



HURON FOOD ACTION NETWORK

2015 HURON COUNTY FOOD REPORT

A MEASURE OF OUR
LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM



Ontario
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Huron County
Health Unit

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ABOUT HFAN

The Huron Food Action Network (HFAN) brings together a large number of food system stakeholders and community members from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Anyone who supports the vision, mission and values of the HFAN and lives or works in Huron County, Ontario can participate. HFAN promotes networking and collaboration. All members are invited to join an Action Group or participate in projects and participate in our quarterly network meetings which are open to the public.

Our Mission

To cultivate a sustainable, local food system to nourish all people of Huron County and beyond

Our Vision

- Stakeholders along the local food chain work in partnership to ensure all residents have safe, accessible, healthy, local and sustainably produced food
- Policy enables the equitable distribution of food to all residents
- Municipal policies encourage the production, development, distribution and consumption of local food
- The people of Huron County engage in and celebrate their rural agricultural history and culture

Goals

- To bring the community closer together around our local food system, to increase understanding and awareness through education and capacity building, to improve food security, and to create a stronger Huron County
- To create a sustainable food system in Huron County that provides access to safe, accessible, local, healthy food to all residents that has been produced in a way that supports our rural community, culture and way of life

Objectives

- Improve the policy context to enable and empower decision-making for a healthy local food system
- Encourage sustainable production of local food, serving as good stewards of land and water
- Expand existing and develop new distribution channels and opportunities for improved accessibility
- Improve local food processing and employment capacity of Huron County
- Improve local food skills and education
- Improve community health

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Healthy Weight Indicators: According to the *2010 Huron Health Report: Chronic Diseases* 26% of youth survey respondents aged 12 to 17, and 62% of adults are overweight or obese. Unhealthy weights have been correlated with health problems, loss of energy and reduced productivity. More studies will be required to report trends.

Diabetes: According to the *2010 Huron Health Report: Chronic Diseases* 9.7% of survey respondents have Diabetes. Diabetes can lead to cardio-vascular system and organ problems. More studies will be required to report trends.

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Please complete the online survey to further our food system work here:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PCHTZ8X>

Why Do We Need a Food System Report?

All across Canada and the world communities are recognizing that a well-planned and community driven food system is necessary to promote and preserve the economic, environmental and health of our communities, particularly in rural areas. This is due to a number of factors including, agriculture and land-use policy, globalization, corporate interests, climate change, food environments and global food insecurity. In this report we have done our best to identify current trends of our Food System and when that hasn’t been possible we have identified the indicators identified by best practices and community input.

History

In 2014, the Huron Food Action Network (HFAN) began to gather community input and guidance from stakeholders to create our Food Charter, a living document that could provide clear direction to our organization and other community groups involved in our local food system. In 2015, we completed the charter and launched it officially at the Historic Bayfield Town Hall with HFAN members, interested community members and media in attendance. It was met with support and appreciation from those who came and has continued to be supported by all those who’ve endorsed the Food Charter online¹. The Huron County Food Charter describes our community’s vision for a sustainable local food system to nourish all people of Huron County and beyond. The Huron County Food Charter is our guiding document in everything we do and this report is no exception.

Methodology

We have set out to create a Food System Report that will be useful to guide our plan to enhance our current local food system. This report seeks to collate information that describes the current status and overall trends of the local food system using the indicators of success identified in our organization’s six objectives:

- Improve the policy context to enable and empower decision-making for a healthy local food system
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- Improve local food skills and education
- Improve community health

Special Thanks

This document was prepared by Nathan Swartz, Food System Coordinator for Huron Food Action Network (HFAN) thanks to funding through an Ontario Trillium Grant and generous support from the Huron Business Development Corporation (HBDC) and the Huron County Health Unit (HCHU). A great deal credit is owed to Paul Nichol of HBDC as well as Amy MacDonald and Janice Dunbar of HCHU who helped refine and direct the scope of this document throughout its development. Many thanks also go out to the key stakeholders and the many community members who helped us create this document and all the others who gave their input towards this document and helped make it a useful document for food system planning.

¹ <http://huronfoodaction.ca/food-charter-signatures>

We have reviewed best practices from other food system reports from all over North America including; Long Island, Iowa, Michigan, Calgary, and Waterloo and accessed federal, provincial and local data sources. These data sources are not always available or readily accessible. This has made establishing trends difficult in many cases as there must be three datasets in order to establish a trend. HFAN will need to discuss these limitations and make recommendations for types of data we would like to see in future food system reports.

OBJECTIVE ONE

The Huron Food Action Network seeks to improve the policy context to enable and empower decision-making for a local food system

TRENDS

Policies: Food system policies at the local level are a fairly new concept and therefore we have do not have sufficient data to establish any policy trends at this time. We are optimistic that local policy makers are open to reinvigorating the local food economy and supporting a healthy food system that benefits all residents of Huron County.

OTHER INDICATORS

Endorsements/Adoptions of Food System Documents: In 2015 HFAN began seeking endorsements from businesses and individuals, at the end of 2015 we had collected over 50 signatures and expect to far exceed that number in 2016.

Institutional Procurement: A future goal of HFAN will be to assist institutions including, but not limited to, hospitals, schools, retirement facilities and daycares, in the creation of local food procurement policies that benefit the institutions as well as local producers and processors.

Food Inclusions in the Municipal/County Plans: We also hope to see more local food system goals written into the municipal and county plans as we ask the various municipalities and their respective councils to adopt the Food Charter.

OBJECTIVE TWO

The Huron Food Action Network seeks to encourage sustainable production of local food, serving as good stewards of land and water

TRENDS

Sustainable Farm Practices: Many sustainable farm practices are improving as can be seen by the annual growth rates. Unfortunately there was insufficient data in the three previous federal Census of Agriculture to establish a trend for the uncertified and transitional organic farm practices but the 2016 Census of Agriculture should give us the required data for future trend reports.

Sustainable Farm Practices	2001	2006	2011	Annual Growth Rate
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Community Food Advisor Program: In the last five years the Community Food Advisor (CFA) Program has tripled in reach. In 2010 the program reached 700 people and in 2015 the program reached 2790. The CFA Program promotes safe and nutritious food selection, preparation and storage practices, through trained volunteers and has provided services to advise thousands of people in food related education.

CFA Program	2013	2014	2015	Annual Growth Rate
People Reached	2170	2180	2790	9.5%

OTHER INDICATORS

Food Skills and Education: Although there are community food education programs happening data was not readily available. Future trend indicators could include high school curriculum involving food skills and other food literacy programs.

Seed Lending Library: In 2015, HFAN’s Community Education Action Group started a seed lending library program with two participating partner libraries. Seed lending libraries teach participants how to plant, collect and store seeds in order to improve their food sovereignty. In 2016 the program was adopted by the Huron County Library and will be expanding the number of programs.

OBJECTIVE SIX

The Huron Food Action Network seeks to improve the health of Huron County

TRENDS

Food Consumption: There are certain health indicators that can be improved through proper nutrition and have an effect on life span and quality of life. Unfortunately there is not enough data at this time to determine trends for Huron County’s community health as it relates to food consumption.

OTHER INDICATORS

Nutritious Food Basket: According to the Huron County Health Unit Nutritious Food Basket 2015 Report³ to the Board of Health, the annual food cost has risen 17% since 2009. The cost to feed a family of four is estimated at \$204 per week or \$883 per month. Families and individuals living on a low income cannot afford to purchase adequate nutritious foods to promote health.

Healthy Food Consumption: According to the 2010 Huron Health Report: *Fruit and Vegetables Consumption less than half of Huron County adults report consuming vegetables and fruit 5 or more times per day. Vegetable and fruit consumption is correlated with heart disease and certain cancers. More studies will be required to report trends.*

³ The nutritious food basket (NFB) is a survey tool that is a measure of the cost of basic healthy eating based on Canada's current nutrition recommendations and average food purchasing patterns.

Food Manufacturing Employment: Food Manufacturing Employment in Huron County is on the decline according to EMSI Analyst data. EMSI Analyst² is a web-based tool that provides data on regional economies and work forces in Ontario.

Food Manufacturing # of Employees	2001	2006	2011	Annual Growth Rate
Sugar/Confectionary	31	<10	<10	Insufficient Data
Fruit/Vegetable Preserving	285	228	182	-3.3%
Dairy Product	16	<10	15	-0.6%
Meat Product	37	22	68	7.6%
Seafood Product	0	14	<10	Insufficient Data
Bakeries	12	21	17	3.8%
Beverage	<10	28	<10	Insufficient Data
Other*	183	155	218	1.7%
TOTAL	>564	>468	>500	-1.5%
*Could include snack food, coffee, tea, syrup, flavorings, seasonings, dressings and all other food manufacturing not previously listed				

Food Retail Employment: Food Retailers provide over 1000 jobs in Huron County which is a significant amount of jobs in a population of approximately 60,000 people. These jobs seem to be declining over time according to EMSI Analyst data.

Food Retail Employment # of Employees	2001	2006	2011	Annual Growth Rate
Food and Beverage Stores	765	944	611	-1.8%
General Merchandise Stores	503	500	434	-1.2%
Miscellaneous Retail	216	174	258	1.8%

OTHER INDICATORS

Incubator Kitchens: At this time there are no incubator kitchens to measure although they would be a great asset to small culinary arts businesses start-ups. OMAFRA currently has nine culinary business incubators listed on their website and recommend them to assist new businesses.

OBJECTIVE FIVE

The Huron Food Action Network seeks to improve local food skills and education

TRENDS

4-H Program: According to the data supplied by the 4H Program in Huron Perth, nearly 200 youth are currently involved in agricultural education.

4H Program	2013	2014	2015	Annual Growth Rate
Participants	181	199	199	3.3%

² OMAFRA explains Analyst here: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/edr/edar/index.html#analyst>

Cert. Organic (By Farm)	22	33	33	4.5%
Uncertified Organic (By Farm)	-	42	34	Insufficient Data to determine trend
Transitional Organic (By Farm)	-	3	5	Insufficient Data to determine trend
No Till (By Acre)	133,321	162,854	191,916	4%
Crop Rotation (By Acre)	2,381	2,299	2,089	-1.1%
Plow Down Crops (By Acre)	454	715	630	5.2%
Winter Cover (By Acre)	325	360	532	5.8%

Community Gardens: Community gardens provide opportunities for all people to learn how to grow their own garden and improve their food sovereignty. This is especially a benefit to people living below the living wage.

Community Gardens	2013	2014	2015	Annual Growth Rate
Public Gardens	3	5	7	44.4%
Client Gardens*	0	1	1	33.3%
* Gardens that are only available to clients receiving benefits or services of an agency				

OTHER INDICATORS

Watershed Health: Our food production practices have an impact on the health of our watersheds but there is insufficient data at this time to establish trends. We have collected data from the local Watershed Report Cards and we look forward to future Watershed Report Cards from the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority so that we can establish trends.

Water Shed Health		
ABCA	2007	2013
Surface Water Quality	C avg.	C avg.
Forest Conditions	C avg.	D avg.
Wetland Quality	No Data	F avg.
Ground Water	No Data	A avg.
http://www.abca.on.ca/publications_section.php?Category=14		
MVCA	2007	2011
Surface Water Quality	B avg.	C avg.
Forest Conditions	C avg.	C avg.
Wetland Quality	No Data	C avg.
Ground Water	A avg.	A avg.
http://www.mvca.on.ca/mvca_documents.php		

OBJECTIVE THREE

The Huron Food Action Network seeks to expand existing and develop new distribution channels and opportunities for improved accessibility

TRENDS

Produce Auctions: Growth for sellers, especially in the “over \$20k” category has been excellent and we would love to learn more from the participating producers on whether this has been profitable for them. The Bruce-Huron Produce Auction (BHPA) is an auction style produce sales not-for-profit located just north of Lucknow that allows producers within a 75 km radius to sell their goods. The participating sellers are from Bruce as well as Huron County and their success is an indicator of a local distribution hub effectiveness. Our thanks to the BHPA for providing this data.

Produce Auction	2011	2012	2014	Annual Growth Rate
# of Sellers By Sales Volume				
Over \$20k	2	6	9	116.7%
\$10k-\$20k	9	7	7	7.4%
Under \$10k	84	99	103	7.5%

Culinary Tourism: The Huron County tourism fact sheets have shown that culinary tourism (events with a food focus) have been increasing in attendance which is an indicator both of success and increasing potential for growth in our local food system.

Culinary Tourists	2012	2013	2014	Annual Growth Rate
Event Attendees	28,622	30,563	31,611	3.5%

Community Supported Agriculture: The three Huron County Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs have willingly provided the number of participants for the benefit of this report. In 2016 one of these three CSA producers will no longer be running a CSA program. Participation in the CSA programs seem to have plateaued at nearly 3000 participants.

CSA Programs	2013	2014	2015	Annual Growth Rate
CSA Participants	2905	3208	2901	0%

Ontario Student Nutrition Program: According to the data supplied by The Ontario Student Nutrition Program (OSNP) in Huron Perth, over 8000 students are provided healthy food almost every school day.

OSNP	2013	2014	2015	Annual Growth Rate
Meals per day	8837	9016	8891	0.2%
*For more information on the OSNP go to: http://www.osnp.ca/huronperth1				

Food Banks: The Huron County Food Bank Distribution Centre distributes food to all the various Food Banks in Huron County and collect data from those food banks to ensure distribution is fair and based on need.

Food Bank Visits	2012	2013	2014	Annual Growth Rate
Visits	15,826	17,165	17,978	4.5%

OTHER INDICATORS

Farmers’ Market Sales: At this time only a few Farmers’ Markets keep track of sales, which would be an ideal indicator for tracking Local Food Sales. We strongly recommend that all local Farmers’ Markets keep track of this data if they are not already doing so.

OCTA Certification: Another future indicator to measure will be Ontario Culinary Tourism Association certified restaurants program that certifies restaurants that purchase a set percentage of Ontario product. Currently only two local restaurants have become certified with several more beginning the process.

OBJECTIVE FOUR

The Huron Food Action Network seeks to improve local food processing and the employment capacity of Huron County

TRENDS

Agriculture Employment: Agricultural employment is in a slow decline which means less employment in Huron County, however on the positive side Agricultural Census data also revealed that our agricultural employment is less seasonal than the provincial average. This Data was available through the Census of Agriculture and EMSI Analyst, which is a web-based tool that provides data on regional economies and work forces in Ontario.

Agriculture Employment # of Employees	2001	2006	2011	Annual Growth Rate
Total (Weeks)	81,621	76,338	73,785	- 0.9%
Jobs	4,915	4,629	4,666	-0.5%

Hunting/Fishing Employment: Hunting and Fishing employment represents only a small portion of employment in Huron County although our tourism is significantly impacted by our water resources. Fishing jobs seem to be declining over time according to EMSI Analyst data.

Fishing Employment # of Employees	2001	2006	2011	Annual Growth Rate
Fishing Jobs	31	21	21	- 1%
Hunting Jobs	<10	<10	<10	Insufficient Data

Culinary Arts Employment: Culinary Arts Employment represents nearly 1500 jobs in Huron County which is a significant amount of jobs in a population of approximately 60,000 people. These jobs seem to be declining over time according to EMSI Analyst data.

Restaurant Employment # of Employees	2001	2006	2011	Annual Growth Rate
Restaurant Jobs	1690	1286	1425	-1.4%