

The Future of Food and Farming: Moving Forward

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Final Report

By

Sasha Patterson & Christy Cook

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Supervising Professor: Chris Beyers

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The Future of Food and Farming: Moving Forward

Sasha Patterson and Christy Cook

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This research project has been a great learning opportunity for us and we look forward to follow up research and initiatives around local food in our community.

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Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of our research was to address the following questions: How to increase access to local food in Peterborough? What are the practical barriers to sourcing local foods in grocery stores? What are grocery store perceptions on the definition of local food?, and What are the employment figures for sourcing local food in grocery stores?

Methodology

The report will first outline the methodology set in place by the researchers and a rationale for this methodology as it relates to the theme of the study. Semi-standardized interviews were conducted over the phone with the managers and owners of grocery stores in Peterborough. Five owners and managers, which represented six medium stores, were interviewed, as well as owners and managers of one small and one large grocery store. An extensive literature review was also conducted into local food sourcing in grocery stores.

The report will then outline the major findings using each question in the interview to guide the findings.

Major findings include the following:

- Barriers for sourcing local foods for grocery stores include:
 - Seasonal and geographic challenges
 - Food and safety standards
 - The need to purchase in large volumes
 - The cost-competitiveness of local foods
 - Pre-existing supply contracts
 - Lack of a local food distribution centre
- Most grocery stores perceive the definition of *local* to apply to Ontario, whereas consumers perceive *local* as regional or within 100 km.
- There is no consensus among the grocery stores about the demand for local foods. Most rate the demand very high, but some rate the demand low.
- More barriers were identified for sourcing local meat and eggs than for any other food products.

- No grocery store had a formal policy on sourcing local foods, although most grocery stores carried out informal buy local campaigns.
- Most grocery store owners and managers deal directly with farmers in local food partnerships.
- There is no consensus amongst the grocery stores interviewed about local foods being cost-competitive

Recommendations

The report then outlines some recommendations for a range of different actors to participate in mitigating the barriers to sourcing local foods in grocery stores in the Peterborough County. Based on the findings and our literature review, we have generated recommendations to address the barriers grocery stores face in sourcing local foods, as well as recommendations for future research. A brief list of our recommendations can be found in appendix C.

The report directs recommendations towards the following actors:

- Grocery stores
- Consumers
- Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments
- Transition Town Peterborough
- Farms at Work
- The Peterborough Social Planning Council
- Other community organizations

The report also includes recommendations to address the following areas:

- Grocery store generated barriers to sourcing
- Consumer education and awareness
- Supplier education and training
- Local Food Charter
- Local Food Expo
- Future Research

Audience

This report has been prepared to guide the actions of *Transition Town*, *Farms at Work*, and the *Peterborough Social Planning Council*, as well as to provide direction for the broader local food movement in Peterborough. Other actors that may find this report of interest are government agencies, grocery stores, consumers and other organizations involved in the local food movement in Peterborough.

Limitations

Time constraints and logistical issues limited our research greatly. As a result, our sample size of grocery stores interviewed is not large enough to make generalizations about all grocery stores in Peterborough. Most grocery stores interviewed were medium size grocery stores. Therefore, comments made by small and large grocery stores may not represent all small and large grocery stores in Peterborough.

Conclusions

The report ends with a brief summary of the purpose of the research, and outlines its major findings and limitations. It then suggests that further research be undertaken in the area of local food sourcing in the Peterborough County.

Introduction

The Future of Food and Farming Project: Moving Forward was proposed by a combination of three host organizations: the *Peterborough Social Planning Council*, *Transition Town Peterborough* and *Farms at Work*.

Host Organizations

The mission of the *Peterborough Social Planning Council* is to facilitate active, broad-based citizen participation in shaping healthy communities in Peterborough City and County. They act as a catalyst for positive, sustainable social change, and promote the understanding that social justice is in everyone's interest. Through research, community development, and public education, the *Peterborough Social Planning Council* works to build a strong community.

The vision of *Transition Town Peterborough* is to build community resilience in the face of three converging predicaments of climate change, resource depletion and global economic contraction. Their focus is on economic localization that provides adaptation to all three predicaments and builds community resilience.

The mission of *Farms at Work* is to promote healthy and active farmlands within the region of east-central Ontario. They are engaged in attracting and supporting farmers new to the region, working to ensure access to local training opportunities, engaging of farmland owners who are non-farmers in the active use of their land for agricultural purposes, and creating partnerships and outreach that result in on-the-ground farm stewardship projects in the region.

Purpose

Our research looks at the barriers that grocery stores face in sourcing local products, and their perceptions on the meaning of *local*.

The purpose of this project was to learn more about the following:

- How to increase access to local food
- Practical barriers to implementing “buy local” strategies at grocery stores
- Grocery store perceptions on the definition of *local*
- Baseline figures for employment in the local food retail sector

The project involved interviewing grocery stores about their ability to buy/sell local food, their policies on buying/selling local food, their perception of the definition of *local*, and their employment figures associated with local food procurement. A literature review was also included.

Context

Our project builds on a community education and consultation process that commenced in 2011. The *Peterborough Social Planning Council* staff, with the help of staff at *Farms at Work*, designed a survey on attitudes towards buying local food. The main goal was to gauge the public's purchasing habits and attitudes toward local foods in order to advance policy development efforts in this area. This survey had 538 responses, gathered in only 16 days (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2013).

The survey respondents identified lack of access at local grocery stores as the major perceived barrier to increased access to local food (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2013).

The survey addressed topics to the public such as;

- how they define local foods (in terms of distance travelled and region of production)
- how they see their role in the local food economy (consumer, producer, distributor, etc.)
- their access to and the availability of local foods from different food retailers
- demographic characteristics

The top five things that respondents identified that would make them more likely to purchase local foods are: 1) availability of local food in local stores, 2) wider availability of frozen local food products in winter, 3) wider availability of local food in big box stores or large grocery chains, 4) lower prices, and 5) clearer, more specific labeling (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2013).

The following is a quotation from the survey analysis, highlighting the contentious nature of issues surrounding local food:

“The issue of having more local products in big box stores and large grocery chains was very contentious. Many said this would make it easier to access local foods, giving people more locations from which to buy local foods at stores that are open daily. On the other hand, many expressed strong opposition to this idea in the comments section, arguing that large corporate retailers would drive down prices for farmers and even put a downward pressure on quality. The needs to balance here are these of convenient and affordable access to local foods, adequate compensation for farmers, ensuring sustainable farming practices, and quality assurance.” (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2013).

Literature Review

In addition to the interviews with grocery store owners and managers, an extensive literature review was undertaken in order to substantiate and embed our findings into the broader context of local food sourcing in Ontario. This section will outline some of the major findings within the literature and attempt to bring about a better understanding of the local food movement in Ontario.

Benefits of Sourcing Local

There are numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits of supporting local food. However, these benefits have been discussed extensively in other literature, and are not the topic of our report. The economic benefits of purchasing or selling local foods are based on the local-multiplier effect. The multiplier effect is based on the logic that the more money that is made by local producers, the more money they have to spend at local businesses and employ other community members (McLeod & Scott, 2007).

Perceptions on Local

The meaning of the word *local* is highly contested, and differs from person to person, as well as across time and space. *Local* can be defined by regional, municipal, provincial and national boundaries (Egbers & Markells, 2009). There have been dramatic shifts in the definition of local over the last decade in Canada. In 2009, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) defined local food as food originating within fifty kilometers of the place it is sold (Egbers & Markells, 2009). By 2013, the CFIA had broadened their definition of local to include foods that are produced within the province in which they are sold, or within fifty kilometers of their province of origin (Babington, 2013). In addition to divergent definitions as to the *boundaries* that define local food, there are also differences in what *activities* define local. For example, the Canadian Food and Drug Regulation Act defines local as not only produced in a local government unit, but as including foods that have been manufactured or packaged in that area (Egbers & Markells, 2009).

The Local Food Act of Ontario defines local food as:

- a) Produced or harvested in Ontario, including forest or freshwater food
- b) Food and beverages processed in Ontario if they include ingredients produced or harvested in Ontario (Wynne, 2013)

One of the main goals of the Local Food Act is to increase access to local food. The act states that Ontario is home to robust and resilient local food systems (Wynne, 2013). It states that the province provides adequate and favourable growing conditions for highly productive agriculture (Wynne, 2013).

These conditions allow for local food systems to develop in cities and towns around the province and therefore reflect the diversity of those communities.

“The variety of food produced, harvested and made in Ontario reflects the diversity of its people. This variety is something to be celebrated, cherished and supported. Strong local and regional food systems deliver economic benefits and build strong communities.” (Wynne, 2013).

The Act recommends that in order to maintain and grow these diverse local food systems it is necessary to have a collaborative approach. An important part of this approach includes working closely with public sector organizations, partners in the industry and public citizens (Wynne, 2013). This report will attempt to connect the efforts, perceptions, challenges and barriers of these various groups represented in Peterborough City and County. The Act also suggests goal and target setting to support local food systems in Ontario (Wynne, 2013). The present report will not suggest goals but rather recommendations aimed at the various actors within the local food movement in Peterborough City and County.

The issue of local employment is also involved in perceptions of local. This will be discussed further in the analysis section, as grocery stores often listed products produced by local vendors but made with ingredients that were not local under the local category. As a result of the multitude of shifting definitions of local food, our research sought to examine if grocery stores in Peterborough had a consistent definition of local food and to see how that differed from consumer definitions.

Broad Context

This report examines the role of grocery stores in particular within the local food sector. In order to fully understand the barriers that grocery stores face with sourcing local food, it is first necessary to understand the organizational structure of most grocery stores in Canada. (see figure 1 below)



Figure 1: Flow chart illustrating organizational structure of food sourcing in grocery stores

Food usually travels from the producer to the distributor or sometimes wholesaler, then to the processor, another distributor, then to the retailer, and finally to the consumer. Some argue that with each extra step in this process the quality of the product decreases while the amount of resources needed to sustain the process increases. An argument for local food sourcing is then presented as a measure in decreasing the number of hands the food travels through, thereby linking the producer straight to the retailer and then to the consumer. This is demonstrated in figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Flow chart illustrating an alternative organizational structure for local food sourcing in grocery stores

A farmers' market or community food share model goes one step further to eliminate the middlemen altogether and sell directly from the producer to the consumer.

Canadian Context

The food system has changed significantly over the past decade with the introduction of new technology and broadening of global transportation and trading of goods (The Supermarket Tour, 2010). This has meant major changes in the way consumers procure food, how food gets from farm to table, the distance that food travels before being consumed, and the relationships that we have with the food we eat. Recent trends in a one-stop shop model for grocery stores has significantly changed the ways we procure food and the relationships that we build with that food and the people who grow it (The Supermarket Tour, 2010). In this sense, a move towards more local food in grocery stores does not address the loss of relationship between consumer and farmer.

In Canada, grocery stores are one of the most common places that people acquire food (Egbers & Markells, 2009). Grocery stores make up approximately fifteen percent of the local food initiatives in Canada, and some have developed sourcing policies to increase their purchase of local foods (Egbers & Markells, 2009).

Ontario Context

Governments and politicians are also seeing the importance of promoting local foods. On November 5, 2013, the Ontario government passed a Local Food Bill, in part to make local food more available within the province (Ontario Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 2013). This represents a hopeful prospect, as many government regulations pose barriers to increasing local food in grocery stores.

Some grocery stores in Ontario have even become part of the local food movement, beyond merely carrying local produce. An interesting shift has occurred within Ontario for stores affiliated with Sobeys. In 2009, five Sobeys franchises in southwestern Ontario chose to separate from the Sobeys Corporation and join with four other former franchises to form an independent Hometown Grocers Co-Operative (Crawford, 2009). Their reasons for the separation centered on the challenges they were facing from corporate policies preventing the owners from buying more local products (Crawford, 2009). For example, Sobeys' policy stipulates that franchises may only buy federally-inspected meat, which mostly comes from large corporations, such as Maple Leaf, Cargill and Tyson (Crawford, 2009). This prevents Sobeys grocery stores from supporting local or even Ontario producers of meat. This barrier to sourcing local meat also applies to Metro and Loblaws (Crawford, 2009).

Major Grocery Store Chains and Local Sourcing

A common theme across the websites of Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys, is that they claim to value local foods *if and only if* the safety, quality, availability and value are right for the customers.

According to Sobeys Sustainability document, they are continually working to expand their assortment of locally grown or produced products (Sobeys Inc., n.d.). Boasting that they purchase hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Ontario grown or raised products every year, Sobeys claims to be developing a sourcing strategy that will "build more local opportunities" (Sobeys Inc., n.d.). However, the case of franchise separatism, illustrated previously, suggests that the ability of Sobeys franchises to purchase local may be less than Sobeys is boasting. Their sustainability document states, "we buy local first when we can be sure that our food safety and quality standards are met and the supply is consistent, reliable and competitively priced" (Sobeys Inc., n.d.). These various requirements are all considerable barriers to sourcing local, but this is downplayed by Sobeys.

Loblaws mirrors a similar sentiment to Sobeys about sourcing local foods. The Loblaws' website refers to a "Canadian-first" commitment, which places a priority on Canadian, regional and local products when "safety, quality, availability and value are right for the customers" (Loblaws, 2012). They also boast that in 2011, thirty percent of Loblaws purchases were Canadian (Loblaws, 2012).

Metro's Corporate Social Responsibility document also expresses a similar commitment to sourcing local foods if an extensive list of requirements is first met. Metro claims to make it a corporate responsibility goal to source local Ontario foods as a way of strengthening communities (Metro, 2012). Metro will choose Ontario or Quebec products when quality is equal to or superior to competing products, when supply is regular and reliable, and when costs are competitive (Metro, 2012). As the analysis and findings section will discuss, meeting all these requirements is extremely difficult for many local food vendors.

Barriers to Sourcing Local

There have been numerous barriers to buying local food identified from a consumer perspective. These barriers include cost, availability, choice, convenience, time, and accessibility (Ward, n.d.). The past Future of Food and Farming Report concludes that consumers in the Peterborough area identify increased availability of local foods at local stores, big box stores and large grocery stores to be a factor that would increase their likelihood of purchasing and consuming local foods (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2013). However, little research has focused on identifying the barriers to sourcing local food identified from a grocery store perspective.

For the purpose of our research, we focused on grocery stores, which can refer to a supermarket chain, independent stores, corner stores, or natural food stores (Masi, Schaller & Schuman, 2010). Grocery stores are numerous in Peterborough, many are open every day of the week, many have long hours, and they are able to supply food on a consistent and reliable basis – making them appealing and accessible to many consumers. Nonetheless, there are many barriers to increasing the availability of local foods sold in grocery stores.

One challenge in sourcing local food is the seasonal pattern of local food production, which is a supply problem (Egbers & Markells, 2009). In the Peterborough climate, there is much less food produced during the winter months of the year. Many gardens and farms around the Peterborough area don't have the production capacity to supply a grocery store for twelve months of the year (Masi, Schaller & Schuman, 2010).

Another challenge for grocery stores is their centralized food distribution system (Egbers & Markells, 2009). There are five main grocery store chains in Canada. They are Loblaws, Sobeys, Metro, Canada Safeway, A&P (The Supermarket Tour, 2010). Each of these brands have their own food distribution warehouses set up in centralized locations with trucks that deliver vast amounts of food to many grocery stores at a time. Stores that are franchises in these large chains are required to order a certain amount of food from these distribution centres. This means that each individual grocery store has their food delivered in one truck, once every few days. This makes logistical sense for the stores. However, when dealing with local vendors, there can be many trucks arriving at different times with various different products.

Additional Questions

Although our research focused on identifying the barriers to sourcing local foods for grocery stores in Peterborough, it is important to question and critique whether grocery stores are the most effective vehicles to support the local food movement. Is the increase in local foods in grocery-store chains a threat to the integrity of farmers markets or the slow food movement? Subsequently, can the local food

movement mesh with the grocery store model? The grocery store model has several disadvantages in comparison to retail outlets such as farmers markets, where there is a direct interaction between producer and consumer. Grocery stores sever the link between consumers and producers, create more food waste, and cannot allow producers to receive the full retail price.

With these findings in mind, the report will now outline the methodology and findings of our own research into this subject in Peterborough City and County. The above discussion provides the context for the rest of the report.

Methodologies

An extensive literature review was undertaken, including review of informal grocery store policies on local food or sustainability. This literature view was used in combination with interviews which we conducted with grocery store owners and managers.

Interviews

When the project was initially conceived, we considered using both interviews and questionnaires to conduct the research. After much reflection with our hosts regarding the type of information we were seeking, along with the logistics of acquisition, it was decided that questionnaires would not have a high enough response rate to make them effective. As Michael Patton, a prominent evaluation scholar, states, questionnaires generate more worthless data than any other evaluation technique (Patton, 1982). Questionnaires are useful for demographic and quantifiable information. However, the information needed for the present research would be better obtained through interviews.

After an inventory of all the grocery stores operating in Peterborough City and County, a combination of emails and phone calls were used to attempt contacting at least 30 stores. We conducted seven phone interviews, representing eight grocery stores in Peterborough City and County. Our final sample of eight grocery stores translates to a sampling success rate of 26.7 %. We decided to conduct the interviews over the phone and not in person, as there were time and geographic limitations. Phone interviews were a barrier for one grocery store that could only participate in face-to-face interviews. In this case, issues concerning the legitimacy of phone interviews were alluded to. Having to conduct the interviews over the phone was a limitation to the research, as people are more likely to commit to interviews if contacted in person.

Small, medium and large grocery stores were all represented in our interviews. Small stores include independently owned and non-franchised grocers, medium include independently owned franchises, and large include national brands. The research was set up in this way to distinguish whether there were differences as to which barriers to sourcing local food affected each size of grocery store, and to what extent. We did not pursue an investigation into dry foods such as grains, oats, and wheat, and we only included stores that carry produce. The research targeted stores in the city of Peterborough, as well as in the county of Peterborough. The interviewees were either the owner or the manager of the store. The interviews ranged between 10 and 35 minutes, and were on average 20 minutes. We contacted all grocery stores in Peterborough County over a two-week period, and conducted interviews with all willing participants. The interview process consisted of one researcher asking the questions to the interviewee, while the other transcribed the answers and recorded the interview on an electronic recording program. When both researchers were not present, the questions were asked and recorded by one person and transcribed at a later date.

Pilot Interview

One pilot interview was conducted with a medium grocery store in Peterborough. This pilot interview helped to inform the structure of the interview for other grocery stores and the following research. Much of the feedback was very positive from the pilot interview and a few small changes were made to the wording and order of the questions. The changes did not affect the analysis of the results, and so the pilot interview was still a usable source of data. The purpose of the pilot was to identify any poorly worded questions and to ensure the questions elicited the anticipated responses.

Sampling Technique

An extensive list of grocery stores operating in the City and County of Peterborough was generated at the beginning of the research project. This list included over 30 grocery stores that sold fresh produce, including dairy and meat products. Grocery stores were phoned during work hours on a weekday in an attempt to elicit the best response rate. Interviews were set up as a result of these initial phone calls.

The interviews were not conducted randomly, and there may have been a bias in which types of stores the phone calls were able to secure interviews with. Most of the sample group falls into the category of medium sized grocery store. This may be because there are simply more middle-sized grocery stores selling produce in the Peterborough County than those of the other categories. But more likely, it is a result of the relative availability of middle-sized stores to be interviewed. Four stores in the large grocery store category declined to participate in the interviews. Their given reasons included the following: their brand had a strict policy on participating in interviews, it would have to be okayed through the Public Relations department or at the headquarter level and the time this would take would extend beyond the project deadline, they had a previous bad experience of interviews backfiring on them, or they could not participate over the phone due to legal issues. With many of the small stores, it was difficult to be put in direct contact with the owners, as they were very busy or were not in the store. One small store politely declined to be interviewed as they felt they did not carry enough fresh produce to make their interview useful for our purposes. As a result, six of the eight stores represented were medium size, although we had representation from one small store and one large store.

There were also many stores that were initially inclined to do an interview but then did not respond to subsequent emails and phone calls. Some stores simply did not answer their phones.

Upon receiving agreement to participate from the grocery store owners/managers, an email was sent with a description and the purpose of the project, a consent form, and a copy of the interview questions. The questions were provided beforehand to improve the quality and usefulness of the responses. Having the questions beforehand allowed the interviewees to prepare well thought out answers. Some

interviewees were more prepared for the questions than others, having had less time to look them over, due to their own personal and professional time constraints.

Quantitative versus Qualitative Approach

Semi-standardized interviews were conducted with predetermined questions and topics, but with the freedom to digress and probe (Berg, 2001). The questions were determined using a thorough literature review and with input from the host organizations who have a wealth of knowledge in this area. Many interview questions were open-ended and allowed for elaboration. However, through our analysis we were able to “count” results, and derive some quantitative results from qualitative responses (Silverman, 1993).

The previous Future of Food and Farming survey was designed to gather quantitative data, which was appropriate for the nature of the research (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2013). The goal of the current research was not to reaffirm what was already known from previous surveys conducted in this area, but rather to gain new insights from the grocery store perspective.

We discussed with our host organizations the content and format of the interviews at length. The advantages and disadvantages of simple, short interviews and longer versus more complex interviews were weighed. Acquisition of qualitative and quantitative data in the interview format was also explored. One of the host organizations desired interview questions that would elicit easily quantifiable answers in order to make comparisons to the earlier Future of Food and Farming consumer survey, and to make results easier to analyze. However, there are several drawbacks of quantitative methods. This research is not exploring whether or not there are barriers or how many barriers there are but rather what those barriers are from the perspective of the grocery stores. We believe that quantitative data would not have given enough detail in which to draw meaningful analysis. Additionally, our sample size was not large enough to be able to make generalizations about the validity of quantitative findings.

Our questions enabled us to gather data about the experiences, perceptions, feelings, opinions and knowledge of grocery store owners and managers. The sequence of our questions generally progressed from simple to more complex questions, and ended with an opportunity for the interviewees to append or elaborate on any issue. Effort was made to avoid combining two issues into one question, and to keep questions concise.

Instead of asking the grocery stores to rank which barriers are the most significant, they were asked to elaborate on each barrier. The barriers have already been established in literature. This research is about gaining new insights on these barriers in the Peterborough County.

Audience

We believe this research is useful for grocery stores in Peterborough City and County as well as the producers who supply these stores with produce. It is also useful to the organizations in the area working on issues of food security, agriculture, and the local food movement. With this audience in mind, our research was conducted with the purpose of being judged on its relevance, clarity, utility and applicability (Patton, 1990).

Data Analysis

The data received from the interviews was analyzed question by question and cross-analysis was conducted between all the interviews. Interview analysis was interspersed with literature review analysis. With the semi-structured format of the interview, some questions were answered within other questions, leading us to cross-analyze within each interview. We looked for differences in responses between the three sizes of grocery stores.

Inductive analysis was used in much of the research. In particular, the interviews attempted to elicit indigenous phrases and terms used by the interviewees for the question about defining local. This was done to avoid imposing researcher definitions or the definitions generated by consumers on the grocery store owners and managers. Certain data was also analyzed against data collected from the previous Future of Food and Farming report, in particular data surrounding the definition of local (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2013).

Our analysis identified recurring themes and patterns in responses, but we also made special note of unique responses and contradictory responses. Data pertaining to the barriers was counted to determine what the most frequent and important barriers were.

The interviews also asked of grocery stores to identify ways in which to reduce the barriers to procuring local food. They identified particular strategies they had used or heard of. From these responses, and in combination with literature review, recommendations were generated.

Analysis and Findings

Major findings include the following:

- Barriers for sourcing local foods for grocery stores include:
 - Seasonal and geographic challenges
 - Food and safety standards
 - The need to purchase in large volumes
 - The cost-competitiveness of local foods
 - Pre-existing supply contracts
 - Lack of a local food distribution centre
- Most grocery stores perceive the definition of local to apply to Ontario, whereas consumers perceive local as regional or within 100 km.
- There is no consensus among the grocery stores about the demand for local foods. Most rate the demand very high, but some rate the demand low.
- More barriers were identified for sourcing local meat and eggs than for any other food products.
- No grocery store had a formal policy on sourcing local foods, although most grocery stores carried out informal buy local campaigns.
- Most grocery store owners and managers deal directly with farmers in local food partnerships.
- There is no consensus amongst the grocery stores interviewed about local foods being cost-competitive

The past Future of Food and Farming reports found that the Peterborough public defined *local* most commonly as; “grown in my region, grown within 100 km, grown in Ontario, grown in my county, and grown on a family farm” (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2013)

This report asked grocery stores to define *local*. Instead of using these pre-existing categories, the interview allowed for respondents to generate their own categories.

Many grocery stores that we interviewed had multiple definitions of *local*. Most of the stores agreed that local is defined as *grown in Ontario*. Most of the stores distinguished between their brand’s

definition of local and their personal or store definition of local. In most cases the brands defined local as *grown in Ontario* while the individual store owners and managers mostly defined local as pertaining to a smaller area.

Table 1: Table tallying grocery store responses on perceptions of the definition of local

Definition	Grown in Ontario	Grown/Processed in Canada	100 miles	Peterborough area
# of responses	5	2	1	3

There were no significant differences between the perceptions of managers and owners from different grocery store sizes.

In general, the grocery stores were more likely to define a larger area as local than the consumers were. However, they seemed to generate very similar categories to the consumer survey which was conducted. Many grocery stores expanded on the partnerships that they have with producers in the Peterborough Area. One store noted that the geographical expanse of local has been growing in recent years as transportation becomes easier and larger corporations have taken over the food industry.

“Back then, when I first started, I would have defined local as purely from my immediate trading area. Now, as the years progress, and seeing the limitations of the area, I would define local as grown within Ontario. Our customers recognize and consider Ontario as local. For purely local, we do try to focus on supporting our neighbours, and the community... but mainly Ontario.”

Grocery stores were asked about the demand for local food from their customers. Their responses differed widely with some commenting that there was a strong and significant demand for local food, to others saying that there was little to no demand at all.

Table 2: Table tallying grocery store responses on customer demand for local food

Degree of Demand	Strong demand	Demand	Declining Demand	No Demand
# of responses	3	2	1	1

One medium store emphasized the strong farming community around Peterborough and the vibrant presence of the farmers market. They elaborated by explaining that when customers buy their groceries at the market on Saturday and get to know the farmers, they like to see those same names in the store throughout the week. People demand to see where their food is sourced. This only pertains to produce which is extremely seasonal in this part of the country. Another medium store mentioned that because

non-local foods are available year-round, people are not demanding the local seasonal products as much. This suggests that a lot of consumers have lost touch with the seasonality of produce. In fact three stores brought up the fact that the demand for local is usually only for produce or unique products, but not for all food.

Two stores responded that the demand for local food was declining or non-existent. These responses indicated that there has been a decrease in demand for local food compared to several generations ago when access to food from other places was not as widely available. However, another response argued that demand for local has in fact increased in the past five years. This could be a result of the recent *Buy Local* campaigns that exist across the province. As consumers become more and more detached from the growers of their food through the long chain of middle men in the global food system, a trend towards farmers markets and farm to table initiatives has increased significantly. However, the sample size for this research is not large enough to extrapolate a clear understanding of the demand for local food from customers.

There was a wide range of responses to this question. Larger and some medium stores were more likely to perceive demand from customers for local food. The demographic of customer for each store could be explored further. The grocery stores catering to a higher-middle class customer base potentially could express a higher demand from customers for local foods, because this demographic can afford to pay higher prices for local foods. The rural/urban geographic divide of the stores might also contribute to the varying responses for this question.

“There is definitely a strong demand for local food from customers, because there is a strong farming community in Peterborough and the surrounding area, with a very vibrant downtown weekly farmers market, which does very well. If I can get some of those local products from those farmers in my store to sell the rest of the week, customers definitely recognize these growers and those names and those producers when they’re in the store. People are demanding to see where something is sourced.” (large grocery store)

“There’s not a big call for it. There really isn’t. People just don’t come pounding on my door. There’s just not the demand for local, unless it’s something that phenomenally is unique.” (medium grocery store)

Grocery stores were asked what local foods they carried. Below are the most common responses.

Table 3: Table inventorying local foods carried by interviewed grocery stores

Categories	Specific Products
Vegetables	Potatoes Corn Tomatoes Peppers Cucumbers Squash Cabbage Beans Peas Pumpkins
Fruit	Grapes Pears Apples Strawberries Raspberries Other berries
Condiments	Maple syrup Honey
Meat	Beef (Alberta) Chicken (Ontario, Quebec) Pork (Ontario, Quebec)
Dairy	Eggs (Ontario) Cow Milk (Kawartha Dairy) Goat Milk Ice Cream Butter Cheese Yogurt
Preserves	Jellies Jams
Seafood	-
Baked Goods	Butter tarts Bread Bread baked in store Pies
Other	Flowers Bee pollen Curry Flour

Most stores carried many local vegetables and fruit when they were in season. They commented that fresh produce is the most available and easiest local product to source. All grocery stores carried at least some local foods and there were no major differences with the size of store. This list of products was generated fairly quickly by grocery store owners and managers and does not represent a detailed inventory of the local foods that stores actually carry.

It is important to disaggregate the types of local foods into different categories, in order to identify which categories face the biggest barriers.

Meat and eggs were repeatedly referred to as “complicated” to source. The quota system for eggs was cited commonly as a large barrier to sourcing local. Burnbrae Farms located in Lyn, Ontario was consistently mentioned as the main source of eggs for many of the stores. This was considered a local product. However, Burnbrae collects eggs from farmers all across the country, which contradicts the definition of local as being Ontario-produced.

The requirement that meat must be federally inspected was cited commonly as a large barrier to sourcing local. Beef was for the most part the only meat that could be considered local, and local was defined as from Ontario or Canada in this case. Many stores extended their geographical definition of *local* when it came to meat, and they claimed that Alberta beef is the most local they could procure. Many stores noted that the restrictions and regulations for meat have become significantly stricter following the 2008 Maple Leaf listeria outbreak. The storeowners did not seem optimistic about any prospective flexibility within the regulations.

Milk and dairy products also posed challenges to the grocery stores interviewed. Five stores identified *Kawartha Dairy* products as their first choice for sourcing. Many had succeeded in ensuring that both *Kawartha Dairy* and other brands, such as *Natrel* and *Sealtest*, were present in the store. This is a unique situation in the Kawartha region however, where grocery stores have been successful at negotiating new terms to include local dairy products in larger volumes and consistently.

Grocery stores were asked to identify any local food campaigns that they participated in and what the consumer reception has been to these campaigns. The most common responses are discussed below.

Many of the medium sized grocery stores responded that they follow the corporate campaigns for local food and that they follow the advertising and marketing created by the brand which dictates what product can go on sale or be featured in the flyers. However, many grocery store owners said that they often go beyond the corporate campaigns and do their own informal local food initiatives. Seven out of eight stores responded that they participated in informal local food marketing campaigns. This included things like marketing displays and flyers, product sampling, advertising through radio and print, innovative product labelling including information on specific growers, having an outdoor market in the summer, and supporting local initiatives with Food Not Bombs and Trent students. A few stores also mentioned that they participated in a contest between franchises, which compared the signage of local

food in numerous stores around Peterborough County.

This would seem to suggest that marketing strategies might be adapting to the level of demand for local food. An analysis of the customer demographic for each store would be an interesting area of further study.

“We kind of go above and beyond [our brand’s] campaigns, we find that [it] doesn’t really promote it as much as it might appear, there is a lot of paper work and stuff behind the scenes in order to participate, there has to be a vendor form filled out for every vendor to provide local products outside of their list. We go outside of this and source our own stuff.” (medium grocery store)

Grocery stores were asked to describe the partnerships that they had with local producers.

Six out of seven owners/managers said that they dealt directly with farmers on local food partnerships. There were a number of different strategies that they identified for ordering, transporting, and selling local products. Some owners/managers met with local producers annually to discuss what products they could provide for the following year, while others dealt with local producers on a week-to-week or seasonal basis. One store set up contracts with farmers to plant a certain number of fields of a particular product. All of the owners/managers were able to talk about specific partnerships with growers around the Peterborough County.

Methods of transportation also varied widely. Some stores said that they would go to the farms to pick up produce while others stated that farmers would come to them with produce.

Owners/managers also expressed that they had positive relationships with the farmers and that maintaining those relationships was really important to their businesses. They expressed that even though it was easier to order products through the warehouse, they thought it was very important to maintain these partnerships that they had established in person.

“It is farm to store. We’ve had a lot of different ones throughout the years. We contact the farm, they will let us know when the product is ready to come to market. They actually deliver to the store direct from the farm so there’s no middle man. A lot of the produce comes directly, doesn’t go through the warehouse.” (medium grocery store)

On the other hand, one store responded that they didn’t have any partnerships with growers themselves. They went on to explain that a salesman comes to their store and they can order products from the list that the salesman provides. On this list there are a few local producers.

There wasn’t a significant difference in the responses between small, medium, and large stores in terms of local partnerships. Many stores mentioned the same local partnerships, such as sourcing produce from Millbrook, Bowmanville, and the Kawarthas, fruit from the Niagara region, honey from Havelock,

bread from Sticklings, and butter tarts from The Butter Tart Factory.

“It takes time to build partnerships with farmers, they have to recognize you as a good customer, has to be worth while for the farmer.” (medium grocery store)

Grocery stores were asked about public and formal policies on local food.

There was consensus among all grocery stores interviewed that they had no public or formal policy on sourcing local food. However, as mentioned earlier in this report, almost all grocery stores carried out *informal* buy-local campaigns. Reasons given for not having a formal policy included that they are small and can therefore make the rules, the manager directs the employees to buy local, they have personal reasons to support local, they do the best they can, local suppliers reach out to them instead, and not having a formal policy allows them more flexibility and adaptability. The overall tone of the answers indicated that the interviewees did not see the lack of a formal local policy to be a significant factor in sourcing local. They implied that a formal policy was not necessary, as they have other reasons to buy local.

Several stores commented on the fact that they had franchise agreements that stipulated they purchase a set amount from their corporate franchisor. This amount was usually estimated to be between eighty and eighty five percent, and even as high as ninety-nine percent in one case. This indicates that franchise agreements are a large barrier to sourcing local food.

An interesting note is that one interviewee explained that their franchise allowed them to carry local if the product was sourced within thirty to forty kilometers of the store. This radius was given due to the fact that customers are commonly drawn within that radius and will be more likely to recognize the local producer. If sourcing outside of this radius, it was implied that the franchisor was not as encouraging of buying local.

“We have personal interests in supporting local businesses and community. You want to support local businesses because you want to keep employment in the area, because that is what helps your community kind of stay intact. Otherwise, it’s going to erode away and you will end up with vacant buildings and just kind of a desolate town.”(medium grocery store)

Grocery stores were asked to estimate the amount of employment time devoted towards sourcing local foods.

The estimated time devoted to sourcing and procuring local foods was 80-120 hours/month for the large store, 45 hours/month on average for the medium stores, and 12 hours/month for the small store.

These estimates of time were in reference to the spring and summer months, when more local products are available. In winter, only a few hours a month were estimated to be devoted to coordinating with farmers.

The time spent during the summer and spring included activities such as talking on the phone and in person to suppliers, writing orders, driving and unloading products. One interviewee commented that the extra time and labour spent on sourcing local food would hopefully be offset by the benefits of having local foods in the store.

One of the purposes of this project was to learn about baseline employment figures in the local food retail sector. Given that grocery stores are not the only retailers of local food, these interviews cannot be used to make generalizations about the entire retail sector.

“Ordering from the warehouse is pretty quick and easy. It’s just a matter of scanning items out of the book or off the shelf and sending them to the warehouse. But local food requires phoning this person. Make sure the back room is cleaned up for multiple deliveries. If it rained and the pickers couldn’t pick, I will have to buy double tomorrow. More planning, more trucks to unload, more man power, more hours, more cost at store level. But we hope that having local product in the store will offset the cost.” (medium grocery store)

Grocery stores were asked to describe the barriers to sourcing local foods. The responses have been broken into five categories below.

Seasonal and geographic barriers posed a large challenge in sourcing local foods for all the interviewees. These barriers were experienced with all sizes of grocery stores. Interviewees elaborated on what these barriers entailed. Seasonal barriers refer to the short growing season in Ontario, which limits the supply of local products, especially produce. Geographic barriers refer to the Ontario growing climate, which limits the variety of products available, as well as logistical problems in transporting local products.

“An issue we have in our part of the world, as much as supporting local is extremely important, is our weather isn’t consistent, produce depends on weather. For example, we’ve had years with next to no local strawberries.” (medium grocery store)

Food safety and quality standards posed a challenge to sourcing local foods for all store sizes but to differing degrees. The small store expressed that these standards weren’t really an issue and that the local products that they carry have always been of very high quality. However, they did mention that they are not able to sell local eggs because of health concerns.

The medium and large stores had issues with their specific brands and the provincial health standards.

The medium grocery stores seemed to find ways to work around these regulations but the large store was not able to and thus only sells products that have been pre-approved by their brand.

“I would love to be able to go to the farmers market, but I’d ask have you got this, have you got that, and they’d look at me like no, we just picked them yesterday. And I’d say sorry, I can’t chance it. Because if anything happened at my store, that would be the end of me, I’d be gone in a heart beat.” (large grocery store)

The need to purchase in large volumes posed a challenge to sourcing local foods for all stores sizes.

The small store indicated that they were pressured to buy a minimum volume of product in order to have lower shipping costs. Medium and large stores stated that often the local producers simply didn’t have enough product to supply to meet the demand of the stores.

“If you have issue with your local vendor, who can’t supply you, whether it’s because of the quantity or the weather has limited your crop. It becomes a problem for sourcing.” (medium grocery store)

One medium store contrasted the supply of local foods in the Leamington, Ontario area to the Peterborough area. They mentioned that Leamington produces vast amounts of produce that are cost-competitive to a lot of non-local producers. This is another area of research that should be considered. As many of Leamington’s producers use migrant labour, an analysis of agricultural employment and its relationship to the idea of local foods would be interesting.

“Our area has much smaller producers and so that makes it difficult, you go down Leamington way and they have massive local producers where the product is always available.” (medium grocery store)

Stores were asked whether local foods were cost competitive to similar non-local foods.

The interviews indicate that there is not a consensus between grocery stores about whether local foods are cost competitive. However, cost competitiveness was not indicated to be the largest barrier to sourcing local foods, as perceived quality was sometimes weighted above costs.

The small and medium stores interviewed thought that local foods were not cost-competitive with non-local foods. They mentioned that transportation, time and other logistical issues increased the costs associated with local foods. Small-scale and local were often used interchangeably by the interviewees throughout the interviews. As a result, the logistical issues involved with sourcing local, were often associated with the logistical issues of sourcing from small-scale producers. This terminology becomes problematic when the Leamington area growers are considered local but are not small-scale.

The representative of the large store perceived local foods to be cost-competitive with non-local foods, and even said local was cheaper in some cases. Elaborating on why this was the case, the interviewee stated that since the store is not a franchise, there is no middleman and no overhead to increase the costs of buying local.

One medium store representative commented that they were prepared to pay more for local, especially when the product is better quality than non-local. Another medium store interviewee commented that customers are also prepared to pay more for local, especially when they perceive the produce to be fresher. This indicates that perceptions around the quality of local foods may counter their perceived higher costs of sourcing local.

Grocery stores were asked whether existing supply contracts posed a challenge to sourcing local foods.

Existing supply contracts were identified as a barrier by some stores and not others. Answers depended on whether the store was independently owned or a franchisee.

The small store said existing supply contracts were not a barrier in sourcing local. They had the most freedom and control over what was bought and sold as they were independently owned. They exercised 100% control with the exception of health and safety regulations from the city.

The large store representative said that existing supply contracts were a barrier, as agreements made by their corporation to buy a product override the agreements that they make with local suppliers. They also mentioned that products have to go through the main distribution centre before coming to the store. This means that strawberries grown near Peterborough would have to first travel to a centralized warehouse in another city, and then back to Peterborough. This begs the question of whether this system can actually be defined as “local”. It also suggests that the definition of local might need to include “how far a product has travelled” and not just where it was grown.

The medium stores said that between eighty and ninety-nine percent of their products have to come from their franchisor’s centralized warehouse first. The medium stores tended to have a bit more leeway in negotiating deals with local producers. This was a result of the fact that some were independently owned franchises.

“[Our brand] has a big market share to protect obviously, and they make huge commitments to Ontario farmers as well. I’m a franchisee, so they know that in the franchise world it’s important for us to support the local community and they do encourage us to buy local.” (large grocery store)

When asked what would encourage their stores to increase sourcing of local foods, answers differed widely.

Reasons for these differences include the possibility that the question was misunderstood, or that respondents were only focusing on an issue that stood out to them during the previous questions.

The small store representative suggested changes that suppliers would need to make. For example, they did not want to have to pay the extra costs for the delivery of local foods, when the cost of delivery is included in the price of non-local foods. They also mentioned that a more consistent supply would make local sourcing easier.

The medium store representatives were for the most part interested in sourcing more local foods, with the exception of one representative who mentioned there was not really a demand for it. Another medium store representative also suggested the suppliers would need to make changes, by starting to think bigger. "Thinking bigger" was in reference to meeting health and food safety, packaging, and delivery requirements.

"Getting the smaller guys thinking a little bigger. They need to understand the requirements (health and safety). That's part of their responsibility, beyond producing a unique and quality local product, they have to be on board with all of those things, packaging, food safety, inspections, delivery etc" (medium grocery store)

Grocery stores were asked about a no-charge online local food system.

All stores interviewed expressed much interest in the concept of a no-charge online system that would allow them to request products from local producers in the Kawartha Region. It was noted that this system would simplify the search process for local foods. One interviewee commented that this system has the potential to make prices more competitive if suppliers could see the prices of other suppliers for the same product. Another interviewee expressed hesitations about such a system, saying that if demand became too large for local foods, some smaller suppliers could be out-competed by larger producers, and the quality of the product would decline.

It was mentioned several times that the system should not only be for retailers to request products, but for suppliers to display what they had available on offer. Two interviewees suggested the system could be set up so that grocery stores could be able to see every supplier that was selling a certain product, and see at what quantity and for what price the product would be sold.

“I think if companies, local suppliers, those small guys, if they had a site that we could log on, see what their availability was, see what their pricing was, see what their quantities available were, I think it would be something that everyone could benefit from.” (medium grocery store)

At the end of the interview, respondents were given the opportunity to add anything to their statements. All answers differed widely so we have chosen some key insights to present in our findings.

One respondent commented that there have been times where they have been put into direct competition for customers with the suppliers of their products. This happens when the suppliers are also selling the same products at farmers’ markets and their own retail stores. The grocery store representative expressed frustration that they could not match the price of the supplier without losing money.

The idea of a Local Food Expo. was proposed for local suppliers and grocery store representatives to network with each other. The grocery store representatives could learn about what the different farmers supplied throughout the year and build partnerships with them. This would allow partnerships to be built all at once, annually, instead of having to deal with suppliers individually throughout the year.

One interviewee said that it was “the Walmarts of the world” that are making it impossible to compete with cheap non-local food. However, they were also optimistic that this trend would reverse, once people figured out there was a reason to pay a little more for local.

Another grocery store representative directed our attention towards the restaurants of Peterborough that are making businesses out of buying local. They commented that these restaurants have taken a lead on the local food movement, which has resonated with their customers, and has provided an example of how local foods can make businesses successful.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed based on our findings, as well as our literature review. We have directed our recommendations for reducing barriers to sourcing local foods for grocery stores in Peterborough to the following actors:

- Grocery stores
- Consumers
- Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments
- Transition Town Peterborough
- Farms at Work
- The Peterborough Social Planning Council
- Other community organizations

Our recommendations are not solely targeted at grocery stores, as many changes need to occur in the broader food system. In order to transition to a more sustainable food system in Peterborough, multiple levels of the food system need to be reformed or reimaged. We have also included suggestions for future research into the topic of our project, and suggestions for future research into alternative models of local food retail.

Recommendations for seasonal challenges:

All of the grocery stores interviewed mentioned that the relatively short growing season in Ontario and the limited variety of produce able to be grown in Ontario posed a large challenge to sourcing local foods.

Seasonal challenges of sourcing local food can be addressed to an extent by seasonal extension and crop variety strategies (Masi, Schaller & Schuman, 2010). Extending growing seasons requires physical infrastructure, such as greenhouses, processing facilities, cold storage spaces, and distribution networks (Masi, Schaller & Schuman, 2010). Government policies that provide support and incentives for this infrastructure are recommended. Research into hardier crop breeding can also help to address seasonal challenges, and should be a priority of local educational institutions. For example, the Sustainable Agriculture programs at Trent University and Fleming College could undertake this research.

One of our interviewees mentioned that the introduction of grocery stores, within the current system, have created decreased anticipation for foods coming into season, as many foods are now available year-round to consumers. It is not realistic to expect grocery stores to stop sourcing non-local foods in the winter, but initiatives could be undertaken to help restore the anticipation consumers once experienced about foods coming into season. These initiatives could be undertaken by grocery stores, through advertisements and marketing that promotes local and seasonal foods. Transition town should

continue to conduct events like the Purple Onion Festival and Dandelion Day that promote consumer enthusiasm for local products. Skills-building workshops that teach how to cook with seasonal and local foods are also suggested for Transition Town.

Recommendations for food safety and quality challenges:

Many of the grocery stores expressed that food and safety requirements set out by the municipal, provincial, and federal government posed a large challenge to the types of farms that stores can source their products from. In some cases, grocery stores could only source products from pre-approved producers, which limited their access to local producers in close proximity to the stores themselves. This challenge was exacerbated greatly when it came to meat and eggs. These products have strict safety and quality measures set out by the government.

To address the challenges posed by food safety and quality standards, policy changes need to occur at the level of grocery store headquarters. For example, the three major grocery store chains in Peterborough will only source meat from federally inspected processors, which poses a barrier to sourcing from small or local producers. Grocery store headquarters should be more flexible in their meat sourcing, and should source from provincially registered meat slaughter and processing facilities, which also meet stringent safety and quality standards.

Many grocery stores identified that smaller producers most likely meet the health and safety requirements set out at the federal level but do not pursue licensing because of the small volume of their products. If this is in fact the case, then measures to decrease the barriers that producers face in getting proper licensing should be put in place. However, more research should be done on this subject before any solid recommendations can be stated.

For non-meat products, we recommend that suppliers and their employees receive more training on how to adhere to quality and quantity standards, such as sizing, grading, packaging etc. (Ernst & Woods, 2012). Farms at Work already provides on-farm food safety workshops, and should continue to do so.

Recommendations for challenges of sourcing in large volumes:

Many grocery stores expressed the need to purchase product in large volumes in order to meet demand and to be cost efficient. They said that this posed a challenge when it came to sourcing local as many of the more localized producers are quite small scale and cannot provide enough volume of product to meet their demand.

To address the need of grocery stores to purchase in large volumes, we look to some local procurement policies in Europe that have been successful in the area of local food retail. Grocery stores allow small producers to bid on parts of contracts, instead of the entire contract (MacLeod & Scott, 2007). Both

independent and franchise grocery stores in Peterborough should change their contract process, to accommodate smaller producers, and allow bidding on small parts of contracts. Grocery stores identified that the process for making contracts tend to vary widely between local small producers. A streamlining of the contracting process on the grocery store side would make negotiating contracts with small producers more efficient and less time consuming. It would also guarantee small producers more sustained business with larger stores.

Collective, cooperative and third party aggregation arrangements should be encouraged (Ohberg, 2012). The co-operative model has the potential to combine the harvests of suppliers as well as combine resources in order to purchase equipment that may help access larger markets or add value to products (Ohberg, 2012). This addresses issues of volume and consistency.

The “Food Hub” model supports small and mid-sized farms, by aggregating the marketing and distribution of products (Merrigan, 2012). This would allow producers to supply retailers that they could not reach on their own and would help retailers to access large volumes of local products (Merrigan, 2012).

Farms at Work is currently working on an online food sourcing system that connects retailers and suppliers. Under this model it might be possible for farmers to split produce orders that have been posted by grocery stores. We received positive feedback about this concept during our interviews with grocery store owners and managers stating that this online system would streamline the sourcing process with local producers and allow smaller producers to get a better share of larger contracts. We recommend *Farms at Work* to continue working on this project.

Recommendations for challenges associated with supply contracts:

Many grocery stores expressed that they were required to source a large percentage of their product from a regional warehouse as part of their contracts with their corporate brands. This posed a challenge to sourcing local, as the flexibility within these contracts was usually quite small.

One recommendation stems from the actions of several former Sobeys franchises in southwestern Ontario who addressed this challenge with a bold and creative move. A number of franchises left Sobeys in 2009 to form an independent co-op with each other in order to have more flexibility and freedom in their sourcing of local foods (Crawford, 2009). These stores retained wholesale relationships with Sobeys for some products, such as dog food, spices and breakfast cereal, and gained control of their other food sourcing (Crawford, 2009). Grocery stores in the Peterborough County have this option available to them if it comes to the point where they feel too restricted in sourcing local foods. We recommend grocery store owners of franchises negotiate with their store headquarters to increase flexibility in sourcing local foods. One way of doing this would be for the municipal government of Peterborough to

create incentives to promote independent grocery stores and co-operatives of grocery stores by offering loans for buildings and equipment. With greater control over the building and equipment, grocery stores are able to better negotiate their sourcing contracts with larger brands.

In the Requests for Proposals (RFPs) that grocery stores write when seeking suppliers, we recommend they incorporate criteria for local procurement, to make contracts more accessible to local producers (Ohberg, 2012).

Recommendations for food distribution challenges:

Many grocery stores expressed the concern that sourcing local foods that did not come out of their warehouses required a lot of time and organizational resources. They expressed that it was much easier for their produce managers to order products from the centralized distribution center. However, store owners and managers tended to not be in favour of a local food distributor, arguing that having another middleman increases the cost of product and puts relationships with farmers in jeopardy.

Matchmakers are the actors that link the grocery stores with the suppliers (MacLeod & Scott, 2007). Matchmakers negotiate contracts, clarify regulations, and undertake educational initiatives to support local food procurement (MacLeod & Scott, 2007). The idea of creating a matchmaker for local food in Peterborough was critiqued by one of the interviewed grocery store owners, who commented that adding another middleman would increase the cost of buying local. However, the no-charge online system mentioned earlier that is being developed by *Farms at Work*, is an example of a unique matchmaker that would avoid those extra costs. There may be minimal costs for maintaining the online system but would ultimately be much cheaper than other matchmaker options.

Local Food Plus, a matchmaker organization in Toronto, facilitates partnerships between producers and retailers through the use of branding and certification (Egbers & Markell, 2009). This is a role that we recommend *Farms at Work*, and possibly Transition Town could be involved in.

Recommendations for consumer education and awareness:

Many grocery stores mentioned that although at times local produce can cost more or be more resource intensive to source, it was an important staple in their stores. They expressed the need for customers to recognize the value of local food and be willing to, at times, pay a little extra for local products.

Consumers should be educated on seasonal availability for their region, food literacy skills (including identifying and preparing locally produced foods), and the location of local food retailers (Ohberg, 2012). This education process may encourage consumers to increase their demand for local foods. Although most grocery stores recognized there was a demand for local food, increasing demand would provide

greater incentives to increase their sourcing of local food. We recommend *Transition Town* continue to integrate this education process more fully into their workshops and events.

Many grocery stores also mentioned that they participate in marketing strategies geared specifically towards local food. Grocery stores should continue this practice and try to provide as much information to consumers as possible about where their food is coming from.

Recommendations for supplier education and training:

Some grocery store owners expressed the need for local producers to be well versed in the health and safety requirements needed by the government. They argued that if small producers were better able to get the certification, it would make it much easier for stores to source from them.

Local and small-scale producers and processors of food should receive education and training on business/marketing/customer service skills, certification processes, and the contracting process (Ohberg, 2012). Grocery store interviewees expressed a desire for suppliers to have better understanding of retailer expectations surrounding quality and safety standards, marketing and consistency. This education process could be executed through government programs, as well *Farms at Work* in this community which is working with suppliers on these issues already.

Producers also need to understand how to price their products for grocery stores (Ernst & Woods, 2012). Grocery stores profit off of the margin between wholesale and retail. Therefore, local goods need to be priced at wholesale not retail prices in order to make sourcing local profitable for grocery stores (Ernst & Woods, 2012). One interviewee expressed concerns over this issue and recommended suppliers be aware that grocery stores cannot buy at retail prices and compete against the supplier's own retail outlets such as farmers' markets and farm stores.

Recommendations for a Local Food Charter:

Food Charters are being created in communities across Canada, and many are being endorsed and adopted by municipal governments (Guelph Wellington Local Food, 2010). A Food Charter is a statement of values and principles to guide decision-making around food policy (Beyond Factory Farming, n.d.). We recommend Peterborough create and adopt a *Local Food Charter*.

Having the Charter endorsed by citizens, local businesses, including food producers/processors/marketers/distributors/retailers, politicians, and community organizations would make a statement about Peterborough's commitment to support sustainable and local food and farming (Guelph Wellington Local Food, 2010). The process of creating a Local Food Charter should involve public consultation that seeks input from all stakeholders, including grocery stores.

A Local Food Charter could act as a bargaining tool between franchise stores and their brands to expand their percentage of non-warehouse food sourcing.

Local Food Expo:

Our interviews highlighted that there are a lot of different ways that stores maintained relationships with local partners which occupied a lot of time and energy.

We think the recommendation, made by one of the interviewees, to create a local food expo, where suppliers and retailers could meet annually, is an excellent recommendation. Personal relationships between buyers and sellers are very important, and events where these actors could interact would be beneficial. The expo would also provide producers a venue to explore prices and quality of product of other farmers in the area, as well as build relationships for shared contracts.

Suggestions for future research

We suggest that in order to gain an extensive understanding of the barriers grocery stores in Peterborough face in sourcing local foods, further research could be conducted by expanding the sample size of this project.

More small and large grocery stores should be contacted in order to draw conclusions that can be generalized. A demographic understanding of their customer base may also be an area of interest in the future. In order to execute this research we recommend a different approach to the interviews. For large grocery stores it would be necessary for researchers to have the resources to do the paperwork necessary to attain interviews and to conduct the interviews in person in order to meet the standards of the public relations departments for these stores. For smaller stores we recommend also doing the interviews in person and changing some of the questions that do not pertain to smaller independently owned stores such as the question about pre-existing contracts.

We also recommend that the grocery store owners and managers interviewed in this study be re-contacted in an attempt to gauge whether the recommendations outlined in this report, specifically for grocery stores, are realistic or useful.

We also would like to suggest topics for future research or thoughts into the local food movement in Peterborough, which are relevant to our topic.

Questions to consider include:

- Is the rise of local foods in grocery store chains a threat to the integrity of farmers markets?
- Can the local food movement mesh with the grocery-store model?

- What are the alternatives to the grocery store and farmers market models for the retailing of local food?

See Appendix for a summary of the recommendations and a chart linking stakeholders to recommendations

Conclusions

The purpose of this report has been to learn more about the following:

- How to increase access to local food
- Practical barriers to implementing “buy local” strategies at grocery stores
- Grocery store perceptions on the purpose of local
- Baseline figures for employment in the local food retail sector

The report began with an introduction of the project and the host organizations that are working towards the Future of Food and Farming research. It then provided an extensive review of the literature surrounding the local food movement in Ontario and Canada as well as a broader understanding of the organizational structure of the mainstream food system. The literature review also outlined benefits and barriers to sourcing local food identified by a number of other research projects. The literature review was followed by a methodology section, which outlined the rationale and purpose behind the research tools used in the report. It also outlined the limitations of this research and suggested areas of further study. A section outlining the findings of the research followed. The findings of this research were used to generate recommendations geared towards a number of different actors in the area of local food.

We hope that the findings of this research will inform a broader understanding of the local food movement in Ontario and how the Peterborough City and Country can play a role in creating and sustaining local food systems. We hope that our analysis and recommendations will be useful for implementing measures that reduce the barriers to accessing local foods and that they will help to inform future research on this topic.

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Community-Based Education Program



Centre for
Community-Based Research
93 Bobcaygeon Road
Box 655 Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0
Phone: (705) 286-2411
Fax: (705) 286-3511
E-mail ulinks@on.aibn.com
Website www.ulinks.ca



Office: 292 London Street, Traill College
Mailing: 1600 West Bank Drive
Peterborough, ON K9J 7B8
Phone (705) 743-0523 Fax (705) 743-7170
E-mail info@trentcentre.ca
Website www.trentcentre.ca



Centre for Community-Based Projects and Social Mapping
Room 284, Frost Campus, Fleming College
200 Albert St. S., P.O. Box 8000
Lindsay, ON K9V 5E6
Phone (705)324-9144 ext. 3092
Fax (705) 878-9501
E-mail: shingram@flemingc.on.ca
Website: c-links.ca

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#4441 The Future of Food and Farming: Moving Forward

Organization Information

Three organizations are partnering on this project with one as the primary point of contact:

The vision of the first host organization is to facilitate active, broad based citizen participation in shaping healthy communities in Peterborough City and County; act as a catalyst for positive, sustainable social change; and promote the understanding that social justice is in everyone's interest. Through research, community development, and public education, the host organization works to build a strong community.

The vision of the second host organization is to build community resilience in the face of three converging predicaments of climate change, resource depletion and global economic contraction. Focus is on economic localization as the strategic solution focus that provides adaptation to all three predicaments. Our mission is to focus on economic localization to build community resilience.

The third host organization's mission is to promote healthy and active farmlands within the region of east central Ontario. In order to accomplish its mission, the host organization is engaged in:

- Attracting and supporting farmers new to the region
- Working to ensure access to local training opportunities
- Providing opportunities for new farmers to become integrated into the larger agricultural community
- Supporting access to farmland by new farmers
- Engagement of farmland owners who are non-farmers in active use of their land for agricultural purposes and
- Creating partnerships and outreach that result in on-the ground farm stewardship projects in the region.

Project Information

The purpose of this project is to learn more about the following:

1. How to increase access to local food;
2. Practical barriers to implementing "buy local" strategies at grocery stores;
3. Baseline figures for employment in the local food retail sector.

(The definition of "local" for the purposes of this project is Peterborough County)

The project will involve surveying grocery stores about their ability to buy/sell local food, their policies on buying/selling local food, their perception of the definition of "local" and the availability of local food for their business. They will also be asked about employment in their business directed toward this sector. A literature review will be included to investigate if

other communities have undertaken a similar process and to report the results. The researcher will produce a report and make a presentation to the Working Group.

Benefit to the Host Organization and Community

This project presents an extremely valuable opportunity for the three host organizations and the community to build on a community education and consultation process that commenced in 2011. The following quote summarizes the benefit of local food production, maintaining farmland, implementing “buy local” strategies and creating supportive public policies:

“The food produced, distributed and sold within a region can play a major role in how well the dietary needs of the population are met. Communities that have ready access to a sustainable supply of healthy, locally grown and produced foods are less vulnerable to external factors that can affect the nutritional quality and/or quantity of foods available. Municipal government and municipal policy have multiple levers to shift the food system.” Peterborough Community Food Network

There is great potential for positive economic impact (i.e. community wealth creation and jobs) by shifting at least 25% of all food-related expenditures to local food. A recent local survey identified lack of access at local grocery stores as the major perceived barrier to increased access to local food.

What students might learn

The student associated with this project will have the opportunity to learn about sustainable food systems and the regulatory frameworks that support or inhibit them – with specific focus on the province of Ontario and the Peterborough City and County region.

The student will gain first-hand knowledge by engaging directly with food system stakeholders. Further, the student will have an opportunity to learn about:

- The growing concern about the changing landscape of rural communities;
- The need to protect food-producing lands to support buying local food;
- The importance of social planning for vibrant communities within the context of economic sustainability;
- How research connects to community development and policy change.

The student will have the opportunity to co-design, implement and publish results from a community-based research project. Through the community-based research process, the student will inevitably learn about conflict resolution, project management, communications, networking, connecting theory to practice and what it means to be an engaged community member.

Screening or Training Requirements

None at this time.

Skills or Experience Needed

Survey methodology, survey tool development, ability to work independently and the ability to seek out information from other resources such as Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Sustain Ontario. An interest in local food would also be an asset.

Resources Required for Project Provided by Host

Mentoring and leadership and connections with other community resources. Assistance will be required recovering the cost of transportation and printing if a survey is to be handed out – this part will not be the responsibility of the student.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Future of Food and Farming: Moving Forward -Grocery Store Perspectives in Peterborough County

Thank you for participating in our interview,

Please answer all of the following questions on behalf of your store. If there are any questions you would not like to answer, feel free to let us know.

1. What does “local food” mean to your store?
2. Is there a demand for local food from your customers? If yes/no, please elaborate.
3. Tell us about the local foods that your store carries.
 - a. Vegetables
 - b. Fruit
 - c. Maple syrup and honey
 - d. Meat: poultry, beef, pork, goat
 - e. Eggs
 - f. Dairy products: cheese, milk, yogurt etc.
 - g. Preserves
 - h. Seafood
 - i. Baked goods
 - j. Other
4. Tell us about any local food campaigns that your store has. What has the consumer reception been to these campaigns?
5. Does your store have any local partnerships with food producers or processors? Explain.
6. Does your store have a public policy on sourcing local food? If yes, elaborate.
If so, could you provide a copy of the policy? _____
7. How many hours a month does your store, or employed food sourcer devote to the procurement of local foods? Explain the process of product procurement for your store and how/if local sourcing is prioritized?
8. What are the challenges your store faces in sourcing local foods?
 - a. Are there seasonal or geographical challenges to sourcing local foods? Explain
 - b. Do food safety and quality standards pose a challenge to sourcing local foods? Explain
 - c. Does the need to purchase in large volumes pose a challenge to sourcing local foods? Explain
 - d. Are local foods cost competitive to similar non-local foods? Explain

- e. Do existing supply contracts pose a challenge to sourcing local foods? Explain
 - f. Does the lack of a local-food distribution centre pose a challenge to sourcing local foods? Explain.
9. What are the top three things that would encourage your store to increase its sourcing of local foods?
10. If there was a no-charge online system where your store could prepare a request for specific products, and this system was connected to local producers across the Kawartha region, would your store be inclined to use it?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX C: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

List of recommendations to address:

Seasonal Challenges:

- Seasonal extension programs
- Crop variety strategies
- Initiatives to restore consumer anticipation for local foods
- Marketing and education campaigns around buying local
- Skills building

Food and Safety Challenges:

- Policy changes at grocery store corporate level
- Decreasing barriers to acquiring licenses to produce meat at the provincial and federal level
- More training for suppliers on how to adhere to safety and quality standards
- Extension of pre-existing workshops by *Farms at Work* and other organizations

Challenges of sourcing in large volumes:

- Contract sharing on a bidding system
- Changes at the grocery store level of the organization of contracts
- Collective and cooperative models
- Food Hub model
- Online local food sourcing system

Supply contract challenges:

- Independent cooperative model
- Municipal incentives/loans for grocery store owners to buy equipment and space to gain bargaining power with contracts
- Modifications to grocery stores' Request for Proposals to include local foods

Local food distribution challenges:

- No-charge online system for sourcing local food
- *Transition Town* and *Farms at Work* as matchmaking organizations

Consumer education and awareness:

- Increase demand for local
- Educational campaigns
- Detailed store descriptions of where product is coming from
- Skills training on local food

Supplier education and training:

- Supplier training in safety and quality standards
- Skill building in marketing, business, licensing, and contracting for suppliers

Recommendations for the municipality:

- Local Food Charter
- Local Food Expo

Future research:

- Contacting more large and small grocery stores
- Doing a demographic analysis of their customers
- Re-contacting participants in this study
- Broader themes of the local food movement

	Peterborough Social Planning Council	Transition Town	Farms at Work	Government	Educational Institutions	Consumers	Grocery Stores	Suppliers
Seasonal Challenges		x		x	x	x		
Food Safety and Quality Challenges			x				x	x
Large Volume Sourcing Challenge			x				x	
Supply contract challenges			x	x			x	
Food Distribution Challenges		x	x					
Consumer Education and Awareness		x				x		
Supplier Education and Training			x	x				x
Local Food Charter	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Local Food Expo							x	x
Future Research	x	x	x					

APPENDIX D: Figure 1: Chart cross-listing some of the various stakeholders in the local food movement, and which recommendation areas they can act upon

VANCOUVER FOOD CHARTER

January 2007

The Vancouver Food Charter presents a vision for a food system which benefits our community and the environment. It sets out the City of Vancouver's commitment to the development of a coordinated municipal food policy, and animates our community's engagement and participation in conversations and actions related to food security in Vancouver.

VISION

The City of Vancouver is committed to a just and sustainable food system that

- contributes to the economic, ecological, and social well-being of our city and region;
- encourages personal, business and government food practices that foster local production and protect our natural and human resources;
- recognizes access to safe, sufficient, culturally appropriate and nutritious food as a basic human right for all Vancouver residents;
- reflects the dialogue between the community, government, and all sectors of the food system;
- celebrates Vancouver's multicultural food traditions.

PREAMBLE

In a food-secure community, the growing, processing and distribution of healthy, safe food is economically viable, socially just, environmentally sustainable and regionally based.

Some members of our community, particularly children, do not have reliable access to safe and nutritious food. In addition, much of the food we eat travels long distances from where it is grown and processed and is dependent on fossil fuels at every stage. Dependency on imports for our food increases our impact on the environment and our vulnerability to food shortages from natural disasters or economic set-backs. Overall food security is increasingly influenced by global factors that affect our community's ability to meet our food system goals.

Community food security needs the involvement of all members of our community, including citizens, consumers, businesses and governments. When citizens are engaged in dialogue and action around food security, and governments are responsive to their communities' concerns and recommendations, sound food policy can be developed and implemented in all sectors of the food system and the community.

In 2002, the City of Vancouver adopted sustainability as a fundamental approach for all the City's operations. The goal of a just and sustainable food system plays a significant role in achieving a "Sustainable Vancouver".

PRINCIPLES

Five principles guide our food system:

Community Economic Development

Locally-based food systems enhance Vancouver's economy. Greater reliance on local food systems strengthens our local and regional economies, creates employment, and increases food security.

Ecological Health

A whole-system approach to food protects our natural resources, reduces and redirects food waste, and contributes to the environmental stability and well-being of our local, regional, and global communities.

Social Justice

Food is a basic human right. All residents need accessible, affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food. Children in particular require adequate amounts of nutritious food for normal growth and learning.

Collaboration and Participation

Sustainable food systems encourage civic engagement, promote responsibility, and strengthen communities. Community food security improves when local government collaborates with community groups, businesses, and other levels of government on sound food system planning, policies and practices.

Celebration

Sharing food is a fundamental human experience. Food brings people together in celebrations of community and diversity.

To create a just and sustainable food system, we in Vancouver can:

- Be leaders in municipal and regional food-related policies and programs
- Support regional farmers and food producers
- Expand urban agriculture and food recovery opportunities
- Promote composting and the preservation of healthy soil
- Encourage humane treatment of animals raised for food
- Support sustainable agriculture and preserve farm land resources
- Improve access to healthy and affordable foods
- Increase the health of all members of our city
- Talk together and teach each other about food
- Celebrate our city's diverse food cultures