to December. Having the sales spread out over several months and a variety of products allows for the main purpose of the farm to remain the priority and not be compromised for financial reasons – that purpose being building and maintaining diversity, a shift in values from a focus on uniformity and hierarchical control, to diversity based on a network model of organization. The model is such that shareholders would buy shares in the early spring, he would inform them of the ready-for-harvest produce by email, they would place their order and he would harvest and deliver accordingly, all with zero waste. Now that he has retired, the farm production is just for his family and for maintaining biodiversity he has created there.

Context
When McMullen started in Norfolk County in 1991, on his concession there were 12 farmers, each with 50-100 acres of land under cultivation. Now there are 2 – himself with 10 of his 50 acres under production, and one with 3000 acres farmed. In 1991, McMullen was the first farmer in his area to grow something other than tobacco. Much of the Norfolk agriculture has been revived in recent years with the demise of tobacco farming, which combined with more farmers markets in and around Norflok, and the proximity of Toronto with its new, more discerning consumer, has created opportunities for more diverse fruit and vegetable production.

Human Resources
Although Spring Arbour has had apprentices over the years, “it was designed to be a one person operation.” McMullen has a good business mind, and he identifies his lack of formal agricultural training as an advantage: “I couldn’t have done this with any agricultural training. Agricultural training would have required me to spray the hell out of everything. There was no training in organic farming when I was starting. The only resource at the time was Rodale [Institute].” He thus had to be creative, learn to work around crop losses and come up with a motto that “There is no such thing as a crop failure, there is only a marketing problem.” He learned to assume that he would lose 5-6 crops each season, but growing three dozen crops, that loss would be manageable. He
also allowed for slow growth of the operation, expanding by sometimes as little as ¼ acre between years.

**Physical Infrastructure**
His last year of operating the CSA saw him with a 50-acre property, a tractor, irrigation system, refrigerator, greenhouse, and cisterns. In the early years “it was a lot of bootstrapping” taking out bank loans, and buying much of the equipment second-hand. But he had a sound business model, and was good at marketing.

**Natural Resources**
McMullen is insistent that the maintenance of a diverse landscape is more valuable to environmental sustainability than every piece of land being put to its “best use” in terms of economic profit. He works with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to protect and restore the natural landscapes of the region. They create diversity on the landscape, which has zero economic value but is invaluable in all other respects.

**Financial Resources**
The farm consists of “profit centres” and each centre covers the cost of its own particular operation: compost, greenhouse, gardens, and kitchen. For instance, one third of the transplants from the greenhouse are sold to cover the cost of operating that greenhouse. Cash from CSA shares means that the members are essentially the bankers, who “loan” the cash up front to get produce later, which means the CSA is selling trust. There used to be a mortgage on the farm, and also a line of credit. The mortgage is paid off now, but there is still the line of credit. McMullen's previous training helped him learn how to put together a financial plan that would seem reasonable to a banker, which made it easier to get loans. He also has generally kept his prices at about 30% above market price which is reasonable but also re-assuring to consumers who have learned to associate higher price with quality. He and his spouse both do off-farm work as well – he does staff training and development and management consulting during the winter. The farm itself, however, does not require the off-farm income: “The farm is sustainable, though not profitable.”

**Community Resources**
The trust of the customers is key in small-scale food production: “A shockingly intimate business is knowing what people eat…It was a dialogue I carried on with people for 20 years, and the trust was the essential element, that I kept building on year after year, but it was also something that could be easily broken. It could be as simple as a rotten tomato.”

McMullen also collaborates with the Nature Conservancy of Canada in preservation. Although not directly involved with either, he credits Foodshare and the Toronto Food Policy Council for some positive policy changes. “They have picked up the institutional response to what I tried to start before.” He also identified Slow Food as instrumental in linking him with new CSAs, although many of those are no longer CSAs: “There are easier ways of making money in agriculture. The pull of the monocrop.”

**Policy and Program Resources**
McMullen pointed to Quebec as the most progressive province in terms of policy: “They tend to put an emphasis on agricultural innovation and small scale.” Ontario, however,
has for so long been telling farmers to “get big or get out… their policies reinforced what they saw, and what they saw was a rationalization of the land base in Ontario, whereby small scale farmers were bought out by mid sized farmers who were bought out by large-scale farmers.” There is also a dearth of policies that build social capital in rural areas, and preservation of local expertise.

“At the small end of farming is the CSAs, farmers’ markets, small-scale farmer, there is an intensification at that level... but it’s not centralized and it has no political clout. We have no political representation.” This despite the fact that small farmers outnumber the large-scale one by 3:1. “The barrier I feel is not policy, but…institutional resistance. The fact that institutions don’t change very easily and very quickly. It’s a crystallization of beliefs, and the belief that is crystallized is that monocropping is the only thing, and large-scale farming is the only profitable way.” This in turn results in taxation system, access to grants, and food processing regulation that are really tailored for large-scale.

**Desired Assets**

McMullen reiterated the importance of the Quebec results. The government there worked with banks to create a loan portfolio for small-scale farmers, gave grants and subsidies for small-scale farmer start-up, wrote off bad debt, allowed leverage for purchase of equipment. “Where I see most small-scale farmers having difficulty is with the institutional frameworks. It’s the feeling of being on the outside. Many of them are afraid of local bankers.” He was able to navigate the institutional morass more easily because of his past work experience, but suggested that new farmers are always on edge about loans.

He also called for a publicly funded breeding program. “It’s what used to be called the public good, and there is no longer any policy that deals with the public good. There isn’t a budget line I can think of in OMAFRA that is rationalized based on public good.”

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**

He is critical of what he identified as excessive and narrow focus on “local” only: “I don’t think local food is the solution…It is the production values that go into the growing of food that give quality, not the distance from the market place.” The development of farmers’ markets has been very beneficial, giving producers another access point to customers without the middle man of grocery giants, but he also indicated that farmers’ markets are a hard way to sell, especially when there is competition from resellers.

McMullen also identified personal expectations as a potential constraint: “My own emotional desire to be successful was one of my biggest constraints, and what it leads to is a panic in the first 3 years of bootstrapping a new business.” That tainted Ken’s first marketing attempts, and also what he considered success on the farm. “As time went on, the feedback from my customers reinforced that I was doing it right, or I adjusted it to make it right.”

The overall system is geared to large scale production so he has to compete with organic produce in large grocery stores. Yet, he always knew that keeping the prices up a bit was important to signal quality. The advantage of a CSA is that he could do his marketing during the winter and sell the CSA shares months before his produce is actually
delivered. The advance sales means that sales take place when produce prices are higher everywhere, and fresh produce less available. Financing a small operation can also be a challenge, the one he overcame mainly because both he and his spouse had off-farm income.

McMullen feels that the declining numbers and ageing demographics of Ontario farmers leave them with little political clout. This, combined with much of the farm labour now being migrant workers who cannot vote, places farming on the political margins. Agricultural policy and programs are still geared towards large-scale monocrop production, and small-scale, particularly organic, growers are under the radar. His successes have been in spite of policy and programs, not because of them. He highlighted that his neighbours provided a lot of support, and the building of those trusting relationships was key: “The best thing I ever did was ask my neighbour for help.”

Successes
Stable clients are McMullen’s most important accomplishment, “a stable client base that is integrated into the farm and feels that the farm is theirs. I just realized, the thing I miss the most [since retiring] is the little kids running to the door and saying ‘Farmer Ken is here’.” He already misses the relationships that were formed, which were the greatest success of his CSA. Consider the following exchange between McMullen, and our researcher Erin Nelson: “I’ve got a generation of kids that knows that food comes from somebody, from some place. Their peers have no idea what food really is, but my kids do.” [Nelson: You think of them as your kids?] “Yeah, that’s right. I do. I think of them as my kids. There’s a piece of me in every one of them, a very large piece in fact. They’ve grown up on my food.”

Relevance
When asked about how his work would be relevant to other producers and other initiatives in other communities he listed a very focused set of lessons he learned and would advise everyone to consider. The first of those lessons is simply “add value” – in the case of his farm the value is in the transparent production on a diverse, organic farm that contributes to health of his customers and of the environment. The second lesson is “spread income opportunities throughout the year and understand that expenses generate income.” Anything he buys for the farm he buys wholesale and resells at retail thus lowering his operating costs. The third bit of advice is to focus on building good customer relations, especially by giving the customer more than they’re expecting.

McMullen also sees his model increasingly viable for Ontario and thinks the direct sales aspect of food production will grow rapidly. “The bigger picture is the squeezing of the middle class. It’s a self-directed opportunity for people who find themselves overeducated and underemployed. I can see it happening already in the urban centres where people are borrowing backyards, or rooftop gardening, inner city greenhousing. I’ve seen quite a few projects emerging around that area, and I call that farming, but OMAFRA wouldn’t, because it’s not taking place in the rural areas. In the rural areas it’s a good opportunity to transition away from monocropping and chemical agriculture, and I’m finding a number of young farmers are willing to try it as a way to stay on the farm.”
Case Study 2: Western Fair Farmers' Market

Location: London (Middlesex County)

Interviewee: Dave Cook, Owner/operator

Phone interviews July 12 and September 9, 2011 (Irena Knezevic), site visit September 17, 2011 (Lisa Ohberg), additional information from a conversation with Sarah Merritt, Old East Village BIA, September 16, 2011 (Irena Knezevic). Photos by Lisa Ohberg

Summary

- Farmers' market located in what is otherwise a food desert
- Has been shown to have influenced (lowered) overall food costs in the neighbourhood
- Economically sustainable, while providing a launch pad for small producers
- Dedicated to providing opportunities for producers while also ensuring access to affordable food

Overview

History

The market opened in December 2006. At that time David Cook, who had been roasting and selling coffee as a hobby decided to try coffee as a side business. His coffee business took off and he eventually quit his job as an executive in food distribution industry, and started selling at Western Fair and other farmers' markets. He then started working one day a week with the previous owner, and in November 2008 Cook took over the entire operation of the Western Fair Farmers' Market (WFFM). In 2009 he was approached by Maisonville Place mall to start up a seasonal outdoor market, which now has about 40 vendors. In 2011 another outdoor market, Southdale, was added.

The Market

WFFM is a year round indoor market with some 100 vendors located on two floors of a historical building in London's Old East Village. The main floor is dedicated entirely to food, and the second floor booths feature mostly vendors selling crafts and other local
products. Though the market is only open on Saturdays, the space is not used for any other purpose, so some of the vendors, including Cook's coffee roastery, are also using their market spaces as production sites. Overall, Cook identified that the market was a really a small business incubator – a launch pad for producers who can start by creating a viable side operation to then grow their business in the market. WFFM, though only 5 years in existence, boasts some of the highest traffic counts among London markets.

**Context**
The market is located in Old East Village, a low income area of London that is otherwise a food desert and has a high concentration of social agencies. Sarah Merritt with the local BIA explained the neighbourhood had long been a marginalized part of the city that had “been left out of the game” but local community building efforts guided by multifaceted redevelopment plan are now transforming the area and the Market is a big part of that. The neighbourhood had been experiencing a range of challenges common to many Canadian urban core neighbourhoods, and the BIA in partnership with the Community Association and the City of London decided to implement a capacity focused approach to addressing local issues. This approach was in contrast to a number of failed revitalization attempts that were deficiency focused. As Merritt described it, it was about “working with what we have, recognizing that everyone had something to contribute... we're not about gentrification (although there is nothing wrong with neighbourhoods like ours looking gentrified) we are about improving the lives of the people who live in this neighbourhood.” It is in this context that the WFFM started operating and although the area has traditionally been considered challenging for retailers, WFFM has had no difficulty attracting shoppers.

The neighbourhood was identified as a food desert in a 2008 study by two University of Western Ontario researchers (Larsen and Gilliland) who at the time also showed that London was indeed a textbook example of a suburbanization of supermarkets and low-income inner-city areas that had become food deserts. Their 2009 research, however, declared that the Old East Village was no longer a food desert, demonstrating that the market had resulted in significant nutritious food basket savings (12%) for local residents, as well as greater availability and better variety of fresh fruits and vegetables – thus crediting the market with improving both economic and physical access to food in the area.

Cook indicated that all the markets in and around the city are estimated to still only attract only 5% of the population and that the potential to stay financially viable and even grow was excellent for local markets in general and WFFM in particular. “If there are days when the numbers are lower, it's not because there are too many markets, but because the public is not engaged enough.” Cook also pointed out that with the newest outdoor markets, the market day is Sunday so that they are not competing with other markets in the area.

Merritt also explained that the market traffic has made it possible for the BIA to think bigger: “We want to grow a food district here... to incubate businesses from the market.
onto the [main street] corridor and have other outlets that sell food that the market does not offer - because farmers' markets are not meant to be selling everything”

**Human Resources**
Cook comes to this enterprise with a wealth of experience. He worked for years in the culinary industry and then for nine years for Sobeys, where he excelled and eventually worked at the head office. In other words, Cook is well-equipped to run a large and complex operation and is well aware of what is required to keep such an operation economically sustainable.

Cook also has a team, which he described as “people who are highly motivated and quick to learn and develop new skills.” He gives the employees a lot of space to grow, so they are all highly skilled in what they do. The team consists of a manager, a maintenance person, and a part-time office person. Occasionally he has had volunteers who come in and help with a specific project, but those instances are on-and-off cases, so there is no organized volunteer support to speak of.

**Physical Infrastructure**
The market operates from a rented building that provides them with 56 000 square feet of open space (approximately 44 000 square feet of selling space). The building is owned by the City of London, and is a historical structure – it was built in 1927 as an exhibition hall for the Western Fair. This adds to the character of the space, but also comes with all the downsides of old buildings – it is difficult to heat, there is no air-conditioning, and there have been no major investments in the structure for a number of years. It is equipped with an audio system that is used to make announcements every so often about the products and sales that can found at specific food vendors' booths. The building is located on London's main street, but in the area that is experiencing some disrepair. Adjacent to the building is a public park (Queens Park) that had been underutilized for years, although it is now starting to see increased activity due to the market. There is also a small 1917 building on the property that has not been used for anything for at least a decade. Cook is now looking to take on that space as well, and use it to relocate some of the production from the market. Other than the building, there are carts and dollies that are needed to operate the market, but no other physical assets.

**Financial Resources**
Table fees are the only source of revenue for this business. The market has not received any funding from anyone thus far. Cook would like to see more investments into the building, but that is simply not feasible yet. The table fees at the market are $50 per day for a 10'X10' booth on the main floor, second floor booths are $30. Some vendors take more than one booth and the booths are permanent, so many vendors leave their non-perishables there, and some have really built their booths up and created beautiful displays. Cook acknowledges that the fees are higher than they are at other markets, especially municipally-run ones, but this market pays a monthly rent of about $15 000.

Despite the success of his operation, Cook also noted the importance of being realistic about what it takes. Running a market can be hard and stressful work and to start something this big, skills, dedication and capital are required: “The businessman who
started [WFFM] had access to $250,000 to open it, and he was dedicated to the idea, so that's what it takes.”

**Community Resources**

The market is embraced by the neighbourhood BIA and it has benefited from the marketing work the BIA has done. It has also received academic attention through the work of Jason Gilliland at the University of Western Ontario.

**Desired Assets**

Cook suggested that it would be very beneficial to have a local small business development organization come on board as a financial partner and further develop the incubator model. He would like to see a support network that can facilitate small business lending as well as business skills development. “I came from a business background and I had some pitfalls along the way that I had not anticipated. So someone who does not have that background is even more likely to encounter struggles. We already have many of these things [loans, skills development], but it would be really good to have all that in one place and have a business development agency partner with us.”

Cook also indicated that he would like to see more institutional purchasing policy in the province. While he is aware that some good initiatives have been taking place, he thinks that they need to be more substantial.

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**

The City of London has classified the Market under the “hawker/ peddler” category, which comes with a $1000 licence every three months. The market is not registered with the Farmers' Markets Ontario, which has created some obstacles along the way. However, by making the decision to not be a member of the association Cook is able to do things other markets are not. For instance, he can have one person selling for multiple farms (though he requires that produce is labelled showing which farm it comes from), rather than having to follow the 70% rule at other markets (can only sell up to 30% from other farms/producers). This, Cook stated, diversifies the offerings in the market and makes market participation more economically viable for producers. On the other hand, this also allows him to bring in resellers of food from the Food Terminal, which ensures that in addition to quality and artisan local food, there is also affordable produce for those who have to shop on a budget – an important consideration when operating in a lower income neighbourhood. He also does not have to inspect his vendors farms – if he had to do this, he would simply not have the resources to inspect every vendors’ production site.

Cook also described how he was having difficulty getting traffic on the second floor of the market building and consequently the rate of occupancy there was only at 60-70%. His roastery had been at a different site, so he decided to move the roasting operation on the second floor and opened up another cafe and “the traffic literally doubled overnight. The quality of offerings also went up and I now don't have an empty booth to rent, in fact, there are 15 people on the waiting list.”

An additional obstacle was identified with regulation. The Health Unit recently requested more facilities, for instance some vendors are now required to have triple-station hand
washing sinks. To keep the market going, Cook estimates that some $100 000 will have to be invested over the next couple of years to meet that requirement. “It's a significant cost. That said, however, I understand why they are doing this, I agree with it and want to meet their requirements. We want to make sure the opportunities that the market offers continue to grow.”

**Successes**

WFFM is a successful, economically sustainable business. It has been embraced by the community and it has provided incubator opportunities for numerous businesses. “There is creation and strengthening of relationships, support for local business and people becoming more astute in voting with their dollar, and people want to eat better, they want quality and hence have a vested interest in local food” Cook stated, adding that his big motivation was “The celebration of food artistry... creating a strong food culture and recognizing that strong food culture is intimately involved with food security”

Cook also has the coffee roastery that has done very well, having grown by 65% in the last year and having recently secured a contract with Sobeys. That business is now employing more than a dozen people, and projecting a $1.5 million year for 2011 revenue. But Cook is careful to acknowledge how instrumental WFFM has been for that business: “this is a business that started at the Market and has in its entirety been developed in the Market.” And his business is not the only one doing well: “I can name a half a dozen business off the top of my head that re doing upwards of $250 000 in sales a year, and that is one day a week at the market... the economic development component is right there, written on the wall.” The estimates for overall market sales are around $110 000 a Saturday in the summer.

For the two outdoor markets, the fees are only $20 per booth. This makes it somewhat hard to grow those operations, especially because Southdale has been slow to take off (although Cook noted that some farmers there are really committed, and they are now looking to move the market elsewhere for 2012). Though there is no real profit from the two outdoor markets, Cook sees them as marketing opportunities for the WFFM and farmers' markets in general.

**Relevance**

Cook thinks the market is an excellent model for how to provide a platform for small businesses to get started inexpensively. “The employment potential of that can be enormous.” Merritt similarly explained that the informal incubator model in the market really works because “the table fees are low enough that if your business does not work out, the loss is so low, you can afford it... at the same time, being at the market exposes you to opportunities for experiential learning from other vendors.”

Cook would like to see his model replicated, but he also underscored the importance of accessibility in such considerations. He indicated that his markets showcase food that is more expensive, for those who are looking for such food, but also feature inexpensive foods from the food terminal with an awareness that his markets are in areas that are largely food deserts. He suggested that we needed more markets that are affordable.
“There are a lot of examples of high-end markets in Ontario, but there are not many cases of markets locating in economically depressed areas.”

Cook felt that markets can really play a role in supporting local connections and relationships, “The community I live in, which is not where the market is, has a void of 'community'. There is no third place. You know how Starbucks says they are the third place – Starbucks is not the third place. Third place is something that is not quite defined yet here, but that's what the market is starting to do.” Merritt agreed, saying that “We joke here that the farmers' market is the only place in the city where it can take up to six hours to buy a dozen eggs... it's our equivalent of the Italian piazza.” She added that the relationship with the community was key: “His business and any other business that thrives in this community are businesses that understand that it is community and commerce together... you have to understand your role in community building – if you don't, the community will not be there to support you when times are tough.”

Cook also felt that hubs of local economic activity were increasingly important amid the ongoing loss of local food producers in North America, and the current economic crisis that has affected Southwestern Ontario: “The trust we once had in the large transnational corporations has been damaged through the recession because they left us... the economies that were supporting London disappeared when they decided that they were no longer financially viable.”

Cook also emphasized the importance of collaboration, noting that he does not want to compete with other markets but would prefer to join forces in promoting farmers' markets and growing the customer base for markets as a whole. Although he has created a successful business without any funding, he was in favour of micro-loans for local food initiatives: “Often it's not a lot of money they need – for some projects as little as $1000 or $5000 can really make a difference.”
Chapter 6: Province Wide Initiatives

Irena Knezevic and Alison Blay-Palmer

Summary

- Complex goals that commonly include economic sustainability
- Pronounced concern with health and consumer knowledge
- Characterized by creative ways of promoting Ontario foods

Background and Participants

Initiatives with provincial focus tend to have more broad definitions of “local” food, with Ontario food being the default definition of local, or at the very least clearly identified as the much preferred second choice – i.e. if something is not available in a particular locality, then that product from elsewhere in Ontario was seen as the next most desirable choice. Otherwise, as seen below, the motivations, successes, and challenges identified were quite similar to what our more localized interviews demonstrated (see regional chapters for more detail).

Eight interviews were conducted for this section of our report and they included initiatives supported by the provincial government, food industry, and non-profit and grassroots sectors.

Common Motivations, Accomplishments, and Challenges

As with more localized initiatives (see regional chapters for more detail), these province-wide efforts were motivated by a range of factors. However, they all, in one way or another, allude at significant problems with the conventional food system. Hannah Renglich with the Ontario Natural Food Co-op (see the case study section) noted:

With food's increasing commodification and industrialization, the things people have to eat are not necessarily safe or nutritious, and may contribute greatly to ill health. Lack of access to food is a source of shame and indignity, bringing Canadians to food banks or soup kitchens, to dumpster diving, begging, and chronic hunger... Social justice is a natural extension of the right to food belief I have, though I'm working on building communities with regard to food and environmental justice.

She added: “Unsustainable agricultural practices contribute tremendously to pollution and carbon emissions and global warming, while landgrabbing, biofuel production, and 'development' contribute to unsustainable land use on prime agricultural land.” But the growing efforts to build sustainable local food systems may offer many positive outcomes: “If we hope to encourage others to pursue alternatives in sustainable
production, co-production, processing, distribution, consumption, etc, it must be because it is empowering, enriching, and fulfilling.”

Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker from Sustain Ontario stated: “I think it's simply the love of good food that motivates many of the groups,” adding “The reason my work is about food is that food has the potential to be holistic – it encompasses environmental, economic and social aspects.”

Recognitions of local, small-scale initiatives are becoming more prominent. One of our interviewees argued that small farms could be very efficient and that it was often a matter of deciding on the right varieties that well-suited for the area. He also argued that we need more comprehensive understanding of local food pointing out that local is not always sustainable nor is it always efficient. He further underscored that different communities need different solutions – some will benefit from farmers' markets, other could do better with European-style community stores that feature local products. One thing he was adamant about, however, is that food production needs to be reasonably profitable “no-one should work for free to make a local food system work.”

Franco Naccarato (Ontariofresh) highlighted the importance of authenticity and indicated that Ontariofresh has been following Foodland Ontario definitions, but he suggested that food processing would have a more difficult time complying with the Foodland Ontario definitions. He alluded that consumers have certain expectations when they see items branded with Ontario identifiers – he suggests if you have chocolate milk where the milk is from Ontario but chocolate is not, it should be labelled “Ontario milk flavoured with chocolate.” Naccarato repeatedly mentioned the importance of collaboration and partnerships – ensuring that various actors are not working at cross-purposes and also gaining strength and clout through numbers and wide-spread presence. He also pointed to the problems of the distribution networks that are set up to support economies of scale, which is a major barrier to shifting food paradigms effectively.

Naccarato was enthusiastic about communication technologies that have made it easier for North Americans to share thoughts about food with one another. He also expressed enthusiasm around culinary work that emphasizes freshness and quality, as well as culinary tourism initiatives. He noted that some are more ready than others to really turn to local food. He felt that most people think that local food is a great idea but getting them there may be more difficult – many have the misperception that local food costs more and are apprehensive to change because of the difficulty in identifying and sourcing local products. He also identified problems around proper labelling – if a cow comes from Alberta but is processed in Ontario, is that an Ontario product?

Elizabeth Smith (Nutrition Resource Centre) indicated that taste and trust were also important, that local food is fresher and tastier and “it's nice to buy food produced by someone you also say hi to, and I think Canadian farmers are quite savvy in producing good and safe food.”

Barriers to success of local efforts, however, are many. One of the study participants indicated that producer groups could really benefit from more detailed sales data for the
province, but that those numbers are difficult to obtain. Another participant was greatly concerned with labelling and traceability and pointed to the shortcomings of certain grading and labelling practices. He indicated that if beef is labelled as Canadian beef, it can be beef from anywhere in Canada, and in case of ground beef it is likely mix of beef from all over the place. He also described that “angus beef” merely means dark-hide cattle beef, and is not a reference to the genetic heritage of the cattle. He was very adamant about the importance of honesty in the food systems and how disappointing he found mislabelled foods – ones that make false or half-truth claims about origin, production and such. Integrated food value chains that are sustainable and honest are what he works towards. He explained that we have to be realistic about things like convenience food – that is not going away. But consumers want local food because international food supply is showing its weaknesses. Yet, local food has to be good – quality, fresh foods is what consumers are looking for, they won't buy bad product and pay premium for it just because it's local. He also warned against assuming that local is automatically sustainable – he gave the example of every farmer driving a truck to a market versus a partnered and streamlined distribution solutions.

Another barrier identified by Rebecca LeHeup (Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance) was the absence of real enthusiasm for collaboration and sharing “there are too many fingers in the pie. Organizations need to bring their 'ingredients' and help make the pie bigger.” She also noted that the ageing farmer population in Ontario is a food security concern.

Nuaimy-Barker would add: “Our supply management policy is really good for some farmers, but it works against others. I don't think it's a system that we should do away with... I think it's a system that should be modified.”

Yet, our participants seemed optimistic about possibilities that lie ahead. Renglich and Whittaker (Ontario Natural Food Co-op) noted the need for rethinking institutional structures at governmental levels, and creation of such things as Ministry of “good food” and/or co-op secretariat – arguing that, while ambitious, those ideas are not unrealistic and Brazil is one example where implementation of such ideas has been quite successful.

But the solutions may not be the same everywhere and how successes are understood may vary as well: Sustain Ontario is working on evaluation indicators and as that is work in progress Nuaimy-Barker was hesitant to identify ways to measure effectiveness but indicated that sustainability over time needed to be a big part of that. “I am interested in numbers of new farmers, but also in knowing how many of them are still farming three years later, for example.” LeHeup identified the cultural component of food as critical to strengthening the Ontario food system, “there are a lot of amazing treasures across this province in terms of food culture and how the different places can be experienced through food.” Those varying conditions may mean varying approaches: “How regional hubs will develop will have to differ from community to community... In the North, we may see that we need more freezer space and more places where meat that is hunted can be butchered and prepared... whereas in Toronto, that would not be concern” (Nuaimy-Barker).
Case Study 1: Local Organic Food Co-ops (LOFC) / Ontario Natural Food Co-op (ONFC)

Interviewees: Hannah Renglich, LOFC Animator, with Randy Whitteker, ONFC General Manager

In person interview and site visit May 25, 2011 (Irena Knezevic), phone interview September 1, 2011 (Irena Knezevic), photos courtesy of ONFC

Summary

• In existence for 35 years, ONFC is a model of a sustainable operation that has over the years managed to resist being absorbed by transnational distribution giants
• While relatively large, ONFC continues to work based on principles of cooperation and sustainability (economic, social and environmental)
• The Local Organic Food Co-operatives, as one of the ONFC projects, is aiming to create collaborative networks and one of its mandate's pillars is the creation of regional food hubs

Overview

History
ONFC was founded in 1976 as the Ontario Federation of Food Co-ops and Clubs, Inc (OFFCC). The organization's vision is “Living in a sustainable world from seed to plate.” The Local Organic Food Co-operatives emerged in February 2009 at a meeting co-hosted by Russ Christianson and Denyse Guy on behalf of the Ontario Co-op Association (this is one of the four strategic directions of the Ontario Co-op Association’s work). The initial meeting brought together several local organic food co-ops who decided to work together – whether the group will interact as a loosely affiliated network, a membership category at ONFC, or as a co-op of co-ops is yet to be determined. Within months of launching, the LOFCs came under the umbrella of ONFC and became one of ONFC’s nine strategic initiatives. In March 2010 baseline market research was completed followed by the second meeting in April of that year. This meeting helped create shared vision, mission, values and purpose documents. Shortly after, the research results report, and business and marketing plan, both developed by Russ Christianson, were published.

The Co-op
ONFC is not-for-profit, consumer co-op. There are 1400 members “across eastern Canada (Winnipeg to the Maritimes).” Most of the member/customers are independently owned retailers or foodservice establishments, but the co-op also sells to almost 400 food buying clubs and a number of food co-operatives. ONFC also has a private label, 'Ontario Natural', which is produced and distributed only in Ontario. Renglich and Whitteker also identified a “wide range of affiliations, memberships and linkages in the co-op, organic food, food security and local food communities.” ONFC is also somewhat of a hybrid as it still very much focuses on small-scale initiatives, but also distributes to chains like Whole Foods and Loblaws.
Context
ONFC is one of two remaining independent natural food co-ops in North America, as most have demutualized or been absorbed by UNFI (United Natural Foods). With the continued trend of ownership concentration, ONFC is increasingly concerned with preserving and supporting independent initiatives and small-scale production. The overarching goals of ONFC are to support and scale up the existing organizations, create synergies to foster values-based supply chains, create local food hubs, and create awareness and education. ONFC is in favour of thinking of local as trusting relationships (e.g. fair trade) in addition to geographical distance. ONFC emphasizes the ethic of cooperation and collaboration, and is involved with many groups while also seeking to expand the networks. However, it sometimes has to rely on products from outside of Ontario and it ultimately has no overarching limitations on products. Instead, their affiliates create their own rules and the ONFC carries products that align with its values.

The LOFC project is intended as support to those small-scale and independent initiatives. Right now, it is a loosely linked network of co-ops (see complete list below). Its purpose is to create a strong network, to educate about and promote sustainable farming and food co-ops, and to connect and scale-up local and regional food hubs. In terms of food hubs, their purpose is to both support existing initiatives\(^{10}\), and to assist in creation of new regional hubs. Creating incubator kitchens and clusters of producers and processors is also being considered by the ONFC as a part of the LOFC work.

Whitteker also added that creating a community of thought around sustainable food was one of the underlying aspects of ONFC's work and its LOFC project, in addition to facilitating creation of actual physical hubs.

Human Resources
ONFC has 90 employees and 9 volunteer directors on their Board. Whitteker explained that those numbers also include “a strong, long term core group of employees and board members.” LOFC has one Animator (Renglich) in a temporary full-time position. However, the coordination team for LOFC includes support from ONFC – with the general manager, purchasing manager and member relations and education manager all on the team – as well as representation from the Ontario Co-op Association, and Russ Christianson as an independent consultant. The two dozen individual co-ops that are officially participating all have a contact person who also provides input and support. Additionally, there is an advisory panel forming in the larger community with people like Mary Lou Morgan from the Carrot Cache, representation from Sustain Ontario, Everdale, and others, as well as participation from universities in the Greater Toronto Area and beyond (including a link to St Mary's University’s Co-operatives program).

\(^{10}\) ONFC is also supporting existing initiatives through other activities – e.g. Organic Central in Eastern Ontario (http://www.organiccentral.ca/).
Physical Infrastructure
ONFC has a 53,000 sq ft warehouse located in Mississauga, ON, and it uses 7 trucks as well as some common carriers. Those resources will be made available to the LOFC project as needed.

Natural Resources
While ONFC has no natural resources, the land of LOFC partners can be considered natural resources that matter to the organization and the project. Hence, dedication to the agroecological principles is more than just a moral statement for LOFC.

Financial Resources
With 4000 products carried by the ONFC, the projected sales for 2011 are at $37 million “generating about $800,000 in operating surplus that is allocated to carry out the initiatives identified in our operational plan for 2010-2012. Members contribute an additional $140,000 in equity, in the form of a member loan, based on 1% of invoice.

These financial resources, coupled with the occasional grant program are generally sufficient to help us achieve our operational objectives. Surplus does fluctuate from year to year depending on a number of factors” (Whitteker). Whitteker also added: “We seem to have adequate resources to carry out the occasional grant application, but are fortunate that we are very self-reliant.

In addition to the financial support from ONFC, the LOFC project has received seed funding from the Carrot Cache, Ontario Market Investment Fund, ICP (Innovative Co-op Project through the Co-op Development Institute), and the Co-operators. The Ontario Co-operative Association (through the Co-operative Internship and Experience Program) is partly funding Renglich's position for several months. They are still trying to figure out how to make LOFC economically sustainable: “Most of the groups we work with are assets rich but not cash rich, so membership fees are not the most feasible way of creating revenue.” Instead, LOFC will be looking to create a values-based supply chain with groups funnelling their raw product through LOFC, where LOFC could be participating as processors and distributors and either creating a new LOFC label, or working with the existing ONFC label. So far, producers are very receptive of these ideas.

Community Resources
In addition to the wealth of community resources already noted under “human resources,” Renglich pointed out that the LOFC project has been fortunate to draw on the knowledge and experience of those working with the Organic Council of Ontario and Local Food Plus. Moreover, the work of FoodShare has been instrumental in this work, albeit in more indirect ways.

Policy and Program Resources
Outside of the OMIF grant, there seemed to be few government programs or policies that could be identified as resources. Nevertheless, Renglich pointed out that there was a palpable growth in attention to local food: “General public policy embracing of local food in Ontario has sort of normalized it, it's more mainstream, it is now more recognized
as important and valuable... I can't tie that to a specific policy but in general the trends are changing.”

**Desired Assets**

Renglich indicated that she would like to see more representation in OMAFRA of small scale production that straddles both environmental and social sustainability. More public education around co-ops, local and organic food, and labour practices was also needed. Renglich also noted that the continued success of ONFC was necessary for LOFC to flourish: “ONFC is one of the last remaining co-op distributors in North America and it definitely feels the pressure of the big natural food distributor, UNFI and its subsidiaries...” She also indicated wanting to see government put their support behind small innovative initiatives, and pay attention to community/grassroots work, and not just the already recognized and/or commercial initiatives.

Whitteker added: “We need to invest more in developing a strong group of volunteer board and committee members and could benefit by governments of all levels supporting co-ops throughout Ontario and beyond” and also noted that “we have a well developed network within the ‘alternative’ food system, but could benefit from wider public knowledge.”

**Constraints/Overcoming Them**

Despite ONFC's continued success, Whitteker was humble about its non-material assets: “Though we continue to grow and adapt both professionally and personally, we are constrained somewhat by skills and training challenges at all levels of the co-op. We are steadily increasing budgets to address these areas.”

With respect to LOFC, Renglich identified several current challenges: “The geography we are working with sometimes makes it difficult to connect the groups with the limited time and money for in-person meetings.” She also added that part of the challenge was “working with groups that have difficulty thinking about profitability... to accept that making initiatives economically sustainable does not have to include compromising values.”

Whitteker added one more concern – a sense that Canada Revenue Agency is “preoccupied with searching out not for profits that they may challenge for legitimacy of status.” ONFC has already dealt with that on the municipal level when their status was unsuccessfully challenged by the City of Etobicoke in the mid 1990s.

More generally, in terms of local food initiatives as whole, Renglich identified the following barriers: lack of local processing and distribution capacity, lack of government support, divided resources, loss of farmland, zoning, and access to appropriate space (for processing, warehousing etc).

**Successes**

ONFC's longevity and success gives it a reputation that is an asset in itself, but it also provides an example that co-operative food work can be economically viable while still upholding environmental and social justice principles. This despite operating in the
shadow of UNFI (United Natural Foods), which has over the years absorbed nearly all natural food co-ops in North America. Whittaker also noted “Our structure makes us unique amongst privately owned distributors. Our triple bottom line and social entrepreneurial approach to the market is also a differentiating factor.”

Renglich added that “the fact that local organic food is being recognized as a priority for ONFC is a success in itself... the ONFC’s desire to support farmers directly and play a role in strengthening small-scale production [should be recognized as a success].” Renglich also thought that the scale of engagement with LOFC is already a success as was LOFC's ability to already bring all the different groups together, “to be able to reach out to isolated groups and say 'you are not alone in what you are doing, there are 25 other groups in other communities doing what you are doing'.

Relevance
ONFC's continued success and province-wide reach makes it uniquely positioned to assist in the development of a 'local organic co-op value chain' in Ontario. As Renglich explains “Through co-operative development and network-building, I think it's possible to create an alternative affordable system in support of local food procurement and access.” The LOFC project has already created connections and clusters of producers and other food initiatives: “These clusters are then able to link into similar clusters in other locales, strengthening and scaling up the local food programs and activities into networks with larger reach and influence, but which still maintain their 'small is beautiful' principles/operations.”

On a more ideological level, Renglich thought that both the ONFC and the LOFC project carried a great deal of relevance to communities across Ontario: “It's just this basic thing of co-operation. We are all in this together, so we should be sharing resources and connecting around ideas and willing to bring other people in with us, rather than protecting our individual projects.” ONFC is in the process of putting together a set of co-op related resources including a toolkit on how to start a co-op.

More information about ONFC can be found at www.onfc.ca

The LOFC member co-ops:

Worker-Owned Co-ops: The Big Carrot, Toronto; La Siembra, Ottawa; Agri-Cultural Renewal Co-op, Durham; Your Local Market, Stratford

Eater-Owned Co-ops: The London Co-op Store, London; Karma Food Co-op, Toronto; ONFC, Mississauga; Eat Local Sudbury, Sudbury

Farmer-Owned Co-ops: Organic Meadow, Guelph; Fitzroy Beef Farmers Co-op, Fitzroy Harbour; Quinte Organic Farmers Co-op, Picton; Sexsmith Farm Co-op, Ridgeway

Solidarity Co-ops (Multistakeholder): Ottawa Valley Food Co-op, Pembroke; Niagara Local Food Co-op, Niagara Falls; West End Food Co-op, Toronto; By the Bushel Community Food Co-op, Peterborough; True North Community Co-op, Thunder Bay; Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op, Hawkesbury; The Village Co-op, Kingston
Co-ops on the Horizon: On the Move Organics, London; Karma Marketplace, Penetanguishene; Lunik Co-operative Café, Glendon College, Toronto; Sustainable Business Co-op Café, York University; Campus Co-op Food Co-op, University of Toronto; 123 Farm! Co-op, Hamilton; Wellesley Mill Redevelopment Project, Wellesley

Figure 6.1: James (left) and Obasuyi (right) at the ONFC warehouse (photos courtesy of Adriana Zylinski)

Figure 6.2: Randy in front of the ONFC Mississauga facility; Jadzia at the ONFC warehouse (Photos courtesy of Adriana Zylinski)
Chapter 7: Other Notable Initiatives from Across Ontario

This chapter presents summaries of initiatives that were included in the research, but were not profiled as regional case studies. The summaries are organized by region, with Northern Ontario presented first, followed by Eastern Ontario, the Golden Horseshoe, Southwestern Ontario, Southern Ontario, and province-wide initiatives. Within each regional section, initiatives are organized based on district or county.

Northern Ontario Region

Lee-Ann Chevrette, Connie Nelson, and Mirella Stroink

KENORA DISTRICT

Dryden

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) Dryden – Locavore Box

The Northwestern Health Unit in Dryden is involved in a number of food security-related initiatives. In 2009 they helped initiate and pilot the Locavore Box program in Dryden. The program focuses on connecting local producers and consumers, and providing a solid market for locally produced goods. The pilot project included 30 people who paid $20 every two weeks to receive the box with a number of locally produced items. The project was run again in 2010, maintaining the same number of participants (30 people). Due to the success of the program and the increasing interest in 2011, they expanded the program to include 60 boxes.

The program is now run by the Cloverbelt Farmers Market who hires an intern every summer to coordinate the farmers’ market and administer the Locavore Box. The Northwestern Health Unit continues to provide in kind support. The main goals of the initiative are to increase producer and consumer connections, increase consumption of local food, and increase the amount of local farmland being utilized. Small quantities of meats are included in the box so that people can try the products, connect with the producers and hopefully purchase more products in the future.

The market has policies for three categories of vendors: 1) goods are produced locally/grown or handmade, 2) goods are produced organically (i.e. no spray), 3) goods are environmentally friendly products that support a sustainable lifestyle. For more information go to: http://www.cloverbeltfarmersmarket.ca/index.cfm

Dryden - Oxdrift

Cloverbelt Country Farmers Market (CCFM)

The Cloverbelt Country Farmers’ Market is located in Oxdrift (15 min. drive west of Dryden) every Saturday morning, and every second Thursday afternoon in Dryden. The
market serves an area west to Vermillion Bay and East to Ignace. The market connects consumers directly with local food producers, and provides an alternative to the conventional food system by increasing access to healthy local food. Currently the market is run by a president and the secretary who are local farmers. The market has a partnership with the Northwestern Health Unit for the Locavore Box project, and recently received a $5000 grant for signs, tables, and tents.

Ignace
Blueberry Initiative
The Ignace Blueberry Initiative aims to explore the feasibility of a processing facility in the community of Ignace. This would be a multi-community initiative that would include Wabigoon Lake, Sioux Lookout and Ignace. The processing facility would be located in Ignace, and would aim to purchase blueberries from pickers in the three communities, process them at the facility, and produce value-added blueberry products. The goals of the project include the diversification of the forest economy, the development of local food stores, community economic development, and job creation. This project may provide growth for northern communities in need of economic development. A graduate student at Lakehead University spent the summer in the communities conducting research, and will spend the next year developing a business plan for the initiative.

Kenora
NWHU (Kenora)
The Northwestern Health Unit is involved in supporting numerous local food system initiatives in Kenora, including: the Kenora Food Chapter, community gardens, two good food box programs, and a farmers market. There are also a number of food skills programs happening in Kenora, including community kitchens. There are two emergency food programs: the Salvation Army (the food bank is run out of there) and the Fellowship Center. There is a Plant a Row-Grow a Row Program, although it is not very well utilized. The donations that come out of this program go to the Minot Children and Parent Resource Centre. The primary goal of all of these initiatives is to increase physical and economic access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate foods.

Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) (Big Trout Lake)
Market Garden Project with Reid Ridge Farm in Thunder Bay
This initiative is a partnership between KI First Nation and the Food Security Research Network, to establish a market garden at Reid Ridge Farms in Thunder Bay. The initiative provides gardening training to KI community members. With the assistance of a Garden Trainer and the Director of FSRN, five community members from KI were brought to Thunder Bay for two weeks in June, two weeks in July, and two weeks in August. The goal is to support gardening skills training and development so that these individuals can bring back and share their knowledge and skills with other community members, and start their own gardening programs. Some of the goals of the projects include learning how to garden, teaching other people in the community how to garden, to start prepping the land for gardens, to provide fresh healthy food in the community, and to provide alternatives to expensive, store-bought food.
Sioux Lookout

NWHU Sioux Lookout

The NWHU was involved in initiating the Northwest Farmers’ Market in Sioux Lookout, but it is no longer involved; the Chamber of Commerce has taken over the management of the market. The farmers market has been very successful and has grown significantly in the last few years. There is a large transient population in the community (a lot of professionals coming and going), and so there is a greater interest in local food as these individuals appear to want greater accountability and sustainability. There is not a lot of local food production in the area so the vast majority of food products sold at the market come in from Clover Valley Farmers’ Market / Fort Frances. However, there are several bakers, preserve makers, a honey producer and local artisans that sell at the farmers market. The market runs every Friday from May-September between 10am and 2pm.

The public health nutritionist in Sioux Lookout is a planner and her role (specific to local food) is to assist in the planning of regional food initiatives.

For more information go to: http://www.nwhu.on.ca

RAINY RIVER DISTRICT

Fort Frances

NWHU Fort Frances – Rainy River Valley Food for All (Rainy River), Apple Core (Atikokan)

Rainy River Valley Food for All is a group of local food enthusiasts, producers, consumers, researchers, and public health educators. The main goals of this group are to provide affordable access to local, healthy food, and to increase education and awareness of buying local.

Apple Core, a newly formed group in Atikokan, focuses on supporting the local food bank. Apple Core has just created a draft terms of reference. There are no producers in Atikokan, all the food for the food bank comes from the Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA) in Thunder Bay.

Both groups are grassroots and receive no public funding. There are 5 to 6 different organizations involved in both groups, and each has a small budget from the Northwestern Health Unit, which varies from year to year depending on programs that are being developed.

Rainy River

Cornell Farms

Cornell Farms is a fifth generation, family-owned diverse beef farm located in the Rainy River District in Northwestern Ontario, along the Ontario/Minnesota border. Their business is divided into two components: beef breeding stock and natural beef products for the consumer. In 2008, Kim Cornell of Cornell Farms won a Premier's Agri-food Innovation Excellence award, which recognizes innovators who contribute to the success of the Ontario agri-food sector.
The Cornell’s also run a good food box program that they market to several communities in their region. The program is run year-round: during the summer months they try to include as many local products as possible, and during the winter they purchase food from wholesalers in Minnesota and Manitoba. The geographic scope includes Kenora, Sioux Narrows, Nestor Falls, Atikokan, Fort Francis, Rainy River and Emo. They charge $25 for each box and in a typical month they sell 150 boxes. For more information go to: http://www.cornellfarms.ca

**Rainy River District Abattoir**

The Rainy River District Abattoir was incorporated as a not-for-profit on February 17, 2010. It operates as a ‘kill and chill’ operation. In 2006 the Rainy River Cattlemen's Association started the steering committee to explore the potential of creating a cooperatively run local abattoir. They established a cooperative membership of about 90 local producers and supporters who all bought lifetime memberships. The abattoir provides the infrastructure necessary for producers to explore alternative marketing. Distance to the other abattoir in the district was a key point in establishing the need and getting support. The abattoir provides alternative marketing for producers, opportunities to produce local products, and quality product to the local community.

**THUNDER BAY DISTRICT**

**Lappe**

**Willow Springs Creative Center**

Willow Springs is a not-for-profit organization with a working board of 12 at present. Their mission is to promote growth through creative expression and community development. They focus on art and therapeutic gardening programming. They are trying to develop a training facility with the hope of providing training opportunities to others in the region. They regularly run horticultural therapy programs, mobile gardening programming and art classes. They have recently reopened their store, where they sell locally created arts and crafts, and locally grown food products.

The four women who started the center wanted to create a new model, one that is respectful of women, respectful of children's creativity and fosters connection to nature. The most important motivation for getting involved is accessibility: making a space where all people are able to produce food. The concept of horticultural therapy for health, healing, and developmental growth is central to the initiative. For more information, go to: http://www.willowsprings.ca/

**Thunder Bay**

**Food Action Network (FAN)-Thunder Bay District Health Unit**

FAN’s mission is to provide a network of individuals and agencies from various sectors to work towards and advocate for community food security for the city of Thunder Bay and surrounding area through coordinated, community–led action. They work to improve community food security, create awareness of food security issues for those doing work in the field, for those who are food insecure, and for the general population. This allows other agencies –who do similar work– to network and share their philosophy, so that resources can be pulled together, and impacts increased.
The Thunder Bay District Health Unit was an original partner and took over the chair of the network in 1998. The geographic scope is mainly the city of Thunder Bay, although they have been reaching out to the region through an annual conference, and have made some progress in creating connections with others in the region. The network consists of many organizations in and around Thunder Bay whose programs the network supports, such as community kitchens, the Good Food Box, gleaning, Get Fresh Guide, community gardens, the Thunder Bay Food Charter, and the Northern Food Connections Conference. For more information go to:
http://www.tbdhu.com/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/FoodSecurity/FAN.htm

Food Security Research Network
FSRN is a large network of over 60 community partners in northern Ontario including: (a) local agriculture organizations (TBARS, TBFA, TBSCIA and Cattlemen’s Association), farm producers, emergent new farm markets, community gardens, CSA programs; (b) umbrella First Nations’ organizations Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Mattawa First Nations, Independent First Nations as well as specific communities; (c) schools in the development of school gardens and related curriculum; and (d) charitable and social organizations. FSRN’s network is based on complex adaptive systems theory which they call the Contextual Fluidity Partnership Model.

FSRN is firmly entrenched in collaborations with regional, provincial and national organizations.

FSRN and the Community Service Learning program is in itself a new way of addressing food security; it couples university resources – faculty, students and staff – with dedicated Northwestern Ontario partners in a Contextual Fluidity Partnership Model designed to foster growth in knowledge. The Food Security Research Network is acknowledged as an important catalyst for promoting agriculture and food security in the region, which has indirectly helped to support the growth of farm operations and other agri-related initiatives (e.g. small scale farming, community gardens) that have a specific focus on promoting local food production and consumption. For more information go to: www.foodsecurityresearch.ca.

Good Food Box-Northwest Ontario Women’s Centre
The Northwest Ontario Women's Center has been running a Good Food Box program for many years. It was started through the Food Action Network. It has created partnerships and workshops, connected people in vulnerable neighborhoods, and has become a community economic development tool. The GFB provides food to Thunder Bay and area and also has requests from outside the area. Some First Nations either order it through their offices in town or come into town to pick it up. The four primary objectives of the GFB are:

1. food security – to provide people with fresh, healthy appropriate food in their neighborhoods, especially to those who may be food insecure,
2. community building – to engage volunteers, partners and agencies in a joint community effort,
3. to provide people with skills and knowledge of how to use food – i.e. cooking and storage of food, and
4. to engage with local producers, and to use local food wherever possible.

Ogden Simpson and East End Veggie Garden Project
The Ogden Simpson and East End Veggie Garden Project was established in January 2006 with funding from Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC). One of the mandates of this project is to create a positive impact in the community. The vision is to revitalize the identified neighbourhood by building relationships over the backyard fence. Gardening is an identified strength in the community; this was focused upon in order to build community and increase community food security. The primary focus was to bring community members and other stakeholders together in a safe neutral environment around an activity that promotes communication, enhances relationship building, and builds strong community. The initiative has a grassroots, unincorporated, neighbourhood organizational structure.

The vision for the initiative is much larger than just providing food, though the food produced does fill a need in the community – as there are numerous community members who live in poverty and are food insecure. Community members are invited to participate by sharing tools, resources, knowledge, equipment and supplies for growing food either in the communal gardening space or in their own backyards.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)
Rudy Butenhuis is the OMAFRA Agricultural Representative for the Thunder Bay District. He is not directly involved in any food hubs per se, but acts as a support person for anyone who wishes to contact him. He would like to see individual organizations step back and take a look at the bigger picture, to ensure that their goals are still appropriate given today's changing market. He feels that the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of a food hub is viability. Rather than speaking about profitability the focus should be on viability. All other points including accessibility for consumers, health and nutrition, contribution to community building in education, contribution to food security, linkages with other food systems, and contribution to environmental sustainability are simply the sales pitch. The bottom line is viability.

Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA)
The RFDA's mission is “let no one go hungry in our midst”. The RFDA operates as a food bank for food banks, by accessing food from public and local businesses, and as a designated hub through the National Food Share System. It supplies products to 29 food banks or feeding programs in Northwestern Ontario: 20 of these programs are in the City of Thunder Bay, others are located in Marathon, Schreiber, Nipigon, Greenstone, Kakabeka, Dryden, Ignace, and Atikokan. The RFDA is a charitable organization, run by a volunteer Board of Directors.

RFDA focuses on food distribution as well as education, and also serves as a meeting place for participating organizations including social justice groups and small-scale food producers. They are slowly expanding their goals to become a food center. They feel their
mandate has to expand in order to improve the lives of people, as emergency food programs are not the solution to the broad problems of food security. The RFDA has strict national guidelines in terms of what foods can be distributed and they're all based on food safety. None are based on local foods but they do have a buying strategy and hope to incorporate more local food providers in the future. For more information go to: www.foodbanksnorthwest.ca.

Thunder Bay Country Market
The Thunder Bay Country Market just celebrated its 15th anniversary. The market’s motto is: "We make it, bake it, or grow it". The market provides both indoor and outdoor space; the indoor market is open year-round. They have approximately 65 vendors from the Thunder Bay region participating. It is a self-supporting market, but has a strong economic impact each year, with general revenues at about $2 million and economic impact in the city at around 5 million annually. The market has grown significantly within the last few years. The market provides a place where local and regional vendors can sell their products and consumers have increased access to safe, nutritious, local/regionally grown foods. John Graveson, Market Manager feels this market is a successful ‘incubator’ for fledgling local businesses. For more information go to: http://www.thunderbaycountrymarket.com/

True North Community Cooperative (TNCC)
Formed in 2009, the TNCC is a non-profit community co-operative aimed at building resilience in Northern Ontario through a stronger localized economy. TNCC currently has 51 producer members, 298 individual members, and 8 commercial/organizational members. Producer members living in Northern Ontario are able to sell their foods, arts, and crafts within a pricing structure that ensures they receive true value for their products. In turn, individual, commercial, and organizational members are able to access regionally produced goods through pre-orders, in store, and/or mail-orders.

The co-op's governance structure is based on democratic control and is rooted in cooperative principles, autonomy being the most important. The board can have up to 11 members. Past board members or general members serve as Special advisers to the board. The geographic scope of the cooperative is the region of northern Ontario defined by FEDNOR: Muskoka/ Mattawa River, all of northern Ontario to Québec, Manitoba and the Nunavut borders. They have a store-front location in downtown Thunder Bay. The co-op is an active participant in the Nutrition North Program; they receive a subsidy for delivering healthy foods to remote northern Ontario communities. For more information go to: www.truenorthcoop.ca and www.facebook.com/truenorthcommunitycooperative
COCHRANE DISTRICT

Cochrane
Northeast Superior Community Forest
The Northeast Superior Forest Community (NSFC) is the term used to describe the regional community served by the Northeastern Superior Mayors’ Group, a voluntary association of the mayors of six communities in the Northeastern Superior Region, including Chapleau, Hornepayne, Dubreuilville, White River, Wawa and Manitouwadge. In 2005, in the face of the growing crisis in the forestry sector, the mayors’ group set out to develop a shared economic strategy for their communities. Recognizing that their future would continue to depend on the forests, they determined to make the forest resources of the region work for the people who live in the six communities.

The Northeast Superior Forest Community’s mission is to encourage innovation in forest-based projects that builds regional partnerships and entrepreneurship in value-added areas including wood products, energy, and non-timber forest products by building capacity and First Nation partnerships through education, advocacy and public policy. The organization recently conducted a study that assessed the potential of Non-Timber Forest Products within their region. Markets for forest food products such as blueberries are currently being explored.

Hearst
AGRIVA (Agriculture and Value Added)
AGRIVA is a volunteer group and a subcommittee of the Hearst EDC. AGRIVA is involved with many local food initiatives, but its primary focus is the organization and management of the summer market. The Hearst EDC provides in-kind support and assistance in research and development, marketing, and promotion of products. Most of AGRIVA’s activities are oriented towards education and providing the resources and infrastructure to facilitate the building of the relationships between the producer and the consumer. Through the market, they provide a physical space for that relationship to take place. Their overall mission is to support sustainable development for companies and/or for regional agriculture and value-added products.

The initiative covers a radius of 125 km from the center of Hearst, and includes the communities of Mattice, Val Cote, Kapuskasing, Moonbeam, Hornepayne, and Constance Lake First Nation. AGRIVA has only been operational since 2009 and there is recognition of its need to become more regionalized as opposed to local. For more information, go to: www.agriva.ca/.

La Maison Verte (LMV)
La Maison Verte (LMV) is a not-for-profit organization that was started in 1982 by l’Association Parmis-Elles, a women’s group located in Hearst, Ontario with the mandate to create financial opportunities and promote well-being for women in the area. In 1981 the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources awarded potential tree growers a five-year black spruce seedling contract. The Association was looking to invest in a project with greenhouses and, together with private funding, they created what was the beginning of LMV. Initially LMV was contracted by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to
grow 2 million seedlings; production has gradually increased to 9 million seedlings annually.

As a result of the sharp downturn in the forest industry in the 1990s, LMV lost 80% of its seedling business; consequently, they recognized the need to diversify their operations. In 1994 they started to produce tomatoes in the greenhouses. In 2009 they began to grow cucumbers. These tomatoes and cucumbers are distributed both locally and regionally. In 2011, LMV started a local food basket program (all food crops are grown in one of their greenhouses). It is similar to community supported agriculture (CSA), in that individuals purchase a share/weekly basket in advance. Thirty-two people purchased shares in 2011, and received 15 weekly baskets over the course of the growing season. LMV is planning to increase the shares to 50 in 2012.

For more information go to: www.lamaisonverte.info/index.html.

**Moosonee**

**Moosonee Native Friendship Center**

The Moosonee Native Friendship Center runs several food security-related initiatives including the Homelessness Initiatives Program, a soup kitchen, emergency food bank, Meals on Wheels, community kitchens for youth and families, and a breakfast program. A meal and/or healthy snack are made available to those individuals attending the drop-in center that is housed within the Moosonee Native Friendship Center. All programs through the Moosonee Native Friendship Center are guided by individual program mandates, as well as the Friendship Center's vision statement: “to serve the Aboriginal population of Moosonee through the seven stages of life by providing needed resources to assist them in establishing a better quality of life, spiritually, culturally, socially, and economically”. The Homelessness Initiatives Program is a partnership with the Cochrane regional food bank.

Moosonee is an isolated community and faces numerous barriers. Fresh foods are prohibitively expensive, growing conditions are relatively poor, and transportation costs are extremely high. The Moosonee Community Plan recognized gaps in services available to the community homeless and at-risk of homelessness population; the food/meal support initiatives were created with the aim to contribute to food security and to provide a safe and nutritious meal/snack to the targeted clientele. For more information go to: www.onlink.net/~mcap/.

**Timmins**

**Urban Park Farmers’ Market, Naturally Pure Farm, Taste of Timmins**

The Urban Park Farmers’ Market is an urban market that was initiated in 2011 by the Timmins BIA and a local grower from Naturally Pure Farm. One day per week, several downtown Timmins streets are closed to traffic, and several local and regional vendors participate in the market. This market increases access to healthy food for local residents and the business community in downtown Timmins. The initiative has been very successful in drawing support from local businesses, local producers and community members alike.
Taste of Timmins is a website that seeks to connect producers and consumers, and provide education and support for the local food movement in the Timmins region.

For more information go to: www.facebook.com/pages/Naturally-Pure-Farm/120820387988527.

**ALGOMA DISTRICT**

**Sault St. Marie**

*Algoma Food Network*

The Algoma Food Network (AFN) was started in 2008. AFN is “dedicated to building and supporting an autonomous, sustainable, healthy, local food system that is accessible to all: through education, advocacy, action, and relationship building.” AFN acts as a central network within the Algoma region and supports such diverse initiatives as the Sault Ste. Marie Farmers’ Market, the Johnson Township Farmers Market, local Community Supported Agriculture initiatives, Penokean Hills Farms, local producers, and the local abattoir. The network created the Algoma Marketing Alliance, and ‘Buy Algoma, Buy Fresh’, whose mission is “to enhance economic opportunities for agriculture in the Algoma / Sault area by facilitating linkages between producers and consumers through promotion, education, and co-operation.”

The AFN is run primarily through Algoma University’s NORDIK Institute. For more information go to: www.algomafoodnetwork.wordpress.com/

**Wawa**

*Wawa Farmers’ Market*

The Wawa Farmers’ Market is a local market that runs every second Saturday afternoon during the summer. The Department of Tourism within the Municipality of Wawa runs this market. This market is unique in that the city of Wawa has no local agricultural producers, so the majority of food items for sale come from a mobile farmers market established by Jack Tindle from Desbarats, Ontario. Jack is a beef producer who brings to Wawa his products as well as other locally produced items from the Desbarats area. Other individuals from Wawa vend such items as baking, preserves, and crafts. This market was started in 2010 and it has been received very well by the local community. There is only one grocer in Wawa, so prices for food are high as there is no competition. The market brings a welcomed alternative food purchasing opportunity to community members. A significant pool of volunteers helps with setup and takedown.

**NIPISSING DISTRICT**

**Verner**

*Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)*

Julie-Poirier-Mensinga is OMAFRA’s Agricultural Business Management Specialist for Northern Ontario. In her role she works primarily with businesses to promote innovation in agriculture. She feels there is a real distinction between food hubs that are led by producers and others that are led by consumers, and the goals of the hubs vary depending on who has initiated it. For example, if it is producer-driven, then the goals are marketing
and profitability. If it is consumer-driven, the goals are access to healthy, local foods, and possibly environmental reasons like purchasing local food to reduce the ecological footprint. Also these goals include helping the local economy. She provides ongoing support to local food initiatives.

**Eastern Ontario Region**  
*Brynne Sinclair-Waters and Linda Stevens*

**PETERBOROUGH COUNTY**

*JustFood Box Program – YWCA Peterborough, Victoria, and Haliburton*  
*Interviewee: Joëlle Favreau, YWCA of Peterborough, Victoria and Haliburton*  
*Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, August 9, 2011*

> “Belonging is really strong in food programs... Definitely at the heart of it for me is social inclusion and opportunities for people to get together, swap stories and start changing the world. Food is at the heart of what makes that happen.” – YWCA staff

The YWCA has been working on food security issues for over 20 years. Through their work with women and children fleeing from abuse and violence it quickly became clear that food insecurity was an important issue. First, they worked on providing community gardens in the city and surrounding area and then in 1996 they started the food box program. The JustFood Box program now delivers about 600 boxes a month to people living in the City of Peterborough and Peterborough County. They offer two boxes: a staples box, which combines fresh food and non-perishable items, and a fresh food box. The purpose of the box is to provide nutritious food to people living in the region.

Both of the food boxes are available at half price. This subsidized price is essential because it makes the food boxes accessible to people living on low-income. Every year they fundraise to cover the cost of that subsidy, which in 2010 amounted to $51,000. Since they do not have any core funding for their food security work, the need to be fundraising constantly is challenging.

The JustFood Box program works with local farmers to get as much local food into the boxes as possible and always ensure that farmers get paid market price. As the number of boxes they distribute grows they have started to source from many different farmers in the area to fulfill their orders and have become a “mini-distribution centre” for local produce.

They are also working hard to bridge the gap between rural and urban communities and now distribute almost half of their boxes into rural areas.

*By the Bushel Food Co-op*  
*Interviewee: Hanah McFarlane, Staff*  
*Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, July 19 2011*
The By the Bushel Food Co-op was started up by a group of people in the Peterborough area that had been meeting to discuss what could be done in their community to make fresh, healthy food more accessible. In 2009, they bought By the Bushel Home Delivery, which had been running as an organic food basket business, and turned it into a co-op. Another CSA in the region was also folded into the new initiative. Today By the Bushel Food Co-op’s mandate is to provide local and ecologically-responsible food, primarily produce, to people in the Peterborough region.

By the Bushel Food Co-op sells a fresh food basket for twenty weeks during high season. This year they will also have a winter basket that will be available until February. Each year By the Bushel puts out a production schedule and rough plan of what will be in the baskets, but it fluctuates depending on what is available and on other factors such as weather. Customers pick up their food basket at the co-op’s new store location either weekly or bi-weekly depending on what they ordered.

The co-op has two types of memberships - producer members who grow the food and consumer members who buy the food. By the Bushel now has nineteen producer members who are all located within a roughly 25-30 minute radius of Peterborough. Most are farmers, although some are also selling value added products. Not all of the producers are certified organic, but they are all growing ecologically-responsibly.

A board of directors oversees the budget and activities of the co-op, while a small part-time staff team act as coordinator and product manager. In the summer of 2011, through a grant from the Ontario Co-operative Society, the co-op was also able to hire a full-time intern. In addition to paid staff there is a lot of volunteer time put into running the co-op each week.

Getting their new store up and running has been their primary focus this year. Since the store opened in the Spring of 2011, it has been open 3 days a week and they are now selling a wider variety of products. Many of the new products are non-perishables ordered through the Ontario Natural Food Co-op. In the future they would like for their members to be able to use the new store as more than just a place to buy food, but also as a place to gather, have community meetings, and organize. They would also like to expand their mandate over the next few years and would love to work in conjunction with a community food centre in the region if one is established.

“You can't be stable and build and grow if you're always scrambling, looking for the next funding opportunity.” – Staff, By the Bushel Food Co-op

Most of their funding comes from basket sales. They also get support from the Ontario Co-operative Society. However, they are still also constantly fundraising, mostly through grant writing. It has been a challenge for the co-op to find long-term funding so they spend a lot of time seeking short-term funding opportunities.
It is also challenging to make the food they sell accessible to those with lower incomes. This is particularly important for them to work towards because the city of Peterborough has a high poverty rate.

**KA WARTH A LAKES**

*Kawartha Choice*

*Interviewee: Karen Jopling, Agricultural Development Officer at the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation*

*Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, June 8 2011*

Kawartha Choice FarmFresh is a non-profit that functions as an arm of the Greater Peterborough Economic Development Corporation (GPEAD) in partnership with the City of Kawartha Lakes. The project got started after the BSE crisis to support local beef producers and has now expanded to promote all local producers. Their main goals are to increase awareness that local products are available and help farmers to increase their revenue. Kawartha Choice promotes food that is grown, processed, or prepared within the counties of Peterborough and Kawartha Lakes. To be promoted by Kawartha Choice, producers must be selling food products of which 80 percent is grown in Kawartha or selling value-added products of which 51% or the defining ingredient is produced on their farm, while restaurants must spend a minimum of $25,000 on local produce between May and October. Kawartha Choice promotional activities include a buy local guide and map and advertising campaigns through local television stations.

One of the primary challenges to building effective local food networks in the region is a disconnect between consumers and producers - many people do not know that they can buy healthy, safe products directly from local producers. Kawartha Choice views its efforts as contributing to the education and awareness building that is necessary to create a stronger connection between consumers and producers.

In addition to promoting existing products, the coordinators of Kawartha Choice also recognize a need to strengthen value chains by identifying gaps and showcasing them to entrepreneurs as opportunities for creating new revenue streams. In their region, existing gaps in value chains include manufacturing and processing. As a result, there is a real demand for teaching skills such as canning, preserving, and cooking. Kawartha Choice also tries to communicate with its farmer members about barriers that they face and identify strategies for overcoming these barriers. Regulation has been identified as one key barrier. Staff at Kawartha Choice understand the need for regulation, but would like it to be streamlined so that it does not pose time and financial burdens for farmers. Having staff with a farming background has helped the organization gain credibility and trust among farmers.

In response to past communication with farmers, many events have been organized by the staff working at the GPEAD and City of Kawartha Lakes including workshops for farmers on marketing, business planning, succession planning, and using social media; networking events with chefs and farmers; and an adventures in agriculture program geared towards grade 8 students.
In the past Kawartha Choice has been funded primarily through provincial and federal government grant programs but they are always seeking third party funding to support their programs.

**Kawartha Ecological Growers**

*Interviewee: Mark Trealout, Founder and Member*

*Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, July 11 2011*

“No organic farm really exists on its own. A strong community of farms around you will make your farm stronger.” – Farmer, Kawartha Ecological Growers

Kawartha Ecological Growers (KEG) is a collective of small-scale farms in the western Kawartha Lakes. KEG was founded in 2005 to develop capacity to distribute food from the western Kawarthas throughout the region and to surrounding areas, including the city of Toronto. It started with just eight farms, but has grown to include over twenty members.

The collective was founded because farmers were not getting the prices that they needed for their produce locally, but they could if they went to Toronto. On their own, however, each farmer did not have enough goods to make the trip worthwhile, so they founded KEG to pool resources and goods. More recently, they have also focused on marketing and selling their products within the western Kawartha Lakes.

The collective now sells its produce through a winter and summer CSA, to restaurants and butchers in Toronto and the Kawartha Lakes, and at a number of winter and summer Farmers’ Markets in Toronto and Lindsay.

All of the farms are located in the western Kawarthas within about a thirty minute radius of the founding producer’s farm. They get requests from farmers outside the region to move their goods, but they turn them down. They are trying to do something really regional. Not every KEG farm is certified organic, but they all grow “good, clean, fair food”. The produce is always fresh and locally produced in a manner that is environmentally sustainable and ethically sound, and prices are fair to everyone. The collective does perform farm visits to check that each farmer is farming sustainably and ethically, but they really believe in the integrity and honesty of all the growers.

KEG has been a worthwhile initiative for farmers because it allows them to increase their revenue and the founder is keen for the model to be replicated in other areas. The driving motivation for establishing the collective was profitability for those involved and they have achieved that.

Financially, KEG is sustainable. They won a Premiers Award for Agri-food Innovation Excellence worth $5000 in 2008 and in the beginning stages the founder borrowed some money to buy a refrigerated truck, but overall they have tried to put out as little money as possible. The only assets that the collective requires are a refrigerated truck and laptops that connect the producers with each other and to consumers. Otherwise, they rely on
individual farms to process their own goods and then they pick up and distribute from there.

By building a community of farms, they have been able to support each other and pool resources in creative ways. In addition to their primary efforts around distribution, they have also worked together in other ways (e.g. sourcing and trading inputs, such as fertilizer among members).

HALIBURTON COUNTY

Haliburton County FoodNet
Interviewee: Rosie Kadwell, Chair and Dietitian at Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit
Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, July 12 2011

Even though Haliburton is not known for its agricultural land or farming community, local food is coming to the forefront in the region in recent years. Efforts of groups like the Haliburton Farmers’ Association, Haliburton County Farmers’ Market, and Haliburton Highlands Local Food Coalition, and initiatives like the Haliburton Fresh website are supporting local producers and connecting them to consumers in the area.

Meanwhile, Haliburton County FoodNet is focusing on raising awareness about poverty and hunger in their community. The group is bringing together organizations interested in food security to network and share resources. They meet 4 times a year, but there is also a lot of networking between meetings (e.g. finding transportation to get food from here to there, sharing of food if one agency is able to access a lot of something) and sharing of resources (e.g. applying for funding together, collaborating on advocacy). The network is chaired by the public health dietitian at the Haliburton and Kawartha District Health Unit. The issues they deal with do go beyond food because they recognize the social determinants of health. The network brings together many charitable organizations but highlights the importance of moving beyond the charity model and empowering the people they are feeding and looking for lasting solutions to hunger.

Haliburton County FoodNet and the other organizations working to promote local food in the region have very little funds and more resources are needed to continue efforts to raise awareness about the availability of local food and food security issues in the region so that they can get more buy-in from the local community.

LANARK COUNTY

Lanark Slow Food
Interviewee: Janet Duncan, Chair
Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, July 8 2011

“Food is supposed to be fun too.” – Chair of Lanark Slow Food
Upon returning from Slow Food International’s first Terra Madre, which is now a biannual conference, two beef farmers in Lanark County and a group of “foodies” from Lanark County founded Lanark Slow Food in spring of 2005. Slow food is a reaction to fast food and is based on the principles of good, clean, and fair food. Lanark Slow Food tries to promote consumer connections with farmers and food and works to ensure that indigenous foods are highlighted and protected. They have had support, especially philosophically, from Rare Breeds Canada and EcoPerth.

Lanark Slow Food is run entirely by volunteers. They are all busy people, so they usually do quick projects, which vary based on the current priorities and ideas of those involved. Most recently, they collaborated with a cycling group from Mississippi Mills to organize FarmGate bike rides. Another project they have done is Meat Matters. For this event guests brought food items to a potluck and a chef from Kingston came with some of her students to show those who attended how to cook unusual cuts of meat.

The group is primarily self-funded through membership fees. They also get a portion of international membership fees, collect a small fee of two to five dollars from Friends of Lanark Slow Food at events, and host some fundraisers. Their fundraisers usually involve a guest speaker and are always food related. In the past they have had a very successful local beer and sausage night. They featured local beers, brewed within 100km, and local turkey, beef, pork, and lamb sausages. A “home” brewer also joined them to talk about the beer and local farmers spoke about their sausage. The organization always pays farmers a fair price for their products, even at fundraising events, because they understand the need for farmers to make a living.

Perth and District Food Bank
Interviewee: Nancy Wildgoose, Coordinator of the Stop Pilot Project at the Perth and District Food Bank
Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, June 8 2011

"I would like to see a broader understanding of poverty, food accessibility and what constitutes healthy eating in our community. I really think it's vital and the time is right."
– The Stop Pilot Project Coordinator, Perth and District Food Bank

The goals of the Perth and District Food Bank are to bring the community together to access, to share, to prepare, grow and advocate for accessible, just food. Their focus is on offering support to low-income people who are having trouble accessing good, healthy food. They try to get as much fresh food as possible coming through the food bank. They now give out eggs, milk and buy fresh produce from a commercial provider. They also have a "grow-a-row" program for people who want to grow for the food bank.

“The issues we are addressing (at the Food Bank) are broad system issues. It would be interesting to see some of our goals embedded more clearly into municipal, provincial, and federal policy” – The Stop Pilot Project Coordinator, Perth and District Food Bank
Throughout the province many people are working independently to reach the same kinds of goals as the Perth and District Food Bank. There is a real need for structural support for these kinds of initiatives including the creation of stable funding lines.

At the Perth and District Food Bank, respect for sustainable, local agriculture is considered part of providing good food. It is difficult to put this commitment into practice, however, because it can be costly. Consequently, it is not yet a top priority. The food bank, however, will soon be hiring a person to focus on food sourcing and would like to continue to consult with producers about how to source local foods in a cost effective way.

Another challenge, which is particularly difficult in rural communities like Perth, is accessibility and transportation to programs and services. Meanwhile, lack of education and awareness about food among their client group is also a challenge.

“To be effective our programs must meet needs of the community, garner and maintain community support, and build partnerships with other groups in the community.” – The Stop Pilot Project Coordinator, Perth and District Food Bank

Working with other groups in the community and creating partnerships has been crucial to the Perth and District Food Bank’s success. In the past, many of those involved knew that the food bank was not addressing the root causes of poverty and hunger, such as lack of skills. Now, as their programs expand, that is changing. The Stop Community Food Centre in Toronto has recently kicked off an effort to replicate its model in other parts of the province and with help from EcoPerth, a local environmental NGO, the Perth and District Food Bank was able to put forward a compelling application and was chosen to be a pilot site. With experience, expertise and funding from the Stop Community Food Centre, the Perth and District Food Bank will be starting up a set of new programs in January 2012 including a commercial kitchen, community garden, and cooking classes. These programs will broaden their mandate and help them to address the root causes of poverty and hunger.

LEEDS AND GRENVILLE

Food Matters Coalition
Interviewee: Carole Chang, Chair and Dietitian at the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Health Unit
Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, July 8 2011

The Food Matters Coalition was established in 2009 in response to a recognition of the need to provide a venue for agencies and individuals to work on issues related to food security in Leeds and Grenville, Lanark and the surrounding area. The coalition is chaired by a dietitian at the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark Health Unit and its main goal is to create a sustainable and resilient community food system that is accessible to everyone. Steering Committee members include the Brockville Climate Action Group, Food for All, House of Lazarus, United Way, and two county health units. They meet about once a month with a minimum of eight meetings per year. They also have other general
members, which include local organizations that participate in specific initiatives and projects but may not have time to attend their monthly meetings. The coalition funds their programs through the budgets and resources of the member organizations.

The small group of people that make up the coalition are very passionate and this helps them to get things done. Their recent projects include a food calendar, which lists all the free meals that are offered in Smith Falls, Perth, Brockville, and Prescott; a listing of community gardens in the tri-county area; the distribution of 3000 vegetable seeds to municipalities, schools, and workplaces with an information card on container gardening (with the Healthy Communities Partnership); and a “Do the Math, Eat the Math” campaign, which aimed to raise awareness about issues of poverty and food security.

The “Do the Math, Eat the Math” campaign, held in November 2010, generated excitement and media coverage. It was based on a Toronto campaign held earlier that year. The first component encourages people to go online to calculate and compare the cost of living to social assistance amounts. Then, eighteen leaders in the community were recruited to live off a food bank hamper for a week and then to reflect on their experience in a journal that was available to the public on the web. The Food Matters Coalition also added a third component, “Work on the Math”, which gave participants opportunities to come together, de-brief, and come up with other actions that can address food security issues in their community.

The majority of the members in the coalition are food bank based. In the future they hope to see the network start making connections with local farmers, but they have found it difficult because farmers are so busy. Other barriers include funding, and transportation, which is particularly challenging in rural areas.

CITY OF OTTAWA

Canadian Organic Growers – Ottawa Chapter and Growing Up Organic
Interviewee: Torry Simpson, Project Manager of Growing Up Organic in Ottawa
Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, July 6 2011

"They are so keen to eat spinach when they have grown it themselves."
– Coordinator, Growing Up Organic

“It is important for farmers to have a say because they are the ones providing the food.”
– Coordinator, Growing Up Organic

The Ottawa Chapter of Canadian Organic Growers has a dual focus on promoting both local and organic food. Currently, they are working primarily on two projects. Their farmer outreach coordinator is working with a group of about fifteen farmers that are interested in forming a farmers’ cooperative. They are looking to pool resources and distribute their produce to individual customers and institutional buyers. By working together they will also try to support small-scale farmers who find it difficult to become certified organic due to time and cost limitations. Because farmers’ are active in identifying how to move forward with this project, the hope is that they will also be able
to negotiate ways to receive a larger portion of the profit made on sales than they would selling to conventional buyers.

Second, on the education and awareness side they are working with over twenty schools in Ottawa on implementing school vegetable gardens. They have developed curriculum-connected lesson plans to accompany the gardens so that it is not a burden for teachers but rather a compliment to existing curriculum and a way to get kids more involved and excited about learning. The lessons teach kids about growing organic food including units on seed starting, soil discovery, preparing the garden for planting, and harvesting the food. They try to host harvest parties so that kids get to eat the food in early summer before the summer holiday (e.g. greens) and in the fall (e.g. tomatoes and squash). They also host farm field trips and summer camp programs where kids spend three days camping out on an organic farm. The main goal of these programs is to increase awareness among youth about where their food comes from and who grows it. As the average age of farmers increases, it is really important to get kids involved so that growing food becomes a career option for them. Funding for the coordinator of this program comes from Trillium, while they also receive funds from the Ontario Market Investment Fund (OMIF). Annually, they also conduct a fundraiser with Bridgehead Coffee in Ottawa, which helps to pay for some of the school gardens.

**Fitzroy Beef Farmers Co-operative**

*Interviewee: Ken Stewart, Founder and Coordinator*

*Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters August 9, 2011*

The Fitzroy Beef Farmers Co-operative sells beef that is produced within approximately a 6-7 mile radius of Fitzroy Harbour to consumers in the region, including the City of Ottawa. All of the beef sold through the co-op is free of artificial growth hormones and antibiotics.

The co-op was founded in 2005 in response to the BSE crisis, which had serious financial impacts on local beef producers. In the early stages they had no plans to become a co-op, but were looking for ways to provide social and financial support to struggling farmers in their community. Selling beef locally as a co-op ended up being the best way to do that. They started with ground beef and took orders and sold at local churches. Soon after they got in touch with a similar initiative that was selling combinations of cuts in boxes of varying sizes and they began to do the same. Now they also deliver to restaurants every Thursday morning and sell at the Ottawa Farmers’ Market on Sundays. The Ottawa Farmers’ Market is quite an up and coming market and it has been working out quite well for them. Selling at farmers’ markets, however, does take a lot of resources because they have to have two people working at the booth all day. For farmers this means a lot of time away from the farm. Consequently, they would prefer to expand with more sales to caterers and restaurants rather than selling at more markets.

The initiative has been spearheaded by a local retired farmer (not a beef producer) who decided it was important to support local beef producers as more and more of them were struggling to earn a living. His efforts have been supported by a small group of committed volunteers and two part-time paid staff. They pay one part-time staff person to
put together orders and look after inventory and another to look after orders coming in through the cell phone and web.

The co-operative is financially self-sustaining. In the past, however, they have received a number of grants from the City of Ottawa through the Rural Association Partnership Program, which has helped them to acquire assets, such as scales and a trailer for transporting their produce to the farmers’ market.

RENFREW COUNTY

Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative, Upper Ottawa Valley
Interviewee: Christina Anderman, Coordinator
Interview and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, June 2 2011

“People with all kinds of different views are interested and involved in the co-op... Food (and the OVFC) is a place where people can find common ground”
– OVFC Coordinator

The Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative (OVFC) provides food produced in the Upper Ottawa Valley (within approximately a 100-200km radius) to consumers in the region. Every month, producers list available food online, then consumers browse listed produce and make their order. Producers then prepare their orders and co-op volunteers deliver them. They have computer software modeled from the Oklahoma Food Cooperative that makes the process more efficient (i.e. by providing a web-based system for orders and labels for producers). The OVFC never takes ownership of the products, but rather acts as a liaison between consumers and producers – collecting the money and then paying out to producers. The OVFC primarily sells food, but they also sell some other products that are made locally including solar lamps, body care products, and manure for gardens.

In 2008 the OVFC received a couple of grants that helped them get started by paying for two part time coordinators, a computer, and other expenses including marketing. Financially, the co-op is now self-sufficient. Their operating costs include paying a quarter-time coordinator and a webmaster, and mileage for deliveries. They are able to cover these costs with membership fees and by collecting 10% from producers’ and 5% from consumers on all sales.

“We didn’t have to do anything really big. Enthusiastic people just get together and provide a system where you get the food from one person to the other.”
- OVFC Coordinator

The OVFC is an exciting way to support small and mixed organic and family farms in the area without having to tackle changing government policy. Their success also depends on profitability for producers and processors and the ability to create enough revenue to cover its operational costs. Recognizing that contributing to community building will make their initiative stronger, the OVFC has also made a real effort to reach out to different people and organizations in their community and has put on some educational events. With the initial grants they received they were able to fund and host educational...
programs that included 100-mile lunches, a local food buying guide, and meet the producer events. Since these grants ended they do less events like these, however, they would love to have more of them in their community.

In 2009, the OVFC was a regional winner of a Premier’s Award for Agri-food Innovation Excellence.

“Supply management is a very good idea, but it needs to be adjusted to work for small scale producers and sellers”

– OVFC coordinator

For several reasons there are gaps in what the OVFC is able to sell. For example, they have insufficient production of some items for demand in the region. They would like to sell more fruit, fruit juice, grains, beans, oils and oilseeds. At certain times of the year they also do not have enough vegetables. More local processing in their region would help to fill the demand for all of these items. In addition, government policy, including abattoir regulation and supply management (both designed at them moment to fit only large-scale operations), make it difficult for the OVFC to sell larger quantities of meat, or any dairy products, chicken, and eggs – all products that their consumers would like to buy.

UNITED COUNTIES OF PRESCOTT-RUSSELL

Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Network

Interviewees: Kathy Chaumont, Vice President and Project Officer at Réseau de Développement Économique et d’Employabilité (RDÉE) and Carole Lavigne, President and Project Officer of Economic Development and Tourism at the United Counties of Prescott-Russell

Interviews and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, June 23 2011 and August 12 2011

The Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Network was founded in 2007 to help groups working on food issues in the United Counties of Stormont-Dundas-Glengary and Prescott-Russell to better work together. The president and vice president of the network are the Project Officer for Economic Development and Tourism for the United Counties of Prescott-Russell and the Development Officer at Le Réseau de Development Économique et d’Emploabilité (RDÉE Ontario). The network is made up of producers, distributors, consumers, grocery stores, and some other stakeholders. They meet every six weeks and have some sub-committees that meet independently.

Overall, the aim of the network is to conserve existing initiatives and support new ones. Currently, one of their main efforts is to get more local meat in the grocery stores. They want a year round counter of local meat marked with the Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Network logo in all the local grocery stores in the region. This has been a challenge for them given policies that are currently in place, but they hope to have a pilot project off the ground in Prescott-Russell soon.
They also host events each year that aim to promote products that are available locally. These events include Agri-Tours, which guide people along a set route in the region to visit farms, meet local producers and buy produce, and the annual “Foire Gourmande Ouatouais-Est Ontarien”, which attracted over 6000 guests to taste and buy food from over 60 local producers last August.

They have network and project specific funding from various places including Trillium, Ontario Market Investment Fund (OMIF), the Community Futures Development Corporations and the counties. They hope that in five years time they can be financially sustainable based on the income generated from the sales of the products marked with the EOAFN logo.

**UNITED COUNTIES OF STORMONT-DUNDAS-GLENGARRY**

*All Things Food Network/Bouffe 360°*

*Interviewees: Dana Kittle, Coordinator and Devorah Belinsky, Founder*

*Interviews and description by Brynne Sinclair-Waters, June 23 2011 and July 8 2011*

“We want to be the hub for all things food.”
– Coordinator, All Things Food/Bouffe 360°

The All Things Food Network was founded in 2007. The network brings together individuals and organizations interested in food issues in the United Counties of Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry (SD&G). The network’s mission is to make local, healthy food accessible to everyone in SD&G.

The network has one full-time coordinator whose salary is funded by the Trillium Foundation and she reports to a five member collaborative group made up of representatives from member organizations including the House of Lazarus Food Bank; Healthy Eating for Better Learning; the Social Planning Council of Cornwall and Area; Le Centre de Santé Communautaire de L'Estrie; and the Eastern Ontario Health Unit. Their programs include community and school gardens; a farm-to-school program; a garlic growing project; Healthy Food, Healthy Kids which encourages organizations (outside of schools) to institute healthy food policies for feeding children; and workshops to build skills including gardening, preserving, cooking, and composting.

“This idea that kids don’t like healthy food... She’s heard it so many times. The truth is, kids love healthy food. It’s just about access.”
– Member, All Things Food/Bouffe 360°

“It’s neat that it’s some of these kids’ families that are growing the local food that they might end up eating at school.”
– Member, All Things Food/Bouffe 360°

The network is trying to increase awareness about the need for changes to the current food system. One of their top priorities has been getting youth involved in hopes that it might increase their awareness of sustainably produced local food and encourage them to
consider agriculture as a viable career option. The founder of All Things Food is also the manager of Healthy Eating for Better Learning, the student nutrition program serving the United Counties of Stomont-Dundas-Gengairry and Presscott-Russell. The student nutrition program is growing quickly. Since much of the region it serves is struggling economically, those involved with the program believe that it makes sense for the program to buy local food and support the local economy. With support from Healthy Eating for Better Learning, All Things Food recently launched their first farm-to-school program and is collecting baseline data to better understand how schools can access local food and connect with local farmers. Since there is no extra funding for farm-to-school programs, these are currently based primarily on the strength of relationships that can be built building between schools and local producers.

“We would like to connect with other groups across Canada, especially in rural Canada, to hear about best practices.”
– Coordinator, All Things Food/Bouffe 360°

The network is keenly aware that they are serving a rural community and that this means that effective solutions and programs may differ from those offered in urban areas. Consequently, they would benefit from sharing resources with and getting support from other groups working on making local, healthy food accessible in other rural areas.

In their region much of the infrastructure needed to make effective distribution networks is lacking. They are also seeking more financial support for farmers’ markets, local food co-operatives, and getting local food into grocery stores.

**FRONTENAC COUNTY**

**Desert Lake**

*Interview and description by Linda Stevens*

Desert Lake is a well-known CSA in the area - Frontenac County, Kingston and into Lennox and Addington – (also reaches into Leeds Grenville and Lanark through connection to Wendy’s Mobile Market). Desert Lake brings together area producers' products to provide a more diverse local selection for area consumers/eaters. Pat is a vocal advocate for local food and expresses her frustration that there isn’t a greater awareness of food safety and the real costs of sustainable food production. Pat lives her work as does her family -- her children, partner and mother- in-law all participate in the business. The CSA is not growing as quickly as Pat had hoped so she feels marketing would help with growth, although the time for marketing has not been a priority given other work that needs to be done.

**Key Motivators**

There is concern with what people in the area eat. Pat recognized there could be more options and wanted to offer a choice. Another goal is to develop a more sustainable food system with a lower carbon footprint and impact on the resources of the community. Finally, there is strong motivation to give a hand to help improve the viability of local agricultural producers.
**Constraining factors**
The costs of sustainable food production make it hard to compete with low cost imported/processed foods. There are limited incentives for sustainable but there are supports for cheap/imported/processed food. The alternative (for example, a CSA) is still a niche market – not mainstream so it is difficult to get traction.

**Enabling factors**
Possible enabling factors could be changes to the taxation system to alter incentive focus to be more favorable to sustainable/organic/local production. Increased collaboration across producers to improve choice and reduce the amount of effort people need to put into finding foods, for example on line ordering and delivery, could also help facilitate access.

**Policy**
Provision of funding support to make grants for things like marketing accessible for alternative, small scale farmers.

**Food Providers Networking Group and the Community Harvest Networking Group**

*Location: Kingston*

*Interview and description by Linda Stevens*

Sisters of Providence, Justice, Peace and Integrity Office (SofP) staff have been able to be active in a number of food initiatives, particularly those with a focus of food security and social justice. Tara Kainer is well connected to food issues through her work with SofP but also through her long history of involvement in community action on poverty issues, inclusion and social justice. This group brings together food provider partners to coordinate, share resources and information towards improved coordination and planning across the emergency/hot meal programs system in Kingston.

Community Harvest Networking Group, works in close coordination with KCHC and other partners. The Community Harvest Market is coordinated by the group and brings a Farmers Market (providing a market opportunity for local producers) to the Rideau Heights area of north Kingston (high concentration in area of public housing and individuals and families living on low incomes), From Earth to Table – organic gardening and workshop series was established under this group

**Key motivation** - Fighting for social justice around the provision of food in community (social justice is SofP mandate)

**Constraining factors**
The most restrictive factors for this project are a lack of coordination. Municipal policy also constrains work by the two groups. There is also the need for more education. Finally, cost is a barrier, especially as the processed, commercial is relatively inexpensive versus sustainable, local food produced by smaller scale producers that tends to cost more for consumers.
**Enabling factors**

Factors that facilitate the success of the two groups include networking groups that help to improve coordination and collaboration on projects and through resource sharing. It is interesting to note this is largely informal. Inclusive, grass roots processes including a community building dimension also help these projects succeed.

**Policy**

Several policy initiatives could be undertaken to facilitate community food projects in Kingston. First, less restrictive zoning by the municipality, for example in regulations for farmers' markets/food stands, would help make food more accessible. There is also an overall need for scale appropriate regulations - small scale farmers are challenged to complete the paperwork and other requirements that are written for large scale producers. Insurance coverage also needs to be less of a barrier. Perhaps the municipality could consider underwriting this expense. Finally, the creation of a Food Council and that could work towards food charter would help to institutionalize and embed these initiatives in the community.

**Good Food Box**

*Interview and description by Linda Stevens*

Community development, direct program and clinical based food services are a significant part of what Kingston Community Health Centre (KCHC) offers through its many sites within Kingston and Lennox and Addington. The CHC through improved access to nutrition and community involvement in food initiatives through staff, facility and some funding support including Healthy Eating Working Group of the PHU, Loving Spoonful/Community Harvest Working Group and Food Worker staff in the coordination of the Good Food Box Program [www.kchc.ca/community.shtml](http://www.kchc.ca/community.shtml).

The Good Food Box Program is a community driven initiative that allows anyone to purchase a produce box for less than the grocery store cost. Bulk buying and the work of volunteers keeps prices down. Participants pay for and pick up food boxes once a month at a neighborhood volunteer or agency host site. Boxes are prepared and packed by volunteers at the back of a local secondary school. The program is available at sites across the Kingston, Frontenac, L&A catchment and refers to the GFB programs in Belleville and Portland.

The bulk of the program runs in urban or small urban communities through agency and residential host sites and reaches into villages into 32 outlying rural communities.

**Key motivation(s)**

Initially social justice and food security for everyone. More recently the goals have been extended to include sustainability and surviving the food crisis.

**Enabling Factors**

There is agency support through resources and staffing. Partner support provides volunteers. There are also inclusion projects, for example, partnering high school with
student volunteers, other agency volunteers. These cross-connections increase and help facilitate across community food initiatives.

Constraining factors
Sustained core funding is needed to support the program. There is also a lack of awareness about and recognition of the health impacts of relative having access to fresh produce. Finally, there are challenges associated with buying local food. It tends to be more expensive and distribution networks are still quite new.

Policy
It would be more effective from a cost and long-term health perspective if there was better coordination between provincial ministries to increase funding for nutrition based prevention rather than dealing with the outcomes of poor eating (for example, helping to fund the Good Food Box instead of dealing with heart disease).

Healthy Eating Working Group
Interview and Description by Linda Stevens

Under the direction of the Kingston Public Health Unit, the Healthy Eating Working Group (HEWG) brings together partners from across a number of sectors (health, social, social justice, agriculture, institutional procurement [Queen’s] and municipal staff) to work towards the development of a local food council (which will ideally enable further/wider sector involvement in work local food system development) and the creation of a local food charter. This group is in its beginning stages. The City and the PHU are driving the process.

Key motivations
The primary motivations are to meet Public Health Unit (PHU) standards and its mandate with an emphasis on social justice through improved food access.

Constraining factors
There is a lack of community capacity to build awareness and use marketing to engage the community in this project. There are also constraints for organizations as they deal with limited, short-term funding that threatens the long-term sustainability of projects/programs and community based organizations. Where these organizations in some cases have permanent staff as coordinators, much of their time is used fundraising. This limits their capacity to work on new initiatives such as HEWG. Other barriers are associated with PHU. First, there is resistance to seeing the potential for community engagement within PHU. There is also reluctance about the role for local food in the context of community health. In some cases there is more focus on healthy eating exclusive of local food. Finally, there needs to be more leadership and staffing to bring community members and PHU together.

Enabling factors
On the community side, there is momentum and a commitment to work on food issues collectively. This commitment to local food policy/program development is explicitly stated in City sustainability plan. There is accountability for ongoing participation and
effort until the goals of both a food council and a food charter are achieved. On the PHU side, there is 'Healthy Communities' funding and organizational focus through community consultation process to focus on healthy eating. This allows staffing, administrative and resource support to be allocated to the development of HEWG and to encourage the achievement of project goals.

Policy
There is an endorsement for the development and implementation of a Food Charter that is being put into practice in City operated facilities.

Local Food - Local Chefs
Interview and description by Linda Stevens

Local Food - Local Chefs is an urban-based economic development project with multiple partners coordinated by the Kingston Downtown Business Improvement Association. It brings together and supports farmers from surrounding local, rural communities in the environs of Kingston, Lennox and Addington and Frontenac. The program is working to generate extra income and support through: culinary tourism programs; by including more local food in area restaurants; through campaigns with well-known local chefs at the farmers' market (e.g. Fare in the Square); and, networking meet and greets. A related goal is to develop Kingston as an authentic culinary tourism destination and increase consumer awareness of local foods.

Enabling Factors
This process is facilitated by the growing interest in local food. Improving networks and partnerships are also helping this process. The FDTR initiative helped build critical mass in this respect by pulling together and cementing many diverse and not well connected sectors/organizations/businesses/producers. The project now has a new enthusiasm thanks to receiving a significant Ontario Market Investment Fund (OMIF) grant to grow the Local Food local Chefs Initiative.

Constraining Factors
Three key challenges to maintaining and growing this initiative were identified. The first is volunteer fatigue. There is also a desire to get things done and move beyond the planning stage. The final important challenge that was raised is a lack of access to city facilities.

Policy
Key informants commented on the need for increased municipal resources, appropriate policy and funding for a central storage space/warehousing/food centre that would allow aggregation and centralized distribution of local food. The creation of a commercial kitchen would also help build local processing capacity as it would provide testing opportunities for emerging businesses. Finally, a Public Health policy focused on healthy eating specific to this region would give this project a boost.
Loving Spoonful
Interview and description by Linda Stevens

Loving Spoonful (LS) is a recently incorporated not for profit organization community food organization. LS works on a variety of projects and within multiple partnerships to make healthy food more accessible to all regardless of income. The organization is urban based with a relationship with rural residents and producers but does not reach into rural communities for food distribution. The organization's primary role includes gathering/reclaiming surplus foods that they redistribute to the community through emergency meal and hamper/pantry programs that support persons on lower incomes. They also provide education and skills development around food, food production, gathering, handling, preserving and cooking through community gardens and workshops. As a food security initiative with limited funding and a reliance on “whatever is donated” LS prioritizes local food whenever possible. LS is also involved in local food initiatives to try to better connect the food security, social justice and local producer worlds.

Loving Spoonful hosts the: Community Harvest Networking Group, is a partner in the Community Harvest Local (north end) Farmers Market (to promote access for lower income individuals and families), recipients and partners in Grow a Row.

Key motivation
Fighting for social justice around the provision of food in the region. Loving Spoonful is a demonstration project begun through Food Down the Road (FDTR). FDTR was developed to connect the farming and social justice communities and build channels to distribute food from local farmers to emergency food shelters and support food security initiatives. LS was started to address a number of the issues identified by FDTR and help to bridge some of the tensions between the food security and the social justice organizations locally. The motivation was to keep these aspects of FDTR going despite an end to the formal FDTR Project.

Constraining factors
Access to facilities is a problem for LS as the costs are prohibitive. As well there is only office and minimal storage available through the City. Logistically, the transportation and perishability of food creates some limits around what can be picked up and distributed.

Enabling factors
Existing networking groups improve coordination and collaboration on projects and through resource sharing. This process is largely informal but tends to be inclusive, founded in grass roots activity. There is a strong emphasis on community building components whenever possible.

Policy
Policy could facilitate less restrictive municipal zoning for farmers' markets and food stands in general. Scale appropriate regulations would facilitate the creation of SMEs by local entrepreneurs. Having the support of the municipality to underwrite insurance coverage would make organizations more viable. The development of a Food Council
with the vision of moving towards food charter would help to provide the larger community context to nurture these types of projects.

**New Farm Project**  
*Interview and description by Linda Stevens*

The New Farm Project (NFP) is a 4-year initiative funded by Heifer International (September 2008 until June 2012). It operates as a project under the administrative umbrella of the NFU National Farmers Union (NFU) Local 316 with oversight by a small committee of producers. There is a full-time funded Coordinator position shared by 2 individuals. This project is largely focused on rural communities but also reaches into opportunities through urban-based markets. It includes an education and skills building program that works to increase producer infrastructure, by for example, trying to increase number of local producers. Increasing the viability of family farms and building the supply of local farm products for local eaters are key component of the project.

This farmer-initiated project aims at building a sustainable, local food system in Kingston and its countryside. “The NFU New Farm Project is a farmer education, training, and support program aimed at strengthening the region’s farm community and local food system. By engaging new and established farmers in the opportunities and benefits that come from producing food for local markets, the project aims to increase the viability of family farms and build the supply of local farm products for local eaters. The project focuses on ecologically-sound farming methods and supports participating farmers in making farm management decisions that will lead to long-term sustainability of their farms.” (NFP web page) The NFP is a recipient of the Premier’s Award for Agri-food Innovation Excellence.

Projects sponsored by the NFP include:  
1. CRAFT Kingston (internship program), farmer training with over thirty workshops  
2. Equipment Sharing Coops  
3. Plan to Grow community engagement project  
4. Fall Gathering – annual event to bring together producers and partners  
5. Re-launch of the Local Harvest Newspaper as the Food Down the Road Newspaper as a communication tool to carry the spirit of connections and awareness forward from the history of the FDTR project

**HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES**

**Food Security Network (FSN) of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties**  
*Interview and description by Linda Stevens*

The Food Security Network of Hastings & Prince Edward Counties is coordinated by the Hastings Prince Edward Health Unit and provides a forum for information sharing and collaboration on actions that will contribute to food security and support a sustainable local food system. The group is non-profit and is comprised of 20 – 25 members from across partner organizations in the area, largely interested in food security and health. The Network provides a forum for information sharing and collaboration on actions that...
will contribute to food security and support a sustainable local food system.

**Key Motivations**
The primary motivation for FSN is fighting for social justice around the provision of food in the community recognizing that food security is multifaceted and is broader than being free from hunger.

**Constraining factors**
The large size of the region and accessibility to food for those on lower incomes due to transportation cost and infrastructure is challenging especially for residents in northern reaches.

**Enabling factors**
FSN Hastings and Prince Edward Counties is facilitated by the significant partner involvement. Public health provides important coordination support. There is also a well-coordinated emergency food system in region.

**Policy**
The most important policy initiative identified in the FSN research was the consideration to work towards a local food charter.

**LANARK COUNTY**

**Smiths Falls Farmers’ Market (SFFM)**

*Interview and description by Linda Stevens*

Smiths Falls is a small farmers’ market located the small urban centre of Smith Falls. The market has a reach through the north western section of Leeds Grenville County and into Lanark County. The market is rebuilding after a few years of inactivity linked to the loss of staff support from the Downtown Business association. The market is now coordinated by a volunteer with space provided by a service club. It is solely funded through vendor fees.

The business functions as a hub/cluster in that it provides a central location for vendors to come together to sell their product and to attract consumers. Advertising/marketing is provided for the Farmers’ Market as part of the vendor fees. Despite the renewal, the SFFM is struggling. In addition to the period of inactivity and the loss of staff support from the DBA, the community culture is not highly supportive of access to fresh and local foods. This could be related to the fact that Smith Falls is an economically challenged community that has had considerable job loss in over the past 5 years. Finally, a large construction project has limited traffic to the new market location.

**Key Motivation(s)**
The most important goal for the SFFM is to give a hand to help improve the viability of local agricultural producers. The market was re-established to make sure there is an opportunity for farmers to sell their products locally but also with the hope the community will begin to see the value of supporting local farmers. In more genera terms,
the area is interested in developing a more sustainable food system.

*Enabling Factors*
A key enabling factor for this project is a committed volunteer. Without this individual the project would not have its current momentum. RCAF support has also been important.

*Constraining Factors*
As previously mentioned, community support for SFFM is low. The culture in the community is more “big box shopping” than farm fresh. As well, key informants noted a lack of municipal support for the project.

**LENNOX AND ADDINGTON COUNTY**

*Hunger Elimination Project (HELP) (based out of Salvation Army, Napanee)*
*Interview and description by Linda Stevens*

The Hunger Elimination Project is a network focused on bringing partners together to address food security needs through some coordination and more recently, advocacy. The Project is functioning mostly as a coordinated program of Salvation Army (SA) then a shared activities network at this time.

*Key Motivation(s)*
The primary motivation is to improve our ability to help individuals deal with the coming food crisis. As part of this goal, the key informant is personally motivated to develop a more sustainable food system with a lower carbon footprint and impact on the resources of the planet.

*Enabling Factors*
Several factors contribute to the viability of the project. First, the Salvation Army provides coordinating staff. As well, organizations allow their staff to partner with the project. There is also are growing partnering activities in L&A in part due to CHC coming to the area and promoting the community development approach. Finally, there are many farmers in the area who have been contributing to Food Bank. HELP staff try to “return the favour” by referring to farmers when able, and are also looking for ways to purchase more food for food skills programs through local farmers.

*Constraining Factors*
As in many communities, the volunteer base is decreasing. In addition, there is a lack of awareness in the community about hunger/low income challenges especially the challenges low income households face getting access to healthy food. This is compounded by the need for more skills and/or awareness about healthy eating. The final constraint identified during the interview is the lack of food based activity and action in L&A. However, there is a beginning awareness that is just beginning to build in the County, which offers the potential to change the tide.
Policy
On the policy front, there is the need to get food security higher on the political agenda. Food needs to become a primary area of funding and policy focus so there is more equitable access to healthy foods for lower income families. It was suggested that a subsidy system to provide fresh produce that could be purchased through local farmers could help enable this. Initially, this could be undertaken through food banks.

UNITED COUNTIES OF LEEDS AND GRENVILLE

Local Flavours
Interview and description by Linda Stevens

Local Flavours (LF) of Leeds Grenville and Frontenac County operates as a program under the administrative umbrella of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve (FABR), a non-government, non-profit organization. Local Flavours was developed to make the local food system more visible and accessible by “making delicious, healthy foods widely available”. This was achieved by generating and providing a list and map of producers and outlets through the development and circulation of the Savour the Arch. Ten thousand copies were printed as well as the creation of an electronic brochure. These resources enabled networking through electronic based linkages and community based events. The organization is predominantly rural-based but reaches into urban centres - Brockville (Kingston to a lesser degree) - to map outlets that provide locally produced food. Web access is open.

Local Flavours is “a network of farm producers, restaurants and outlets which use locally produced ingredients insofar as possible”. Participants are located in and around the Frontenac Arch Biosphere, which encompasses Leeds and Grenville and Frontenac County. The network began in 2005 and with approximately 114 members including farmers, B&Bs and restaurants. Notably, it is one of Canada's largest local food networks. The programme is open to producers using a variety of production methods ranging from conventional to certified organic.

According to the LF webpage, “The long-term goal of the Local Flavours Project is to build on the strengths of the region by increasing the sustainability of the local food supply and the farmers who produce it. Their primary task is to bring together local producers and consumers, creating an economic and social partnership which benefits the entire community”. The organization serves as an information collating and sharing hub highlighting local producers and outlets while also providing education on local foods.

The program describes itself as “an excellent example of sustainable community development... It integrates sustainability's four pillars of environment, culture, society and economy. By buying both food and food services locally, you fortify our regional economy, help build stronger communities and reduce the heavy costs to the environment associated with food transport” (LF webpage).

Key motivation(s)
The project has two key goals. First, it strives to improve the chances of being more self-reliant. There is a concern regarding a possible future food crisis and the sense that
communities need to be more independent in protecting their own food interests. LF is motivated by a desire to be independent from governments and big business. There is the conviction that bottom up action is required for communities to regain control of their own food production/provision. Second, is the goal to develop a more sustainable food system with a lower carbon footprint and impact on the resources of the planet. There is a commitment to “local” and “sustainable” food. The Coordinator is a long-standing and politically active Green Party member and lives by the philosophy of sustainability.

**Enabling Factors**
A key asset is the committed and active volunteer coordinator alongside the supportive oversight organization (FABR). The region is also home to producer innovators (e.g. Wendy Banks). Finally there is a growing interest in the retail/outlet communities in providing local that may reflect a shift in consumer preferences.

**Constraining factors**
Several factors constrain LF’s ability to operate as effectively as it could. First, there is a lack of funding. This limits the time available for programming as the coordinator is constantly dealing with hurdles and trying to find the money to maintain and grow the service. There is also a limited volunteer capacity in the community. Essentially, there are too few doing too much without the supply of incoming younger/enthusiastic volunteers to step in and help. The erosion of local capacities is a challenge, specifically less emphasis on/and support for smaller farms and basic food awareness and skills. The last problem that was raised are the regulations and the associated overwhelming paperwork for organic production. The regulations are designed for larger farms and processors but imposed on smaller ones.

**Policy**
One policy challenge is the food safety regulations. As noted earlier, small businesses and operations do not have the time and capacity to meet regulatory requirements and paperwork. It was suggested that a commitment to funding ongoing coordination and mutual support programs for small and sustainable farms to the extent large commercial farms, agri-business and mining are funded would help to level the playing field.

**Golden Horseshoe Region**
*Lisa Ohberg and Sarah Wakefield*

**BRANT**

*Bountiful Brant*
http://bountifulbrant.com/

Bountiful Brant is a producer representation organization that helps bring traffic to members’ farms and build awareness of local producers and food in the county to consumers. Bountiful Brant’s mission is to represent local farmers, increase sales to local farmers and promote local small producers. It was started in October 2008 by a group of dedicated volunteers from the Brant Federation of Agriculture raising funds to create a
‘Buy Local’ map. Bountiful Brant has expanded in the last three years to additional projects aimed at promoting local products. They have created a website, recipe booklet, widespread media advertisement and many events to promote the availability of food. Producers pay a membership fee of $100 to join, and all local producers are welcome. For their fee, members have their farm featured in Bountiful Brant’s promotional projects such as the buy local map website, and on the Rogers Cable local television channel, as well as having the opportunity to participate in events and workshops. The membership fee comprises Bountiful Brant’s operating budget for funding projects and hiring contractors to do specific tasks (such as website design), the organization is otherwise staffed by volunteers, who are producers themselves.

Six Nations Reserve
http://www.sixnations.ca/

The Six Nations Native Reserve in Brant hired a Farmer’s Market and Garden Coordinator in July 2010 using money obtained from various grants (Union Gas, Walmart Evergreen, Healthy Community Funds) to manage all of the food security initiatives in the reserve community. These activities include a community garden, a food bank, a farmer’s market, food literacy workshops, as well as participation in Brant’s Good Food Box Program organized by the Community Resource Service. The coordinator picks up food boxes from the Community Resource Service in Brantford and delivers them to the several pick up sites through which the good food box is administered on the reserve. Workshops are given monthly on food topics that correspond with the seasonal ceremonies the community celebrates and emphasize traditional practice and knowledge.

The community garden was started this year, and promotes traditional cultivation methods such as sister mounds. Currently it is entirely volunteer based, and whomever volunteers to cultivate is eligible to receive a portion of the harvest, although next season the garden will be divided into plots for rent for the season for five dollars. At the time of writing, the reserve had just started its market with a focus on providing a space to sell produce and homemade goods from the community garden as well as residents’ private gardens or kitchens. The goal of the market is to promote economic self-sufficiency in the community and provide a place for residents to generate their own income or barter and trade with their neighbors.

The reserve community has found that food security links to many other issues such as health, delinquency, and maintaining traditional knowledge, “if you can’t come together in the garden, in the dirt, then you’ll never come together [as a community]”. Community food security initiatives are seen as opportunities to strengthen economic self-sufficiency, practice and transfer traditional knowledge and address social issues at their core.
Community Resource Service (food box and bank)
http://www.crs-help.ca/
http://www.bchu.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1580&Itemid=954

The Community Resource Service is a not for profit organization in Brantford that runs a food bank and a good food box program. The food bank began relying on community food donations, but is now also a distribution centre. The Ontario Association of Food Banks operates a regional food bank distribution network. Large corporate donations are solicited within a region and distributed to the food banks within that region from a main hub. The Community Resource Service food bank receives their allotment of these donations from the Waterloo Region Food Bank, which is the main hub in the region. The CRS then redistributes these donations along with direct donations from the Brant community, using some to supply their food bank and redistributing the rest to twenty-two other community food initiatives such as emergency food pantries and meal programs.

The Community Resource Service received funding from a Trillium Grant to hire a part-time coordinator to run a fresh food box to compliment the food bank’s provision of emergency (often dry) goods. Because of the food box’s success, the coordinator position was maintained as a CRS staff member even after the expiration of the grant. The program administers 400 boxes of fresh produce on a monthly basis to customers who reserve their boxes by paying in advance. Boxes cost $10 or $15 dollars depending on the size and all of the money is used to purchase good quality produce. The boxes are packed and distributed by volunteers. Each box includes a newsletter prepared by the Public Health Department including food safety, preparation and nutrition information.

DURHAM

Whitby Ajax Garden Project/ Durham Integrated Growers
http://www.durhamdigs.ca/
http://www.durhamdigs.ca/wacg/

The Whitby Ajax Garden project was started up when Drummond, a parish nurse working with community members who experiences low income and/or physical disabilities, convinced the church she was working for to allow her to use their land and set up a communal garden. What started with in 2001 with a single communal plot is now a 50-plot operation on rented and donated land that involves up to 100 people. The gardens bring participants together, contribute to food security and health, and provide a place for empowering community members.

In 2010, the project donated over 7000 pounds of fresh produce to various agencies in five communities in Durham Region. Operating on a small budget (about $15 000) with a small symbolic stipend to support Drummond, the project has received funding from faith organizations and from Carrot Cache. The garden rents plots to members and is largely run by volunteers.
HALDIMAND

Dunnville Farm to School Program
http://www.hnreach.on.ca/index.php/community-networks/child-nutrition-network

The REACH School nutrition program funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services operates school nutrition programs in Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk, Niagara and Hamilton. The Haldimand-Norfolk office received Trillium Foundation grant funds in 2010 to commence a pilot farm to school program in the community of Dunnville. The program started in two schools and has grown to supplying four schools with locally produced food for meal and snack programs run by REACH. The goals of the program are to increase the consumption of healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables in children, as well as to support local farmers, and increase students’ awareness of local food.

The Salvation Army has provided in kind support to the program by allowing the program to make use of a basement space in its Dunnville location. The Salvation Army in Dunnville is across the street from the Dunnville Farmer’s Market, which is where the produce for the program is purchased. It is stored in the refrigerator equipment in the Salvation Army space. A dedicated staff person spends 15 hours a week sourcing produce, coordinating with the schools and making deliveries. The program is overseen by a loose grouping of active volunteers in the community. At the time of writing, the program was beginning to source more produce (such as strawberries) when it is available in the peak summer season (when school nutrition programs do not run) and freeze it for use in the upcoming school year.

Richardson’s Farm and Market
http://www.richardsonsfarm.com/

When James and Kirsten Richardson bought their farm in 1997 it had a quarter acre of strawberries on it. Today they cultivate thirty acres of fruits and vegetables including sweet corn, peas, beans, fall raspberries, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and tomatoes grown without fungicides or insecticides. The Richardsons sell their produce at their own market on the farm as well as at six different farmers markets in Haldimand County and the City of Hamilton. The Richardsons also have an educational corn maze featuring facts on agriculture in Haldimand on their farm and offer school tours to promote facilitate education.

The Richardsons are actively involved in supporting local agriculture in Haldimand County as they themselves rely on the local hubs of markets and the direct connections with consumers markets provide to retail 97% of their produce and earn their living. James volunteers with the Dunnville Farm to School program, is a volunteer member of the executive board of the Caledonia Farmer’s Market in Haldimand, is on the board of directors of the Locke Street Farmer’s Market in Hamilton, and is the President of the Dunnville Farmer’s Market Association.
**Dunnville Farmer’s Market**
http://www.dunnvillefarmersmarket.ca/

The Dunnville Farmer’s Market is open from March to December, 7 am to 12 noon on Tuesdays and Saturdays. The market does not receive funding but operates on a budget comprised of vendor fees. Vendors can apply to be permanent vendors under the canopy space for the entire season, or can arrive on a day-to-day basis and be allotted a stall on a first-come first-serve basis or to set up their own stands in the parking lot. Haldimand County owns the market shelter and is responsible for its maintenance. The County supports the market by providing printing and advertising, particularly through the Harvests of Haldimand website.

The Dunnville Farmer’s Market Association, made up of volunteers, runs the market. The Association pays for further advertising, and oversees the operation and vision of the market from long term planning to day-to-day issues. Vendors at the market are very diverse selling produce, meat, baked goods, honey, and other products. The Market Association plays a role in maintaining the diversity of vendors by managing vendor applications. The Dunnville Farmer’s Market has a by-law stating that 50% of a vendor’s wares must to be produced by the vendor. The market tries to balance the desire to be as local as possible with the reality that inter-regional vendors help increase diversity.

**Shared Harvest Community Farm**
http://www.sharedharvestdunnville.com/

Shared Harvest Community Farm and Education Centre was started by two doctors in the community of Dunnville in Haldimand who put up the capital to build the farm and greenhouse. Hamilton, who has studied organic agriculture across the globe, was hired full time to run the farm with the help of students and interns from various programs including the WWOOFing (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) Club and Dunnville’s D.R.E.A.M. education and mentorship non-profit. Together they grow 100 varieties of 40 different vegetables on a five-acre plot.

Shared Harvest operates Dunnville’s first certified organic CSA program that produces about 60 32-week shares. A non-profit organization called ‘Triple Bottom Line’ was incorporated for the purpose of running Shared Harvest and providing it with a Board of Directors. Shared Harvest is organized around the three governing principles alluded to in the name of this organization: financial sustainability, environmental responsibility and social responsibility.

**Harvests of Haldimand**
www.harvestofhaldimand.com/

Harvests of Haldimand is a marketing campaign and program run by the Haldimand County Economic Development and Tourism Division to promote local agriculture in Haldimand. The county’s Rural Development Officer is responsible for operating the program. Harvests of Haldimand partners with farmers and producers, restaurants and other food service businesses that might use local food. These members benefit (at no
cost) through events, advertising, increased traffic to their businesses as well as networking opportunities (for example between local producers and restaurants).

The program was started two years ago with start up capital provided from the Ontario Market Investment Fund and is now supported by the County, with annual funding from Haldimand Council and dedicated staff time from the Rural Development Officer. Harvests of Haldimand also partners with Haldimand’s three farmers’ markets (Caledonia, Hagersville and Dunnville), providing support and advertising. Harvests of Haldimand is exclusive to Haldimand but supports the full range of agricultural products grown in Haldimand County.

Harvests of Haldimand has a website that features local producers, processors, agri-tainment, equestrian facilities and restaurants that feature locally grown food. Harvests of Haldimand has also produced a Local Food Guide and a recipe booklet featuring recipes from local producers and restaurants that feature local food in their menus. Harvests of Haldimand and locally grown food have also been featured at numerous local festivals and events

**HALTON**

*Halton Food for Thought’s Farm to School Program*

http://www.haltonfoodforthought.ca/
http://www.haltonfoodforthought.ca/programs.php?bdiId=35
http://www.halton.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=46822

Halton Food for Thought has been facilitating the creation of and operating school nutrition programs in Halton Region schools for more than a decade. Food for Thought’s mission is to inspire children and youth to make healthy food choices vital to their development by providing inclusive access to nutritious foods throughout the school day. They currently operate programs in approximately 90 schools in Halton Region. In 2009 the Farm to School program was started to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables in children, educate students and parents about local and healthy foods and support local farmers. The program is run through Halton Food for Thought’s existing school nutrition infrastructure in a subset of 9 schools for the year 2010-11 with more interested in participating this school year

A part-time coordinator liaises with local farmers to source local fruits and vegetables for the participating school nutrition programs and coordinates logistics. The Food for Life/ ‘ReFresh’ distribution centre plays a role in the distribution of produce from local farmers to schools. Participating schools also receive information regarding local and seasonal agriculture for morning announcements, and inserts for school newsletters educating parents and children about healthy food and local agriculture.
Oakville Sustainable Food Partnership  
www.osfp.ca

The Oakville Sustainable Food Partnership (OSFP) is a not for profit organization started in 2008 to promote a sustainable local food systems in Oakville and the surrounding Region of Halton. The organization is run by volunteers who collaborate in a working group style without any physical office space or continued funding. Despite this obstacle the organization has made many important contributions towards increasing the sustainability of its food system in the past three years. OSFP's first project was the Harbourside Organic Farmer's Market, which continues to offer healthy local and organic foods and environmental products to consumers. OSFP is starting a fruit tree harvesting program (Halton Fruit Tree Project) as well as a backyard/garden sharing program and a community orchard within the next year. Although OSFP has to date been funded on a project basis by various grants, they are investigating a diversified continued funding base model to ensure the long term sustainability of its projects and the capacity to grow new food ideas in Oakville, and the Region of Halton.

Halton Fresh Food Box  
http://www.choices4health.org/pages/Projects/Halton+Fresh+Food+Box

The Halton Fresh Food Box Program started eight years ago after an anti-poverty coalition identified a need for fresh produce provision to low-income groups in Halton. The food box followed the Foodshare Toronto food box model in starting up, it is now an incorporated not-for-profit organization directed by a board. The food box is staffed using core funding for operating and administrative costs from Halton Region Public Health Department supplemented by grant funds.

The food box was originally conceived as a food access program to supplement traditional emergency food access and fill a gap in that sector by increasing access to fresh produce. The box consists only of good quality produce. The food box’s policy on local sourcing is that averaged over the year, the box must contain fifty percent local content or food grown within an approximately 100 km radius. The box contains higher percentages of local produce at some times during the year than others – for example the box is often 100% local in the summer, but has a lower local content in April and May. This reflects the seasonality of agriculture in Ontario. Halton region grows strawberries, raspberries, apples and pears, as well as some broccoli, kale, corn, turnip, squash and tomatoes, mostly in the rural North of the Region. Expanding the definition of local to neighboring regions as well allows the box to access local content in items for which there is a gap in supply within Halton, such as potatoes from Hamilton or peaches from Niagara.

Produce is sourced from wholesalers and some growers directly: some growers grow crops specifically for the food box program, and wholesalers are often willing to offer good prices because they know the destination of the purchase is the food box. Customers pay a reasonable, but an affordable price for the boxes, and all the money collected is used to purchase the produce and provide truck drivers with honorariums. The boxes are designed to be accessible to those who need them most, but also non-stigmatizing. Thus,
the program is open to anyone, and anyone can purchase a box, but the drop sites (often schools and churches) are selected in high need neighborhoods to ensure that targeted populations are served. The food box is packed monthly at three locations, the Food for Life warehouse and churches in Georgetown and Burlington by some 180 volunteers.

Food for Life/Refresh Foods
http://www.foodforlife.ca/index.php
http://www.refreshfoods.ca/

When Food for Life started fifteen years ago, it looked very different than it does today. Originally, it consisted of only founder George Bagaco’s individual efforts to deliver baked goods not sold by the end of the day at the local bakery to families in need in his neighborhood.

Food for Life collects fresh surplus food (baked goods, fruit and vegetables, meat and dairy) from local grocery stores, restaurants and the corporate food sector seven days a week, and delivers the food to over 42 community agencies in Burlington, Oakville, Hamilton, Mississauga and Halton region. For example, Halton Region Longos Chains will flash freeze much needed meat products the day before their best before date and donate them to Food for Life. In addition, Food for Life has established over 36 outreach programs in housing complexes and low-income neighborhoods in Burlington, Oakville, Milton, Acton and Georgetown. Today, Food for Life redistributes over 900,000 pounds of food annually.

Examples of outreach programs include food pantries, distribution to residents of a social housing project, meal programs and much more. At each of Food for Life’s outreach programs a volunteer coordinator administers the outreach with the support of the Food for Life Outreach Program Manager. The four outcome goals for the outreach programs are: increasing access to food, increasing nutrition and food literacy, providing additional information about other social services and building trust between volunteer coordinators and clients. Food for life has a 6,000 square foot warehouse with walk-in freezer and cold storage, and two refrigerated trucks. Food for Life is operated by a board of directors and funded by four different united ways, contributions from Halton Region and also fundraising.

Refresh Foods is a Food for Life program created three years ago to build donor partnerships with large food service corporations (food manufacturers, processors and distributors). Food for Life partners with other food groups in the community by offering their warehouse space and distribution infrastructure to the Halton Food for Thought school nutrition program, its Farm to School program and the Halton Fresh Food Box program.

Halton Food Council
http://www.haltonfoodcouncil.ca/

The Halton Food Council, started in 2008 is a group of community stakeholders whose goal is to facilitate dialog and communication between food players in the community.
Members identified it as a think tank type, policy advocacy committee, with a two pronged focus on social justice, agriculture and related policies. The council’s first task was to identify all the community food stakeholders and initiatives in the community. As such it conducted (and completed in spring 2011) an environmental scan containing statistics on the region's land use, agriculture, poverty, food costs, as well as a detailed list of all the food related programs and organizations in the community.

The Council’s second task is to bring together community food stakeholders for dialog and collaboration so that community goals and priorities relating to food can be identified. As such the council is made up of twelve members representing different key interests and sectors of Halton’s food community. Some members volunteer their time (including the chair) while others represent the organizations that employ them and are involved with the Council as a part of their work with these organizations. The council is trying to achieve membership representation from all community food sectors including farming and agriculture, social justice, business, planning, school nutrition, non-profit organizations, etc. All members have an equal voice in voting processes, aside from two non-voting advisory members from the region’s Public Health and Planning Department.

The Council also regularly engages in meetings and activities aimed and increasing communication with and between other community food actors. For example, the Council held a planning day where 70 community food actors were invited to attend, hear speakers and engaged in facilitated conversations to identify important issues. Sub-committees have now been established within the council to continue to work on these issues and include both council members and non-members. The third task of the Council will be to develop and advocate for food policy in the region that addresses the community identified food priorities and goals that are produced by these activities. The Council has already been successful in fostering relationships and partnerships between community food actors through its efforts to facilitate greater communication and collaboration between these actors.

HAMILTON

Community Food Security Stakeholders Committee

The Community Food Security Stakeholders Committee was created in 2007 from a Hamilton Public Health Services Department recommendation. The committee consists of a wide range of community food stakeholders representing agricultural, environmental, social service, emergency food access, research and education and other key interest groups. The committee meets monthly to discuss community food issues and policy advocacy projects they are working on. The CFSSC plays a communication facilitation, policy advisory/creation, and think tank role in food issues in Hamilton. One recently completed project was the creation of a white paper to guide policy development for Farmer's Markets in the City. The CFSSC is also working on a project to create a Food Charter for the City of Hamilton.
Manorun Organic Farm and CSA
http://www.manorun.com/

Manorun Organic Farm is a small, family run organic farm. The farm has 40 acres half cultivating hay and pasture, and a quarter each cultivating grains and vegetables, fruits and herbs. The farm produces organic vegetables, fruits, herbs, meats and breads to supply a CSA of 150 shares. Manorun also sells their products at three farmer’s markets in Hamilton, the Dundas, Ancaster and Locke Street markets. Manorun’s vision of a sustainable food system involves small, diverse farms using sustainable methods selling directly to consumers. Manorun is embodying this vision in its practice, and furthering it by participating in marketplaces that increase the demand for small, local, diverse, sustainable farmers.

Hamilton Eat Local
http://environmenthamilton.org/view/page/hamilton_eat_local

Hamilton Eat Local is a subsidiary of Environment Hamilton, a non-profit organization committed to protecting the environment and educating Hamilton residents on how they can do so. Environment Hamilton and other community partners created Hamilton Eat Local in 2005. It creates and supports programs that encourage Hamilton residents to eat food grown by local farmers and in the urban community. One major project is the annual local food map and directory started in 2007 that lists all the places that Hamilton residents can purchase food directly from farmers in their region. Another major project is Hamilton Fruit Tree project, a gleaning program where volunteers pick the fruit of urban fruit trees and split the harvest three ways between volunteers, owners and food banks. Other projects have included the Rural Routes bus tours that took urban residents on tours of local farms to educate and increase Hamiltonian's awareness of local agriculture, while offering opportunities to buy produce directly from those farms, giving those organizations a bit of extra income in exchange for their hospitality; and the Operation Smoothie project, which is working towards providing frozen fruit from local farms to school nutrition programs so they could serve healthy, delicious, local fruit all year 'round in the kid-friendly "smoothie" format.

TORONTO

North York Harvest
http://www.northyorkharvest.com/

North York Harvest is a large food bank in Toronto, and also a regional warehousing and distribution centre for emergency food provisions. North York Harvest distributes 1.6 million pounds of food a year through the food bank and the programs of member agencies including neighborhood food banks, social services, community kitchens, shelters, and meal programs throughout the City. North York Harvest is currently conducting a feasibility study with funding provided by the Metcalf Foundation to investigate the potential for creating a food hub in the Lawrence Heights neighborhood in Toronto. The envisioned Lawrence Heights food hub would be a multi-service hub that would provide more than food services, but use food as the ballast of operation.
West End Food Coop
http://www.westendfood.coop/

The West End Food Co-operative (WEFC) is an incorporated multi-stakeholder co-operative – with consumer, employee, and producer/supplier members – committed to the development of an inclusive community food culture in Toronto’s West End. WEFC acts as a catalyst for local food security by co-ordinating community-driven food initiatives; these include the Sorauren Farmers’ Market and the soon-to-open full service grocery store at the Parkdale Community Health Centre at Queen and Dufferin which will feature local, organic and fair trade products. The co-op will focus on creating local food security while providing employment using a liveable wage model.

Co-op Coordinator Lynn Bishop sees WEFC as much more than a grocery store; it is a multi-stakeholder co-operative, one of the first of its kind in the local food space. Serving a diverse population, WEFC hopes to continue to build on its roots as a community food service organization by leveraging financial stability and food security achieved through their soon-to-open retail space and combining this with additional funds raised through community fundraisers, public and private foundations to support innovative capacity building and outreach programs in the community. As a co-operative social enterprise, the WEFC aims to be inclusive and innovative, reaching more diverse populations through life-changing ways while connecting local farmers with new markets to enhance regional resiliency.

YORK REGION

York Region Food Network
http://yrfn.ca/

The York Region Food Network is an organization that promotes food security in York Region by raising regional awareness of issues the impact food security. The York Region Food Network started as mostly an awareness group in the late 1980s to counter the myth that there was no hunger in the suburban York Region. Their work grew over the years to include breakfast drop in program, community kitchens, community gardens, school programs and so on. They are also now involved with pushing for a Food Charter. They are partly funded through the United Way, but mostly project funding. The organization is located in a building that functions as a services hub: as it also houses the Street Outreach, Emergency Winter Shelter, John Howard Society and the food bank. The York Region Food Network envisions a food system in York Region that is healthy, accessible and sustainable.
Southwestern Ontario Region

Erin Nelson and Irena Knezevic

OXFORD COUNTY

Oxfordlicious
http://www.oxfordlicious.com/
Interviewee: Cathy Bingham, Tourism Oxford

Bingham has long been a champion for local food promotion in Oxford County. In her role at Tourism Oxford, she was able to secure a Trillium Foundation Grant to develop a database that connects local producers with potential consumers; she has also helped spearhead Oxfordlicious – a program designed to increase the use of local food in local restaurants. Although Tourism Oxford’s mandate does not explicitly include local food promotion, Bingham’s personal passion has inspired her to creatively include local food initiatives such as Oxfordlicious as part of the County’s culinary tourism strategy.

For Bingham, community-building is at the heart of what she does, but she also believes that in order for Oxfordlicious, or any other local food project, to be successful, it is important that there be a clear economic impact, particularly in terms of helping local area producers increase the viability of their operations. At the end of the day, the two elements go hand in hand, as successful local business development helps build community ties.

Oxford County Buy Local Map
http://www.oxfordbuylocal.ca/
Interviewee: June Nussey, Oxford County Federation of Agriculture

Like many other communities, Oxford County is increasingly interested in buying local, and getting the Buy Local Map off the ground has been key to facilitating that, as it helps restaurants, caterers, Good Food Box programs and others more easily locate local products. Currently, the Buy Local Map project is funded by an OMIF grant, and managed by a committee with representatives from a number of organizations.

Having grown up on a farm, Nussey has always been passionate about agriculture, and sees her main role at the Oxford County Federation of Agriculture as being about getting the agricultural message out to the public. Taking on the coordination of the Oxford County Buy Local Map has been an excellent way to move forward with that agenda, as it has allowed her to actively engage in public education regarding the importance of local food. Ideally, Nussey would like the Board of Health to take on a stronger role in providing resources for individuals to learn how to preserve local food through the canning and freezing processes. It is important to have public sector involvement, as opposed to simply relying on private business to move the local food agenda forward. She notes that developing municipal public procurement programs that would favour local food would be a wonderful strategy for increasing the local food sector.
**Oxford County Food Charter**
*Interviewee: Linda Dimock, Woodstock and Area Community Health Centre*

The Woodstock and Area Community health centre staff spearheaded a collaborative process to develop a food charter for Oxford County. Other actors involved in drafting the charter included Public Health, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, OMAFRA, Children’s Aid, non-profits such as the Salvation Army, Operation Sharing and Helping Hands, private citizens, and one member of County Council. Broad in scope, the charter addresses issues such as emergency food service improvement, education and awareness about healthy eating, community gardening, and policy proposals.

Work is still needed in Oxford County to build the kind of broad-based community support for action on food issues that exists in a place like Waterloo Region, or Guelph-Wellington. Dimock hopes that the Food Charter will eventually be adopted by County Council, and that it may spark increased action and potentially lead to the development of a food hub project that would help coordinate the variety of activities already happening in the County. Ideally, community partners can take a more active leadership role in local food work, helping to educate local citizens – many of whom are still unfamiliar with concepts such as “food security”.

**Your Farm Market**
*Location: Woodstock*
*Interviewee: Don McKay, Oxford County Warden and local sweet corn grower*

A sweet corn grower for 20 years, McKay’s daughters now run his operation. They have opened a sales outlet in a local parking lot, where they sell their own produce as well as that of 20-25 other area farmers, and some added goods that they source at the Elmira Produce Auction. Known as Your Farm Market (YFM), all products sold come from a 100 km. radius, and annual sales have reached almost half a million dollars. In McKay’s opinion, this success is a direct result of his daughters’ focus on building close personal connections with their consumers, which he feels keeps them wanting to buy at the market, even when other options might be available.

According to McKay, a city like Woodstock could easily support many more farm market outlets similar to the one operated by his daughters. He suggests that, if zoning bylaws would permit it, the city could be home to ten such business ventures, and that each could be open every day, as opposed to just one day per week. In addition to helping increase consumer access to fresh, local food, this model would help smaller-scale producers in the region gain market access. In spite of opposition from large-scale producers, who see such markets as competition, McKay is working hard in his role as County Warden, and as a private citizen, to create consumer awareness about local food issues, in the hopes that the public will push for more market openness.
PERTH COUNTY
The Local Community Food Centre
Location: Stratford
Interviewee: Steve Stacey, The Local Community Food Centre

In 2010, Toronto’s Stop Community Food Centre decided to pilot its model in two other Ontario communities, one of which was Stratford. Stacey explains that the Stratford site will be modeled after the original location in Toronto, but will be tailored to suit the needs and context of the local community. Taking advantage of the area’s rich agricultural productivity, The Local Community Food Centre will strive to source local food as much as possible (though it will also partner with industrial suppliers). Its programs and services will include an emergency food distribution centre, greenhouse, community garden and kitchen, drop-in meals, nutrition education, and advocacy work on food issues.

Stacey strongly believes that it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach when working to support local food networks, and take environmental, social and economic factors into equal consideration. He thinks the community food centre model is a good example of that kind of holistic thinking, and would like to see the concept replicated in other communities across the province and country as a means of addressing market instability and building social relationships. The Local Community Food Centre is a pilot project that will contribute towards the creation of a Canada-wide network of community food centres that would facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experience, and resources.

Slow Food Perth County and Perth County Kitchens
http://www.slowfoodperthcounty.com/
http://www.perthcounty.ca/kitchen
Location: Stratford
Interviewee: Laurie Knechtel, Slow Food Perth County and Perth County Kitchens

Following the philosophy of the international Slow Food movement, Slow Food Perth County strives to promote local, naturally grown food. One of the main ways in which they do this is by running a Sunday market in the Stratford Market Square. Based on their “good, clean, fair” philosophy, this market has been highly successful. Knechtel points out that it has been wonderful to see the city’s historic Market Square return to its original function as a marketplace for the buying and selling of local products.

In addition to her work with Slow Food Perth County, Knechtel is also involved in Perth County Kitchens, an innovative initiative under the umbrella of Perth County Economic Development. The program assists small, food-related business start-ups by facilitating access to and use of certified community kitchens for an affordable, hourly rate. Those same certified kitchens are used to conduct classes for both children and adults on traditional methods of food preparation and preservation.

According to Knechtel, both Slow Food Perth County and Perth County Kitchens contribute to much-needed public education around food issues. She notes that, with so much junk food readily available, “we need a lot of Jamie Olivers”, or people promoting healthy food choices. Beyond the physical health benefits associated with good, clean, fair foods, Knechtel also highlights the
social and community aspects of her food-related work. Indeed, she sees the health, social, educational and economic elements of a local food system as being inextricably linked.

Finally, she commends other local food initiatives that engage people in learning to produce and prepare their own food. She feels that providing this type of education is immensely important: “Not only does it promote a healthy local economy, but it is rewarding for consumers, young and old. It establishes in their mind a new paradigm of seasonality, and it enhances the pleasure of eating.”

*Milverton Farmers’ Market*

*http://www.milvertonfair.ca/farmers-market.htm*

*Interviewee: Sandra Kuepfer, Milverton Farmers’ Market (coordinator)*

Although it remains relatively small, Kuepfer believes that the market has been quite successful at meeting its goals. One of those goals relates to fair pricing, and she points out that vendors selling the same product work together to set price. Kuepfer also notes that prices at the local grocery store have decreased slightly since the market opened four years ago. While she feels positive about the level of success to date, she does acknowledge that she would like to see the market eventually become bigger, more diverse, and play more of a social role in the community.

Kuepfer explains that it can be challenging to get residents to attend a farmers’ market, especially when many work in urban centres such as Kitchener-Waterloo and London and are not in the habit of participating in a local food economy. She believes that food-themed festivals like Savour Stratford as well as public education are important for raising people’s awareness about how much excellent local food is available in the region. If people were better educated about the issues, they might be convinced to support a local market as opposed to doing their grocery shopping at supermarkets on their way home from work.

**HURON COUNTY**

**Huron-Perth Farm to Table**

*http://huronperthfarmtotable.ca/*

*Interviewee: Joan Brady, Huron-Perth Farm to Table*

The Huron-Perth Farm to Table network’s main goals are to build the capacity of the local food system, by increasing farmer training, building processing and other infrastructure, engaging in promotion work to communicate the benefits of local food to consumers, and market development. Specific activities of the organization include a Good Food Box program and Buy Local Buy Fresh map, as well as the Opportunities Project, which has been responsible for starting a number of farmers’ markets in the area. In 2005, the first was opened in Grand Bend; in 2008 another one was opened in Exeter. Since then, three additional markets have opened, all of which try to be as producer-based as possible.

A commercial hog farmer for 30 years, Brady stresses that the work done by the network must focus on the farmer perspective. She very much appreciates that growing numbers
of people are getting passionate about local food; however, she cautions that there is little point supporting local food if the farm perspective is not included in the work being done. For example, culinary tourism is wonderful, but care needs to be taken to ensure that it is developed in a way that benefits local farm families. Similarly, farmland preservation work can only be truly effective if it includes a focus on farmer preservation as well.

A self-described “big picture thinker”, Brady’s work as an agricultural advocate extends to involvement with the National Farmers’ Union, Sustain Ontario, and FoodNet Ontario. Ideally, she would like to see a system developed wherein local food networking organizations could communicate directly with OMAFRA about their needs. In her opinion, the current movement to develop a provincial network of local food networks could help facilitate such a system.

**REACH Huron, Community Food Centre Social Enterprise Project**

http://reachhuron.ca/

*Interviewee: Brian Wiley*

Wiley has been hired on contract (a position paid for by a Trillium Foundation grant) by REACH Huron to develop a proposal for a community food centre social-enterprise project. Such a project would fit into REACH Huron’s mandate of promoting local economic development within the agricultural and equine sectors. Although the project concept is still in its initial stages, elements would likely include a greenhouse, community kitchen and gardens, and a focus on food-related education, such as teaching people how to grow, cook and preserve their own food, and informing them of the benefits of local food from a nutrition, economic and social equity standpoint. The centre would be designed to serve the entire County, but would be located in Clinton where the lack of a farmers’ market makes access to fresh local food particularly challenging.

Currently, Wiley is working to build awareness of, and support for, the community food centre project. He notes that this is a challenging but essential task, as the project will only be successful if it achieves broad-based community buy-in. For Wiley, securing support for a community food education centre is tied to shifting the community’s priorities towards an increased focus on the importance of food, from a health, economic development, and social perspective. “We live in the heart of agriculture and there are tons of producers” he explains, “so there should be enough food for the community, and there’s no reason why we couldn’t have people selling fresh produce on the streets…Having more food sale more often in public areas would be helpful, and subsidizing it for people with access problems would be good for decreasing health problems such as obesity…Looking at health prevention through a local food system would be a good idea.”

Youth will be targeted for curriculum-based, hands-on agricultural education to instill values of sustainable agriculture and good food at a young age, and to complement in-class learning. There will also be a focus on sustainable farmer training for youth, and will follow Everdale's model of a curriculum-based farmer training program. Wiley also hopes to provide vocational training for at-risk youth that will provide them with the tools to pursue opportunities in the agricultural community, and within their own community.
There is also an interest in offering green care to expose vulnerable groups to the beneficial effects of healthy food and farming.

Huron County Health Unit
http://www.huroncounty.ca/health/food/index.php
Interviewee: Janice Dunbar, Community Developer, Huron County Health Unit

Working in close collaboration with Huron-Perth Farm to Table, the Huron County Health Unit is involved in a number of local food initiatives, including the Huron County Good Food Box, a newly-opened community kitchen adjacent to the Health Unit headquarters, and the provincial Healthy Communities Partnership. The Health Unit also conducted a series of educational and consultative kitchen table talks about food systems in the County – work made possible through a grant from the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

From the perspective of the Health Unit, work to promote local food systems is based on both supporting local area producers and increasing access to healthy local food for everyone in Huron County. Dunbar points out that “it’s ironic, because we’re so strong and rich agriculturally, yet we have so many people who can’t afford to eat.” She believes it is essential to make healthy local food more accessible, particularly to vulnerable populations, while at the same time ensuring that farmers are able to make a good living, receiving fair pay for their work.

Recently, the Health Unit is working on the development of a food hub project in the County. If successful, the project would seek to bring together different food system actors to build hubs that could include elements such as sales, distribution and processing of local produce, and public education focused on nutrition and food skills. Recognizing the need to be accessible in a geographically-spread-out County, the hubs would ideally be located across the County, at sites where current food system work takes place (e.g. Good Food Box distribution site, REACH Huron projects). Although it is still unclear whether an eventual project would use a traditional business model, be based on social enterprise, or favour a non-profit approach, Dunbar stresses that any initiative “not only has to be economically viable, but you have to look at the triple bottom line…it’s not just about making money.”

GREY-BRUCE

Foodlink Grey-Bruce
http://www.foodlinkgreybruce.com/
Interviewee: Freeman Boyd

Foodlink Grey-Bruce is run by 2 almost full-time staff working with an annual budget that is subject to yearly re-approval by County Council. The organization’s mandate is to build linkages between 350 local food businesses (approximately 70 of which are farms). In addition to network-building, Foodlink Grey-Bruce provides small business grants and helps small-scale businesses navigate government regulation – an issue that Boyd (a farmer himself for 25 years) points out the organization would like to become more
actively involved in, for example by promoting the idea of a provincial agency that would help producers deal with regulatory compliance.

By far the most important priority for Foodlink Grey-Bruce is increasing the viability of local farm operations. In order for this to happen, Boyd suggests that there need to be significant changes in people’s attitudes about food. For example, the public needs to be educated about concepts such as seasonality, and institutions such as schools and hospitals need to acknowledge the link between food and health and start sourcing fresher, healthier local food. In addition, Boyd stresses the importance of moving away from the increasing concentration that characterizes food processing and distribution and towards creating systems within which diverse small-scale operations can thrive. One specific recommendation is the development of a toolkit that would help people working on local food issues measure the economic impacts of their work, as this data is often required by funding agencies, but people working on the ground do not have the expertise to collect it.

Boyd is passionate about the need to scale-up the work that is done regionally, and ensure recognition of the value of local food at the national level: “We are lacking a national food policy. We have had a cheap food policy, coupled with a push for consumers to have a duty to seek out the cheapest cost. I often wonder what it would be like if we had had a cheap car policy. People don’t buy the cheapest car they can buy.”

**Around the Sound**

*Location: Owen Sound*

*Interviewee: Anne Finlay-Stewart*

Around the Sound was a retail outlet that sourced as locally as possible, with a focus on Grey-Bruce goods. All products offered were made by Canadian companies. The store, which began as a National Farmers’ Union project, sought to act as an incubator, providing a secure market for up-and-coming small-scale production businesses in the region. It never advertised “sales”, instead choosing to focus on educating the public about the value of local products. The project was intended to become a cooperative, but that idea was not feasible due to the widely varying interests of different actors. Essentially a non-profit by default, Around the Sound was lost in a fire in May, 2011, and plans for rebuilding are unclear.

For Finlay-Stewart, community-building and the creation of networks was the most important motivation for her involvement in the project. She thought of herself as a matchmaker, more than a retailer, and noted that the store was located in a mixed income neighbourhood, and made an effort to be accessible to a broad spectrum of customers. The community-building nature of her store is tied to local food security, because “if you’re building community the farmer is always going to make sure that there’s some for us” as opposed to going to market in Toronto, where there will always be money. It is also important to present a positive vision that captures peoples’ imagination.
**Markdale Farmers’ Market**  
*Interviewee: Kate Russell, Markdale Farmers’ Market and Kate’s Country Kitchen*

A number of years ago, a Grey-Bruce regional conference, hosted by the Saugeen Economic Development Corporation, was held to discuss local economic development; one outcome was a realization that local farmers were almost exclusively shipping their production for sale at the Ontario Food Terminal. The potential to develop a local market for this production was identified as an important opportunity, and the Markdale Farmers’ Market was created as a result. Russell notes that the Markdale experience is just one of more than 14 farmers’ markets now operating in Grey-Bruce – a region that, only a few years ago, was home to just a couple of local markets.

In 2011, just the second year of its existence, the Markdale Farmers’ Market consisted of six vendors. While five sold their own products, one was a broker bringing in goods from a 100 mile radius. Russell explained that, because local farming is still based on a mentality that favours cropping for bulk sale, it can be challenging to find producers to participate directly in the market. For consumers, the ability to attend a farmers’ market is invaluable. According to Russell: “As much as people go [to the market] for good food, and the quality, it’s also because somewhere deep inside our hearts we remember what it was like to grow our own food, and have a family supper, and I think that’s why people go to farmers’ markets; it’s to touch that. There’s a real sense of pride in that.”

In addition to her work with the farmers’ market, and her own small-scale processing business, Russell has also recently put together a funding proposal for the development of a food hub project in Grey-Bruce. If successful in obtaining funding from the McConnell Foundation, she would work to turn the Markdale Farmers’ Market into a real hub for local food activity that would ideally include processing, storage and sale of local produce, as well as a community garden and kitchen, and food-related educational activities. Eventually, other elements might be included as well. “The sky is the limit for what you could use that kind of thing for” says Russell.

**WELLMINGTON COUNTY**

**Guelph-Wellington Local Food**  
[http://www.guelphwellingtonlocalfood.ca/](http://www.guelphwellingtonlocalfood.ca/)  
*Interviewee: Kate Vsetula, Guelph-Wellington Local Food*

Housed within the Guelph Community Health Centre, Guelph Wellington Local Food is dedicated to linking local area producers with consumers. Vsetula, whose work to champion local food was essential for getting the initiative off the ground, explains that in the early years the project was much smaller because there was not as much public awareness of the importance of local food. More recently, however, Guelph-Wellington Local Food has been able to capitalize on the wave of interest in local food to help garner broad-based support and expand the scope of its work. There is a strong steering committee of 16 which includes farmers, restaurateurs, economic development officers, store owners and others; the steering committee consists of a number of working groups including partnership, events, marketing, evaluation and more.
For Vsetula, the main priority is to build linkages amongst local area farmers and any individuals or businesses that could be potential consumers. In her opinion, there is a lot of willingness on the part of both producers and consumers to participate in local food chains, but people need a facilitating organization to connect the dots. Activities designed to create these linkages include the publication of a Guelph Wellington Local Food Map, an online food finder, and various events such as the Guelph Wellington Local Food Fest, the Wellington Rural Romp farm tours and numerous networking events to link buyers and sellers of local food, including the broader public sector, food service and others, to regional producers and distributors. The new Taste Real local food brand for the region is also facilitating the knowledge transfer to consumers about what is local, through broad partner use of the brand and umbrella marketing of the brand and partners.

In Vsetula’s opinion, Guelph-Wellington Local Food is well-positioned to act as a convenor for a food hub project, bringing together many different actors, including farm organizations, local economic development offices, municipal planning offices, institutional food buyers, business owners and public sector organizations. Indeed, she has already put together a funding proposal for such a project, and her long term vision would include everything from a venue for local arts, to a farmers’ market, to a retail outlet, to a CSA pickup point, to educational space to office space, and beyond. Vsetula stresses that, although grant money would be necessary for project start-up, any food hub proposal must have a built-in plan for long-term financial sustainability and should not be afraid to consider membership fees or other options to ensure viability.

Distribution is a key issue for more use of local food to be used by stakeholders and a food hub has been discussed by many partners as one strong possible solution. In the meantime, the work of Guelph-Wellington Local Food and partner organizations are in many people’s eyes the food hub of the region. There is huge potential to create a brick and mortar food hub come into development.

*Taste Real*

http://guelphwellingtonlocalfood.ca/taste-real

*Interviewee: Gayl Creutzberg*

Operating under the umbrella of Guelph-Wellington Local Food, Taste Real is a branding initiative designed to promote goods produced on Guelph-Wellington soil. In order to use the brand, businesses must commit to sourcing a certain percentage of local food. With funding from OMIF, and some financing from membership fees paid by participating businesses, Creutzberg explains that Taste Real seeks to expand the producer-focused work of Guelph-Wellington Local Food by bringing bigger businesses, such as the Delta Hotel in Guelph, into the consumer end of the local food chain.

A producer herself, Creutzberg feels strongly that local food initiatives must prioritize putting more money in farmers’ pockets. In order to accomplish this, she believes a business-oriented model is the most effective. Specifically, she suggests that farmers producing for the local market are often too diversified, and could benefit from increasing specialization that would allow them to produce at a scale that would facilitate their
ability to supply larger local businesses such as the Delta. Creutzberg points out that, although she favours increasing specialization, maintaining farm biodiversity is still important for ecological reasons and to have a fallback in case of a problem with the primary crop.

**Guelph-Wellington Food Round Table**
http://gwfrt.com/
*Interviewee: Brenda Doner*

The Guelph-Wellington Food Round Table was created to bring together different actors and work towards the creation of, in the words of Doner, “a thriving regional food system that is economically and environmentally sustainable.” The six specific areas of focus are: network construction; research and advocacy for improved food policy; relationship building; promotion of social learning; support for infrastructure development; and the launching of new programs. Currently, the Round Table is not formally incorporated, but does have one full-time contract staff (whose contract comes to an end in 2011). It receives in-kind funding and support from participating organizations, including Family and Children’s Services, the City of Guelph, Canadian Organic Growers, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, the University of Guelph Research Shop, the Taskforce for Poverty Elimination, the local school boards, and Guelph-Wellington Local Food.

For Doner, the initial motivation to work with the Round Table was its focus on food accessibility issues; however, she notes that the scope of the organization has evolved into a more systems-based approach that includes actors from a variety of sectors, such as non-profit and government and, similarly, looks at food issues from a variety of perspectives, including environmental sustainability and personal health. Doner explains that it has been challenging to bring the private sector into the Round Table work, but hopes that closer collaboration with Guelph-Wellington Local Food (including potentially bringing the Round Table under its umbrella) might address this issue, by facilitating more direct linkages with local producers. Additionally, there are plans to look more at social enterprise projects that would address the issues of profitability and distribution.

As it works to consolidate its role in the community, Doner feels the Round Table offers people an excellent opportunity for civic engagement. She stresses that its many volunteers are not just volunteers in the traditional sense of the word, but rather take part in the Round Table, and its associated activities, as a means of engaging in active citizenry in their community.

**WATERLOO REGION**

**Pfenning’s Organic Farm**
www.pfenningsfarms.ca
*Interviewee: Wolfgang Pfenning*
Pfenning’s is a family-owned farm that has been operating since 1983, and currently grows 500 acres of certified organic vegetable crops, while employing approximately 40 full-time and 60 part-time or seasonal staff. The operation is unique largely because it has developed its own distribution network, packing and storing its produce on-site, and shipping it in its own vehicles to regional retailers. In addition to their own produce, Pfenning’s also distributes goods from approximately 40 other farmers, primarily from Southwestern Ontario, but also from the Maritimes and California. Its distribution network is concentrated in Ontario, though it also includes a number of retailers in Quebec, Chicago and Pennsylvania. Although it supplies some larger supermarkets, the focus is on smaller-scale retailers whose “passion for selling good food” is much appreciated by Pfenning.

Pointing out that “we were local before it was cool”, Pfenning suggests that the key to his success was taking on the distribution side of the food chain, which is a big struggle for many producers. He explains that this involved going to Toronto and asking retailers what they were doing wrong. “It takes a long time to figure things out” he explains, “and a lot of times you don’t hear pleasant information…but if you take it and digest it and come up with creative solutions…then you do your homework and you come back. It’s like growing a crop, and you have to serve all year long, and only once are you allowed to harvest. Growing relationships with stores is the same.”

Largely due to its achievements in developing an effective distribution network for local organic food, Pfenning’s was recognized with a Premier’s Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence. Even with all this success, however, Pfenning points out that there is still very little financial security in what he does.

**Garden Party CSA**

http://gardenparty.ca

*Interviewee: Theresa Schumilas, owner-operator of Garden Party CSA*

In the opinion of Theresa Schumilas, who runs a CSA farm and an organic buying club, consumers are responding to the message about local food because it represents “a positive marketing strategy in the middle of a doom and gloom message about destruction. I think people respond to positive things; they're not motivated by fear.”

A recipient of the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence, Garden Party is based out of Schumilas’ certified organic farm, and includes a 30-share year-round CSA, bulk buying club, and on-farm farmers’ market. While a focus on local is important, Schumilas is also a strong believer that, to truly be sustainable, food should be produced without dependence on agrochemicals, GMOs or exploitation of migrant workers. She feels that the local food movement sometimes masks these issues, and would ideally promote a shift away from the large-scale corporate model that makes such unsustainable practices difficult to avoid.

Schumilas suggests that one of the most important things about her work is that it helps demonstrate that there is a lot of local organic food available locally, and that you do not have to make trade-offs between the economic development and environmental goals of
sustainable food systems. Her members may sometimes pay more money for the food they buy; however, in-season organic produce costs the same as conventionally-produced produce. She explains that members are willing to pay more because they recognize that they are paying for the internalization of social and environmental costs. She notes that it would be very helpful for these consumers to receive a tax credit, and also for public institutions to move towards increased sourcing of local organic food and paying a fair price that recognizes its true value. Also it would be ideal if public procurement programs prioritized purchases from smaller local producers, instead of using conventional value chains. Schumilas also offers barter arrangements for shares for people who are unable to afford them. In each CSA session, she asks members if they can contribute something “extra” so that members with less income can be included. Efforts to make organic food more accessible for lower-income people are becoming almost standard among the organic CSAs that she networks with in the area.

For Schumilas the most effective initiatives are those based on small-scale organic producers because they have seen first-hand the impacts of the large-scale, globalized model, and they truly understand the environmental issues of sustainable production and also the social importance of local agriculture. Organic is an important characteristic because it has the benefit of definition. When producers describe themselves as “sustainable” or “ecological”, eaters do not really know what that means and risk being mislead. If the local food movement is building something authentic, then communications have to be very transparent; Schumilas believes this is lacking in much of the localism movement today. People think that farmers who rely on fossil fuels and GMOs are located far away, and that farmers in our own backyards are “pure”. Because Schumilas works closely with many farmers who sell direct into local markets, she knows this is not the case.

Southern Ontario Region

Irena Knezevic

ELGIN COUNTY

Savour Elgin

(With information from Kate Burns, Business Development Coordinator, County of Elgin)

Launched in 2010, Savour Elgin promotes local farms, wineries, restaurants, and food events in Elgin County. It also serves as a communication hub for producers, distributors, and suppliers, while at the same time promoting Elgin as a culinary tourism destination. As indicated on its website (http://www.savourelgin.ca) “Savour Elgin has three culinary tourism-specific goals: 1. Strengthen the local food supply chain, including suppliers, providers, and users; 2. Build awareness of culinary tourism in Elgin County; and 3. Evoke a sense of pride within and have a positive impact on the community.”
There has also been some overlap with community members who are working with Savour Elgin and the efforts to develop Elgin Food Charter, so while Savour Elgin is primarily an economic development effort, it is not exactly isolated from broader community development and food security work.

**Horton's Farmers' Market**  
*(With information from Shawn DeVree, Manager, Horton's Farmers' Market)*

First opened 130 years ago and reopened five years ago, Horton's Farmers' Market is managed under the umbrella of the City of St Thomas. With a budget of $29,000, and several dozen vendors, the market features local products exclusively, with most of them coming from no more than 60km away. There are a few 100km exceptions for products that cannot be found closer to home.

The market purpose is to support local economy and community building. The manager, Shawn DeVree, explained that she saw the market as an incubator of local jobs too – where each stall represents several jobs. That is a welcome contribution to the economy of a town that has been hard hit by the disappearance of manufacturing jobs. Shoppers seem interested in supporting local producers but also looking for healthier and fresher foods. The markets website can be found at [http://www.hortonfarmersmarket.ca/](http://www.hortonfarmersmarket.ca/)

**ESSEX COUNTY**

**The Windsor-Essex County (WEC) Food Matters Forum**  
*(With information from Adam Vasey, Pathway to Potential; Colleen Mitchell, United Way; and Celso Oliveira, former WEC Food Strategist)*

This forum took place in October 2010 and was facilitated by the WEC United Way and Pathway to Potential (WEC's Poverty Reduction Strategy). It brought together city agencies, community groups, and local business to develop a common vision and identify the assets and needs of the community. While diverging views were evident in this meeting, the collaboration became an asset in itself. It is difficult to determine if the Forum's success was a reflection or a catalyst (likely both) of the strong food movement in Windsor-Essex, but it was evident that the local food activity in this area was more advanced than elsewhere in Southern Ontario. (Our interviews in this area also snowballed quickly as everyone we spoke to had numerous others to recommend for the study.)

The Forum itself produced the Food Matters report (available at [http://www.weareunited.com/reports](http://www.weareunited.com/reports)) all food security-related activities in the area, sets out an action plan, and identifies the area's priorities for strengthening the food system and addressing access to fresh food. Their top priority is to have a food strategist, a community position that has now been established. The position is supported through a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation as a collaboration between the United Way, Pathway to Potential, and the Windsor-Essex County Food Bank Association. The strategist will spend the next three years developing the food strategy for the county and facilitating collaborations among the various initiatives including community gardens and
community kitchens. Celso Oliveira, who was filling the position for a time in 2011, indicated that the goal of this position is to find ways to meet the food needs of a recently impoverished population and extend community networks and collaboration. At the same time, Oliveira suggested that there would be stronger efforts to engage big food producers in the areas with local issues – make them aware of food security concerns in the area, while at the same respecting that they have to be economically viable.

**Windsor-Essex Community Supported Agriculture (WECSA)**
*(With information from Steve Green, WECSA)*

WECSA was launched in 2009 and now encompasses a CSA-type “local good food box” program, a community garden, a peri-urban organic farm in transition, and an egg co-op. WECSA has also been at the forefront of urban hen by-law campaign, and a part of the Food Matters Forum (see above).

Volunteer-run and supported with only occasional and small contributions (including a grant from the TD Friends of the Environment Fund), WECSA's participation numbers vary but involve several dozen community members at any given time. WECSA also works closely with other community groups sharing resources, creating a platform to push for a municipal food charter, and spreading awareness of food security issues and the importance of local food. The motivations for WECSA's work are mainly food-security and food-sovereignty related, but also include environmental and community-building concerns. More information can be found at http://windsorcsa.blogspot.com/

**Grown Right Here**
*(With information from Lana Drouillard and Joe Byrne, Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation)*

The Agri-Business Sector Task Force of the Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation (WEEDC) identified, applied and received an OMIF grant from the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs in 2009 and 2010. The purpose of the grant was to promote locally grown, produced, and/or processed agricultural products to consumers in the Windsor-Essex region. The grant was matched by the WEEDC in 2009 and 2010. “Agri-Business and Nutraceuticals” has been identified as one of the nine priority sectors within the WEEDC's Regional Economic Roadmap that holds potential for the Windsor-Essex region.

“Grown Right Here: Look for Local” campaign and branding program was initiated in 2009 by the Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation, with support from the Ontario Market Investment Fund and in partnership with numerous WEC producers and associations including Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island, Essex County Federation of Agriculture, Essex County Associated Growers, South Western Ontario Vintners Association, and the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers Association. The campaign created a local food map, a resource-filled website, and the “Grown right here Windsor-Essex: Look for local. It's worth it!” logo available to producers as well as to restaurants that feature local food (see http://www.welookforlocal.ca/ for more information). In
2011, the campaign also produced a 32-page local food supplement for the local daily, The Windsor Star.

The campaign is by all accounts successful, it has helped create strong producer-consumer connections, and those who participated in the branding program in its first year reported seeing noticeable sales increases. The campaign's purpose is to increase profitability/viability for producers, increase and improve access to local food and assist in building a more sustainable food system. As Byrne described it, it was conceptualized as a “marketing campaign that could also double up as an educational opportunity; guided by economic principles to make good ideas into broadly successful endeavours.”

Drouillard indicated that a part of the work of this branding program was to find ways to increase economic sustainability in the long term and look beyond just immediate economic gains. Ironically, the big challenge to the program right now is its precarious future because of the lack of permanent funding.

**Downtown Windsor Farmers' Market**
*(With information from Victoria Rose, market communications and mylocalfoodblog.com)*

One of Essex County's five markets, and now in its third season, this market operates on an annual budget of less than $20 000 and is volunteer run. The dependence on volunteers puts it at high risk of volunteer burnout. The funding comes from booth fees (from about two dozen vendors) and support from the local BIA (approximately 25%). The market volunteers have put a lot of work into meeting regulation requirements, such as maintaining a required ratio of farmers to other vendors (artisans, entrepreneurs), so as not to compromise its position due to lack of washrooms facilities.

As their mission statement describes: the market “connects residents of Windsor and surrounding areas to the farmers of Essex County by providing residents with local, fresh and in-season food in an accessible setting. We aim to raise the profile of local food producers and entrepreneurs by giving them a venue in which to sell their goods, while educating the public about the rich agricultural diversity that exists in Essex County. Through partnerships we work to build a stronger sense of community, restore the positive image of downtown and bring vitality back to our city.” More information is available at http://downtownfarmersmarket.ca/

**County Connect**

County Connect is an online market that connects producers and consumers in Essex County. This family-run business is membership-based (vendors and customers become members of the County Connect community), it offers online ordering and deliveries, and is frequently cited as one of the more innovative and successful initiatives in Essex County. Though run as a business, County Connect is very much a community building endeavour and as their website states:

The County Connect Family encompasses all the member Farmers, Craftsmen and Restaurants in the Essex and Kent County region. These are the people that do extraordinary things to bring quality local food to the doors and mouths of our
community. These are the people who have a story to tell, and a culture to share. We are grateful for the dedication of local Farmers whose jobs are not easy, and who often times must hold a second job to pay for the farming they love and share... We celebrate and share those Craftsmen that create local treasures that represent the people and values of our community... We value the Restaurants who share the vision of our Farmers in providing quality, fresh, nutritious, local food to their guests.

More information can be found at http://www.countyconnect.ca/

KENT COUNTY

Buy Local Buy Fresh
(With information from Kim Cooper, Agricultural Coordinator with Economic Development Services, Chatham-Kent)

Facilitated by the Kent Federation of Agriculture and supported by Food Link and Economic Development Services, the creation of this map is only partly motivated by economic factors. The Federation's website notes: “Buying directly from the farm helps support local farm families, preserves local farmland, helps to expand the local food market and is your source to the freshest food around. Buying your food locally and eating from our region is not only healthy for you and your family, but also for the environment.”

Although the region has always been very agricultural and farm-gate sales have always been common, there has been plenty of interest in the map, which is now in its third edition. Cooper indicated that the map and, more generally, local food are attracting those consumers who are wanting to know more about their food: “They just want to know that the food they are getting is safe and healthy and then there are the are spin-offs in helping the environment and helping the local economy. But those factors are not insignificant, rather they are all interconnected, and all positive.” More information can be found at http://buylocalbuyfreshchathamkent.com/

Chatham Kent Community Gardens Program

Supported by the United Way and Trillium foundation this is a community garden project whose website states that “Food Link Chatham Kent Community Gardens are committed to providing the necessary land, education, tools and seeds to allow the citizens of Chatham-Kent, through their own efforts, to have access to safe, nutritious and appetizing fruits and vegetables.” The program is a part of the wider Food Link Chatham Kent Coalition, which also includes food banks, collective kitchens, and other community and faith organizations.

Since 2006, the gardens program has been working with the aim of establishing a community garden in each community, and so far 8 community gardens have been established in 4 municipalities. The program emphasizes the multiple benefits of community gardens including health, food security, community building, environmental
benefits, and skills development. More information is available at http://www.chathamkentcommunitygardens.com/

LAMBERTON

Sarnia Lambton Food Coalition
Formed in 2010 and co-chaired by the Community Heath Services Department, the Coalition represents an effort to bring together the key players in the community's food system, including public health officials, producers, retailers, community development and planning sector, NGOs, and community members. Lambton's local food encompasses farmers' markets, city garden plots, emergency food services, and several garden projects (run by businesses and community groups) that supply fresh produce to emergency food services.

The Coalition has been at the forefront of effort to develop a food charter for Lambton. Earlier this year, the Coalition released a strategy document, Creating a Food Revolution: A Healthy Food System Plan for Sarnia-Lambton. The document lays out the goals of the Coalition's work and the purpose of the strategy: “fostering food-friendly neighbourhoods; promoting social justice; supporting nutrition and disease prevention; building strong communities; creating local, diverse and green economic development; protecting and sustaining the environment; empowering people with food skills and information; and nourishing links between city and countryside.” For more information see http://www.lambtonhealth.on.ca/nutrition/slfc.asp

Petrolia Farmers' Market
(With information from Sandy Mason, Petrolia Farmers' Market)

This market is one four farmers' markets in Lambton (the others being in Sarnia, Forest, and Grand Bend). Petrolia market started operating in 2009 in a community arena. It now has nearly three dozen vendors and can see up to 2000 customers on market day. This operation is owned and operated by the town of Petrolia, is coordinated by a part time employee hired by the town, and the town also provides administrative support. In 2011 it became an outdoor market with a large covered area (an 8000 square foot pavilion) and full washroom facilities. The pavilion was made possible with federal support through Community Adjustment Fund. Located in downtown Petrolia, the market serves a double purpose – it supports local producers and attracts visitors to the downtown area, hence supporting other downtown businesses.

Though primarily an economic endeavour, this market is also interested in contributing to community building – as many other markets have been doing in recent years, Petrolia's market features live music and local artists, providing a bit of a cultural hub every weekend.
MIDDLESEX

Get Fresh... Eat Local
Created by the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture, this local food map is another case of wide community collaboration as it was supported by Tourism London, the County of Middlesex, City of London, Western Fair, Middlesex-London Health Unit, Healthy Living Partnership Middlesex-London and the London Farmers Market. Like other similar initiatives, it aims to support local producers while also promoting healthy eating. The map also includes information on seasonality, benefits of local food, tips for buying local, and tips for pick-your-own options. More information is available at http://www.heeman.ca/images/stories/pdf/get_fresh_map.pdf

NIAGARA

Niagara Local Food Co-op (NLFC)
(With information from Linda Grimo, NLFC)

The co-op is a for-profit virtual market for Niagara region that started in 2008. In 2007, some seed money became available for an agricultural initiative. Local producers and community developers came to the table, bounced ideas around, and invited a co-op consultant. One of the models the consultant shared with them was the Oklahoma Food Cooperative and everyone zoomed in on it. They sent a team to Oklahoma to observe and learn. By 2008 the team had tweaked the model to better suit Niagara, adjusted a few operational details and the co-op was launched. The memberships now stands at over 200, 35 of which are producers, though not all members are active. Some are active only seasonally, others have joined but only listed products once or twice (if producers) or purchased very little (if consumers).

The co-op facilitates online ordering (on a very clean, easy to navigate website), provides space for drop-off and pick-up (they have been lucky to obtain space through a local church). The only products allowed to be sold are food items (e.g. they do not facilitate sales of local crafts). The co-op takes a fee for everything sold and is a profitable venture now, though it still relies much on volunteer work. Grimo observed that the online technologies made it more convenient and easier to set this operation up and for members to participate, but that it made it difficult for the co-op to play a role in face-to-face community building (though she also acknowledged that power of online “community”). Run as a business, the co-op's main purpose is to support local agriculture in being economically sustainable, but relationships of trust, food safety and food security are also important considerations. For more details see http://www.niagaralocalfoodcoop.ca/

Niagara Local Food Action Plan
Developed by the Niagara Region, this strategy document was developed following the regional council's 2008 decision to take a proactive role and ramp up purchases of local food. The purpose of the plan is to provide “potential solutions to many problems that farmers are facing through the creation of stable and reliable markets for Niagara producers; safe and secure food supply of consumers; economic development through
local markets; and opportunities to enhance wine and culinary tourism in the region,” the Region's website explains.

Project partners included Vineland Research and Innovation Centre as well as the Niagara Culinary Trail. For more information visit: http://www.niagararegion.ca/government/initiatives/lfap/about-local-food-action-plan.aspx

**Sexsmith Farm Co-operative (SFC)**
*(With information from John Blackwell, SFC)*

Established in March 2011, the co-op formed to merge two existing CSA programs in Fort Erie, which serve clients in Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Welland, Niagara Falls, Thorold and St. Catharines. It is a community of farmers whose mission is to cultivate a secure, sustainable food production and distribution system rooted in Niagara. The co-op incorporated as a Farming and Supply Co-operative with Share Capital under the Ontario Co-operative Corporations Act. SFC also works in partnership with a number of other local farms (a tender fruit producer in Niagara-on-the-Lake, for example), though these partnerships have not been formalized by Co-op membership yet. The distribution takes place through the CSA program, as well as two local farmers' markets and the Niagara Local Food Co-op.

When the original Sexsmith Farm operated its CSA program alone, its membership doubled each year, so now with the larger production and shared risks, the co-op is a very promising venture. For more information contact sexsmithcsa@gmail.com

**Niagara Culinary Trail (NCT)**

This extensive project is the information hub for local food and culinary tourism in the Niagara Region. The initiative has produced a map, a culinary tour guide, cookbooks, and a website rich in information about local food. Intended to benefit the local economy, NCT materials also note the importance of healthy and fresh food, taste, community building, knowing where one's food comes from, and benefits to the environment.

NCT is a member of the Niagara Original regional branding program and the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance. NCT was initiated in 2008 by the Niagara Environmental Food Alliance, which is in turn supported by Niagara Peninsula Community Resource Centre and the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation. NCT currently has nearly 100 members, including farms, markets, wineries, restaurants, bakeries, and so on. More information can be found at http://niagaraculinarytrail.com/

**NORFOLK COUNTY**

**Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS)**
*(With information from Bryan Gilvesy, Y U Ranch, Tillsonburg)*

Norfolk ALUS's website describes the program as follows: “The Norfolk Alternative Land Use Services ... is a voluntary, incentive based project... providing payments to
farmers for returning marginal, environmentally sensitive, or inefficient farmland into native vegetative cover and wetlands.”

Modelled on the concept developed in the Blanshard Manitoba ALUS pilot, the project provides payments to farmers in exchange for ecological services. It has nearly a hundred participating farms, several of them also serving as demonstration sites. The idea is that farmers can be enabled to make ecologically sound farm decisions if they are given financial incentives and know that such a decision would not put their business in jeopardy. Bryan Gilvesy, whose Y U Ranch is one of the demonstration farms, explains: “We want to get to a place where we can provide ecological services and produce food on the same land. We can get many of the ecological benefits from working land... The more we can fold these things into the way we farm and reward farmers with real money for doing these things... the faster we can become sustainable.”

In essence, ALUS participants commit to undertaking some ecological service activity – they either take some land out of production or provide other ecological services along with continued farm use – and others, for instance corporate entities, compensate them for that service. In short, participating farmers provide ecological services, ALUS organization markets their ecological credits to corporations, organizations and individuals, and those entities who agree to buy the credits in turn fund the whole enterprise. Gilvesy compared this to carbon trading, but encompassing a larger suite of ecological function than simply the sequestration of carbon.

Gilvesy explained that participation in the program was as at first a one-way street for farmers, but now participants also use it as a marketing and production tool, enhancing the contribution of nature to their farming activity, and adding marketing lustre to the way their food is produced. Partners in the project are numerous. 21 funding partners funded the initial pilot program. The project is now permanent and ALUS is now supported by several groups including the W. Garfield Weston Foundation, the George Cedric Metcalf Foundation and Delta Waterfowl Foundation. Working collaborations exist with various organizations such as Local Food Plus, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Bird Studies Canada, Ontario Nature, Long Point Regional Conservation Authority, OMAFRA, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. More information can be found at http://www.norfolkalus.com/

**Direct from Norfolk**
(With information from Nick Kinkel, OMAFRA – Norfolk, Haldimand, and Brant; and Cindy Vanderstar, Norfolk Tourism and Economic Development)

Branding Norfolk County as “Ontario's Garden” this initiative was developed by Norfolk's Tourism and Economic Development Division. It encompasses a website with a local food directory, a local food map, local recipe book, an annual Flavour Fest, and other local food and wine promotions as well as culinary tourism marketing. The county is rooted in agriculture and in recent years has been creating opportunity out of the loss of tobacco markets. The richness and diversity of food production make food the perfect vehicle to promote the area. While primarily interested in economic development, the
Province-Wide Initiatives

Irena Knezevic

Foodland Ontario

Foodland Ontario is a branding program supported by the Ontario Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and established in 1977. The program includes recognizable slogans, such as “Good things grow in Ontario,” a logo, and ongoing marketing campaigns. As its website explains, Foodland Ontario “identifies and promotes Ontario foods in grocery stores through the distribution of point-of-purchase material and in-store promotions to 1,200 stores across the province.” The program is also present in farmers' markets.

Foodland Ontario boasts 94% brand recognition in the province, and its promotional materials include recipes, seasonality information, nutritional information, and other educational materials for consumers. The program also includes the Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards, which recognize retailers who contribute to promotion of Ontario foods in notable and innovative ways.

For more information visit http://www.foodland.gov.on.ca

Ontariofresh

(With information from Franco Naccarato)

Ontariofresh.ca is a free website and online community that is being created to expand the market for buyers and sellers of local Ontario food. The goal of the site is to create connections across the food service value chain, linking bulk buyers, chefs, restaurants, caterers and distributors with growers and producers.

The Ontariofresh.ca website is designed as a support to the Broader Public Sector Investment Fund, a granting program which aims to get more Ontario food into our public institutions, although it is not exclusively dedicated to this purpose. It will be a business-to-business (B2B) website, so the focus will not be on consumers, but instead to assist Ontario growers and producers tap into large lucrative markets close to home. Since advanced registration began, Ontariofresh.ca has seen steady growth in the number of registrants from hospitals to major food service providers to large and smaller scale producers alike. The whole idea is to provide an easy and accessible way for buyers to connect with producers that meet their needs, and vice versa.

The information collected on the Ontariofresh.ca site will help to populate it with four profile types: grower/producers, buyers, distributors and friends/supporters. Registration is easy, and will address questions such as location and distance, farm practice, availability, traceability and more. Other key features include the advanced search
functionality and the Marketplace, in which buyers and sellers can make up-to-the-minute requests or offers for products, putting their business front and centre on the website.

There is a huge amount of potential for Ontariofresh.ca to serve as a tool for the food value chain to communicate, network and coordinate for the benefit of everyone involved. As administrators of the project, the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation will be actively engaging the users of the site right out of the gate to identify new opportunities and take suggestions.

For more information or to sign up, go to http://www.ontariofresh.ca or call Megan Hunter, Communications Manager at 416-960-0001 x 315.

Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA)
(With information from Rebecca LeHeup)

Initiated by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism with support from OMAFRA, OCTA's purpose is to roll out Ontario's 10-year Culinary Tourism Strategy created in 2005 (there is now a revised 2011-2015 strategy), which aims to support the tourism industry alongside Ontario's food and beverage producers. Guided by a Board of Directors and relying on a variety of grants, OCTA works on promoting Ontario as a culinary destination and is currently working with over 35 local destinations in the province. Their membership includes farmers, winemakers, restauranteurs, accommodations' businesses, producers' associations and so on.

Achieving and maintaining economic sustainability for producers and tourism service providers is the foundation that underpins OCTA's work, but that work also encompasses working towards safe and secure foods system, healthy environment, and vibrant communities. The Executive Director of OCTA, Rebecca LeHeup, comes to her position with a great deal of experience and a track record of success in promoting Prince Edward County as a culinary destination through organizing food and wine events, and developing the Prince Edward County Taste Trail. However, LeHeup is apprehensive about taking credit for OCTA's success to date, indicating that the province-wide momentum around local food has cleared much of the way for OCTA's success. LeHeup encourages better and more multifaceted collaborations across sectors and locations, and applauds the work of other initiatives. In particular, she highlighted the work of Savour Ottawa in creating a space for collaboration across sectors, and the efforts of of Sustain Ontario, especially for their ability to bring the various players together at the Bring Food Home conferences.

OCTA's work also includes developing toolkits and culinary tourism best practices, some of which are only available to members, while others are accessible to the public such as the guide to culinary trails and a research report on local food distribution in Ontario (in collaboration with Sustain Ontario). For more information visit http://ontarioculinary.com/
Sustain Ontario: An Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming
(With information from Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker)

Officially launched in January 2009, Sustain Ontario developed from two years of province-wide consultations initiated and facilitated by the Metcalf Foundation. The consultations identified the need to create a group that would link the various initiatives in Ontario, provide space for dialogue, and do some of the research and advocacy work needed at this time. Somewhat modelled on Sustain UK (http://www.sustainweb.org/), Sustain Ontario is a non-profit organization and its website describes it as:

...a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance that promotes healthy food and farming. Sustain Ontario takes a collaborative approach to research, policy development and action by addressing the intersecting issues related to healthy food and local sustainable agriculture. Sustain Ontario is working towards a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable.

Based on the constellation model (see socialinnovation.ca/blog/constellation-model-of-collaborative-social-change), the organization now has over 275 members and is a project of Tides Canada. Additional support is garnered from Metcalf Foundation, the Trillium Foundation, and Heart and Stroke Foundation, as well as Friends of the Greenbelt, Hypenotic, and Carrot Cache.

Sustain Ontario's main role is to convene the participating partners and promote province-wide conversations. Hence, its Bring Food Home conference (http://bringfoodhome.com/) is a key activity. There are two full time staff (the executive director and the program coordinator), with additional part time and temporary staff who work on specific projects. There is also substantial volunteer and student intern support, as well as a steering committee and an advisory council for guidance.

Sustain Ontario's mandate is multifaceted and Nuaimy-Barker emphasized the importance of holistic understandings of food and food systems. She indicated that one of Sustain Ontario's roles was to help build capacity across the province, share good examples, and assist communities in finding local solutions. She emphasized that Ontario needs food hubs that are designed locally and grounded in local realities. Sustain Ontario can help with the design process but not the type of design as their role is not to prescribe solutions. However, Nuaimy-Barker did underscore the importance of creating physical infrastructure in conjunction with informational and relational infrastructure.

Nuaimy-Barker indicated that the largest barrier to local food had to do with global markets and global trade, including subsidies and world-wide policy. In Ontario, this is compounded by many local and provincial policies that limit the growth of local and sustainable food systems. More attention needs to be given to ways in which policies and practice can support small-scale, local, sustainable production.

For more information visit http://sustainontario.com/
Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG)

OGVG is a lobbying and research group representing over 200 producers with some 2000 acres of greenhouse production (tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers).

OGVG has been supportive of local food branding campaigns, but their focus is on Ontario food and they are hence very supportive of Foodland Ontario branding. Most of their collaborations are with Foodland Ontario and OGVG has benefited from that branding. Because they depend so much on exports (70% of what is produced by OGVG members is produced for export, mainly to the United States), they also promote their produce as local in Michigan. They are careful in how they approach local because of the diverse interests at stake, but they would like to be able to see more OGVG produce marketed and sold in the province. OGVG is hoping to get into the province's food service market more aggressively and perhaps take advantage of the Broader Public Sector Fund.

Despite being a large entity and representing some large producers, OGVG encounters barriers in the food system, such as competition from cheap imports and public misunderstandings around food scares. Sometimes, the barriers are of small, technical nature – for instance, the food service industry is not very favourable to OGVG tomatoes as their slicing machines are actually designed for a different type of tomato.

OGVG website can be found at http://www.ontariogreenhouse.com/

Nutrition Resource Centre (NRC) and Community Food Advisor (CFA) program
(With information from Elizabeth Smith)

The NRC is an Ontario Public Health Association initiative supported by funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport. Their programs include CFA, Eat Smart® (certification program for public spaces and work environments that offer healthy food choices), NutriSTEP® (nutrition screening for every preschooler), Colour it Up (promotion of higher vegetable and fruit intake), and production of a variety of educational materials. The programs do not have a mandate to promote local food, although Colour it Up pays attention to seasonality and also works on introducing new immigrants to local fruit and vegetables and way to consume/prepare them.

CFA is a train-the-trainer program offered by 14 health units across the province. The health units recruit volunteers who then receive 40 hours of training on nutritional information, cooking skills, and budgeting. In 2010, the program had over 350 CFAs in the province. Although local food is not in the mandate of the program, the CFAs are themselves taking on the local food cause. Many of them are heavily involved with community gardens and such. Some of the material also promotes local food and seasonality. As a result, the CFA program has inadvertently become a program that also promotes local food initiatives and can help strengthen communities' food systems by supporting community gardens and kitchens, promoting local and seasonal foods, and teaching the valuable food skills to local populations.
Elizabeth Smith, the Registered Dietician who coordinates CFA provincially, indicated that, in her opinion, Registered Dieticians and Public Health Nutritionists have some professional responsibility to include food security and food access issues in their work. She also felt that price and convenience were still driving much of the food economy and that educational programs like those offered through the CFA initiative can really be helpful in relocalizing the food system through teaching the importance of fresh food that is safe and nutritious. Smith also identified food-related programs as excellent entry points for other things – for example, she explained that nutritional programs for newcomers can also be a venue to raise awareness about other programs available to new Canadians. She thus thought that food hubs can easily double up as community centres. She also felt that the use of co-ops and CSAs has not been fully realized and that there was still much potential in that.

For more information go to http://www.communityfoodadvisor.ca/ and http://www.nutritionrc.ca/
Appendix I: VUE Maps

The relational “maps” presented in this appendix were prepared by Philip Mount, working with Peter Andrée. They were created using Visual Understanding Environment (VUE) – an open access software developed by Tufts University (http://vue.tufts.edu/). The purpose of these diagrams is to help demonstrate the different assets, resources and capacities of the case study organizations highlighted in this report, and to show the linkages between various actors, including decision-makers and funders, among others.

The case study maps included in this appendix represent the following 19 case study organizations:
1. Eat Local Sudbury (ELS)
2. Food Security Research Network (FSRN)
3. La Maison Verte
4. True North Community Cooperative
5. Northern Ontario Health Units
6. Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op
7. Food Down the Road
8. Just Food Ottawa
9. Lanark Local Flavours
10. Wendy’s Country Market and Mobile Market
11. Grand River Community Health Centre (GRCHC)
12. Good Food Box Network
13. Plan B Organic Farm
14. Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre
15. Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Market Initiative
16. Herrle’s Country Farm Market
17. Spring Arbour Farm
18. Western Fair Farmers’ Market
19. Local Organic Food Co-ops (LOFC)

Because it was added as a case study at a later date, a relational map of FoodShare is not included in this report.
L'Association Parmis-Elles

La Maison Verte

special and research projects

funding

private forest management companies

LandSaga

Microtek

funding

Nord-Aski

RESOURCES

INITIATIVE

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

INTERNET

CITIZEN

FUTURE

Inputs

Activities

Assets

32 members (40 in 2012)

employees 7 FT / 20 PT

volunteers

greenhouses

profit

pre-sales (shares)

Tree seedlings

labour

multi-producer CSA

local producers

outdoor garden

CSA food basket

La Soupe Communautaire

Les Entreprises Forma-Jeunes

gift store

profit

management

produce

tomatoes
cucumbers

excess

sales

fundraiser

donation

local restaurants

grocery stores

community members

profit

sales

funding

profit

sales

produce

excess

CSA food basket

farmers market

local producers

micro-producer CSA

CSA food basket

Labour

Inputs

Activities

Assets
Eastern Ontario Local Food Cooperative (producer)

- 5 directors
- 40 members
- part-time coordinator
- 10% of sales
- 5% of sale price

Volunteers

Available product

Orders to producers

Orders printed

5% of price

10% of sales

Distribution warehouse

150+ customers
- individuals, groups, institutions
- rural and urban (Ottawa)

5 delivery routes

Private weekly market

Producers' trucks

Trillium

Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative

Apprenticeship program (web-based)

Interns

Customers from local region, Montreal, Ottawa

Suppliers

5 directors

Funding

Knowledge support

Suppliers

Trillium

Regional networks

Oklahoma Hub software (trade)

Weekly on-line market

Customers order online

Volunteers

Labour

Inputs

Activities

Assets

RESOURCES

- Initiative
- Public
- Private
- Internet
- Citizen
- Future
Plan B Organic CSA
Venturelli Family

Youth Entrepreneurship Program (GC)

Pfennings Organic Farm

warehouse

22 small producers

2 full-time, 6 seasonal employees

Interns

Labour

Warehouse (packing)

Warehouse (storage)

Parents

Start-up funding

Additional revenue

Farmers market

Annual shares $$$

Excess produce

Unused produce

Home delivery premium $$$

37 pick-up locations

Van / truck

700-1000 customers

Inputs

Activities

Assets

RESOURCES

INITIATIVE

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

INTERNET

CITIZEN

FUTURE
**City of London**

Consumers / production site (City of London)

**Western Fair Farmers Market**

David Cook (owner)

Maisonville Place Mall outdoor market

Southdale outdoor market

Ontario Food Terminal

Middlesex London Health Unit

Local farmers

Food resellers

Diverse vendors

Fresh produce

3 employees

Labour

Small business incubator

**University of Western Ontario**

Research

Marketing

**Old East Village BIA**

Licence

Monthly rent

Table fees

Regulation

Table fees

Management

Sales

Consumers

40 vendors

Vendors waiting list