



Food security is when people can easily obtain and afford safe, healthy and familiar food.

“Food secure” communities value local food and work to preserve and protect the land, water and other resources needed to produce food.

Focus on Food in Simcoe Muskoka

Local Food Procurement Policy

Local Food Procurement Policy gives direction to institutions such as government, colleges, school boards/schools and hospitals on the type of local food to buy and where to get it. It helps local farmers, and those who process and sell food, compete fairly.

What would local food procurement policy look like in our community?

- Community partners help develop local food procurement policies.
- Requests for proposals, tenders and food purchasing contracts give priority to local food producers and suppliers, which supports a more stable local market.
- Property taxes, land-use decisions and other laws and guidelines help local farmers, and those who process and sell food, to compete fairly with imported food.
- A central food distribution centre handles year-round demand for local foods in large amounts.
- Locally sourced foods are available and promoted in institutions throughout the community, helping employees, students, patients and customers use and appreciate local food.

Definitions

Food — in a food procurement policy context includes meats, poultry and seafood (fresh and frozen), dairy, fruits and vegetables (fresh), frozen, dry and canned foods, as well as mixed dishes made from any of these items and/or served by catering or banquet services.

Local food — means different things to different people. Food produced within a 170 km (100 mile) area is a common definition. Local food can also be defined as food that comes from your own community, or that is produced regionally, provincially or nationally.

Local food procurement policy has many benefits

- Keeping money spent on food in the community supports local farmers and others in the food sector by creating jobs, income and security.
- Makes healthy foods more available so people can meet their nutrition needs.
- Increases the number of vegetables and fruit people eat, which is important for a healthy diet.
- When people buy local and eat foods in season, it helps to reduce greenhouse gases and improve air quality.

Providing local food makes sense

- Local food procurement policies can support a food system that offers a safe and quality food supply now and into the future.
- Institutions that have a local food procurement policy make it easier for people to access local foods.
- Many Ontario produced foods are fairly easy to obtain locally, including fresh vegetables and fruit, dairy products, eggs, beef, and other meats.
- Some schools report better-tasting, fresher meals and increased sales when adding local food to menus.
- A growing number of Ontario municipal governments and institutions have or are planning to develop local food procurement policies including: County of Simcoe, Oro-Medonte Township, Town of Collingwood, City of Toronto, Town of Markham and the University of Toronto.
- The Ontario government is showing commitment to local food procurement through various initiatives including The Broader Public Sector Investment Fund grant program.

For more information, check out the following links:

- Local Food Plus www.localfoodplus.ca/
- Greenbeltfresh.ca www.greenbeltfresh.ca
- The Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy Project (USA) www.sustainablefoodpolicy.org/
- Simcoe County Farm Fresh Marketing Association www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca

Other factsheets available in this series:



Food Security is when people can easily obtain and afford safe, healthy and familiar food. Communities that are “food secure” value local food and work to preserve and protect the land, water and other resources needed to produce food.



Urban Agriculture is growing food in or around cities, towns or smaller communities. Some examples include backyard gardens, beehives, berry patches, shared gardens, container gardening, edible landscaping, greenhouse agriculture, herb gardens, urban farms, orchards and vineyards, rooftop gardens and schoolyard gardens.



A Sustainable Local Food System helps people to eat a healthy diet and provides fair payment to local farmers and those who process and sell food. It provides a safe and quality food supply now and into the future.

For more information or to access the other factsheets available in this series contact *Your Health Connection*.



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DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

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