



# LOCAL FOOD ON ONTARIO UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

DECEMBER 2017

# ABOUT MEAL EXCHANGE

Since 1993, Meal Exchange has been mobilizing large-scale youth involvement on the leading edge of Canada's food movement. We've partnered with diverse stakeholders to achieve our goals: from Maclean's magazine to Much Music, from the largest international food service companies to the most grassroots non-governmental organizations. Our programs have tested a wide range of interventions into the food system, including coordinating the largest national student-run food drive cumulatively raising \$5 million worth of food, developing an educational computer game and app, and influencing request-for-proposal processes and contracts of over \$50 million worth of campus food purchases. Our goal has always been to support passionate students to make a difference on Canada's most pressing food issues, and our continued approach is to look for high-impact opportunities to respond to gaps in the sector.

Our first program, Skip a Meal, gave students an opportunity to donate unused meal plan dollars to local food banks while simultaneously learning about food insecurity in their neighbourhoods. Over our 24-year history, we have shifted away from thinking about food insecurity as an outcome, and have begun to understand it is a marker of larger food systems issues. Today, we see campus food as being influenced by a wide range of factors within our national food system. As an organization, Meal Exchange operates within the complexity of this food system and represents the voices of young people on postsecondary campuses across the country. We believe that by engaging student leaders to catalyze change within postsecondary campus food systems we can shift the needle on what is possible in society today, and in the future. Our student-led and staff-facilitated programs, projects, and research are geared towards achieving our vision of a world where good food - food that nourishes the environment, communities, and people - is accessible and affordable for all.

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# Local Food on Ontario University Campuses

## Summary

Meal Exchange's Campus Food Report Card measures the success of Ontario universities in providing locally-grown, sustainable, healthy, and accessible food - as rated by students, campuses themselves, and the physical food environment.



**4 out of 5 students felt that more locally-grown food would increase the availability of healthy food options on campus**

**"From what I can tell the food isn't locally sourced, which would be a strong preference for me and others I know."**

University of Waterloo student

Our local food findings suggest a disconnect between Ontario students and campus food services management. Nearly **1 in 4** students were unsure whether food on their campus was made with locally-grown ingredients, and **1 in 3** were unsure about their satisfaction with local food on campus. Meanwhile, campus foodservice providers cited various activities to provide locally-grown foods, including working with foodservice companies and local farmers to offer a variety of local options. However, **only 17%** of food outlets on campus had Foodland Ontario signage visible to students.

Students clearly prioritize locally-grown food on campus: **3 in 4** students felt it was important for their university to source and serve locally-grown foods, and **4 in 5** students felt that having access to more locally-grown food options would increase the availability of healthy, good quality food on campus. Despite the lack of signage for local food on campus, **over half of students** were aware of local food events on campus, such as farm visits, local food days, and farmers markets, and **1 in 3** had attended such events.

**"I have never once seen local food served."**

Laurentian University student

**"Love that the food is locally cooked and fresh each day."**

Ryerson University student

These findings suggest that the student experience of local food on campus is different than that of foodservices management across the province. The factors contributing to this gap may include challenges with communication between foodservices and students about efforts to procure locally-grown foods, and limited student local food literacy. In some cases, students may not be aware of what their campus is doing - interviews with campus foodservice directors indicated a lot of 'behind the scenes' work goes into procuring locally-grown foods for students. Our findings suggest that where this work is taking place, students may not know about it. In addition, the lack of transparency of food supply chains challenges efforts to trace where food is coming from and connect the dots between farm and fork.

Despite these challenges, some Ontario campus foodservices are finding ways to shift their procurement to local and support local food literacy among their student populations (see Case Studies, page 16-17). **91% (19/21) campus foodservice providers** reported a campus garden or farm with student involvement, and **71% (15/21)** reported a person or group responsible for local and sustainable procurement.

There are important next steps that can be taken to address student awareness of local food on campus, including increasing point-of-sale local food promotion and providing training opportunities for front-line staff to learn about local food being served. To encourage long-term change, campuses can create a dedicated staff position responsible for coordinating purchasing, promotion, and education around local food, and work with Meal Exchange to become a Good Food campus by working on the Good Food Challenge. In publishing this report, Meal Exchange's goal is to elevate the voices of postsecondary students in Ontario and across Canada, and encourage campuses and foodservice providers to enhance their efforts to provide local food on campus.

## What is the Campus Food Report Card?

**Meal Exchange's Campus Food Report Card measures success of Ontario universities in providing locally-grown food, as rated by students and campuses themselves, as well as the physical food environment.**

The Campus Food Report Card is composed of three components: The Student Satisfaction Survey, the Campus Food Services Survey, and the Campus Food Outlet Checklist



### Student Satisfaction

The Student Satisfaction Survey allows students to voice their satisfaction with and knowledge of locally-grown food initiatives on their campus. This survey component was informed by a similar survey conducted at all Ontario colleges in 2016-2017 (1). Meal Exchange adapted methods used by Maclean's magazine to gather student satisfaction data from Ontario university campuses.

The Student Satisfaction Survey was distributed to students attending Ontario universities via Facebook ads and other social media platforms, as well as an email campaign between March and May 2017. Over 2,600 student responses to this survey are reported in a 9-item Student Satisfaction Score (see Appendix 1 for scoring framework).



### Campus Food Services

The Campus Food Services Survey recognizes efforts by campus administration and foodservices staff to increase student access to locally-grown food. Development of the survey was informed by consultations with civil society leaders, academics, public health professionals, and food service industry representatives, as well as public health, sustainability, and food systems literature from Canada, the U.K. and U.S. (2-6).

To ensure feasibility during the first year of the Campus Food Report Card, the Campus Food Services Survey has been completed by representatives from the largest foodservice provider on campus and/or campus administration. We provided campus foodservice representatives with the opportunity to participate in a follow-up telephone interview, during which challenges and successes of campus food procurement were discussed. If campus representatives declined to complete the Survey, the Survey was completed for the campus by Meal Exchange staff based on information available on the campus website. Data for the Campus Food Services Survey was collected between April and July 2017. Survey results are reported in the 30-item Campus Food Services Score (see Appendix 2 for scoring framework).



### Campus Food Outlets

The Campus Food Outlet Checklist measures physical availability and promotion of locally-grown, healthy, sustainable, and accessible food options, and was adapted from the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey, University College version (6).

Students attending 18 Ontario universities were trained in data collection procedures, and completed a checklist for two food outlets operated by the largest food service provider on their campus in March, April, and September 2017.

## LOCAL FOOD:

Food on campuses that is "produced or harvested in Ontario, including forest or freshwater food, and food and beverages made in Ontario if they include ingredients produced or harvested in Ontario" (7).

## WE SURVEYED



2668

Ontario  
University  
Students

15

Campus  
Food  
Services  
Reps

35

Campus  
Food  
Outlets

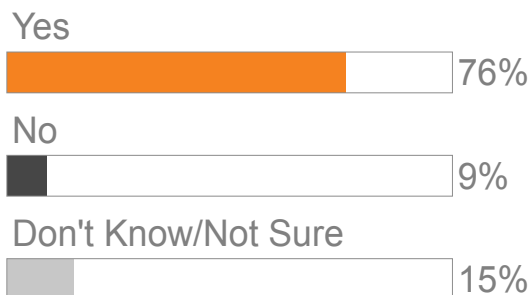
# What Students Said: Locally-Grown Food

## TOP 10 CAMPUSES: STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH AVAILABILITY OF LOCALLY-GROWN FOODS

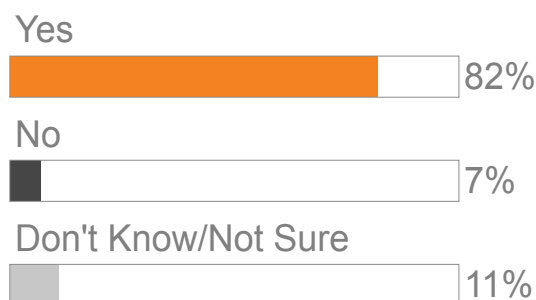
1. University of Guelph
2. Ryerson University
3. Queen's University
4. Algoma University
5. Trent University
6. Wilfrid Laurier University
7. Carleton University
8. Western University
9. University of Toronto
10. University of Toronto Mississauga

See the Appendix for details on scoring

Do you think it's **important** for your campus to source and serve locally-grown foods?



Do you think that serving more locally-grown food would **increase the availability of healthy food options** on campus?



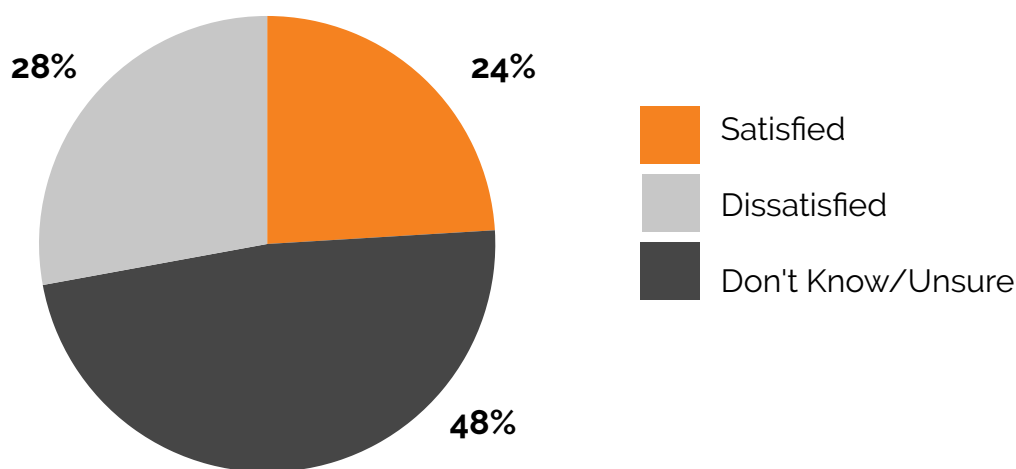
23%

of students  
were unsure  
whether food  
on their  
campus was  
locally-grown

Nearly a third of students reported that they didn't know how they felt about their satisfaction with locally-grown foods on campus, and a quarter were unsure whether food on their campus was locally grown.

However, **3 out of 4 students** felt it was important for their university to source and serve locally-grown foods, and **4 out of 5 students** felt that more locally-grown foods on campus would increase the availability of healthy food options (see above graphs).

## HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE AVAILABILITY OF LOCALLY-GROWN FOODS ON YOUR CAMPUS?



## What Students Said: Locally-Grown Food

54%

of students reported **being aware** of local food events on campus, such as farm visits, local food days, and farmer's markets

28%

of students reported **attending** local food events on campus

**Just over half** of students reported an awareness of celebrations of local food on their campus, including farm visits, local food days, and farmers markets. **1 in 3** reported attending at least one of these events on campus.

### TO IMPROVE, CAMPUS FOODSERVICES SHOULD PROVIDE:

56%

of students said **more locally-grown options**

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

**"Food tastes amazing. It's all food from local farmers."**

University of Guelph student

**"Most importantly, the university is beginning to prioritize locally sourced ingredients"**

Ryerson University student

**"There is a great variety of healthy, made to order meals and snacks that cater to different eating styles and restrictions. They focus on fresh local foods."**

University of Western Ontario student

**"I would recommend if it was local... bring it closer to home"**

University of Windsor student

# Key Findings from Campus Foodservices & Campus Food Outlets:

## Locally-Grown Food

The majority of campus foodservices estimated that between **10% and 49%** of their university's total annual food budget was spent on locally-grown food (see bottom right graph).

Yet, only **17%** of campus food outlets assessed had visible Foodland Ontario signage, and just **43%** had visibly promoted eating or purchasing local food (i.e. "Eat Local!" or "Support local farmers!").

Despite this, **90%** of campus foodservices reported a garden or farm on campus with student involvement, and **71%** had a person or group responsible for local and sustainable food procurement.

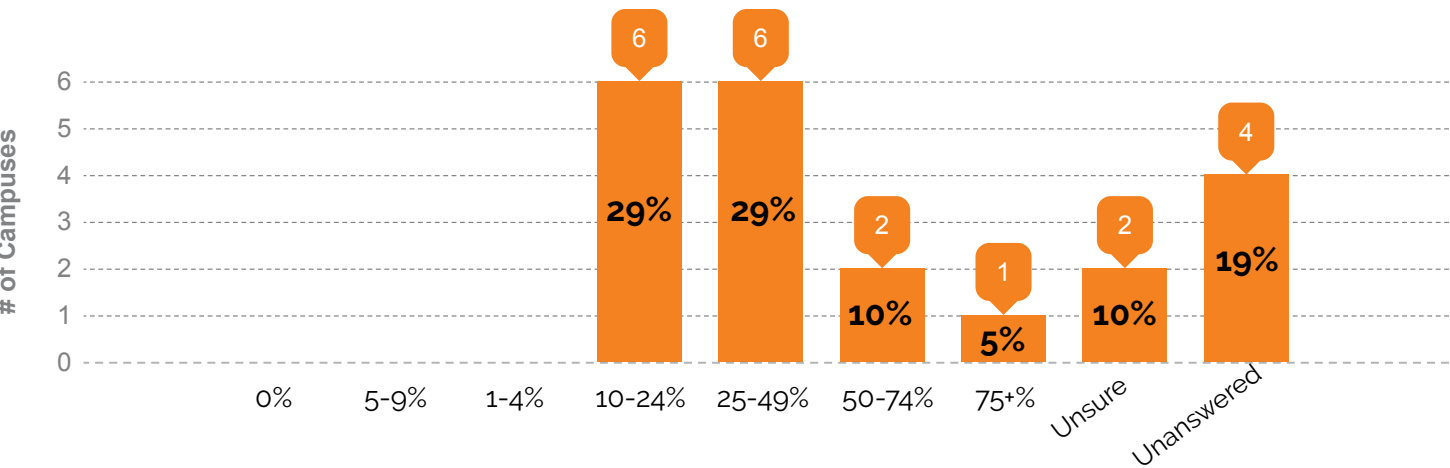
10-49%

Estimated proportion of university food budget spent on locally-grown foods

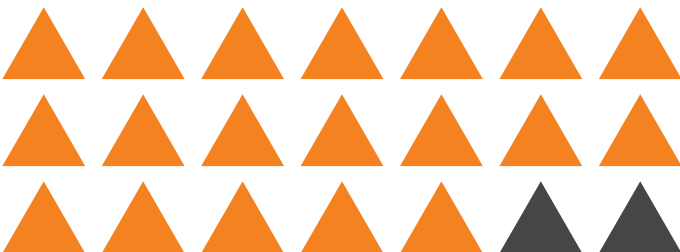
17%

of food outlets had Foodland Ontario signage visible to students (6 of 35 food outlets assessed)

Campus estimates of the percentage of their food budget spent on local food



**19 OF 21** campuses reported having a garden or farm with student involvement



**15 OF 21** campuses reported having a person or group responsible for sustainable and locally-grown food procurement



# NEXT STEPS

to support local food on campuses in Ontario

We suggest that campuses and foodservices representatives collaborate with student leaders on their campuses to implement the following short-term changes and set long-term goals:



## LOW-HANGING FRUIT: Things that can happen tomorrow

- **Create a multi-stakeholder committee focused on increasing the promotion of local, sustainable food on campus**
- **Increase point-of-sale promotion through free Foodland Ontario signage and materials to increase awareness of seasonality and benefits of locally-grown, healthy food among students**
- **Organize local food events and develop local food educational activities**
  - For example, farm visits, on-farm education, and workshops to increase local food skills, knowledge, and awareness, iron-chef style cooking competitions featuring local ingredients and monthly local food days celebrating seasonal products
- **Promote your campus on Farm 2 Cafeteria Canada's school food map: a living map of activities underway to get more healthy local foods in the minds and on the plates of students across the country**
- **Provide training opportunities for front-line staff to learn about local food being served**



## LONG-TERM GOALS: Things to work towards

- **Increase the transparency of supply chains among campus food services**
- **Increase student awareness of locally-grown and sustainable food on campus**
- **Create a dedicated staff position responsible for coordinating purchasing, promotion, and education around local, sustainable food**
- **Commit to becoming a Good Food campus by working with Meal Exchange on the Good Food Challenge**



# WHAT MEAL EXCHANGE IS DOING

to cultivate good food campuses

## ASSESSING CAMPUS FOOD PROCUREMENT

### Good Food Challenge

The Good Food Challenge uses the power of youth and students to create campus food systems that are sustainable, socially just, humane, and healthy. Amidst a sea of confusing labels, certifications and claims about sustainability and ethical purchasing, the Good Food Challenge offers campuses a comprehensive and decisive definition for Good Food, set a high standard upheld consistently among institutions, and support users in tracking their progress.

The ultimate goal of the Good Food Challenge is for the president of a university to sign the Good Food Campus Commitment. By signing the commitment, campuses commit to becoming a Good Food Campus, that is, ensuring that at least 20% of their campus food meet the standards established by the Good Food Calculator.

## ADDRESSING STUDENT FOOD INSECURITY

### Hungry for Knowledge & Students Feeding Change

Hungry for Knowledge is the largest cross-campus study on student food insecurity in Canada, to date. The report collected data from post-secondary students regarding their financial access to food, the barriers that limit access, and the physical, emotional, and social impacts on our youth. The findings suggest that food insecurity is a serious issue for post-secondary students in Canada, with nearly two in five (39%) of surveyed students experiencing some degree of food insecurity in the past year.

Our findings from Hungry for Knowledge inform the development of Students Feeding Change: a project to develop campus-level solutions to severe student food insecurity by gathering stakeholders in a series of social innovation activities.

## CONNECTING STUDENT PEERS

### Chapter Network & the National Student Food Summit

We work with student leaders to across the country through our chapter network.

At our National Student Food Summit, students connect with peers to build better food systems on over 40 campuses across Canada. Students learn how to create meaningful change on their campuses and in their communities through our programs, and gain inspiration from food organizers and leading researchers.

## SUPPORTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

### Trick or Eat & Share a Meal

Trick or Eat is our largest youth-led national campaign. Students collect food and funds in support of local food banks and finding solutions to root causes of food insecurity.

Share-a-Meal, our longest running program, allows students to donate their unused meals or meal points so that food can be purchased for donation to meet the immediate need of hunger on campus and with local social agencies.

## FOSTERING STUDENT LEARNING

### Indigenous Food Sovereignty Bookclub & Applied Student Research

The Indigenous Food Sovereignty Bookclub is an online youth-led group where students from across the country gather to discuss food systems literature authored by Indigenous leaders.

We work with professors to engage students through applied research projects that allow hands-on experience with the development of our programs, particularly the Good Food Standards.

**Meal Exchange works with student leaders, industry professionals, and campus administration to cultivate Good Food Campuses: postsecondary institutions that commit to increasing food sustainability and security, and who invest in providing good food for all.**

**Meal Exchange can connect your campus with successful examples, tested tools, and national experts to help build your campus's leadership for good food. Please contact Merryn at [merryn@mealexchange.com](mailto:merryn@mealexchange.com) to discuss opportunities.**

# CASE STUDIES

## Highlighting good food projects on Ontario campuses

Here are just a few examples of Ontario universities who are raising the bar on food literacy initiatives and providing locally-grown, accessible, healthy, and sustainable food:

### St. Jerome's University, University of Waterloo

Main Food Service Provider:  
Dana Hospitality

- An Ontario Map in the Community Hall lists the area and farm where food comes from. Signage breaks down which ingredients in a given dish are local and exactly how far from St. Jerome's those ingredients have traveled.
- Audits to ensure adherence to local sourcing and from-scratch cooking
- Sauces, preserves, pickles, and soups are made in-house, and documented via social media to students. They also have an in-house baker!
- Colour-coded signage for gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan options
- No less healthy retail food options are sold in their cafeteria



### University of Toronto, St. George campus

Main Food Service Provider:  
U of T Food Services

- Took over the management of its own foodservices, formerly run by an external company, in 2015 with local sourcing as a focus of its new mission
- Adopted the Greenbelt Fund's 'Local Food Challenge': a series of events that raise student awareness and increase the amount of locally-grown options on campus
- Runs 'Veggie Mondays': a campus-wide campaign to raise student awareness of the benefits of plant-based foods & discounts for vegetarian meals



## Trent University

Main Food Service Provider:  
Chartwells

- Targets for % of locally-grown food procured increase annually - local procurement has expanded to more than 4% of purchases sourced from Kawartha Region, including Yorkshire Valley Farms organic chicken, Empire Cheese, Martin Fruit Farms, Kawartha Dairy, and many others
- Extensive year-round use of produce from the on-campus Trent Market Garden and roof top gardens
- 'No Frydays' where there are no deep-fried foods available on campus for one Friday each month. Chefs substitute fruit, baked items, and other choices, many of which have gained popularity and have been added as regular menu items
- Expanded Eco-tray program has reduced use of disposable containers by 90%. This year, less than 5% of meals are served in/on a single-use disposable container



## University of Guelph

Main Food Service Provider:  
Hospitality Services

- Hospitality Services purchases produce and protein from over 75 local Ontario farmers
- 55% of in-season produce on campus is grown in Ontario
- Support community outreach by assisting on-campus organizations including CSA Foodbank, Meal Exchange and off campus partnership with Taste Real Local Food Guelph Wellington to support purchasing from local farmers and wholesalers
- In 2017, U of G chefs preserved over 400 jars of locally grown products in the Creelman Vegetable processing facility
- Use social media via @HospitalityUofG to help educate students using hashtags such as #UofGFoodFact #CampusFoodRevolution #uofgchefs
- The SNAP (Student Nutrition Awareness Program) works to education faculty, staff, and students on healthy eating and lifestyle choices and runs an excellent social media and communications program.

# REFERENCES

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# APPENDIX

## Student Satisfaction with Local Food

To determine the top 10 campuses in Ontario for student satisfaction with local food, we assigned 10 points for every student who responded with 'very satisfied', 7.5 points for 'somewhat satisfied', 5 points for 'somewhat dissatisfied', and 2.5 points for 'very dissatisfied'. Scores for each campus were then totaled and compared. See below for a breakdown of point allocation based on student response:

Question	Response Options	Points Allocated
“How satisfied are you with the availability of locally grown foods on your campus?”	Very satisfied	10
	Somewhat satisfied	7.5
	Somewhat dissatisfied	5
	Very dissatisfied	2.5