

2013

Halton Food Literacy Project



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1. Introduction

This project was completed by four MSc students in the Rural Planning and Development program at the University of Guelph, as one component of Dr. Wayne Caldwell's Advanced Planning course. This collaborative project was undertaken with the Planning Dept. at Halton Region, and partial funding assistance was provided by the Knowledge Translation and Transfer (KTT) program of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) and Ministry of Rural Affairs (MRA). In order to receive this funding support, the project needed to align with OMAF's research priorities, including focusing on agriculture, healthy communities, and social media. The ultimate goal of this project was to develop products that supported the Region's current "Simply Local" initiative which aims to increase agricultural literacy through educating children and the general public about local agriculture, health, food and sustainability.

2. Deliverables

Through consultation with the Halton Region Planning Dept. four project deliverables were established to ensure that the project would be beneficial for both the Region and our team. Through the development of a project charter the final deliverables that were agreed upon included:

1. an adult brochure,
2. an early teen brochure,
3. an evaluation of Halton's website and,
4. an online version of the region's current simply local map, satisfying the project's required social media component.

3. First Deliverable: The Adult Brochure

The adult brochure was designed to promote the importance of buying local food, to create awareness of the food that is readily available in the Halton region, and to highlight the interconnectivity of healthy eating and local food. This brochure is designed for an adult audience and is intended to compliment Halton's Simply Local map. The brochure was designed to be two-fold so that the Simply Local map could be inserted into the brochure and delivered to the community as a complete package. By providing this brochure with the Simply Local Map the goal is to bridge the gap between the importance

of buying local food and the importance of knowing where and when local food is available within the Region.

The adult brochure is divided into several sections in order to communicate the benefits of local food, as well as to promote awareness of the food readily available in the community. The awareness section is divided into interesting facts about local food and more importantly has a substitution section of local food you can substitute for non-local products, for example using local honey in your morning beverage instead of sugar. Another component of this brochure is the “What You Can Do” section which lists a number of activities you can do within Halton that involves local food. Finally the last section is divided into three components that describe the benefits of buying local food: community economic benefits; transportation and food standards; and taste, quality, and health. This brochure can be seen in Appendix A.

4. Second Deliverable: The Early Teen Brochure

The early teen brochure was designed to be more eye-catching than the adult brochure in order to attract the attention of the 10 to 13 year old audience. The main motivation of this brochure is to educate the reader on the importance of buying local, provide them with some basic knowledge about their everyday food choices, and encourage them and their parents to make a commitment to supporting local food.

The title “Refuel your Mind and Body” was chosen for the early teen brochure in order to make the link for the reader between local food and energizing their mind and body through healthy choices. When you open this brochure, the first thing you will see is the “What You Can Do” section. We put this part here in order to provide a starting point for early teens to get involved in the local food process. The back panel contains a crossword, which gives the reader an opportunity to improve their knowledge of local food in a fun way.

The first inner panel of this three-fold brochure introduces how you can use local healthy food to refuel your mind and body. This panel provides two healthy recipes and suggests some healthy food choices for breakfast, lunch, and snacks. The second panel touches on the benefits of buying local; this content is similar to the adult brochure but has been simplified and written in point-form for readability. The third panel provides some easy local food substitutions, as well as fun facts, to engage the reader in understanding the food that they eat every day. This brochure can be seen in Appendix B.

5. Third Deliverable: The Website Evaluation

An evaluation of Halton Region's website was undertaken, and the results were compiled into a report that was provided to the Region's Planning Department. The purpose of the website review was to provide feedback on the content and organization of the Region's website (www.halton.ca) with respect to agricultural literacy material, information about local farms and markets, and the Simply Local initiative. The report is organized into two components. First, it outlines general observations that were made about website content, organization, ease of navigation, using the search bar to access information, and the Simply Local map. Secondly, it provides recommendations to improve each of these areas. Overall, the main observation that was made while evaluating the website is that it is rich in relevant content, but considerable improvements could be made to organization and ease of navigation in order to make the available information more accessible.

Furthermore, we suggest that by framing the way that people view the information, based on where it is located on the website, you can influence the way that people think about local food and how to fit it into their current lifestyle. Therefore, our recommendation is to spend resources on re-organizing the current content of the website since the information already available is ample. One key recommendation is to relocate the information to the homepage, directly under the "Living in Halton" tab in an attempt to present buying local not as a leisure activity, but as a lifestyle choice. By locating the information directly on the homepage it also increases access to it and allows users to interact with it more easily. This promotes greater understanding of local food and agri-businesses, which in turn could have a positive impact on the Halton agricultural community. The full website evaluation report detailing all of our observations and recommendations is located in Appendix C.

6. Fourth Deliverable: The Online Version of the Simply Local Map

Halton's Simply Local food initiative provides an excellent resource for individuals interested in local food, through the use of a fold out paper map. Upon realising that no online version of this map existed, our team suggested the additional deliverable of creating a web version of the Simply Local map in order to fill this gap and make local food information available to a more diverse audience.

This online version of the map was created using Google Maps. This was done for a number of reasons including:

- accessibility - Google Maps is compatible with a number of platforms;

- expandability - the map is easy to manage and update. A particular interest of the Regions was the ability to add on seasonal attractions, such as a pumpkin trail. This could be accommodated with this platform.
- And affordability - the Google Map function is widely available and affordable, making it easy to promote to cost-conscious audiences.

By creating an online version of the map users are now able to access farm information at any time, directly connect to the farms' websites, and get directions to multiple locations. This map is also accessible on smart phones, making it easy for users to access local farm information regardless of their location. This map is accessible through the QR code on the back of both brochures, at this website <http://goo.gl/maps/2LV2B>, and through screen shots displaying functionality, located in Appendix D.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we feel we have met the deliverable expectations through providing the two brochures: an adult brochure to be given out with the Simply Local Map, and a kid's brochure to be used by the region for educational purposes. The website evaluation will aid the Region in expanding the accessibility of local food information, and the online version of the Simply Local map utilizes a social media component that is easy for the Region to maintain and closes the gap in their local food strategy.

What You Can Do?

Currently, imported food travels an average of 4,497 km to get to your plate. In contrast, local food could be from just around the corner, producing fewer transportation emissions, as well as being fresher and tastier (Xuereb, 2005). So what can you do to support the local food?

Step 1: Vote with your fork. Regardless of what food you buy, you are voting with your dollars; so why not make your vote one for local food. Local food saves energy in terms of transportation, refrigeration, processing, and packaging. It is as fresh as it gets, healthy, and tastes great!

Step 2: Take an inventory of the foods you already have in your kitchen that are local.

Read labels on packages, jars, bags and boxes – butter, eggs, chicken, jam, condiments, etc. You'd be surprised at where your food comes from. It is suggested to freeze in season berries and use them in baking all year round.



Use this code to find local markets close to you!

Step 3: Buying food from local farms.

Go for a weekend afternoon and enjoy picking or purchasing fresh local products. Visit the website below to find the farm nearest to you:

<http://goo.gl/maps/2LV2B>

Step 4: Do a local taste-test. Buy a local, in season product and compare it with an imported version. You won't believe the difference in taste!

Suggestion: compare local and imported strawberries this June!

Step 5: Check these cool websites about food programs.

-Halton Fresh Food Box Program:

www.haltonfreshfoodbox.com

-Student Nutrition Programs:

www.haltonfoodforthought.ca

-Food for Life: www.foodforlife.ca

For further information, please contact:

Halton Region

Dial 311 or 905-825-6000

Toll Free 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)

TTY 905-827-9833

www.halton.ca



Make Your Food Count

>>Take the Local Challenge



BUYING LOCAL

Buying local ensures the support of everyone's bottom line. Buying local supports the multiplier effect: this means that when your money stays within the community and stimulates job creation and investment which in turn helps fund important community initiatives. Every dollar spent on local products it generates an extra \$2.40 in the local economy. (TIME Magazine, 2009).

Benefits of Buying Local



Economy

Cost is often cited as a common obstacle against buying local food. However, local food does not necessarily translate into more expensive food. When local food is in season the prices are often competitive. While some products may cost more, others will cost less, resulting in a balanced food budget.

By purchasing local food, it supports the local economy and the local farmer. When local products are in demand, farmers are able to continue farming, reducing the pace of farmland development, and continuing to play an important role in environmental stewardship.

Taste Quality & Health



Generally local food tastes better because local farmers emphasize freshness and quality, instead of travel durability and shelf life.

Imported food has spent more time travelling than local food, losing valuable nutrients during the process. For example, fresh peas lose approximately 50% of their nutrients within a week from being picked (Fresh Farm Fare, 2011). Like most produce: the fresher it is, the better it tastes, and the better it is for you.

Transportation & Food Standards



Food standards are different in every country and we're fortunate in Ontario to have some of the highest standards for food production and safety. Buying local provides you with peace of mind that your food has been produced safely. And if you have questions about your food, local farmers and producers are there to answer them; try to get that service with imported food!

Local food travels less. This translates into fewer greenhouse gas emissions related to food transportation.

Fun Facts

01

If 38% of Ontario's population shifted \$10 of their food budget to buying local products each week, an additional \$3 billion dollars would be added to the local economy (Fresh Farm Fare, 2011).

02

"Locavore" – is a term to describe people who only eat local food. Try having one locavore meal a week! (Fresh Farm Fare, 2011).

03

The multiplier effect means that for every dollar spent on local food, 45% of that is reinvested in the local community; when that same dollar is spent on imported food, only 15% of that is reinvested in the local community (YES Magazine, 2006).

04

Shifting \$10 of your grocery budget to local food provides the same reduction in green house gas emissions as taking 100 cars off the road (Local Food Plus, 2013).

Local Food Suggestions

These easy substitutions can help you and your family incorporate more local food in your diet as you take on the Local Food Challenge:



Use local honey or maple syrup in place of sugar in your coffee, tea, cereal and when baking;



By canning or freezing favourites like tomatoes, corn and strawberries you can purchase local food when its most competitively priced, and flavourful, for use all year long in your favourite recipes like soups, sauces and salsa;



Local eggs, meat and dairy products can be purchased all year long;



Apples can be purchased in Halton at markets and farms throughout the winter months and are a local tasty and nutritious alternative to other fruits during this time;



Freezer jam uses far less sugar than cooked jam, and is a fun, fast and easy way to turn local fruits – like berries, rhubarb and apples – into year round cupboard staples.

EATING HEALTHY HELPS ENERGIZE YOUR MIND AND BODY

Here are some ideas to keep your body at top performance throughout the day:

Jump-start your day with breakfast!

- Try local eggs or when you're on the run try a smoothie!

Lunch is the perfect time to re-fuel your mind!

- Keep focused by re-charging with local vegetables and dairy or protein

After school or sporting activities remember to re-energize

- Try drinking a glass of milk that's high in protein, instead of a sugary sports drink!

- Follow the Canadian Food Guide for healthy eating standards:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>

NOW, READY TO REFUEL YOUR MIND & BODY?

Try having
a smoothie as
a snack

Instead
of

Skipping breakfast
or having a
milkshake



It couldn't be easier or faster! Just add these ingredients to a blender, put the lid on, and blend until smooth: 6 ice cubes, ½ cup of yogurt, ½ cup of milk, ½ cup of fresh or frozen local fruit, and 3 tbsp honey, maple syrup or sugar.

Getting protein by
having an "apple
sandwich"

Instead
of

Grabbing a
bag of chips

Slice an Ontario apple horizontally, cut out the core from the center, and use the apple slices as bread. Put some peanut butter or almond butter on one slice by itself, or add chopped nuts or granola for something different. Top this with another slice of apple and you have your sandwich!



BENEFITS OF BUYING LOCAL

1. Buying local keeps money in our community:

- Helps create jobs in the community
- Brings more local products into the market

2. Taste Quality & Health:

- When you buy local food you often get the freshest quality possible
- When you want to refuel your body and mind, pick food that has traveled less. Less travel means more nutrition

3. Transportation & Food Standards:

- In Ontario we can depend on a number of agencies to maintain our local food standards
- When we buy local food, we reduce the green house gas emissions that result from long distance transportation

LOCAL FOOD ALTERNATIVES



Use local honey or maple syrup in place of sugar in your milk



By canning or freezing favourites like tomatoes, corn and strawberries you can purchase local food when its most competitively priced, and flavourful, for use all year long in your favourite recipes like soups, sauces and salsa



Local eggs, meat and dairy products can be purchased all year long



Apples can be purchased in Halton at markets and farms throughout the winter months and are a local tasty and nutritious alternative to other fruits during this time



Freezer jam uses far less sugar than cooked jam, and is a fun, fast and easy way to turn local fruits - like berries, rhubarb and apples - into year round cupboard staples



FUN FACTS

Dairy - "The average dairy cow produces 30 litres of milk/day; that's 7.5 four litre bags that you buy at the grocery store!" (Dairy Farmers of Ontario, 2010).



Fruit - "Strawberries are the only fruit that has their seeds on the outside"

Grain - "One acre of wheat produces enough flour to make bread for a family of four for ten years!" (Grain Farmers of Ontario, 2013).



Meat - "Ontario produces the most chickens of any province in Canada" (Chicken Farmers of Ontario, 2013).



Vegetable - "Broccoli's name comes from the Italian word 'braccio' which means 'arm'"



WHAT YOU CAN DO?

Step 1: Make a commitment to eat local.

Regardless of what food you buy, you are voting with your dollars; so why not make your vote one for local food. Local food saves energy in terms of transportation, refrigeration, processing, and packaging. It is as fresh as it gets, healthy, and tastes great!

Step 2: Be aware of foods that are locally grown.

Read labels on packages, jars, bags and boxes – butter, eggs, chicken, jam, condiments, etc. You'd be surprised at where your food comes from.

Step 3: Visit a local farm and learn where your food comes from.

Go for a weekend afternoon and enjoy picking or purchasing fresh local products. Visit the website below to find the farm nearest to you: <http://goo.gl/maps/2LV2B>.

Step 4: Tell your friends.

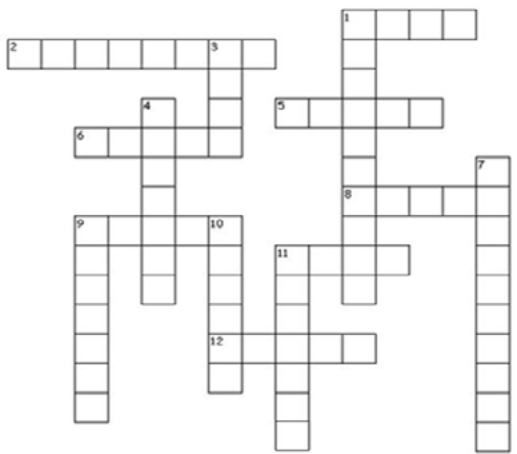
Next time is your turn to bring snacks, bring something local and spread the local food message.



Use this code to find local markets close to you!

- Answers
- Across:
- 1. wash
 - 2. cucumber
 - 5. fresh
 - 6. farms
 - 8. eight
 - 9. peach
 - 11. food
 - 12. onion
- Down:
- 1. watermelon
 - 3. eggs
 - 4. orchard
 - 7. strawberry
 - 9. pumpkin
 - 10. Halton
 - 11. October

<Crossword Time>



- Across
- 1. You should always ____ your fruits and vegetables before eating them
 - 2. You can buy this vegetable locally from March to October – they taste great raw or you can make them into pickles
 - 5. Local food tastes better because it is really ____
 - 6. Buying from local ____ helps keep farmers in business and also creates jobs in your community
 - 8. The number of farmers' markets in Halton
 - 9. This sweet fruit has a pit in the middle, and can be bought locally from July to September
 - 11. Buying from local farms connects you to the people who grow your ____
 - 12. You can buy this vegetable locally all year long
- Down
- 1. it's a fruit bigger than your head that you can buy in August and September
 - 3. You can buy this breakfast food all year round at markets and straight from farms – eat them hardboiled, scrambled, or sunny-side up
 - 4. A farm that grows apples is called an ____
 - 7. A red berry you can pick in June and July
 - 9. You can buy this vegetable in Halton from September to November and use it to make pies or jack-o-lanterns
 - 10. The "Simply Local – Your Guide to ____ Farms" tells you all about local farms, and is available free online and in print
 - 11. Tomatoes can be bought locally from May until ____

For further information, please contact:

Halton Region
 Dial 311 or 905-825-6000
 Toll Free 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)
 TTY 905-827-9833
www.halton.ca

Refuel Your Mind & Body

>>Take the Local Challenge<<



Evaluation of Halton Region's Website for Agricultural Literacy Content

Prepared by: Shelby White, Kelsey Lang, Kelly Henderson & Xiao Zhang from the University of Guelph

Prepared for: Halton Region Planning Department

Date: April 5, 2013

1. Introduction:

This report has been prepared by Masters Student's in the Rural Planning and Development program at the University of Guelph, as part of a collaborative project with Halton Region. Partial funding assistance for this project was provided by the "Knowledge Translation and Transfer" (KTT) program of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) and Ministry of Rural Affairs (MRA).

The ultimate goal of this project is to develop products to increase agricultural literacy in the Region that can be utilized to educate children and the general public about local agriculture, health, food and sustainability. This report, which is a review of Halton Region's website content and subsequent recommendations for improvement, was one of the project deliverables requested by the Region. The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on the content and organization of the Region's website (www.halton.ca) with respect to the following elements:

- agricultural literacy material
- information about local farms and markets
- the Simply Local initiative

To achieve this, the report has been organized into two components. The first is general observations about website content, organization, ease of navigation, using the search bar to access information, and the Simply Local map. The second consists of recommendations for improvements to each of these areas.

2. General Observations:

2.1 Content

Overall, the content of the website is very thorough, easy to understand and audience appropriate. There were no major gaps in available information noted, with the majority of the information related to agricultural literacy, local farms and markets, and the Simply Local initiative found on the "Farms and Markets" webpage (http://www.halton.ca/discovering_halton/things_to_see_do/farms_markets/), which is a subsection of the "Discovering Halton" section of the website. Information pertaining to the following can be found there:

- Why buying local is important, including economic, health and social rationales
- Farm food safety information

- Farm fresh produce and entertainment in Halton, as well as local heritage farms and conservation areas, including links to external websites if applicable, and individual Google maps showing the location of each site on a separate map
- An online, pdf version of the Simply Local Map indicating the location of and information about farmers markets, horseback riding, agri-tourism sites, nurseries, garden centres, and farms with on-farm markets, pick-your-own produce, and family-friendly activities.
- Where to find specific food items in Halton, organized in the form of a chart that lists the item and the vendors that carry it, including the number that corresponds to the Simply Local map
- Seasonal availability of fruits and vegetables
- A message from the Halton Regional Chair, Gary Carr regarding the importance of local food

Once this webpage has been reached it is fairly easy to browse through the different topics using the sidebar to navigate through the pages. Additionally, the subsections are appropriately titled which allows users to easily locate the information they seek, or to just generally explore the website. The only exception to this is the “Farm Safety Tips,” which deals more with food safety than farm safety.

In addition to this section of the website, there is information available about the Farm to School program under the “Support for Professionals” page in the “Working in Halton” section of the site. This provides information for teachers about the Farm to School program, which brings local food into public schools and helps to develop agricultural literacy in the classroom. There is also general agricultural information under the “Planning and Sustainability” section of the website, however the information contained in this section is related more to farming as an industry and is not explicitly focused on promoting agricultural literacy. It provides information on action plans, regulatory guidelines and census information; hence the information in this section is not the focus of this website evaluation, since its main purpose is not to promote agricultural literacy and the importance of local food systems to the public, but to provide information to the agricultural community.

2.2 Organization and Navigability

While the content of the website is rich with respect to agricultural literacy, the information available, including about farms, markets, and the Simply Local initiative, was difficult to locate even with prior knowledge that the information existed. If it was not known that this information was on the website, it may not have been found because of the considerable number of pages that need to be navigated through to reach the information. The location of the information under the “Things to See & Do” page was also somewhat unintuitive. To reach this information, the following steps must be taken:

1. Navigate to the Halton Region homepage (www.halton.ca)
2. Hover over the “Discovering Halton” tab and click “Things to See & Do”
3. Once on the “Things to See & Do” page (http://www.halton.ca/discovering_halton/things_to_see_do/) select “Farms & Markets” from the list on the left side of the screen
4. Once on the “Farms & Markets” page (http://www.halton.ca/discovering_halton/things_to_see_do/farms_markets/) select “Simply Local - Your Guide to Halton Farms” on the list of the left side of the screen
5. Once on the “Simply Local - Your Guide to Halton Farms” (http://www.halton.ca/discovering_halton/things_to_see_do/farms_markets/simply_local_-_your_guide_to_halton_farms/) you can select from a variety of pages on the left side of the screen.

The location of the information regarding the Farm to School program was located in a completely different part of the website, and was also very difficult to navigate to. In fact, this information was not included as one of the clickable links, and could only be found by using the search bar. Furthermore, it is unclear as to whether or not the program is still running. The pilot program evaluation report states that the program was a success and the Region plans to expand it, however if you click on the “I want to participate” in Farm to School button located on the top right of the webpage it is broken, and opens as “Page Not Found.”

2.3 Accessing Information via the Search Bar

While agricultural literacy information can also be located using the search function, the search terms used turn up varied results. For example, by using the search term “simply local” or even just “local” the “Simply Local – Your Guide to Halton Farms” webpage is the first result, however when using the search term “local food” the webpage does not show up in the results at all.

2.4 The Simply Local Map

It was also very difficult to find the printable version of the Simply Local map that contained not only just the numbered location, but also the legend. Most of the clickable maps do not include the legend because the numbers are provided on the webpage that links to it (for example see: <http://www.halton.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=19088>), which is problematic if the map is located using the search bar, as its functionality is minimal without any indication of what the numbers mean. A Google map version of the Simply Local map is only available for a single location, which does not allow for the location of multiple sites to be compared. This issue has been addressed through one of the other project deliverables.

3. Recommendations:

3.1 Content

Overall, the website does not have any significant gaps in information, and is audience appropriate in its approach. The only area that could use an increase in content is the information available on the status of the Farm to School program as it is unclear whether it is still running.

3.2 Organization and Navigability

There is great potential for improvements to organization, ease of website navigation and improved information access. Our recommendations to for improvement are:

1. Rename the “Farm Safety Tips” page (<http://www.halton.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=19074>) to better reflect the content of this page. A more appropriate title that reflects the food safety information available on this page will allow users to more easily find information they are seeking.
2. The “Farm to School” webpage (<http://www.halton.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=90627>) is very difficult to locate, and could only be found using the search bar. If this program is still running, a direct link to it under the “School Health Information for Professionals” should be added to ease navigation. Once on the page, the “I want to participate” link on the top right is broken. This should be fixed immediately, and monitoring for broken links throughout the website should be undertaken regularly. Furthermore, the “Farm to School” page is located in a completely different part of the website than the rest of the agricultural literacy information. While it makes sense to locate it under “School Health Information for Professionals,” it might be worthwhile to have a link to this program in the “Farms & Markets” section of the website to increase traffic to it.
3. Decrease the number of steps that it takes to access the Simply Local information. To increase web traffic, this information should be easily accessible; ideally a direct link to the “Farms & Markets” page should be located under the tabs on the homepage. It is also recommended that a link to the Simply Local map be located here as well.
4. Increase the ease of access to and use of the online version of the Simply Local map by ensuring that the legend is included in all uploaded pdf versions of the map. The only way to access the map in this form is by clicking “order online” from the “Simply Local – Your Guide to Halton Farms” page, and then clicking “View this Resource.” This version of the map should be directly accessible from the “Simply Local” page, as users may not find it otherwise. Further suggestions and justification for improvements to the Simply Local map are outlined below in *Accessing Information via the Search Bar* and *The Simply Local Map*.

5. The current location of the “Farms & Markets” and the “Simply Local” information is under “Things to See & Do,” which frames the information in a way that suggests accessing local food and agri-businesses is a leisure activity. Increasingly, people’s lives are becoming busier and busier, and it becomes difficult to make time for leisure activities and community engagement, especially when it is outside of our established routines. By relocating this information to a different area of the website, these activities can be framed and presented as more of a lifestyle choice. Our recommendation is to locate the “Simply Local” and “Farms & Markets” information directly under the “Living in Halton” tab on the homepage in order to increase traffic to this site and to frame buying local as a part of what it means to be a resident of Halton. Ultimately, the goal of the Simply Local initiative is to promote a local food lifestyle, therefore it makes the most sense to present the information in a way that aligns with this, and which will hopefully start to change the way that people think about purchasing local food and partaking in agricultural activities with their families. However, agri-tourism should still be promoted; therefore we suggest that the “Farms & Markets” and “Simply Local” information also be located directly under the “Discovering Halton” tab to continue to capture the tourism market.

3.3 Accessing Information via the Search Bar

Generally speaking the search bar works well for accessing agricultural content, including information about local farms, markets and agri-tourism in Halton. However, the Simply Local initiative could not be found using the search term “local food,” so it should further be tested to ensure that information can be accessible via this route of access. Additionally, most online versions of the Simply Local map do not include the legend that explains what each of the numbers correspond to on the map, as this information is contained on the website (see for example: <http://www.halton.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=19091>). When this map is accessed via the search bar, it becomes ineffective since information about the points on the map is lost. It is suggested that this map only be uploaded in its full form, which includes the legend, even if corresponding information about the map is also available on the webpage.

3.4 The Simply Local Map

The Region should ensure that every clickable pdf copy of the Simply Local map has the legend attached *within* the pdf file – this will increase ease of use by: 1) eliminating the need for users to click back and forth between the map and the webpage with the legend and/or key, and 2) allowing users who have found the map through the search features of the website to understand what the numbers and symbols on the map mean without further searching. This map is a great resource in print form, but is less user-friendly online. In an effort to improve ease of access to this valuable information, our team has developed a Google Maps version of the

content (<http://goo.gl/maps/2LV2B>) which allows for more dynamic interactions with the information. Users can locate farms, markets and activities that are nearest to home or work, see hours of operations, directly access their website, and then calculating directions to them. It is recommended that this map replace the pdf version of the map that is currently featured on the various webpages. It is also recommended that a direct link to it be placed on the homepage, under the “Discovering Halton” or “Living in Halton” tabs to increase traffic to it.

4. Conclusion:

Overall, the key observation that was made while evaluating the website is that it is rich in relevant content, but considerable improvements could be made to organization and ease of navigation, which will make the available information more accessible. Therefore, we recommend that time and resources be spent on re-organizing the current content of the website, rather than the development of new information since the content is already sufficient. Increasing access to information will allow users to interact with it more easily, and therefore promote greater understanding. Furthermore, by framing the way that people view the information, through locating it in a different section of the website, you can influence the way people think about local food and how to fit it into their current lifestyle. This can have positive impacts on local agri-businesses, and the Halton agricultural community as a whole.

Appendix D

Map can be found at: <http://goo.gl/maps/2LV2B>

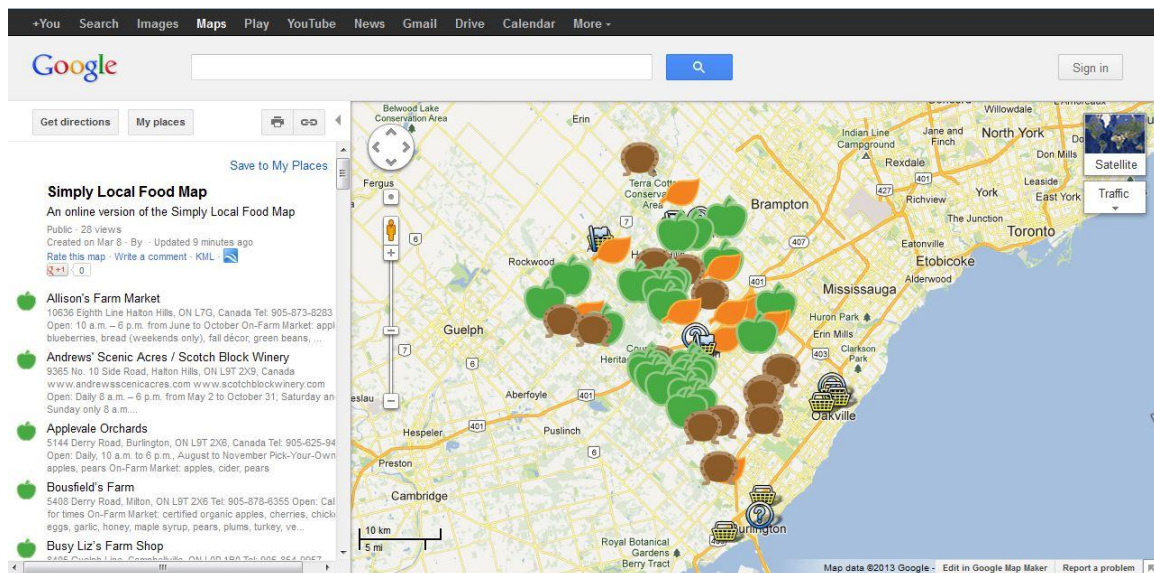


Figure 1: Arrival at the Online Simply Local Map.

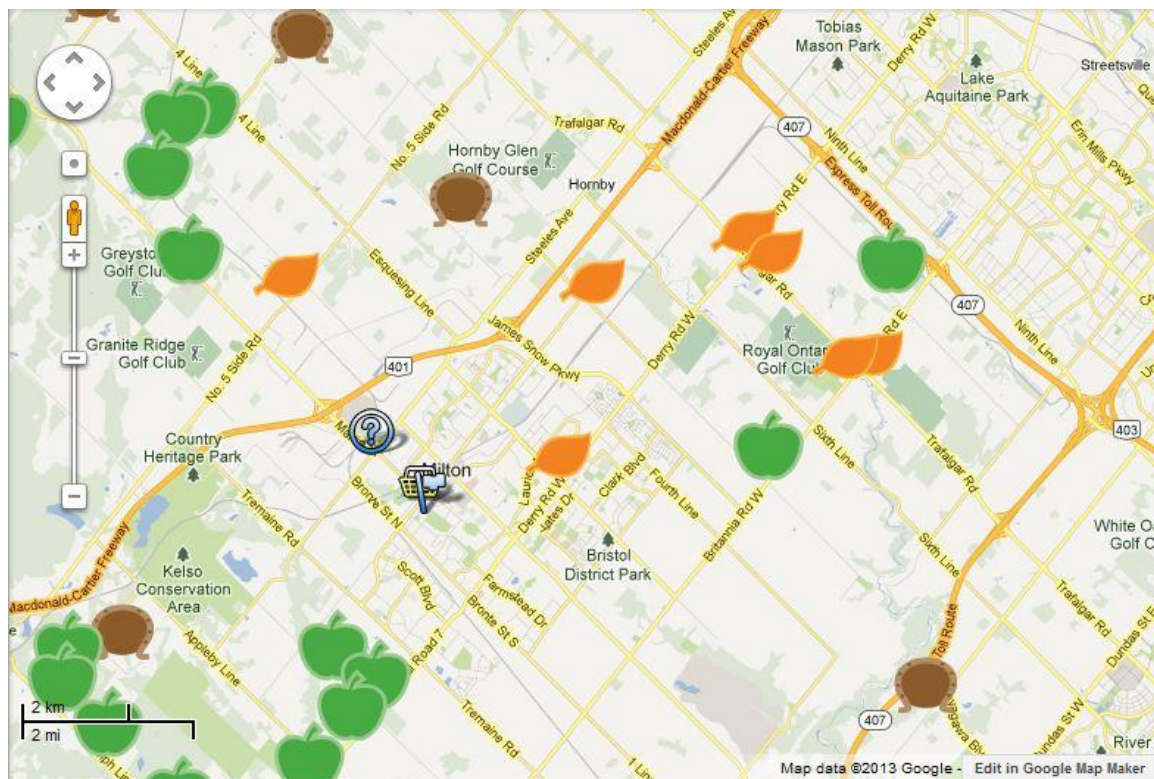


Figure 2: Close up of what the map looks like. Apples represent farms, leaves represent nurseries, horseshoes represent equestrian centres, shopping baskets represent farmers markets, question marks represent tourist info centres, and flags represent agricultural fair grounds.

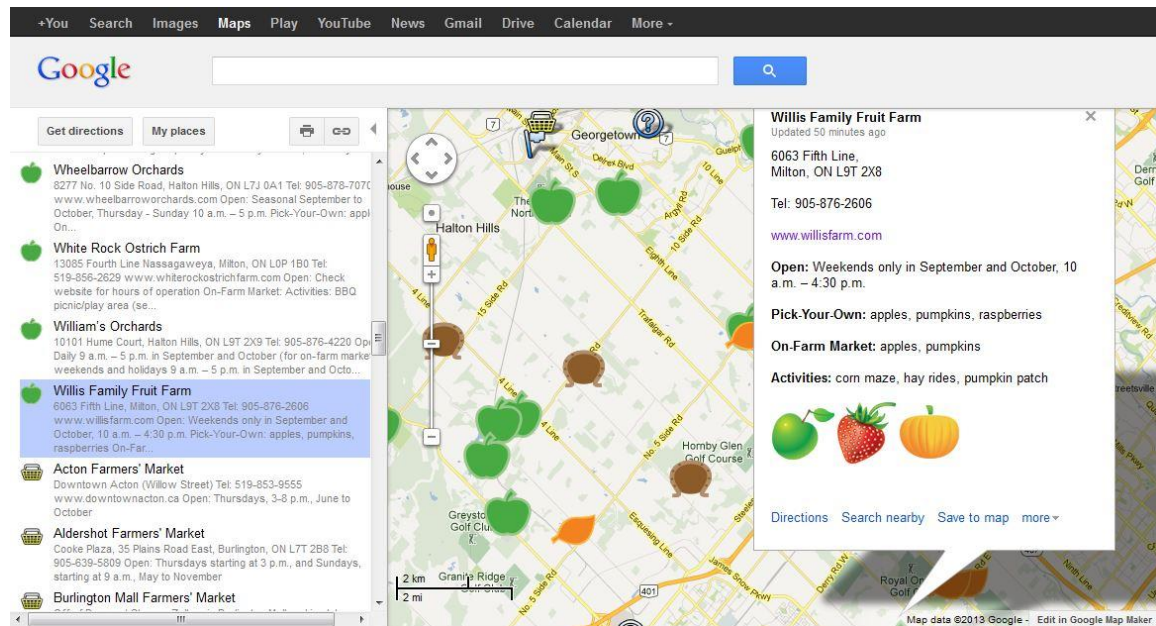


Figure 3: By clicking on a map icon or on a farm in the listing on the left, the farm information pops up.

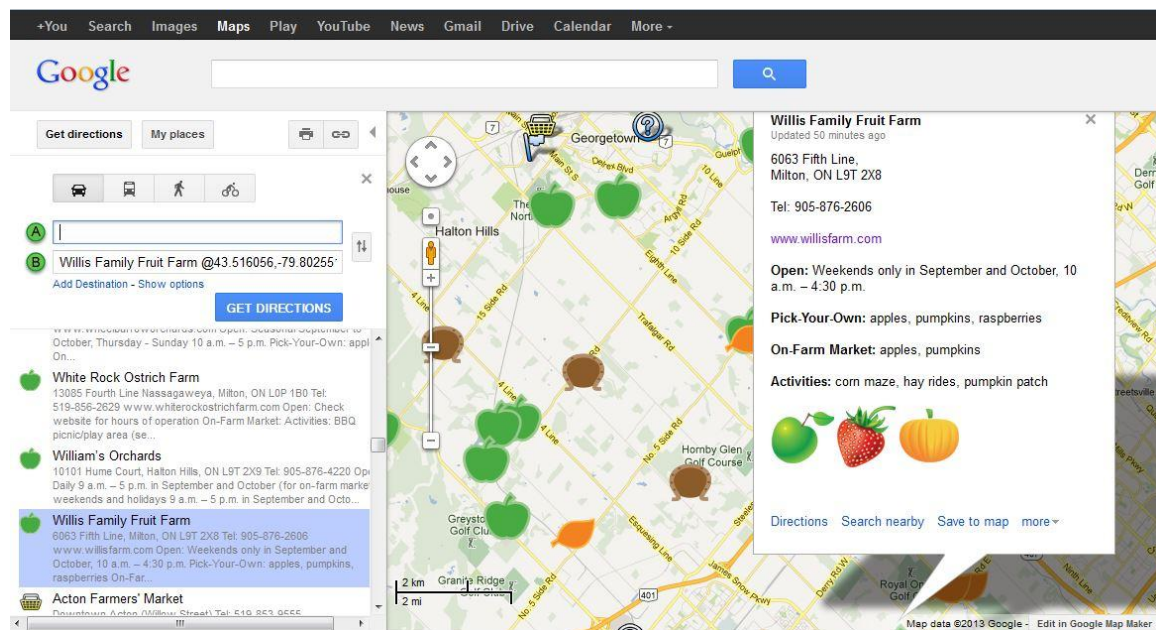


Figure 4: Clicking on 'Directions' in the farm info box, puts that farm as your destination.

Examples of the same functionality on a smartphone:

