

BUILDING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

*Strengthening Agriculture, Food Security
and Regional Development*

A MUNICIPAL TOOLKIT

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**Supporting local food strengthens local economies,
builds healthy communities, and creates a more resilient North.**

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Northern Ontario communities face challenges accessing affordable, healthful food. This research explores ways to strengthen local food production, processing, and distribution systems to improve food security and create economic opportunities.

Interviews, case studies, and policy analysis were conducted across Northern Ontario with producers, processors, organizations, and municipal leaders.

WHY IT MATTERS



Food security is a key issue in many Northern communities.



Agriculture creates jobs, retains population, and supports economic diversification.



Stronger local food systems build resilient, self-reliant communities and improve quality of life.

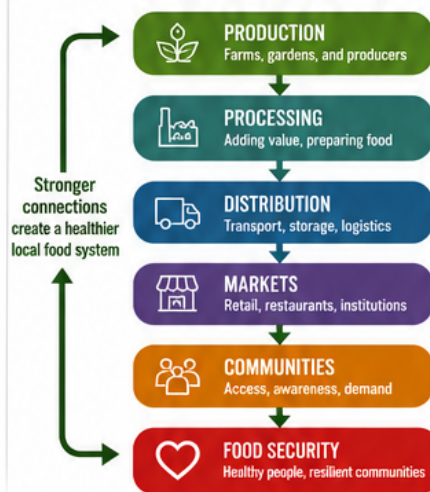
KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ **Agriculture has potential:** The North has fertile land, committed producers, and growing interest in local food.
- ✓ **Barriers exist:** High transportation costs, limited infrastructure, regulatory complexity, and market access challenge producers.
- ✓ **Networks are emerging:** Local food hubs, farmers' markets, and partnerships are expanding.
- ✓ **Municipal leadership matters:** Municipal policies, supports, and investments can create a more enabling environment.
- ✓ **Collaboration is essential:** A coordinated approach within and between communities strengthens the entire food system.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- **Identify** existing systems for producing, processing, and distributing local food.
- **Assess** opportunities to expand agriculture and create stronger food networks.
- **Understand** challenges and needs of existing and new farmers, including Anabaptist, young, and immigrant farmers.
- **Highlight** best practices, policies, and initiatives that support local food systems.
- **Provide** municipal tools and actions to support local food and agriculture.

THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM



WHAT MUNICIPALITIES CAN DO

Municipal governments play a vital role in supporting local food and agriculture. Actions include:

- Develop an Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Create a Food Charter and Agri-Food Strategy
- Map agricultural assets and opportunities
- Adopt supportive policies and zoning
- Invest in infrastructure and local capacity
- Support new and innovative farm businesses
- Build partnerships and regional networks
- Promote local food and buy local initiatives



RESEARCH APPROACH

- ✓ Review of existing literature and policy
- ✓ Jurisdictional scan
- ✓ District-level agricultural analysis
- ✓ Case studies from across Northern Ontario
- ✓ Interviews with producers, processors, organizations, and municipal leaders
- ✓ Engagement with Anabaptist communities
- ✓ Two research trips across Northern Ontario

CASE STUDIES FROM 10 NORTHERN DISTRICTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ Kenora – Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op | ✓ Algoma – Valleyfield Farm |
| ✓ Rainy River – Rainy River Meats | ✓ Algoma – Algoma Produce Auction |
| ✓ Thunder Bay – Brule Creek Farms | ✓ Sudbury – Smart Greens Sudbury |
| ✓ Cochrane – JK Gardens | ✓ Timiskaming – Bison du Nord |
| ✓ Cochrane – Fromagerie Kapuskoi | ✓ Nipissing – North Bay Farmers' Market |
| ✓ Parry Sound – Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve | |
| ✓ Manitoulin – Burt Farm Country Meats | |

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