



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

## Sustainable Local Food System

A **Sustainable Local Food System** allows 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.

### *What would a sustainable local food system look like in our community?*

- All levels of government have policies that support small and large farms (i.e. trade agreements, food regulations, farm subsidies, taxation, zoning, local food processing and distribution, and competition).
- Local government policies support farmers’ markets, community food centres, food incubator kitchens, community-shared agriculture, composting programs, etc.
- A central food distribution centre handles year-round demand for local foods in large amounts.
- Community partners develop a local Food Charter.
- Farmers earn a good living from agriculture.
- Local food is appreciated and used by residents, as well as in larger settings like government buildings, schools and hospitals.
- Community food programs (i.e. Good/Fresh Food Box, Farm-to-School) link people with farmers and support the use of local foods.
- Food maps show where local foods are grown and sold.
- Education and training help people choose local foods and prepare them in healthy ways.

### *A sustainable local food system 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.
- Links people and farmers.
- When people buy local and eat foods in season, it helps to reduce greenhouse gases and improve air quality.

### **Definitions**

**Food system** refers to all of the processes that are a part of providing food to people including the growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food and food packaging.

**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 described as foods that come from your own community, or are produced regionally, provincially or nationally.

**A community food centre** includes services such as emergency food, gardens, kitchens, food education and training programs (i.e. The Stop in Toronto).

**An incubator kitchen** is a shared-use commercial kitchen where local food entrepreneurs can prepare their food products in a fully licensed and certified kitchen, often with technical, business and other assistance.

**Community Shared Agriculture (CSA)** programs allow farmers to set an advance price for a “share” of their harvest so that people can buy shares at the beginning of the growing season.

**A Food Charter** is a document, developed by a group of partners that guides policy development that reflects a community’s food security priorities.

## ***Currently, our local food system is not sustainable***

- Large food companies and stores are able to offer lower food prices, making it very difficult for local farmers to compete, earn a decent living and keep their farms viable.
- Many farm families must rely on income off the farm.
- The average age of Simcoe Muskoka farmers is 50+ years, and many do not expect their children to work the farm in the future.
- Over the last 30 years, Ontario has lost about two million hectares of prime farm land to urban growth, and six Ontario fruit and vegetable processors have closed.
- Much of Ontario's prime farm land is used for food crops for export and for non-food operations (i.e. sod farms, Christmas tree farms, tobacco, corn for ethanol).

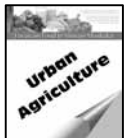
## ***For more information, check out the following links:***

- Food Partners Alliance Simcoe County [www.fpa.simcoe.ca](http://www.fpa.simcoe.ca)
- Simcoe County Farm Fresh Marketing Association [www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca](http://www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca)
- Savour Muskoka [www.savourmuskoka.com](http://www.savourmuskoka.com)
- Ontario Farm Animal Council [www.ofac.org](http://www.ofac.org)
- Ontario Farmland Trust [www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca](http://www.ontariofarmlandtrust.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.



**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.

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](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)

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