



Ontario's Local Food Champions 2012

Cultivating Change in the
Broader Public Sector



The Broader Public Sector: Where Champions Grow

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Welcome to our second year of celebrating Ontario's Local Food Champions. Last year's report introduced the growth of the local food movement into Ontario's Broader Public Sector (BPS) institutions. Now, less than a year later, that landscape of opportunity is flourishing, with systemic changes taking root across the province.

The impacts are inspiring. Sales and volumes of Ontario food served in institutions have increased. Patient satisfaction and kitchen staff morale is on the rise. And students are fast becoming a new generation of local-friendly consumers.

Change of this kind would not have been possible without the joint efforts of some of Ontario's food distributors and foodservice operators, many of whom now track food origins, and help producers understand BPS requirements around food safety, traceability and sizing. Some are finding ways to consolidate products from smaller producers, further enhancing their access to the BPS market.

BPS institutions are innovating too, by specifying Ontario product in their requests for proposals, creating and serving new menu items, and by educating patients, residents, and students on the benefits of going local.

Partnering with them all is the *Broader Public Sector Investment Fund: Promoting Ontario Food*. The Fund has provided grants to institutions and businesses across the value chain, including producers, distributors and food service operators. And in 2011, **Ontariofresh.ca** was launched – a dynamic website connecting bulk buyers and producers, broadening access to local food and cultivating the spirit of collaboration.

As Ontario witnesses the transformation of philosophies and practices around local food in the BPS, we're proud to honour some of the organizations leading the way: Ontario's Local Food Champions for 2012.

Adding Local to High School Menus

School Food Action Coalition

Peel high school menus have been taking on an increasingly local flavour over the past year, thanks to the School Food Action Coalition in Peel Region. As a model collaboration between education, foodservice, environmental and public health organizations, the Coalition has strived to make local food more familiar at Ontario schools and in students’ thinking about eating. Through this innovative coalition’s work, cafeteria fare for hundreds of students will never be the same.



The Innovation

The School Food Action Coalition is a first for Ontario, bringing together a public school board (Peel District School Board), a food-service provider (Chartwells, a division of Compass Group Canada), and a public health unit (Peel Public Health), all facilitated by an environmental organization (EcoSource). The group’s goal: identify opportunities for students to support local food purchasing by their cafeterias.

The power of the Coalition comes from its impressive parts: the Board serves over 150,000 students from kindergarten to grade 12, operating 233 schools; EcoSource, a respected non-profit, provides education programs to over 25,000 youth and their families yearly; Chartwells is the primary foodservice provider to 400 Ontario schools and over 900 throughout Canada; and Peel Public Health brings expertise in support of the province’s new *School Food and Beverage Policy* (PPM 150), and represents *Grown in Peel* – a buy local initiative and partnership.

The Board is no stranger to innovation, having been the first in Canada to implement a local food buying policy for their secondary

schools. Their spirit has helped drive the Coalition’s success in engaging students to explore new food options that make the link between PPM 150 and Ontario products.

“This project helped us bring healthy food and environmental sustainability together – all while supporting the local economy.”

David Neale, Controller of Corporate Support Services
Peel District School Board

The key to getting students to think local: involve them. EcoSource has done just that, by holding special local food outreach events at three pilot schools. Students got to taste-test local food, meet farmers and student chefs, and take cooking classes – perfect practice for the *Cooking Up Action Culinary Challenge*, a competition for students to create menu dishes featuring local ingredients. Adding some spice to the contest, Chartwells agreed to carry the winning items in their 32 Peel cafeterias.

By helping grow students’ interest in Ontario products, these initiatives are establishing the next generation of local-food-friendly consumers. As Lea Ann Mallett, Executive Director of EcoSource notes, “This project enhances formal education on local food, increasing the ways students can support the local economy and environment in their very own cafeterias.”

On the other side of the counter, the Coalition has educated cafeteria staff through training and farm visits. Chartwells has committed to incorporate more local ingredients at all of their Peel sites. It all points to an overall success, and has led Chartwells to develop promotional materials to help identify locally sourced menu items at 200 schools.

Moving forward, EcoSource plans to track students’ cafeteria behaviour to gauge how strongly the presence of local food options affects their purchasing choices. And through it all, the Peel Board will continue to include local food buying specifications in Board-wide contractual agreements, keeping local a regular part of cafeteria meals.



Producer Partners:

Carron Farms Holland Marsh
• carrots and beets

Hayter’s Farm Dashwood
• turkey

Magalas Farms Waterford
• eggplant and zucchini

Nightingale Farms La Salette
• green beans, eggplant, red pepper, zucchini

The Implications

The Coalition has become a blueprint for schools across Ontario, not only laying the groundwork for systemic change at every level of the BPS food distribution system, but ideally inspiring investment in Ontario producers and processors who service the education system. Several municipal Economic Development Offices and school boards have contacted the Coalition for input into local food strategies, proving that when a champion like the School Food Action Coalition sets a course, change can’t be far behind.

“We’re committed to using our resources to provide local food products in the school cafeterias we manage whenever possible.”

Ross Munro, President, Chartwells

Ontario Local Food Champion

A Healthy Dose of Local

Nutrition Group, St. Joseph's Health System, Group Purchasing Organization and My Sustainable Canada

The Nutrition Group at St. Joseph's Health System, Group Purchasing Organization, (SJHS-GPO) and My Sustainable Canada have addressed one of the health care sector's biggest challenges: how to incorporate more fresh, local food. Bringing together suppliers and customers like never before, these two champions are making health care vendors and local food producers key allies in the growing wave of change.

The Innovation

SJHS-GPO is accelerating change in a big way. The organization is one of Canada's first health care GPOs to rewire the process of sourcing sustainable, local foods and make local a key part of their business. They've done it in part by including local food language in their Requests for Proposals (RFPs), proving that local can be sourced through traditional channels – and be cost-neutral.

Bucking the status quo wasn't easy. According to Brendan Wylie-Toal of My Sustainable Canada, "Health care has a lot of challenges with food services. Budgets are tight, food operations are complicated, and the vulnerable nature of the population they serve requires high standards for food safety. It would have been easy for SJHS-GPO and its members to look the other way on this issue. But they stepped up, and made real and valuable changes to the way they do business."

The evolution started when SJHS-GPO and My Sustainable Canada began developing and conducting an audit to determine the food origins of hundreds of suppliers' products purchased by health care facilities. Their research team used that data to establish baseline values of local food, and to transform SJHS-GPO's RFPs to include a request for food origin information. The results have been dramatic: more local producers are participating in SJHS-GPO's process, and the procurement of Ontario food has jumped by 15%.

In addition, My Sustainable Canada and SJHS-GPO organized one of North America's first workshops of a GPO's membership and its

suppliers, elevating the partners to a new level of understanding. "The supply and demand sides were stuck in a vicious circle," says Brendan Wylie-Toal. "With suppliers saying, 'Tell us you want local and we'll provide it,' and hospitals saying, 'Tell us what's local and we'll buy it.' This workshop helped break that circle, demonstrating a commitment from both sides to start sourcing and buying more local food."

The effects have resonated across the local food horizon: vendors' sales pitches to GPO members now feature the products they provide in terms of local food; more health care food dollars are being reinvested in the agriculture community; and local food baseline values are rising.

The momentum is building. SJHS-GPO is evolving their RFPs to award additional points for local products, creating more options to increase their purchases of local food, and helping suppliers like D&D Poultry and VG Meats to ensure their products fit the bill for health care.

"Now when vendors make their sales pitches, local food is part of their message. The ripple effect on the supply chain is such an important evolution."

Candice Bester, Nutritional Group, SJHS-GPO



Producer Partners:

- Cohn Farms** Holland Marsh
• produce
- D&D Poultry** Toronto
• chicken
- Parmalat** province-wide
• cheese
- VG Meats** Norfolk County
• various meats

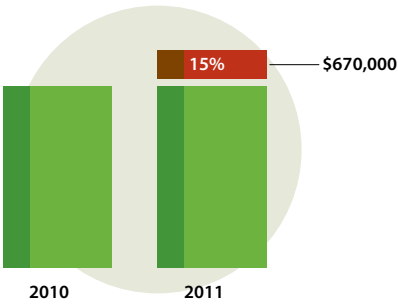
"Many of Ontario's smaller producers weren't familiar with the institutional procurement process. But once we reached out, it was clear there was real interest."

Brendan Wylie-Toal, My Sustainable Canada

The Implications

These champions' efforts have made suppliers keenly aware of the demand for local food, and have proven that buyers needn't go through hoops or drain their budgets to go local. My Sustainable Canada has also created a food origin best practices document, sharing their knowledge to help other health care facilities recreate SJHS-GPO's game-changing success – something that Candice Bester of the Nutritional Group wants to see continue: "It's vital we don't lose the gains and contacts we've made. We want the changes to be sustainable for years to come."

Together, SJHS-GPO and My Sustainable Canada have brought those changes to life, showing us that when we're all talking together, we're all talking success.



SJHS-GPO / My Sustainable Canada's initiatives led to a 15% increase in local food purchased by health care institutions, representing \$670,000.

SJHS-GPO works on behalf of the following 16 members, representing 28 facilities:

- Bluewater Health** Sarnia
- Cambridge Memorial Hospital**
- Grand River Hospitals** Kitchener
- Groves Memorial Community Hospital** Fergus
- Guelph General Hospital**
- Hamilton Health Sciences**
- Hamilton Health Sciences Volunteer Association**
- Hotel Dieu Shaver & Rehab Centre** St. Catharines
- Homewood Health Centre** Guelph
- St. Joseph's Health Centre** Guelph
- St. Joseph's Healthcare** Hamilton
- St. Joseph's Home Care** First Place, Hamilton
- St. Joseph's Lifecare Centre** Brantford
- St. Mary's General Hospital** Kitchener
- St. Michael's Hospital** Toronto
- Villages of Halton** Allendale

Ontario Local Food Champion

Distributing a Bigger Slice of Ontario

Gordon Food Service Ontario

One of the largest broadline distributors in Canada, Gordon Food Service (GFS) Ontario has the infrastructure to dramatically impact Ontario’s local food business. But there’s more to this landmark company than its size: GFS has the innovative drive and spirit to not only create change, but to make it stick – both for their producer partners and Ontario’s public institutions.

The Innovation

With an average of over \$800 million in yearly sales, it’s safe to say GFS Ontario has always had the foresight to navigate the evolving landscape of Ontario’s agri-food business. Just over a year ago, they sharpened their local focus by creating a dedicated team to implement their local food strategy. Today, that strategy is bringing more local food into Ontario’s public institutions than ever, with GFS distributing upwards of over 800 local products – all suitable to the high standards of the BPS.

By creating targeted promotional campaigns, and implementing a local food identification process within their ordering system, GFS made it easier for sales reps to select local products, and for customers to verify the percentage of local in their purchases. Producers are happier, too, with greater access to BPS markets.

Making local more of a standard practice in the BPS has been a multi-step process for GFS, involving: conducting a survey of the BPS to pinpoint the sector’s needs; tabulating which local products already existed within the vendor partnerships; sourcing more Ontario producers; and distributing a weekly, always-current local product list featuring food origins to the GFS sales team and BPS customers.

“In 2011, we’ve been able to build local products for the BPS into a viable, added-value business for every link in the foodservice supply chain.”

Steve Kampstra, General Manager, Gordon Food Service Ontario



These tactics have worked in tandem with GFS’s *Local Made Easy* campaign – a powerful awareness driver that has stamped the *Ontario’s Own from Gordon Food Service* brand onto food systems, packaging and advertising. The campaign also includes a dedicated Local Foods Section at GFS’s 35,000 square-foot Spring Food Show – the most anticipated foodservice distributor event in the province.

“The Gordon Food Service team are true local food ambassadors, taking every opportunity to educate all providers from farm to table.”

Annette Carroll, University of Waterloo Food Services

In addition to building awareness, GFS is building new bonds between producers and the BPS. How? By forging relationships with growers like Cohn Farms, a supplier who consolidates products from other farms to increase capacity and streamline logistics. By helping growers and manufacturers adopt CanadaGAP as a minimum requirement for Food Safety and Traceability – a must for BPS clients. By helping BPS institutions localize more menu items and develop *Buy Local* strategies. And by working with growers to meet BPS expectations, like Kevin Martin of Martin’s Family Fruit Farm, who says, “With Gordon’s Local Team, we developed new pack formats that are more relevant to institutional and foodservice clients.”

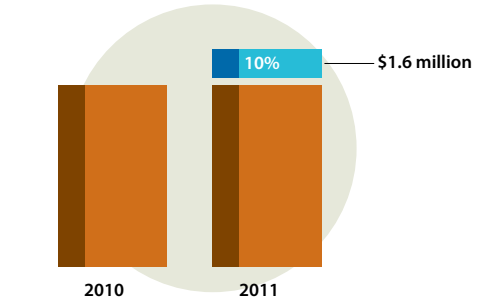
Clearly for GFS, when local food wins, Ontario wins. Which is why they’ll continue to bring more local farms on board, growing our economy in the process.



The Implications

What began as a plan to, as Steve Kampstra, General Manager of GFS Ontario puts it, “Practice environmental stewardship while responding to the requests of many of our key customers”, has become a transformative force for local food. His team has shown how distributors can adapt their systems, and work with suppliers to purchase more local product. And with their improved ordering process, GFS is assuring institutional buyers that local isn’t just a great choice, but dependable and safe.

For all of their innovative efforts, and for showing how change from within can enrich the bigger picture right across the province, we’re proud to celebrate GFS Ontario as an Ontario Local Food Champion.



The expanded breadth of local products GFS distributed this year boosted sales nearly 10% over 2010, representing \$1.6 million.

Producer Partners:

Black Angus Mississauga

• lamb

Cohn Farms Holland Marsh

• root vegetables

Country Herbs Courtland

• organic herbs

Delft Blue Cambridge

• veal

Jiano Foods Scarborough

• prepared foods

Martin’s Family Fruit Farm Waterloo

• apples

Willowgrove Hill Farms Mitchell

• pork

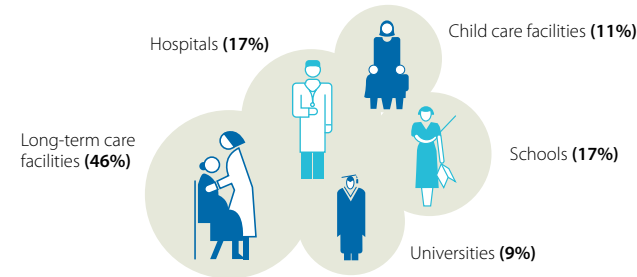
Windmill Farms Ashburn

• mushrooms

Around the BPS in 365 Days

Don's Produce

With a customer list including eight hospitals, 22 long-term care facilities, 12 universities and schools, and five child care centres, Don's Produce is helping to make local food an institution of its own across the BPS. Since its start in 1991, Don's has always purchased from local farmers, with even greater volumes over the past five years. The result: more BPS customers than ever can buy local, fresh food that's as competitively priced as it is high quality, every day of the year.



Breakdown by percentage of the 47 BPS institutions Don's Produce currently supplies.

The Innovation

Happily for customers and suppliers alike, getting more local food from seed to table has been a passion of Don's Produce for some 20 years. As a leading distributor for Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Guelph and surrounding communities, Don's impact on the local food movement is enriching Ontarians' health and economy while cultivating systemic change across the BPS.

Don's has succeeded in building and maintaining customer satisfaction with 47 BPS institutions, and growing the viability of 35 local producer partners. It's all taken shape through a series of market-wise initiatives to make local as familiar and comfortable a choice for BPS customers as possible. For example, Don's produces a weekly product-wide price list that highlights local options and specials, and a newsletter with updates on current and prospective local food availability, quality and other factors affecting supply. Customers also appreciate Don's seasonal availability charts for local products, helping chefs and foodservice managers plan their menus more efficiently.

Don's also knows the value of on-the-ground learning, and arranges visits and tours where BPS chefs can meet producers and check out the harvest activity onsite. These visits give clients a firsthand look at the value chain, seeing the who, what and where of getting produce from farm to kitchen. It also builds trust and understanding for everyone involved. Add that Don's supports local food events, as well as distributes and promotes local farmers' brochures, and it's clear that Ontario producers have a strong advocate at work.

"Don's Produce is committed to supporting local farmers and their customers by providing affordable fresh, quality Ontario produce."

Leslie Carson, Manager of Food and Nutrition Services, St. Joseph's Health Centre

Beyond promotion and education, Don's is developing a program to help chefs and foodservice buyers increase their purchase of local produce and monitor their progress quarterly. It's just part of how Don's anticipates their customers' needs, as in their



promotion of safe food handling principles and practices, product presentation, and sizing consistency among its farm partners, reassuring BPS customers that local produce meets their requirements.

Customers like Jeff Chalmers, Assistant Director of Food Services at the University of Waterloo, are enthusiastic about Don's: "For years, UW Food Services has partnered with Don's exclusively for our fresh and value-added produce. In the past year the local percentage of total produce ordered from them has increased substantially, and we look forward to further increasing this throughout 2012."



The Implications

Don's far-reaching initiatives and actions provide a great example of how collaboration between suppliers and customers can maximize customer satisfaction and supplier returns. With their keen understanding of the value chain, backed by their experienced determination, Don's is establishing local food across more of Ontario's BPS map, earning them deserved recognition as an Ontario Local Food Champion.

"We've confidently promoted local produce for 20 years, knowing that Ontario growers produce a product that's second to none."

Gerry Blake, President, Don's Produce



Producer Partners:

Local Farms within 10km:

Floralane Farm Elmira
• tomatoes, cabbage, beans, squashes

J&L Burkhart Farm Wallenstein
• tomatoes

Pfenning's Organic St. Agatha
• carrots

Local Farms beyond 10km:

Denboer Family Farm Otterville
• beets, green onions

J.D. Fresh Herbs Brampton
• herbs

Magalas Produce Waterford
• tomatoes, corn, zucchini, cantaloupes

Procyk Farms Wilsonville
• corn, peppers

Ravine Mushrooms Woodbridge
• mushrooms

Scarafle Produce Etobicoke
• plums, cherries, strawberries, blueberries, apricots

Ubbelea Mushrooms Millgrove
• sliced mushrooms

U of Local

Hospitality Services at the University of Guelph

A new equation is figuring prominently at the University of Guelph: more local food = less food miles and reduced food costs. It's a lesson being taught every day, thanks to a dedicated team putting the University's Hospitality Services at the forefront of local food procurement. For students, producers and distributors, it's adding up to a very local success.

The Innovation

As part of its department-wide Sustainability Plan, Hospitality Services created a local food strategy. The strategy's goals are two-fold: to support local farmers directly by purchasing at venues like the Elmira Produce Auction Co-operative (EPAC) and University of Guelph farms, and to educate consumers both on and off campus about the many pluses of buying local.

"The University is a number one buyer at the Auction, because of the volume purchased and fair prices paid. That translates into a great return for local farmers."

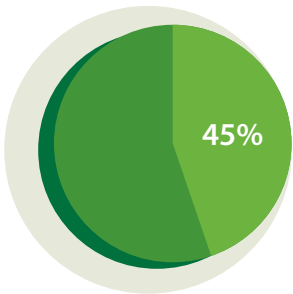
Noah Gingrich, General Manager, Elmira Produce Auction Co-operative

That education comes not only through putting more local food on the University's menus, but by teaching customers about the food's benefits, background, and impact on sustainability – all bringing to life one of Hospitality Services' tag lines, "Growing local minds, one plate at a time." The effect is already becoming widespread: BPS institutions across the region have begun to take notice.

The department's many efforts are as local as it gets: with direction from the University's chefs, Mark Kenny, Purchasing Co-ordinator, proactively sources local ingredients, including honey from the

Honey Bee Research Centre on campus, fresh chicken from Sargent Farms in Milton, and flour from local processor P&H Milling Group. And, thanks to the Hospitality Team's growing volume of local purchases, distribution channels like EPAC are enjoying increased revenue – big support for the 75 farmers who sell at the Auction and all hail from within a 75km radius.

The team's education tactics are also impressive. They regularly update students and other University stakeholders on the department's local food activities through the Hospitality Services Advisory Committee – a group comprised of student representatives, faculty/staff members and Hospitality managers. Mark also delivers lectures about the Sustainability Plan, and



The University's produce purchases are currently 45% local in season.



participates at Guelph Wellington Local Food (GWLF) round tables, sharing ideas to help enrich communication between farmers and BPS institutions. In addition, the team plays a key role in the GWLF *Taste Real* Steering Committee, by holding farmer-attended campus events to promote the *Taste Real* local food brand.

As awareness about local food has climbed, so have the numbers: the department's produce purchases have risen to 45% local in season; EPAC is selling twice the produce to the University over 2009; and *Taste Real* farmers are gaining more customers, as students who've tasted their products on campus are now buying them at farmer's markets.

Moving forward, Mark and the Hospitality Services team are working to process produce on campus to ensure that food bought directly from regional farmers, EPAC and nearby distributors like Don's Produce can be processed and stored, so that local stays on the menu beyond harvest season. And as enrolment increases, the team will turn to even more Ontario sources for products to process – good news for every stop on the value chain.

"Institutional buying and serving of local food has not only decreased our costs, it's helped strengthen the region's rural economy."

Alastair Summerlee, President & Vice-Chancellor, University of Guelph



Producer Partners:

- P&H Milling Group** Cambridge
• flour
- Elmira Produce Auction Co-op**
• produce
- Hayter's Farm** Dashwood
• turkey
- Sargent Farms** Milton
• chicken
- Smoyd Farms** Fergus
• potatoes
- Thatcher Farms** Rockwood
• sausage

The Implications

When it comes to demonstrating the efficacy and value of local food, Hospitality Services has not only been a model for the University's students, but also for other BPS institutions in the region. Through their collaborative efforts and strong relationships with local partners, the team has proven that it's possible to secure large volumes of local product for a university. As the BPS looks to learn more, one place they're sure to find answers is the University of Guelph – home of a true Ontario Local Food Champion.

Ontariofresh.ca is for Your Business.

2011 saw the launch of **Ontariofresh.ca**, a free business-to-business website designed to connect Ontario's food value chain, making it easier than ever to source, buy and sell local food.

Created with support from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the site works for businesses of all sizes, with users ranging from individual chefs and farmers to regional distributors to large institutions like hospitals or universities.

By creating their own detailed profiles, users can identify themselves as producers, buyers or distributors, showcase products they're looking to buy or sell, and flag facts about their business' scale, traceability programs, and farm and business practices like organic or kosher. Since the profile details are fully searchable, **Ontariofresh.ca** allows users to quickly zero in on key buyers or suppliers that fit a specialized need.

The site also features an online Marketplace, where users can post short-term classifieds requesting or offering specific products – a perfect opportunity for producers to post about a sudden surplus, special deal, or new product. And for buyers seeking specific items on short notice, or looking to source new and interesting products to offer their customers, the Marketplace is the place to be.

Another great feature of **Ontariofresh.ca**: users can create their own local food network by building connections, contacts and relationships with other businesses. And with a host of resources on topics like research and development, food safety and traceability, recipes and menu planning, users can stay up to date on the very latest developments.

At a time when online marketing tools are redefining the way Ontarians do business, **Ontariofresh.ca** is keeping pace, allowing every member of the value chain to access more powerful channels of buying, selling and connecting, opening the doors of opportunity like never before.

Funding Change. Forging Collaborations. Fostering Champions.



Broader Public Sector Investment Fund: Promoting Ontario Food

The time is now to integrate more Ontario food into the Broader Public Sector. Today's consumers are demanding local food more than ever, and Ontario farmers produce some of the best product in the world.

The *Broader Public Sector Investment Fund: Promoting Ontario Food* is fostering this evolution, providing grants that are enabling all levels of the value chain – from farmers to processors, distributors to caterers, and buyers to institutions – to help create systemic change in the procurement and purchasing of local food. This will enhance Ontario's economic and environmental outcomes, and the sustainability of our agriculture.

For more information, please visit **bpsinvestmentfund.ca**.



Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

Ontario's Greenbelt is over 1.8 million acres of green space, farmland, vibrant communities, forests, wetlands, and watersheds – all permanently protected by world-leading legislation. In return, the Greenbelt gives back much to Ontario, providing \$5.4 billion to Ontario's economy through farming and food production, and \$2.6 billion in ecosystem services annually.

The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation is working to help farmers in the Greenbelt be more successful; to protect and enhance natural features; and to strengthen local economies.

For more information, please visit **greenbelt.ca**.



Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) helps strengthen our agri-food sector and our rural communities. OMAFRA is investing in the development and transfer of innovative technologies, helping to attract and retain investment, developing markets, providing regulatory oversight, and encouraging all Ontarians to choose Ontario foods first.

For more information, please visit **omafra.gov.on.ca**.

Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

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