

# Ontario's Local Food Report

Tastes  
of Home



2016/17 Edition



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# Message from the Minister



This year marks Canada and Ontario's 150th birthday – an occasion to reflect on all that we as a country, and province, have accomplished together over the past century and a half. Ontario's farmers have made an indispensable contribution to our tremendous progress and this is truly something to celebrate.

Since the mid-19th century, Ontario has changed significantly – we have gone from a rural population base to a province where the vast majority of Ontarians live and work in urban areas. As we became more urban, we came to lose our direct connection to agriculture. I am pleased to see that this is changing, thanks in large part to the local food movement.

Across the province – farmers, processors, consumers and community groups are collaborating to increase consumption of foods grown, produced and made here. Ontarians know that there truly is no taste like home!

And by choosing local, we keep dollars in Ontario. The agri-food industry is already an economic force, generating more than \$36 billion in annual GDP and supporting 790,000 jobs in the province. It is also a high-potential growth sector.

To help realize this potential, the government adopted the Local Food Strategy in 2013 that aims to increase the consumption of local food in Ontario. We have backed our words with dollars, investing \$6.3 million in 133 local food initiatives in 2016-17.

In 2016, following consultation with our agri-food partners and local food champions, I established our second series of targets under our pioneering Local Food Act, which focus on increasing access to local food.

You are reading our third annual Local Food Report. This year's report focuses on the work being carried out by our government and our partners to bring more local food to Ontarians' tables. We also look at farmers, food processors and organizations that are expanding choice for Ontario consumers with local food products that reflect the diversity of this great province.

This year, we are also celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our banner Foodland Ontario program, which has been building awareness and enthusiasm for Ontario food since 1977.

As we celebrate Ontario's 150th birthday, I salute the farmers and food processors that have made immense contributions to building our province up, and who every day are helping consumers' access "Made-in-Ontario" food products. Here's to another 150 years of making Ontario stronger!

Jeff Leal

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

# 2016-17 in Review

The agri-food sector in Ontario is made up of hundreds of thousands of people: farmers, food and beverage processors, distributors, retailers and restaurateurs. Within those ranks are countless local food champions who drove the local food movement forward in 2016/2017. The Government of Ontario was there to support and partner with a number of great local food providers to expand opportunities for the people of Ontario.

## Funding Summary

Throughout the 2016/2017 fiscal year, the Government of Ontario invested in local food through:

Growing Forward 2	Greenbelt Fund's Local Food Investment Fund	Rural Economic Development Program
<b>\$1.8 million</b>	<b>\$3.8 million</b>	<b>\$660,000</b>
<b>47 PROJECTS</b>	<b>77 PROJECTS</b>	<b>5 PROJECTS</b>

## Achievements


**182** farmers' markets registered with Farmers' Markets Ontario.



**300** members of the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association.



**82%** of Ontario shoppers can identify Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables in grocery stores.



Almost **80%** of principal shoppers incorporate locally grown food in at least one meal per week.

# Ontario's Local Food Strategy

In 2013, the government developed a Local Food Strategy to increase consumer awareness and consumption of local food in Ontario. That commitment to local food is supported by the *Local Food Act, 2013*.

Consulting with farmers, food and beverage processors, retailers, foodservice providers, not-for-profit organizations and consumers, the government established three core objectives for the Local Food Strategy:

- Increased consumer awareness and education – so Ontario consumers are more aware of, highly value and choose more local food;
- Better access to local food – so local food is easily identifiable and widely available through a range of channels; and

- Expanded local food production – so Ontario's agri-food sector is more competitive, productive and responsive to consumer demand.

Our province is making great gains thanks to the Local Food Strategy and under the Local Food Act, the government publishes this report every year to share progress with Ontarians.

For more information on the government's Local Food Strategy, visit [www.ontario.ca/localfood](http://www.ontario.ca/localfood).

## Why Local Food Matters

The advantages of buying local food are enormous. Ontario's agri-food sector offers consumers an immense variety of delicious, nutritious foods that underpin the diversity, quality of life and economy of our province.

Ontario's agri-food sector includes a value chain of farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, restaurants and other food service organizations working to provide quality products to Ontarians. Every day, nearly 800,000 Ontarians wake up to work in this dynamic, exciting and important sector.

We depend on the creativity and hard work of Ontario's 52,000 family farms, to ensure we have a ready supply of tasty, wholesome foods. From apples to quinoa, and cattle to fish, Ontario grows, harvests and makes more than 200 diverse foods and agri-food products.

### Agri-Food – An Economic Powerhouse

Ontario's powerhouse agri-food sector generates \$36.4 billion a year in Gross Domestic Product. What's more, the agri-food sector has exciting growth prospects. In 2013, Premier Kathleen Wynne challenged the sector to double its growth rate and create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. The sector is on track to meet these targets with \$2.2 billion in GDP added to the economy and more than 42,000 jobs created since the challenge was issued.

When we buy local food, we are helping to build a strong and resilient agri-food sector that not only feeds us but strengthens our economy by keeping jobs and dollars in communities across our province.

## Bring Home the World

Ontario's agri-food sector is a reflection of Ontario's diversity. Consumer values and needs are evolving, leading to expanding demand for organic products and artisanal goods, products with added health benefits and globally-inspired specialty foods. Ontario's agri-food sector is responding to this demand.

Food is integral to every culture and Ontario's agri-food sector is working diligently to satisfy the tastes of Ontarians with roots from around the globe. Whether it's growing bok choy, making goat cheese or preparing small-batch kimchi, World Foods made in Ontario are rapidly gaining momentum across the province.

This report will highlight the scope and impact of World Foods by presenting a small sample of efforts currently underway in the province.

## Seizing Opportunities

The Ontario government is helping provide the agri-food sector with the supports needed to seize the opportunities emerging from consumer trends at home and abroad.

Of course, Ontario does not – and due to our climate, cannot – produce all the food our people need or

want. However, we can produce much more of what is consumed here. A high priority for the government is to encourage consumers to put more emphasis on local food – food grown, harvested or produced in Ontario or made from Ontario ingredients. The government is also working to encourage the sector to produce more of the foods Ontario residents demand. This vision to have more Ontario consumers enjoying local food more often – and in more places – is broadly shared. Local food is a movement that extends far and wide and has energized action across Ontario – from consumers, entrepreneurs, governments and established businesses.

In particular, for many Ontarians, local food may not reflect their traditions or their tastes, requiring imports. This reflects lost opportunities for Ontario businesses and workers. The solution is to enhance the availability of local food that aligns with the diversity of Ontario's population. Bottom line: the more home-grown-and-made food Ontarians choose, the stronger our province will become.

To that end, the government has launched a conversation with Ontarians called Bring Home the World to get a better sense of the demand for and supply of World Foods in the province. Feedback from this consultation will help inform how the government can support growth in this exciting segment of local food. For more information, visit [www.ontario.ca/worldfoods](http://www.ontario.ca/worldfoods).

## The Local Food Act, 2013

The first of its kind in Canada when introduced in 2013, the Local Food Act has been instrumental in supporting the government's Local Food Strategy. Some highlights of what has been achieved as a result of the Act include:

- The government proclaimed Local Food Week, which takes place the week beginning on the first Monday in June each year.
- Since 2014, farmers have been able to get a tax credit for donations of agricultural products they

make to community food organizations, such as food banks.

- The Minister has established goals around local food literacy and local food access, which are helping to engage the agri-food sector and consumers to support the Local Food Strategy.

The following sections of this report summarize some of the success stories and Local Food Champions that have supported progress on the Local Food Strategy in 2016-17.

# Local Food CHAMPION

## T&T Supermarket

*Banners in Mandarin a First for  
Foodland Ontario*

T&T Supermarket is Canada's largest Asian supermarket chain. Headquartered in British Columbia, it has eight stores in Ontario – seven in the Greater Toronto Area and one in Ottawa. In June 2016, Foodland Ontario began providing merchandising materials to T&T outlets to highlight Ontario-grown produce. Stores have built displays featuring Ontario products and use Foodland Ontario materials to promote the vegetables' origin.

To better reach many of T&T's customers, Foodland Ontario developed bilingual banners – in traditional Mandarin and English – for T&T's Ontario-grown bok choy and Asian greens selection. The eight-foot banners represent Foodland Ontario's first merchandising materials produced in a language other than English and French.

優質食品 源自安省

Good Things Grow in Ontario





# Increasing Local Food Literacy

Local food literacy is an objective of the Ontario government's Local Food Strategy, with three aspirational goals identified under the Local Food Act that are meant to inspire the government's local food partners to action:

1. Goal 1: Increase the number of Ontarians who know what local foods are available.
2. Goal 2: Increase the number of Ontarians who know how and where to obtain local foods.
3. Goal 3: Increase the number of Ontarians who prepare local food meals for family and friends, and make local food more available through food service providers.

The Ontario government supports programs and works with partners to improve local food literacy among Ontarians.

## Foodland Ontario Builds Food Literacy

Local food literacy has long been the objective of the Foodland Ontario program delivered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Since 1977, Foodland Ontario has worked with the agri-food sector – producers, processors and retailers – to build awareness and enthusiasm for Ontario foods.

Over 1,400 producers, retailers, and food service operators are using the Foodland Ontario logo to promote and identify Ontario food products in the marketplace. In 2016-17, the program distributed more than 7.5 million pieces of point-of-sale materials to grocery stores, enabling consumers to easily identify Ontario-produced fresh foods. Radio, television, and digital advertisements reached a combined audience of more than 45 million. And over 100 special events supported by Foodland Ontario attracted more than 1.2 million participants, raising the profile of Ontario food.

**7.5 million** pieces of point-of-sale materials distributed to grocery stores.

**45 million** people reached via combined radio, television and digital ads.

Over **1.2 million** participants in over 100 special events supported by Foodland Ontario.



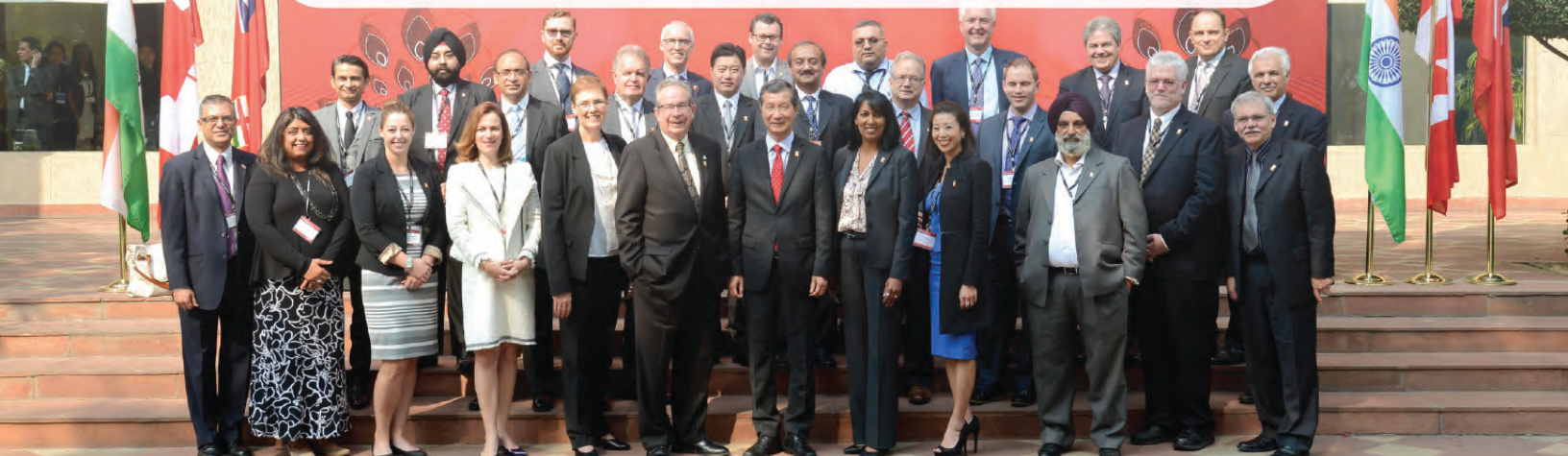
# Local Food SPOTLIGHT

## Growing Ontario's Global Profile

A strong position at home gives Ontario's agri-food sector a solid base to expand globally translating into more jobs for the Ontario economy. The first step is to increase awareness with international customers of the range and quality of Ontario food products, and with Ontario agri-food businesses of exciting global opportunities.

In November 2016, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Minister of International Trade co-led Ontario's first Agri-Food Trade Mission to India to attract new investment and continue to grow the agri-food sector globally. Building on momentum from the Premier's trade mission to India earlier in the year, the agri-food mission promoted Ontario's value-added processed food, cutting-edge technology – including dairy genetics – and economic opportunities to more than 300 Indian companies and government officials. Twenty-one delegates from 18 Ontario agri-food businesses took part in the mission.

The Ontario government will continue to promote the province's agri-food sector as an opportunity for international investment through its Growing Global strategy.



## Celebrating Local Food Innovation in Retail

Foodland Ontario salutes its retail partners for exceptional efforts to raise consumer awareness about the diversity of foods produced, processed and grown in the province. The annual Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards – underway since 1987 – are the retail sector’s prime competition for excellence in food retailing display and promotion in support of local Ontario produce.

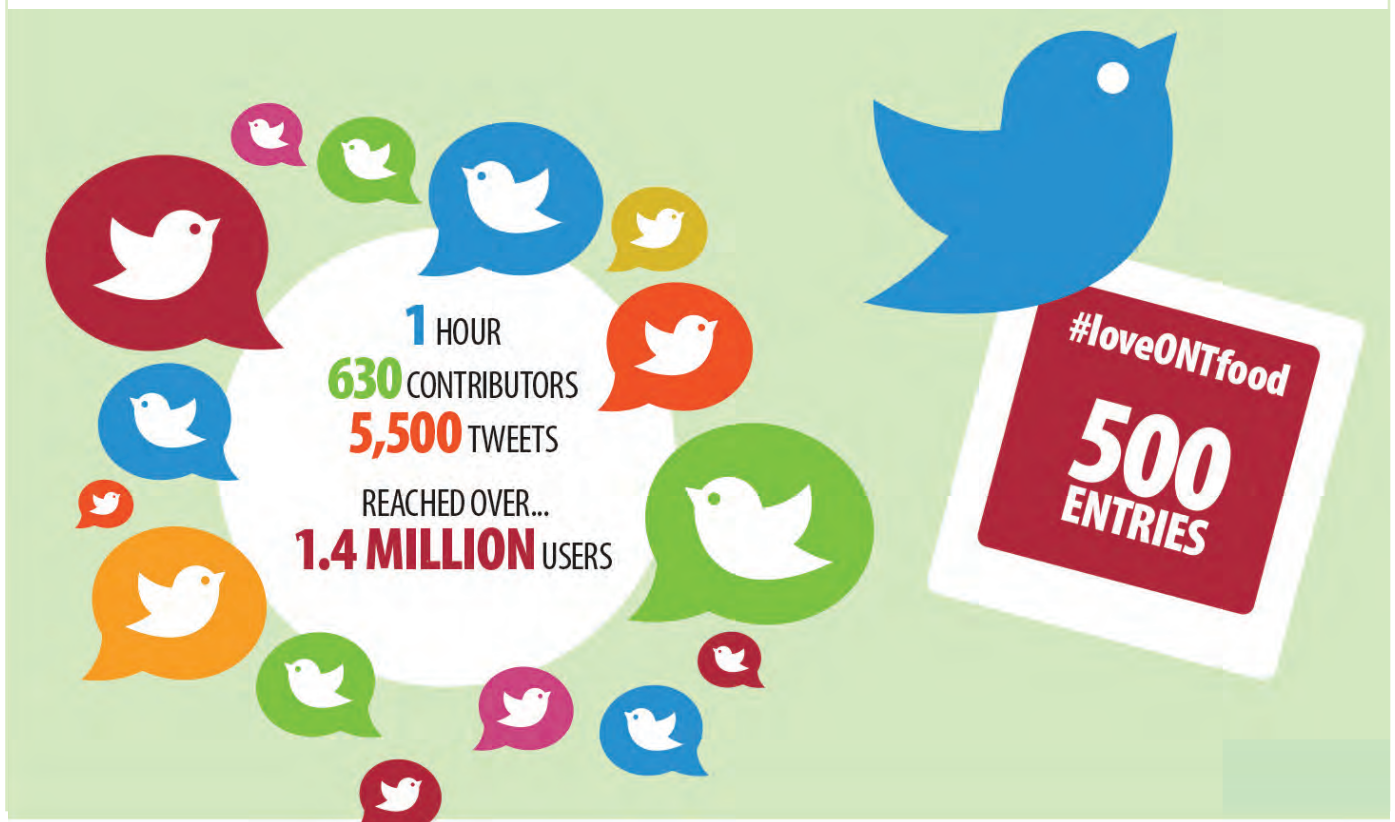
In 2016, 60 retail stores and three retail grocery banners received awards for their new ideas and innovative in-store promotions that help Ontario consumers recognize and buy more locally-grown food.

Find out which stores had winning entries by visiting: <https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/page/foodland-ontario-retailer-awards-winners-0>.

## Growing Reliance on Social Media

When Foodland Ontario began, there were no smart phones and no Internet. Today, Foodland Ontario is reaching more and more consumers through digital platforms and is active on five social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube. The Facebook page was created in 2011 and has grown to an online community of over 170,000 followers. The Twitter profile, set up in 2008, now has over 29,500 followers. Together these five online communities resulted in over 47 million consumer impressions and over 236,000 engagements (direct consumer comments, reactions and shares) in 2016.

During Local Food Week – the first week of June – Foodland Ontario hosted an online Twitter Party and also a photo contest. The Twitter Party generated 5,500 tweets from 630 contributors in one hour, reaching over 1.4 million users. The Show Your Love for #loveONTfood photo contest attracted 500 entries.





# Local Food SPOTLIGHT

## Local Food Investment Fund

In 2015, the Ontario government pledged \$6 million over three years to the Greenbelt Fund to support initiatives that align with Ontario's Local Food Strategy.

This investment enables farmers, businesses and not-for-profits to access a Local Food Investment Fund that helps increase the availability of Ontario-grown-and-made food to be purchased and enjoyed across the province. To date, \$3.8 million has been allocated to 77 projects to further local food literacy, access to local food, and local food purchases by broader public sector organizations.

Thanks to the success of the Local Food Investment Fund, the Ontario government and the Greenbelt Fund are partnering in 2017-18 to invest an additional \$1 million into local food projects.

## Foodland Ontario Marks 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In 2017, Foodland Ontario marks its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and the province's agri-food sector has plenty to celebrate. Over the last 40 years, the program has partnered with thousands of Ontario producers, processors and retailers to help promote the good things that are grown and made in our province.

Four decades of work have built the influential Foodland Ontario brand that draws consumer attention to local food options. Year after year, Foodland Ontario has achieved consumer recognition of more than 90 per cent among Ontario's principal grocery shoppers. As a result, local food has high visibility in the Ontario marketplace and consumers better understand the rich diversity of foods produced here.

No program could last 40 years without evolving, and Foodland Ontario has grown with the needs and expectations of the sector and consumers. From an initial focus on fruits and vegetables, the scope widened in 2008 to cover all Ontario-produced food – meat, dairy, eggs, honey, maple syrup, and processed foods where the majority of primary ingredients are sourced from within this province.

Consumer tastes have also shifted as Ontario's population has become more diverse and the range of products supported by Foodland Ontario has expanded accordingly – from bitter melon to bok choy, from cheddar to paneer, and from omega pork to goat meat.

Throughout the year, Foodland Ontario will be holding public awareness events to highlight its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, with a focus on Local Food Week in June and Agriculture Week in October. To stay up to date, connect with all Foodland Ontario's channels by visiting [www.FoodlandOntario.ca](http://www.FoodlandOntario.ca).



### History of the Foodland Ontario Logo

The Foodland Ontario logo originated in 1977. The logo was refreshed in 2011 along with the introduction of a new organic logo. To help celebrate Foodland Ontario's 40<sup>th</sup> year, an anniversary logo was released in 2017.

# Local Food CHAMPION

## Kiknedaasogamig Elementary School

### *Students Exploring Their Roots through Traditional Foods*

Sixty-three First Nations across the province receive \$4 million in funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to support breakfast or lunch programs in their communities.

In 2015, First Nations were invited to develop plans to deliver the program in ways that addressed the unique needs of their communities. Many incorporated traditional foods and activities to help celebrate and preserve knowledge, language and culture amongst their youth.

During the 2015-16 school year, Kiknedaasogamig Elementary School on the Neyaashiinigiing reserve of the Chippewas of Nawash explored the themes of traditional food and food preservation.

The primary grades learned about wild rice in their Ojibway Language Class. Partnering with the Student Nutrition Program, their teacher had students prepare a dried soup mix to take home for their families – made up of dried herbs, spices and veggies as well as barley and organic wild rice. The students followed the recipe and used their math skills to measure the proper quantities of each ingredient, which were placed in mason jars.

*“The students absolutely loved this activity and were extremely proud to take dinner home to their families,”* – Deidre Millar, the School & Community Nutrition Project Coordinator for Neyaashiinigiing.

## Success Stories

### Highview Food & Drink

*Ontario's Best Veal Parmigiana Sandwich*

Highview Food & Drink in Southampton offers Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich 2016 as determined by a province-wide contest organized by Veal Farmers of Ontario. Highview was one of three finalists – selected from among 500 online nominations of 97 favourite sandwich spots – to prepare their entries at the Gourmet Food & Wine Expo in Toronto in November 2016.

The competition, supported by a \$35,000 grant from the Local Food Investment Fund, was designed to generate excitement and promote Ontario veal sales. It made a strong impact on both social and traditional media, garnering more than 700,000 Twitter, Instagram and Facebook impressions, as well as, earning a full page article in a major newspaper chain and coverage in several community newspapers as well as national and local radio coverage which altogether generated more than 1.5 million earned media impressions.

### AgScape

*Inspiring the Next Generation*

The Ontario government is helping inspire youth to become the next generation of agri-food leaders through its continued investment in AgScape. AgScape is a charitable organization dedicated to providing food literacy programs and resources to Ontario's educators and students. Teachers can download tools to help incorporate agri-food education into everyday lesson plans from grades one to 12.

In addition, AgScape's Teacher Ambassadors visit junior-to-high-school classrooms to deliver lessons. During the 2015-16 school year, 27 Teacher Ambassadors delivered 156 lessons to 54 different schools to educate and inspire youth and inform them about the vast array of agri-food career opportunities available.

### Ontario Tender Fruit Growers

*Getting to Know Ontario's Tender Fruit*

In 2016, the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers received a \$120,000 grant through the Local Food Investment Fund to work with major retailers to increase awareness and knowledge of Ontario tender fruit. While peaches are what usually comes to mind when thinking of Ontario tender fruit, the campaign also promoted other locally-grown fruits like nectarines, plums, table grapes, cherries, pears and apricots.

A Spring into Summer event kicked off the growing season by bringing growers and retail partners together to learn about the timing and size of the crop and the promotions planned. New marketing tools included a total of 6,400 retail display bins delivered to major retail stores.

As well, in-store sampling events and recipe demonstrations in selected locations promoted Ontario peaches, pears and table grapes and suggested options besides eating fresh fruit out of hand. The awareness campaign contributed to a 4 per cent increase in the gross value of fresh fruit crops in 2016 compared with the previous year.

# Local Food CHAMPION

## Roots to Harvest

### *School Cafeteria Menu Rebuilt*

Through a \$45,000 Local Food Investment Fund grant, Roots to Harvest has collaborated with the Lakehead District School Board to launch the Get Fresh Café at Westgate Collegiate & Vocational Institute in Thunder Bay.

The pilot project is transforming the traditional high school cafeteria model. Instead of buying pre-prepared food that often costs more, the Get Fresh Café uses fresh ingredients sourced as locally as possible and devotes extra resources to making more food from whole ingredients. The cafeteria menu has been rebuilt to include and feature more than a dozen Ontario-grown produce and meat items made into dishes like salads and wraps. The items are procured through local distributors including Belluz Farms, Brule Creek Flour, The Squash Queen, Mile Hill Farms, and B&B Farms.

New flavours, combined with seasonal ingredients, have won the students' enthusiasm – with Get Fresh Café recording the highest gross revenue among all Lakehead Public School cafeterias. And 80 per cent of students eating there recognize that the food is grown in Ontario.





# Boosting Local Food Access

## Targets Set under Local Food Act

On its own, increased awareness is not enough to expand consumption of local food: local food choices must be made available to Ontarians where they shop and dine. To improve consumer access, producer access to local food markets must also be improved.

In 2016, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs worked with its agri-food and local food partners to develop a series of aspirational goals under the Local Food Act for increasing access to local food.

More than 40 agri-food, health, education, Indigenous and civil society organizations participated in consultations during the spring

and summer. Based on feedback from those consultations, the Minister established the following food access goals in fall 2016:

1. Goal 1: Increase opportunities for all Ontarians to choose local food.
2. Goal 2: Increase the variety of local food offerings to celebrate the diversity of Ontario and its foods.
3. Goal 3: Increase collaborations and strengthen partnerships among producers, communities, and the public and private sectors to enhance local food availability.

The following section highlights recent accomplishments across the province and agri-food sector to improve local food access.



# Local Food CHAMPION



Possibility grows here.

## Burnac Produce

### *Ontario Fresh at SUBWAY® Restaurants*

Burnac Produce, a wholesale distributor, has partnered with SUBWAY® restaurants, the sandwich shop chain, to bring Ontario produce to the chain's 1,300 Ontario locations.

Burnac received a \$90,000 grant through the Local Food Investment Fund for this innovative project to supply Ontario-grown tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and onions to the restaurants during the 2016 harvest season. Buyers worked closely with farmers throughout the planning, planting, growing and harvesting stages to ensure SUBWAY®'s requirements were met. As well, a promotional campaign using Foodland Ontario materials highlighted the availability of local produce at the chain's locations.

The project doubled the amount of locally grown produce served in SUBWAY® restaurants in Ontario last year, with Burnac buying over 1 million more pounds of local produce than in 2015.



Foodland  
ONTARIO

*"Funding from the Greenbelt Fund was able to help Burnac execute the project internally and with growers to develop and source product and educate growers. It also helped to support the marketing campaign executed by Subway." – David Capobianco, Burnac Produce*

## Success Stories

The agri-food sector continues to work with the Ontario government to enhance local food availability across the province. Some key highlights and results from the Ontario government's 2016-17 investments in agri-food partners are presented below.

### Direct Links between Farmers and Consumers

A province-wide association, Farmers' Markets Ontario (FMO), promotes registered venues as places for Ontario consumers to buy locally grown food direct from farmers. At last count there were 182 farmers' markets registered with the association. Meanwhile, the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association fosters the direct farm sales industry, such as pick-your-own and on-farm fruit and vegetable markets. Approximately 300 farmers belong to the group.

### Ontario Student Nutrition Program

Connecting school children with local food has multiple benefits: it helps students get the nutrition they need to get ready to learn; it increases their

food literacy skills; and it also strengthens local economies by giving farm sales a boost.

Funded through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ontario Student Nutrition Program helped bring healthy meals and snacks to more than 890,000 school students and 63 First Nations communities during the 2015-16 school year. The program operates in partnership with local partners – including parents, charities, community organizations, corporate sponsors and some municipalities.

In fall 2016, updated nutrition guidelines were released to help schools select nutritious foods and encourage the serving of food grown or produced in Ontario. A 2015 survey of select volunteers found that close to 60 per cent of the local programs choose Ontario foods when they can.

Schools tailor the program to their own needs and interests. In Timmins, for example, students at St. Paul School enjoyed a breakfast of grilled cheese sandwiches and fresh local vegetables one morning last spring. The switch from the usual oatmeal or cold cereal was intended to broaden students' horizons about food choices and experiences.

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*"Grilled cheese is one of those breakfast items that really gets the kids excited and part of the reason we chose it is that we wanted to break out of some of those stereotypes that exist when it comes to thinking about breakfast in the morning,"* - Rena Keenan-Buhler, student nutrition program food and logistics coordinator for the Timmins Branch of the Canadian Red Cross.

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# Local Food CHAMPION

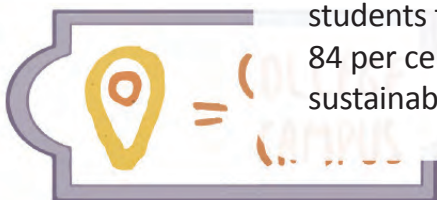
## Mohawk College

### *New College Procurement Model Emerging*

Food services at Ontario's 24 colleges of applied arts and technology serve roughly 237,000 students each day and record \$65 million in annual sales. With a \$100,000 Local Food Investment Fund grant, Mohawk College is leading a two-year effort to develop the first-ever local food procurement model for Ontario colleges.

The research phase has been completed and a report released in March 2017 highlighted barriers to and opportunities for local food procurement. For example, lack of local food literacy among college food service and other staff was found to be a key area to strengthen. Soon pilot projects will be launched to test evidence-based solutions emerging from the findings. The research and pilot projects will guide the development of a local food procurement framework that will provide a set of tools that can be adopted by all 24 Ontario colleges. The final framework is to be released in early 2018.

Mohawk also conducted a province-wide survey of Ontario college students to gauge their demand for local food. Of those surveyed, 84 per cent felt that it was important for their college to support sustainability by purchasing and serving local food on campus.



Possibility grows here.



*“Increasing the amount of local food served on Ontario college campuses is an important opportunity for colleges to better serve their students and communities. The support we have received from the Local Food Investment Fund has opened the door to an evolution of college foodservices in support of Ontario-grown food.” – Alan Griffiths, Manager of Sustainability, Mohawk College*

## Child Nutrition Network of Haldimand & Norfolk

*Farm to School – a Winning Partnership*

The Child Nutrition Network of Haldimand & Norfolk supports 69 local Student Nutrition Programs. It relies heavily on its Farm to School program to provide schools with access to fresh local produce like apples, cucumbers, berries and cherry tomatoes.

As a supportive local partner, the Norfolk Fruit Growers Association has dedicated an area within its warehouse to Student Nutrition Programs. This is where local farmers can drop off their fresh product to be picked up by volunteers and served at schools later that week.

West Lynn Public School in Simcoe is one of the many schools that place online orders for local products each week through the program.

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“My students as well as my own children love to smell and taste the aroma of fresh cucumbers every Wednesday at West Lynn. The cucumbers provided by our Farm to School program and cut by the same grandparents of a couple of our students add great nutrition to our students’ lunches.” – Tonya Lesage, teacher and parent at West Lynn Public School

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# Local Food CHAMPION

## Metro Ontario Inc.

### *Supermarket Chain Stepping Up Local Food Purchases*

During the 2016 Local Food Week, 260 Metro and Food Basics grocery stores in the province launched a Local Purchasing Policy that is expected to increase the chain's purchases of Ontario-grown-and-made food products.

The company states that the policy reflects its commitment to make it easier for consumers to find the products they are seeking, and which meet their needs in terms of freshness, variety and value. Metro is collaborating closely with Foodland Ontario and other associations that promote Ontario products.

Metro already sources many fresh Ontario foods such as produce, lamb and organic pork and the new policy will enable many more Ontario farmers and food processors to supply their products to the chain. This will enhance local food availability for Ontario consumers.

*“Metro is proud of the strong commitment we have made to invest in Ontario by buying local food products. It’s important to our customers to be able to buy local food products and it’s important to Metro to contribute to economic growth in the regions that we do business. Our partnership with Foodland Ontario been critical to delivering on our commitment.” – Andre Gagne, Vice President, Fresh Merchandizing, Metro Ontario Inc.*

## Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program

Delivered under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (NFVP) increases awareness and consumption of fruits and vegetables among primary-to-junior school students in northern and remote communities. The program runs from January to June and provides no-cost fresh fruits and vegetables – about 65 per cent from Ontario – twice a week in school, combined with education in healthy eating and physical activity.

As of January 2016, the NFVP provided over two million servings of fresh fruit and vegetables in three northern regions over the course of the

20-week program, reaching over 36,500 students, including over 6,600 Indigenous children, in 192 schools.

The program involves a partnership among three local health units – Algoma Public Health, the Porcupine Health Unit and the Sudbury and District Health Unit – and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association.

Ontario's First Nations Health Action Plan, announced in May 2016, includes expanding the NFVP to increase access to fresh fruit and vegetables for approximately 40,000 more children, including 13,000 Indigenous children.



**The Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program**  
reached over **36,500** students in **192** schools in 2016.



A circular logo with a green border and a white center. The text "Local Food" is in green and "CHAMPION" is in red. The logo is flanked by two red ribbon-like shapes.

# Local Food CHAMPION

## Fresh City Farms

### *Urban Farmers on Growth Track*

Based in Toronto's Downsview Park, Fresh City Farms is Canada's largest commercial city farm. Two dozen member farmers grow produce organically on two acres and in a greenhouse and sell food and meals through an online market for delivery in Toronto and elsewhere in the GTA.

With Local Food Investment Fund support of \$100,000, Fresh City has been building its capacity to process and package local and organic foods that today's consumers demand. In December 2016, the company moved into a 20,000 sq.ft. packing and production facility and shortly thereafter launched series of value-added food items, including prepared meals, salad jars, recipe kits and smoothies. The plant processes local ingredients from Fresh City's own farms as well as more than 100 other growers.

Fresh City now serves 4,000 homes in the GTA and anticipates a nearly 40 per cent revenue increase by early 2018. This growth will translate into thousands of local and healthy meals delivered weekly to GTA homes, creating 20 jobs.



## Community Food Program Donation Tax Credit

Ontario farmers have a long tradition of helping those in need. Their generosity has inspired recent programs to meet urgent calls by food banks for fresh food donations, beyond the usual non-perishable items.

To encourage farmers to produce more food for donation, the Ontario government offers the Community Food Program Donation Tax Credit to farmers who give agricultural products to community food programs, such as food banks and student nutrition programs. Introduced in 2014, the tax credit helps ensure families in need have access to healthy local food options.

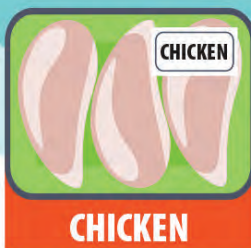
Farm commodity organizations are also demonstrating generosity to Ontarians in need. For example, the Beef Farmers of Ontario and the Chicken Farmers of Ontario have partnered with the Ontario Association of Food Banks. Since its launch in 2014, the beef program has provided 80,000 servings of fresh ground beef for Ontario families in need, while the chicken program delivers about 175,000 kilograms of chicken to food banks a year. As well, in 2016 Ontario Pork and its sector partners donated nearly 27,000 kilograms of ground pork, enough for more than 178,000 servings. And every year, the Egg Farmers of Ontario contributes about 1.8 million eggs.

## FARM DONATIONS to FOOD BANKS



**GROUND BEEF**

**80,000**  
servings



**CHICKEN**

**175,000**  
kilograms



**GROUND PORK**

**178,000**  
servings



**EGGS**

**1.8 million**  
eggs



# Local Food CHAMPION

## NMK Foods

### *Expanding Halal Meat Production*

Another processor that is also expanding to meet the growing demand for halal cuisine is NMK Foods based in Mississauga. With an investment of \$43,000 from the Local Food Investment Fund, the company is upgrading its equipment to pack product more efficiently, deliver a much higher quality product and add shelf life.

NMK Foods creates and manufactures an authentic tasting, Ontario-sourced halal product line that includes chicken, turkey, beef and lamb Kebabs, meatballs, burgers and marinated chicken. Products are available in grocery stores across the province and the company is negotiating with major chains to expand its retail presence.

## Local Line Inc.

### *Making Local Food Connections Online*

Efficient distribution channels are essential for farmers to connect with local food markets. Technology is playing a growing role in enabling these links.

Local Line Inc. in Kitchener has developed an online platform that makes it easier for restaurants and other food service locations to put Ontario food on the menu. Launched in 2014, the system lets chefs buy directly from growers without placing dozens of different orders for meats, dairy products, grains, fruits or vegetables. The site has brought together 230 registered buyers and suppliers in Ontario, Calgary and select U.S. sites.

Recognizing the platform's contributions to growing Ontario's agri-food sector, Local Line received a regional award in the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence competition in 2016.

## Fresh from the Farm

### *Boosting Local Food – and Schools*

Fresh from the Farm connects children and youth with farms by helping schools raise

funds through selling bundles of local fruits and vegetables. Since the program began in 2013, 665 schools have participated and families have bought almost \$1.7 million in local apples, carrots, onions, potatoes and more. That represents more than 8.9 million individual servings of nutritious Ontario produce. As a result, more than \$868,000 has been returned to Ontario growers, and more than \$626,000 has been retained by Ontario schools.

In 2016, over \$950,000 in local produce representing over 4.8 million individual servings of Ontario fruits and vegetables were sold through the program, engaging 371 schools across the province.

In 2016, Timmins Centennial Public School, part of the District School Board of Ontario Northeast, participated in the program. The school sold over \$23,000 worth of produce, or 22,000 pounds of Ontario fruit and vegetables – by far the most in the province. Since schools keep 40 percent of sales, this means that Timmins Centennial raised \$9,500 for school programming.

What a great way to promote health, team-building and strengthen schools!



# Local Food CHAMPION

## Vineland Research and Innovation Centre

### *Feeding Diversity a Research Priority*

Located in the Niagara Region, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is a world-leading research facility that works with growers to showcase the potential of new crop opportunities. It is conducting a multi-disciplinary research program, Feeding Diversity: Bringing World Crops to Market, designed to build a local ethno-cultural vegetable marketplace.

The program focuses on development of new world crops such as okra and Asian eggplant varieties. In partnership with commercial growers across Canada, Vineland's production team is testing varieties of these crops for performance in such areas as growth rate, potential yield and disease resistance.

India accounts for most of the world's okra crop and Canada imports over 6 million kilograms a year. In tests in summer 2016, three okra varieties did particularly well under Canadian conditions – leaving growers, researchers and retailers optimistic about the long-term prospects.

China produces most of the world's eggplant. But with the success of this research, consumers now can often find some local eggplant at the grocery store. Then they can just slice it like cucumber and toss in the wok!

Vineland is an independent, not-for-profit organization funded in part by the Ontario government through the federal-provincial-territorial Growing Forward 2 program.

# Growing Ontario's Local Food Options

As Ontarians increasingly choose local food options, it is important for the province's farmers, food processors, retailers and food service organizations to expand and diversify their supply of locally grown, harvested and made products to meet the changing preferences of Ontario consumers.

Through key initiatives – such as Growing Forward 2, the Jobs and Prosperity Fund, the Local Food Investment Fund, the Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Ontario Development Funds, and the Wine and Grape Strategy – the Ontario government is investing in the province's agri-food sector to encourage innovation, productivity and growth. Several of these investments in turn are creating new opportunities for Ontario consumers to savour new tastes, get more Ontario fruits and vegetables year-round, and find the products they like locally-made.

## Funding Programs Nurture Growth

In 2016:

- The government invested over \$660,000 in five local food projects through the Rural Economic Development program to increase economic competitiveness, innovation and diversification within Ontario's rural communities.
- Growing Forward 2 – a federal-provincial-territorial initiative that encourages innovation, competitiveness, market development, adaptability and industry sustainability in Canada's agri-food sector – committed more than \$1.8 million to 47 projects by producers, processors, organizations and collaborations to support local food.



# Local Food CHAMPION

## Cross Wind Farm

### *Meeting Demand for Artisan Goat Cheese*

Located just east of Peterborough, Cross Wind Farm is a goat farm that began shipping raw milk 10 years ago and now produces a multi-faceted line of goat products, including pasteurized milk, artisan cheeses and Chevon (goat meat). With a \$40,000 grant from the Local Food Investment Fund, the farm invested in new processing equipment to increase production capacity to meet the growing demand for its artisan cheeses.

The project enabled Cross Wind to launch three new products, increasing yearly cheese sales by more than 60 per cent. Overall revenue was up \$80,000 over six months, due to increased production. The higher capacity also means better market access for other goat producers, as Cross Wind can aggregate goat dairy from other Ontario farms in its pasteurization and packaging facility.

## Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence

Innovation is key to competing in the global marketplace. The annual Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence recognize the valuable work carried out by the agri-food sector to improve existing products, develop

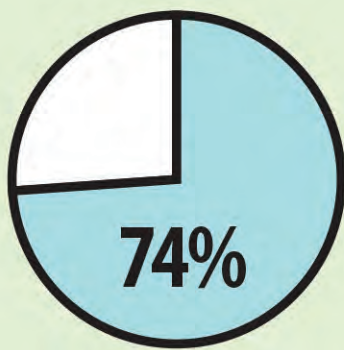
new ones, pioneer new techniques, create jobs and drive economic growth.

Fifty winners were recognized in 2016, which marked the 10th anniversary of the awards program. Dairy Quality Inc. of Newmarket won the Premier's Award for their breakthrough technology that helps keep dairy cows' health in check and ensures the highest milk quality standards.

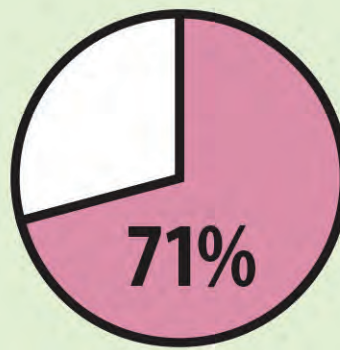
### Innovation Driving Results

We reached out to 170 previous recipients of our Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence to highlight key trends.

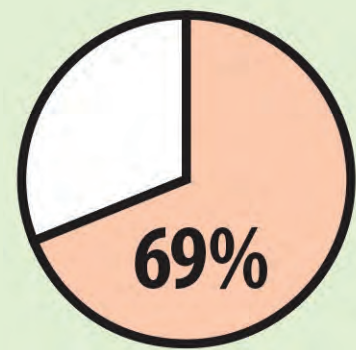
#### Since receiving the award companies have:



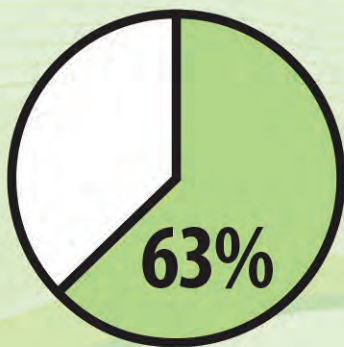
Expanded their operations



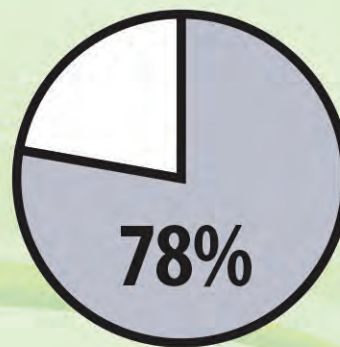
Created jobs



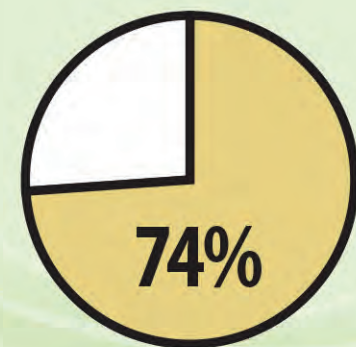
Invested in machinery, equipment, infrastructure or buildings



Expanded markets or entered new ones



Improved profitability or increased sales



Begun work on new ideas or projects



# Local Food CHAMPION

## **Mackellar Farms**

### *Ontario Edamame Competing with Imports*

Edamame is a kind of soybean that is popular in the cuisines of Japan, China and other countries in East Asia. It can be eaten as a snack or appetizer or used as an ingredient in various dishes. Most edamame consumed in Ontario is imported from Asia.

Interested in offering Canadians a new crop, young farmer Jacob MacKellar perfected edamame growing techniques over three years of research and development to produce high quality legumes, both in size and taste. He reaped his first harvest of edamame on his family's farm southwest of London in 2010 and a year later MacKellar Farms' edamame was in a handful of stores in Toronto. It's caught on and is now sold in over 350 stores across Canada.

The Ontario government supported this local food initiative with a \$105,000 grant in 2015 for new technology and marketing efforts. Most of the funds went to acquire specialized equipment to prepare edamame for the freezing process. Edamame usually is not sold fresh – instead it is quick frozen and sold like peas or beans. The new equipment is expected to improve yields and quality while reducing processing costs.



## Local Food Innovators

A decade of the Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence has generated some exciting stories in Ontario's local food sector. The 2016 awards proved to be no exception. Here are a few examples:

### Cold Snap™ Pears – “Winter's Favourite Fruit”

By late fall, local pears usually have to be replaced by imports in Ontario grocery stores. That's beginning to change with the arrival of Cold Snap™ pears, developed in the 1970s by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and only just recently making their way to market. Niagara-based Vineland Growers' Co-operative Ltd. licensed the growing rights in 2011 and in fall 2015 the first fruit from this variety hit stores.

The main selling advantage of Cold Snap™ pears is their longer storage life, allowing them to be kept in atmosphere-controlled storage as late as February or March. Their firm texture, sweet taste and large size appeal to consumers, while growers like their blight resistance.

The first crop sold out by early January 2016 and about 1 million pears were harvested the next year and sold to major retailers across Ontario and Quebec. Sales are expected to reach almost 2 million pounds by 2018 and 4 million by 2024. Vineland researchers calculate that Cold Snap™ will create a net benefit to growers of \$51.5 million over a 14-year period, compared with a standard pear like Bartlett.

The government contributed to this success through \$299,000 in Growing Forward 2 funding, awarded to Vineland Growers in 2015, to retrofit cooler storage areas in the first major application of controlled atmosphere technology to Ontario-grown pears.

## Shrimp Now Grow in Ontario

Ontario seafood lovers can now find home-grown shrimp, thanks to the vision of the Cocchio family in Campbellford.

Inspired by reports of indoor aquaculture in the United States, the Cocchios set out to become Ontario's first shrimp producers. They researched and toured operations in Maryland and Indiana, secured an aquaculture licence and worked with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to import feed and shrimp larvae.

They then converted one of their hog barns into a shrimp facility with 16 cement saltwater tanks. Although initial survival rates were low, the Cocchios fine-tuned their system and can now produce 136 kilograms of Pacific white shrimp a week. The new food product means new value chain opportunities for local industries, like equipment manufacturers, hatcheries, and processing and packaging facilities.

In homage to their pioneering roots in the province, the Cocchios named their company First Ontario Shrimp Inc.

### Northern Farming Proves Viable

Mike Visser dreamed of starting his own farm, but he couldn't afford the land prices in Southern Ontario. So in 2012 he moved to land just west of Thunder Bay, where he found an unsatisfied demand for locally produced meat and a plentiful supply of bull calves from the dairy farm sector.

He began with four calves, marketing his veal through the Thunder Bay Country Market, local stores, restaurants and farm gate sales. Now the operation has grown to 145 calves and also includes meat rabbits. Through his My Pride Farm, Visser is proving that cattle farming in Northern Ontario is both possible and profitable.

## **New Ice Cream Alternative**

Each week, Oat & Mill Ltd. located in Smiths Falls produces up to 300 litres of frozen oat-based ice cream alternative in a variety of flavours like peanut-butter-jelly-chocolate chunk, butter pecan cheesecake and creamy pumpkin spice. They started by selling out every weekly batch at farmers' markets, local events and online.

While many alternatives to dairy-based ice cream rely on ingredients like nuts, soy, or coconut, Oat & Mill uses Canadian-milled oats. In doing so, they have created a market for local growers and a healthier alternative for lactose-intolerant consumers. Oat & Mill is now expanding across Ontario in stores with their fun flavours and delicious take on oats.

## **A Truly Homemade Beer**

On their 232-year-old family farm just outside Kingston, Daniel and Ivan MacKinnon converted a century barn into a brewing facility, which opened in spring 2014.

The operation produces beet-infused ales, German wheat beers and wild peppermint stouts, all made with their own hops, wheat and malting barley. To their knowledge, no other commercial brewery in Canada grows the majority of its ingredients on site. And in fall 2016, they went even further to introduce a 100 per cent home-grown beer.

Local is cool: in its first full year MacKinnon Brothers Brewing Co. reached consumers through 16 LCBO stores and 100 draught taps.

## **Success Stories**

### **Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference**

*Eastern Ontario Event Builds Capacity*

Held each year since 2011, the Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference has grown into the region's premier annual local food event. It has

become a key forum for staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to engage with farmers, food processors, distributors, retailers, local-food organizations and local governments.

For the 2016 gathering, the ministry partnered with the cities of Belleville and Quinte West to host the two-day gathering in Belleville in November. With the theme of "Mission: Resilience", the agenda focused on climate change and other global issues presenting both challenges and opportunities for the agri-food sector.

The event featured a half-day tour of six local food producers and businesses by more than 50 participants, a trade show with over 20 exhibitors and a full-day conference with 178 delegates. In a follow-up survey, more than 95 per cent of those responding said they had made new connections at the event and 47 per cent indicated they are considering business expansion as a result of the conference experience.

### **Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network**

*Matching Investment Program Creates Production Opportunities*

In order to help local growers meet demand at farmers' markets, FoodShare Toronto is to launch a new matching funds program, thanks in part to a \$45,000 Local Food Investment Fund grant.

The goal of the program is to increase economic opportunities for local farmers and provide consumers with more product diversity. The program offers farmers \$500 to \$2,000 in matching funds to introduce new products, scale up, extend their growing season and improve quality and value.

To date, the program is helping 32 farms with projects such as installing a greenhouse, building a cheese aging room or constructing a commercial kitchen. The investments are expected to increase sales at farmers' markets by \$1.3 million over two years.

# Local Food – A World of Opportunity

Today's farmers are doing more with less. In 1900, a single Canadian farmer could feed 10 people. Today it is estimated that one farmer produces enough food for 120 people – and does it on less land and using less water and other resources.

The driving force behind this extraordinary achievement has been innovation throughout the value chain: innovation in technology both on the farm and in processing to boost productivity, and innovation in product development, distribution and marketing to respond to the needs of a changing society.

The fundamental purpose behind Ontario's Local Food Strategy is to help keep this innovation going. By increasing consumer awareness and appreciation of local food, as well improving access to local food and expanding the menu of local food choices on offer, the strategy will accelerate growth in Ontario's already thriving agri-food sector.

The stories presented in this report have highlighted some of the exciting opportunities sparked by grassroots efforts across Ontario to expand the consumption of food produced or made here.

Looking ahead, momentum behind the growing emphasis on World Foods can be expected to increase – bringing local food options more closely in line with consumer preferences in our diverse society. And our creative farmers and processors can be counted on to keep generating new specialized food options in response to evolving market demand. The Ontario government remains determined to sustain the right environment and provide the right support for our agri-food sector to help Ontarians *Bring Home the World*.



