Chapter 2: Eastern Ontario

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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).1 Of these

1 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)].

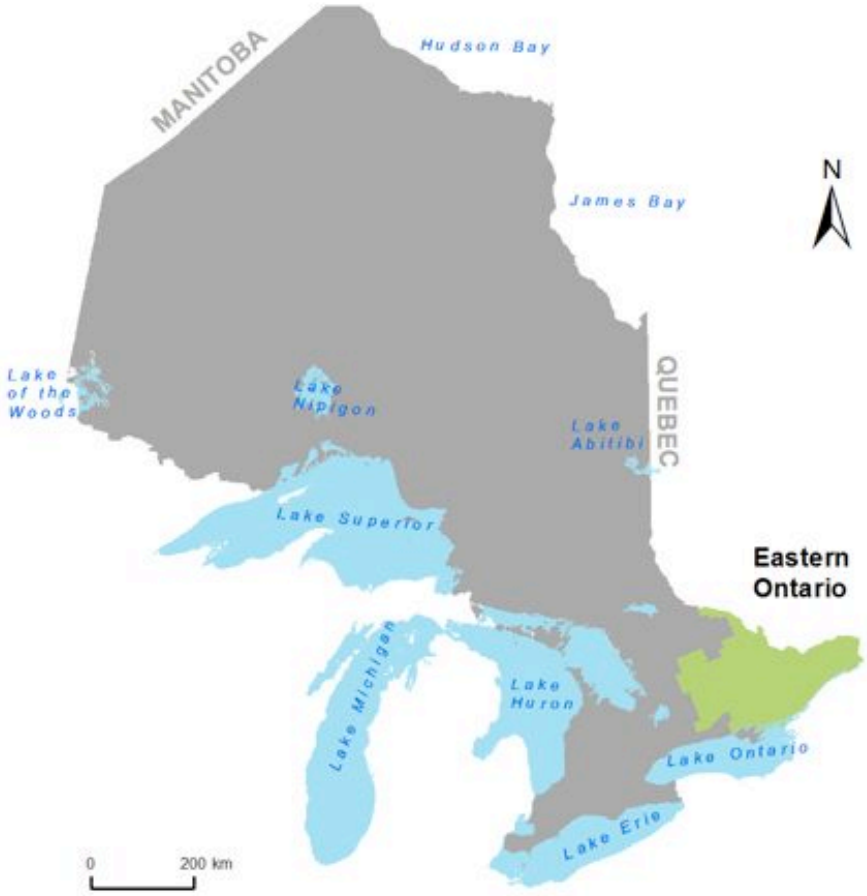

Figure 2.1: Map of the Eastern Ontario Region

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)2 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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2 See Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit (2011) *Nutrition: Food Matters*. URL: http://www.healthunit.org/nutrition/foodmatters/

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, Puterbough, 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 of 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 orgain 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:

- Eastern Ontario Development Fund of the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation: http://www.ontariocanada.com/ontcan/1medt/econdev/en/ed_eodf_main_en.jsp
- Community Futures Development Corporations in Ontario: http://www.ontcfdc.com/frame1.asp
- Ontario Market Investment Fund (OMIF): http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/industry/omif-program.htm
- County-level rural development funds
- Epicure Foundation: http://www.epicureselections.com/en/company/epicure-foundation/what-we-do/;
- United Way Canada: http://www2.unitedway.ca/uwcanada/default.aspx
- Canadian federal government (in particular, its emphasis on supporting small businesses in rural regions)

- Agricultural Management Initiative (AMI) – a joint federal-provincial fund set up to support the implementation of Canada's 2009 *Growing Forward Agricultural Policy Framework*

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

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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 Trilllium 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-Rusell.

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

"Any 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 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 and Sharing Food Down the Road at www.fooddowntheroad.ca/resources/sharing-fdtr-june08.pdf

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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 system3 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, Stromont-Dundas-Glengarry, Frontenac, and the Outaouais – all understood as part of the City of Ottawa's "foodshed."

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3 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.

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 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"4 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,

4 These might include gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation, etc., and the unique ways in which they combine.

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 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 emhasized 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 opportunties, 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 additonally 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'Outaouis (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 unnecesary 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

City of Ottawa. (2011). *Ottawa 20/20 Official Plan*, *Volume 1*. Available at: http://www.ottawa.ca/city_hall/ottawa2020/official_plan/vol_1/03_design_land_use/index_en-07.html. Accessed on June 5, 2011.

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 short-sightedeness 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 famer’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). 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 on 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 has 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