

THE TORONTO AND GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE CITY REGION FOOD SYSTEM - POLICY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT



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Acronyms

GGH: Greater Golden Horseshoe

GH: Golden Horseshoe

GHFFA: Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance

Introduction

This report summarizes the policy development work that comprised the Phase 3 activities of the City Region Food Systems project in Toronto and the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). The work included identification of key policy measures and initiatives underway. The policy development goals shaped the secondary and primary research to provide information to support stakeholder decision-making. The first two phases focused on aggregating and generating data across a range of dimensions covering the full spectrum of the food system from field to waste. Phase 1 research consisted of understanding the performance of the Toronto and GHG city region food system. The primary (Phase 2) research included consideration of networks and collaborations to identify keys to successful collaborative change towards more resilient and sustainable food systems, aligned with the vision of the CRFS Toronto Task Force of “Healthy food for all, sourced as regionally as possible, and as sustainably produced, processed, packaged, and distributed as possible”. (Access Phase 1 and Phase 2 report here: <http://www.ruaf.org/toronto-and-greater-golden-horseshoe-canada>).

The Greater Golden Horseshoe physical, social and policy landscape

The Greater Golden Horseshoe extends in a semi-circle around the western end of Lake Ontario.

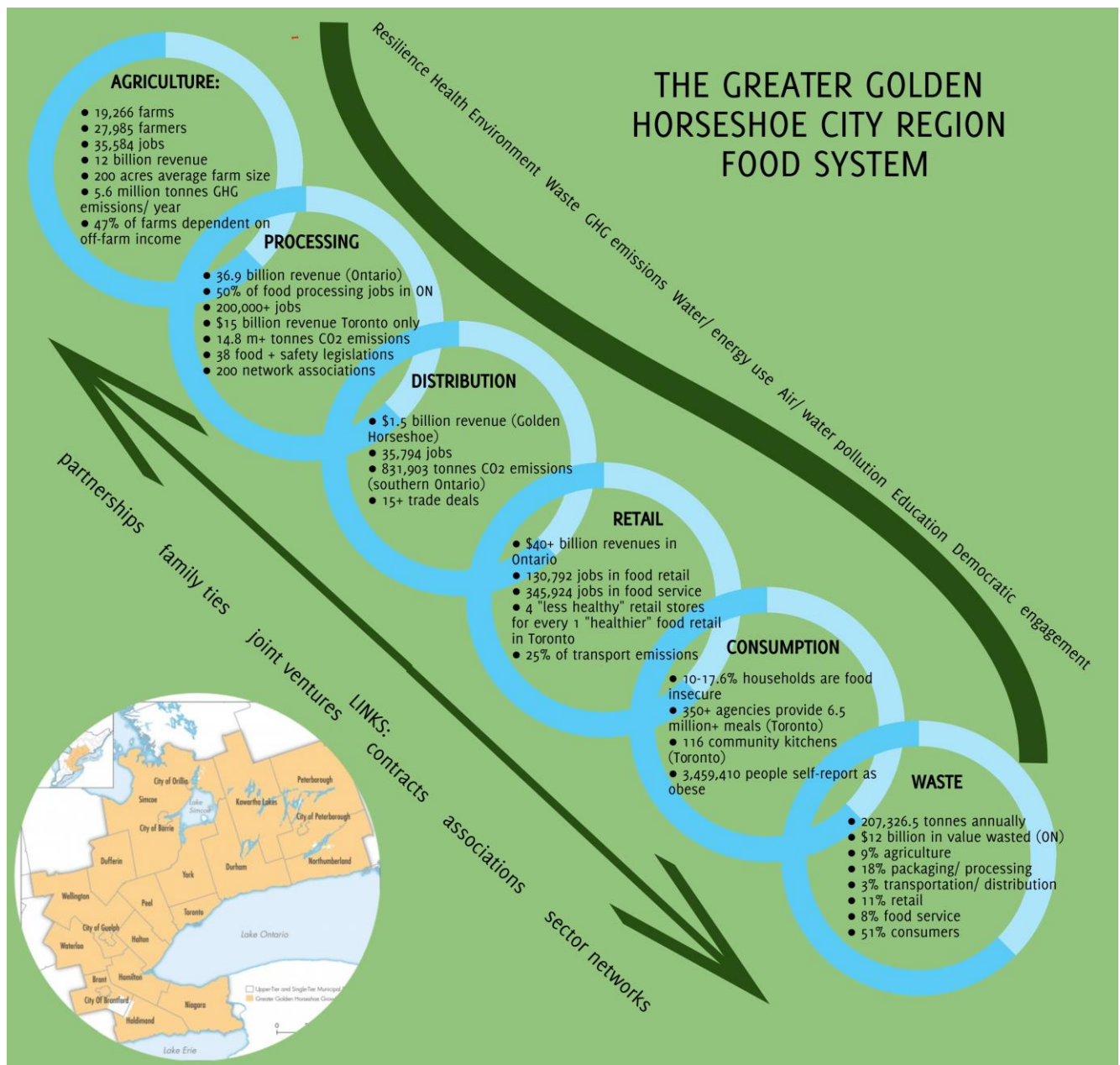
Table 1: Map of Greater Golden Horseshoe research area with inner and outer ring municipalities.



The region encompasses 32,000 square kilometres. The GGH comprises one of the fastest growing population areas in North America, a significant portion of Canada’s best farmland (50% of Class 1 farmland is in southwestern Ontario, including and extending to the west, south and north of the GGH).

The area also includes key natural heritage areas, the watershed for Canada's largest city and internationally recognized natural areas such as the Niagara Escarpment UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The population growth increases the demand for infrastructure development, and aggregate extraction for the roads and new housing. The GGH is home to almost 25% of Canada's population, and contains high density urban areas coupled with agriculturally important (and resource-rich) rural areas. The region represents a perfect storm of conflicting land use, stakeholder needs and population pressures. The economic, environmental and social base indicators of the GGH food system are summarized in the infographic below.

Table 2: The Greater Golden Horseshoe food system



The GGH contains 41% of Ontario's farms, with the average size below the national average, over 50% of most of Ontario's food manufacturing sectors, and 65% of food and agriculture jobs (GHFFA Synthesis Report 2016: 8, 25, 28). The research also shows that much of the agri-food production in the GGH is not designated for consumption in the GGH, but travels on export routes to the U.S. and other countries where trade is facilitated by various international agreements.

The policy landscape is made complex by the different governmental levels of activity. Some areas (e.g., Hamilton) are single-tier authorities, while others are nested within various tiers that must coordinate their nested plans. Within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, there are 21 upper and single tier municipalities, and 89 lower tier municipalities. The single-tier authorities have more freedom to set regulations and innovate in planning, and more flexibility to move quickly to seize new opportunities. For instance, single-tier Hamilton's new plans show significant support and ground-breaking policy regulations to support regional farmers and urban agriculture. Furthermore, the complex of municipal tiers is within the hierarchy of policy in which the local and regional plans respond to provincial plans; above that the provincial policy is within the federal frameworks.

The following is paraphrased and cited from slides based on MacRae and Abergel, 2016 (slides provided by MacRae):

For policy authority, the Federal government is the lead for cross-border commerce, farm financial safety nets, agricultural research and technology development, food and phytosanitary safety, food standards, packaging and labelling, and nutritional health.

The provinces lead on commerce and food safety within their boundary, land use and agricultural land protection, property taxation, many areas of environmental protection, and agricultural extension.

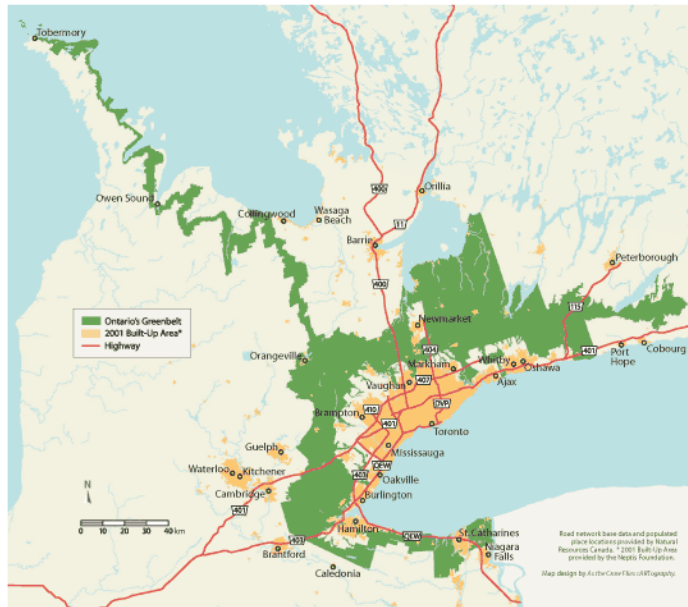
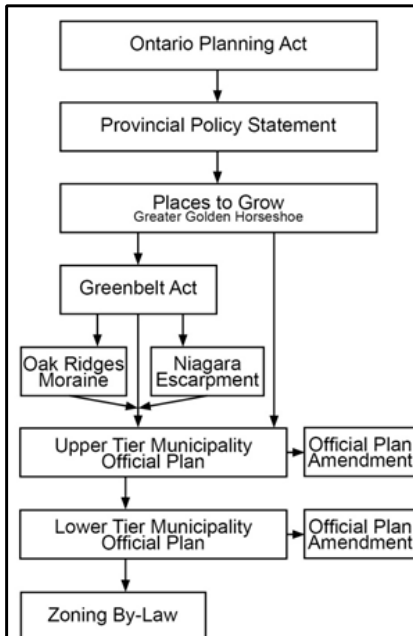
Urban municipalities engage in food inspection activities and nutritional health promotion. Urban municipalities also affect food distribution through zoning policies that may determine food store and food company locations and their associated economic activity.

Rural municipalities have direct policy impacts on agriculture through zoning, and property and education tax decisions. Municipalities also often have a lead responsibility for household and commercial waste management; much of the waste stream involves food and food packaging.

The following graphic, courtesy of Lauren Baker, formerly of the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC), now with the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, shows the complex and nested structure of land use planning and authorities for Ontario. The graphic also shows the overlapping extent of the protected Greenbelt area, the high density built areas, and major transportation routes.

Table 3: Nested levels of policy authority in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Baker 2016)

Land Use Planning and the Greenbelt Plan, 2005



In addition to the government structures, non-governmental organizations and others play an important role in policy advisory initiatives and advocacy. The following list summarizes the types of organizations involved in policy work that were consulted during the CRFS research:

1. Non-governmental organizations (not-for-profits and charitable organizations)
 - a. Food security
 - b. Environment
 - c. Urban agriculture
 - d. Sustainable agriculture
2. Municipal committees
3. Agriculture organizations/ unions
4. Food industry actors
5. Government departments
6. Universities

In particular, the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) has demonstrated significant leadership, particularly in advocating for the positions of the agricultural community but also in efforts to link markets and consumers to regional agriculture, as in their recent institutional procurement project with hospitals and long-term care facilities. The GHFFA has been operating in partnership with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, a public body that oversees conservation areas near Toronto. TRCA public lands include 400 acres of near-urban agriculture land. The TRCA has taken a leadership role in protecting and supporting the agricultural areas within their conservation regions. TRCA provides tenure security through rolling five year leases to farm businesses such as The Living

City Farm. TRCA also provides sites for urban agriculture development (Albion Hills Community Farm, Black Creek Community Farm) and new farmer training (FarmStart's McVean farm). Other urban agriculture groups also thrive in the area, such as the Durham Integrated Growers with fifteen community gardens within their network.

The GGH is also home to numerous organizations focused on food security, from municipal and regional food bank organizations to Community Food Centres® to FoodShare to various networks like the York Region Food Network. Environmental organizations are also plentiful, many combining environmental education with urban agriculture and food systems curricula, as in the case of Ecosource. Toronto launched Canada's first Food Policy Council (TFPC), which has been followed by several others in the GGH and elsewhere. These organizations link municipal or regional government with food and agriculture advocates in research and advocacy to improve food systems.

The Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) was instrumental in the formation of the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Committee, which led to the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance. TFPC was founded in 1991, and is within the Toronto Public Health department at the City of Toronto. TFPC was involved with the work of the Food and Hunger Action Committee from 1999- 2003, and the formation of the Toronto Food Charter, approved in 2001. The Toronto Food Strategy at the City of Toronto was formed in 2010 to work alongside the TFPC. In 2013, TFPC and partners issued the *growTO* report from the Toronto Agriculture Program. In 2015, the TFPC was involved with the ground-breaking Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, signed now by over 160 cities around the world, including Toronto (<http://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/>).

Another key cluster of GGH policy makers focus on food and health, drawing on input from public health units, nutrition experts, community food organizations, and food security leaders from society and government. The civil society members of this coalition tend to have less time and capacity to engage in policy work; charitable organizations are limited in policy advocacy work by the rules of their tax status.

An initial review of stakeholders generated by the Task Force showed important weightings in representation in policy work, with little input from waste, a sector still in the research phase for the most part, with most initiatives a matter of voluntary action on the part of businesses. The table below showed representation by number of organizations or people from the initial stakeholder mapping completed by the Task Force. During Phase 2, the research team focused on ensuring that stakeholders from sectors with reduced representation were also consulted.

Table 4: Stakeholder mapping

The colours in the grid below indicate the number of stakeholders identified in each category (also indicated by the numbers in each cell). Dark green indicates the most stakeholders (more than 3) while the lighter greens show that only 0-1 or 2-3 stakeholders were named during the mapping exercise. The process was used to identify areas where the team might need to do additional research to find a representative, or where a theme is under-represented in general by stakeholders (for instance, the category "round-tables" actually has few instances of this approach to coordinated effort in the GGH).

Area of impact Organization types	Agricultural inputs and food production	Food storage, processing and manufacturing	Food wholesale and distribution	Food marketing, catering, retail	Food consumption	Food and organic waste management	Other
Government departments/ groups (provincial)	5						8
Government departments/ groups (municipal)	3		3		2	2	1
Non-government organizations (NGOs)	8	2		2	3		
Roundtables/ Commissions							1
Public/ private partnerships			1				
Sector associations/ networks	12	2		7	4		
Industry associations/ networks	1	1		1			
Foundations, funding organizations (non-governmental)	1		1				5
Community groups (projects)	1	1					
Community groups (advisory to sector and government)	4				2		1
Education organizations/ representatives (academic)	2				3		5
Consulting firms/ research	3				1		

groups/ think-tanks							
Lobbying groups	1						
Marketing groups			2		1		
Private corporations and businesses				1			

The chart below show some of the key policy advocacy groups and activities within each region of the Greater Golden Horseshoe identified in the CRFS research process. As much as possible, representatives were consulted that could address the key issues in the area and/ or participated in one or more of the policy groups listed.

Table 5: Food and agriculture policy-making coalitions in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

In the following table, “X” indicates an ongoing and active group or coalition process. “Under development” indicates that the group is at some stage of development but is not yet fully operational. In a few cases, the group as named may not exist but a similar project is completed or underway. In this case, the name of the project is given. For instance, mechanisms to address food security exist but fall under a range of different groups; in this case the name is given.

Place	Food charter process	Agriculture committee	Agri-food strategy group or process	Food policy council	Municipal food security group
Guelph	X	X	under development		Roundtable
York	X	X	under development		X
Niagara	under development	X	X	under development	
Halton	X	X	X	X	
Simcoe County	X	X			
Hamilton	X	X	X	X	X
Durham	X	X	X	X	
Peel	under development	X			X
Toronto	X	X		X	Toronto Food Strategy
Waterloo	X		X		Food System Roundtable
Wellington	X		under development		
Haldimand Norfolk		X			
Brant		X			Food System Coalition
Kawartha Lakes	X	X	X		Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition
Dufferin	under development		under development		
Northumberland	X			X	

Peterborough		X		Peterborough Community Food Network	Sustainable Peterborough
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Context for policy research and development

Policy in Canada begins at the federal level, followed by provincial and then municipal. The federal government establishes the overall framework, while the provinces deliver programs, and municipalities respond to the provincial framework. The interaction of policy at different levels can become complex, but in general the hierarchy proceeds from national to provincial to municipal levels. An overview of the inter-relation of different levels of planning is offered by the government of Ontario here: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=10582> . As noted on the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Ministry of Housing website, “The [Planning Act](#) sets out the ground rules for land use planning in Ontario and describes how land uses may be controlled, and who may control them.” (<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1760.aspx>). At the regional level, the GGH and nearby regions are subject to four major separate and overlapping plans that were recently subject to a coordinated review: the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Conservation Plan, and the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

Policy agreements that affect the GGH food system range from municipal and regional official plans, policies and bylaws, to provincial and federal policies and regulations, to international agreements (including agreements that address trade, and climate change). The research showed a great deal of agreement and existing or potential joint efforts to strengthen regional food systems through policy change, and provides the recommendations and data to stimulate and support these initiatives.

Supports for policy changes have included the Ontario Local Food Act with provision to support local food systems through market incentives, consumer education, public procurement, and tax incentives. Policies for food system resilience include the provincial severance policies that prevent severance of agricultural plots below one hundred acres. The policy protects contiguous farmland, preventing the fracture of the agricultural landscape into numerous small and disconnected plots. These severance policies protect farmland to some extent but can also create problems for smaller farmers who are more likely to be selling direct or through independent retailers to local consumers, and require smaller and more affordable plots of land to operate (see Miller, 2016). Stakeholders also mention concerns about the uneven tax regulations (lower for farms, higher for housing and industry). The tax regime means farms that consolidate are likely to remove surplus housing in order to avoid associated responsibilities (financial and landlord), reducing the rural housing infrastructure.

A key barrier that has been embedded in provincial and federal policy is a tendency to regulate sites based on a single activity. If a site has been zoned and used for agriculture, there have been barriers to a farm business that wanted to implement value-added processing as part of their activities, although doing so would facilitate effective access to regional markets by diversifying the farm’s output and product lines. The additional activity can trigger changes to tax status from agricultural to industrial, creating a significant cost barrier. Some zoning barriers also have precluded on-farm processing. Municipalities and regions have also interpreted the OPA unevenly, creating a patchwork of approvals and barriers that can frustrate farmers and other food system actors who are likely to work across these geographical boundaries. Changes to the Ontario Planning Act (OPA) have opened the door to mitigation of these and other problems¹.

¹ See an overview of these changes in this presentation from the government of Ontario: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=10584>.

Federal policies and income supports for the agricultural sector have been structured to support farm consolidation and export marketing. Growing Forward 2, the current provincial agriculture policy framework, and the future agriculture policy framework announced in the Calgary Statement for 2018, focus on market competitiveness, innovation and competitiveness in export markets². Slim to non-existent margins and increasing costs of farm inputs have stimulated an ongoing exodus of farmers from the profession. The new generation of farmers is entering the profession from non-agricultural backgrounds and with a commitment to direct or regional markets. Policies, programs and funding have lagged behind this change. More support is needed to facilitate the development and operation of mid-scale infrastructure, price supports and capital access that can encourage these regional food system actors. Trade deals continue to threaten the existence of regional markets by disallowing the promotion of food by regional source of production, endangering retail and institutional local food procurement policies and practices. Many of the stakeholders interviewed work on enabling policies to address these barriers and to prevent agreement to harmful trade deals.

Farther down the supply chain from agriculture, independent retailers are working to rebuild mid-scale distribution and production in a food economy largely dominated by large national and trans-national players and a context of ongoing consolidation (e.g., the recent purchase by Amazon of the Whole Foods Market chain). In many areas of the food system, regulations have been designed for large-scale, often transnational corporations and are not appropriate for mid-scale operations. In the case of abattoirs, many regional abattoirs were closed when the regulations were harmonized with the federal rules, even for abattoirs that were not exporting across provincial or national boundaries. The investment to meet the new federal rules was too onerous for many of these long-standing mid-scale infrastructure sites to continue operations.

On the consumption side of the food system, the lack of sufficient social assistance to meet basic food and shelter requirements has caused a crisis of hunger and marginalization in a significant percentage of the population. Since the research was completed, many of the stakeholders have successfully lobbied to achieve basic income (pilot projects) and other assistance for the Canadians facing food insecurity (averaging well over 10%, but over 50% in some areas of the north and in indigenous communities). Pilot basic income initiatives have now been launched in several municipalities, including Hamilton and Lindsay in the GGH, and Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario. The development of a national food policy was also launched in 2017.

The City Region Food Systems research in Toronto and the Greater Golden Horseshoe was conducted at a historic moment of policy development and stakeholder consultation. In 2015, four planning acts that affected the Greater Golden Horseshoe came up for review. The planning acts under review were the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Conservation Plan, and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. The Growth Plan sets parameters for population growth as well as protection and planning for key economic, natural heritage and infrastructure areas. The Greenbelt Plan designates a zone that extends beyond the Greater Golden Horseshoe with a focus on environmentally sensitive areas and natural heritage. The Oak Ridges Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan are similarly focused on environmental issues. The Greenbelt Act is supported by a foundation that works to promote and sustain the agricultural sites within the Plan as well as the conservation areas.

² See the Government of Canada press release on the new framework here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/agriculture-agri-food/news/2016/07/federal-provincial-and-territorial-ministers-set-the-direction-for-the-next-agricultural-framework.html>

The stage for the planning review was set by the preceding decades of sectoral planning and regulation that were not well coordinated or harmonized. The lack of coordination from overlapping jurisdictions created confusion, conflict and negative outcomes. The consultations for the coordinated review involved all levels of government, thousands of citizens and residents, business owners, and background research spanning many years.

The 2015-2017 stakeholder consultation process demonstrated the strength and coalitions of some sub-sectors in the food system and the challenges and weaknesses of policy advocacy participation in others. In general, the CRFS research found that the agricultural sector, through the multi-year efforts of the GHFFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the National Farmers Union and other coalitions, was able to mobilize stakeholders to ensure a united voice behind many key policy requests. The result has been a positive move to recognize the needs of the agricultural community more broadly by support for “agricultural systems”. The term “agricultural systems” can include value-added processing and other key services that contribute to the agricultural economy, and extend planning support beyond farmland and farm business protection.

The new plans contain few provisions to ensure that food is accessible for all. The food security sector was also found to be less well coordinated than agriculture, even at the municipal level, with lower capacity and resources, frequent staff turnover, and limited funding to engage in policy work, or to collaborate with similar groups in other regions. In Toronto, progress on coalition building for food access is demonstrated in the Food by Ward project, led by the Toronto Food Policy Council. The project provided asset mapping of food assets and gaps across the municipality, and connected food security resources directly to the political structure through the councilors of each ward. Recently coalitions across Canada have successfully advocated for the implementation of a national food policy. In 2017, a national food policy development process was launched that can set the stage to increase the organization and impact of food security organizations within and outside governments at every level.

CRFS Policy research and development

The CRFS research project was organized to achieve the widest possible assessment of the food system, and to engage stakeholders who were positioned to make significant policy change. The CRFS Task Force includes the following representatives:

- Lauren Baker (Toronto Food Policy Council, Global Alliance for the Future of Food)
- Alison Blay-Palmer (Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at Wilfrid Laurier University)
- Barbara Emanuel (Toronto Food Strategy, City of Toronto)
- Megan Flaherty (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA))
- Harriet Friedmann (University Toronto, former Chair TFPC, supervised students in food and planning)
- Janet Horner (Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) Executive Director, farmer)
- Jaya James (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs: OMAFRA)
- Rod MacRae (York University, actively involved in food policy and consultant to organizations such as Local Food Plus)
- Ralph Martin (University of Guelph, Ontario Agricultural College, Loblaws Chair in Sustainable Food Production)
- Jessica Reeve (Toronto Food Policy Council)
- Michael Wolfson (City of Toronto, Food and Beverage Sector Specialist)
- Fiona Yeudall (Ryerson University School of Nutrition and Centre for Studies in Food Security, Dietician)

The Task Force was designed to engage representation from government (agriculture, public health and economic development), independent policy coalitions (GHFFA, TFPC), and universities (University of Toronto, Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, York University Faculty of Environmental Studies, Ryerson University School of Nutrition and University of Guelph/ Ontario Agricultural College).

The Phase 2 research examined several critical themes that were identified as priorities during Task Force consultation:

1. Waste
2. Land and Transportation
3. Prices and Costs
4. Democratic engagement
5. Education
6. Bureaucratic processes
7. Labour and decent work
8. Food access issues

Stakeholder consultation focused on these critical themes. The policy needs and initiatives of stakeholders were explored in interviews, discussion groups, focus groups and material review. The research focused on collaborative activity and identified key stakeholders across the food system. Over seventy extensive interviews were conducted with stakeholders who had been identified as involved in policy-making, sitting on several committees and/ or taking a leadership role in one or more sectors of the food system. Interviewees and their affiliations are listed in Appendix A. The following list shows the presentations and discussion groups that were also held to develop key themes, policy recommendations and action planning to achieve the recommendations.

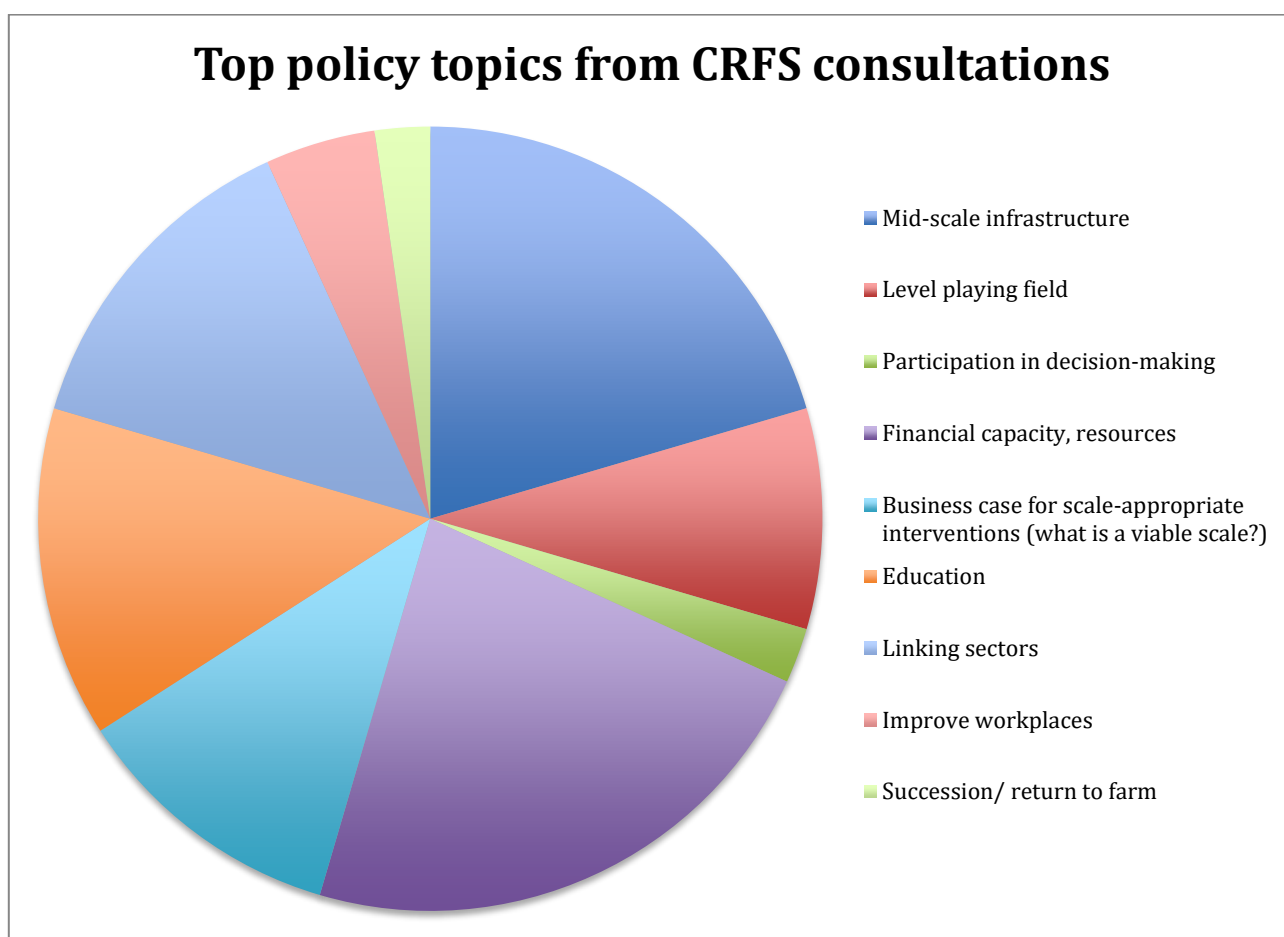
Tours and discussions:

1. Gwillimdale Farms, Sheldon Creek Dairy, Martin Family Fruit Farm, Mapleton's Dairy, March 2016

Presentations and discussions

2. Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, September 26
3. Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group, May 26
4. York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Working Group, July 18
5. Region of Halton, summer 2016
6. Region of York, summer 2016
7. Food Secure Canada, October 2016
8. Canadian Association for Food Studies (CAFS) conference June 2016
9. Nova Scotia Food Summit May 2016
10. Ontario Climate Change Symposium May 2016
11. TFPC focus group March 3, 2017
12. Sustain Ontario focus group March 9, 2017
13. CAFS conference opening plenary May 2017
14. Discussion group: Simcoe Health Unit (summer 2016)
15. Discussion group: Durham Food Policy Council (summer 2016)

Table 6: Frequency of policy recommendations from stakeholder interviews



The most common policy development that was promoted by stakeholders was financial mechanisms to support the development of regional food and agriculture, and the development of mid-scale infrastructure to support regional food systems. Mid-scale infrastructure for agri-food systems would include policies, regulations and regional/ municipal plans that facilitate and incubate food hubs, mid-scale processing, regional distribution, and diverse food and farm activities.

The need for a national food policy was also frequently mentioned. Limited funding, rapid staff turnover, and the need to maintain frontline services has meant that organizations working on food security are less likely to have time and energy to engage in work to change policy. The new national food policy initiative may help to make important changes to this context, at the very least in advancing the conversation to the level of national awareness.

The following sections review the policy drivers and key policy initiatives that were identified to create the food system that stakeholders want to see: resilient, sustainable, and responsive to needs across the supply chain.

CRFS Toronto policy research and development results

A key principle of the work was to examine how policy changes have been made in the past and are being made currently. As an IPES (2016: 6) report notes, “Farmers cannot simply be expected to rethink their production model, nor consumers to radically reorient their purchasing patterns, without a major

shift in the incentives running through food systems.” Identification of opportunities for change is only a starting point; there must also be an understanding of how change has happened and can happen in the future. Policy development tends to occur through the activities of robust alliances and coalitions, as well as the stakeholder consultation referred to earlier. The research agenda included an examination of types of collaboration that have been effective or mobilized in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Toronto, as well as the keys to success in coalitions.

It was found that collaborations took various forms in the GGH, including:

- Collaborative activity and consultation for development of food and agriculture plans or strategies
 - The development of agri-food strategies
 - The development of food charters
 - Work on campaigns for agricultural promotion/ advocacy (e.g., consensus-based input from coalitions to the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review)
- Project-focused collaborations
 - Partnerships and contracts (based on legal agreements)
 - Non-profit project based collaborations (e.g., Ecosource manages urban agriculture projects with specific community partners such as the one with the Ontario Early Years Centre and LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada).
- Networks
 - Business based networks
 - Value-based networks
 - Public/ private networks
- Food policy councils or similar groups
- University/ college collaborations

Each group can take on responsibility for policy advocacy or participation in government consultations. Project focused collaborations are the least likely to engage in policy work, as they tend to focus on time-limited projects (e.g., installation of a community garden, negotiation of pricing for a commodity). Many project-based partnerships however are interconnected with committee and policy group work that draws on the same sectoral leaders. Their policy work is strengthened by their practical work together that builds trust and mutual understanding of issues.

Stakeholders reported that keys to collaboration were sometimes a matter of “win-win” relations, although many participants added elements of shared values and understanding to a simplistic calculation of benefit. The examples of longer term sustainable co-operation found in the research went well beyond the formula of “win-win”. Long-term collaboration was found to be based on trust, multiple experiences of successful initiatives, recognition of shared values and no immediate expectation of return.

The challenges to successful work together were found to include:

- i) divergent culture
- ii) divergent goals
- iii) divergent capacity
- iv) divergent access to power

Considerations of these elements can contribute to strengthening factors of successful collaboration to increase resilience across the food system. Implementation of solutions to these challenges may improve the likelihood of success for joint initiatives (such as policy work).

Policy opportunities, systemic solutions and recommendations

The multi-stakeholder Task Force identified the overall vision as change towards a food system where everyone can afford healthy food that is sourced as regionally as possible from a stable agricultural sector. This next section addresses the question of change more directly; the focus is the policy change that provides benefits and increased sustainability to the food system overall. The research team asked stakeholders: what policy differences are required to achieve the changes you want to see in the food system?

In order to examine how change happens and can happen in the future, interviewees were asked the following questions:

1. What has changed and what drove that change?
2. What is changing now?
3. What will or should change in the future?

The research showed that rapid change at one time or another has affected every part of the food system; and that stakeholders can readily make recommendations for future positive change. The research found that: 1) that every stakeholder group can easily identify aspects of their part of the food system that they would like to change; 2) that each group can also identify practical solutions and strategies to achieve the change they want to see and that 3) much of the expertise and capacity, if not actual examples, exist to achieve the change desired.

Many factors have driven changes in the regional food systems. These are described quantitatively in the Situational Analysis Report. Primary factors for the GGH include ongoing consolidation of agricultural businesses, loss of farmland that is near markets, reduction in primary and secondary processing options, consolidation in markets, reduction in regional or independent (non-chain) markets, increase in export orientation, social and environmental pressures from increasing population, and ongoing increases in food insecurity and low nutritional outcomes from food. Policy, planning, legislation and regulation has driven these changes and can be used to rebuild a food system to fit the current needs and goals of stakeholders.

Some innovations and changes have a salutary effect in one sector while damaging functions in another. For instance, the success of farmers' markets has led to by-laws and permitting review that can facilitate direct-to-consumer sales. The success has also led to private pop-up markets that may encroach on farmer sales, as well as some markets that under-perform and provide insufficient income for farmer success.

Sales in farmers' market venues has tended to be oriented to the middle class, and often do not offer solutions to lower income and marginalized groups. These markets can fuel the increase in artisanal markets that are not an option for lower income people (both by price and because they do not feel welcome). Market voucher programs have been inconsistently funded but are one solution that has been tested in Toronto. Foodshare's Mobile Market combines the pop-up mobile market with the Good Food Market approach (for under-supplied, low income communities) to get healthy, affordable food to neighbourhoods with limited access to fresh food.

The examination of change in the past and anticipated in the future can pinpoint the drivers and patterns of food system change in order to stimulate the change that stakeholders want to see, and to identify the policies that can drive that change. Systemic changes, trends or opportunities for change were identified through interviews and secondary research. The focus has been on change for which assets, expertise and the will (of organizations or policy-makers) already exists. These include:

- Local sourcing at independent retail
- Climate change responsiveness
- Technology innovations
- Direct marketing from farmer to consumer
- Increase in local food at mass market
- Institutional procurement
- Aquaponics and other urban food production
- Mid-scale infrastructure
- Level playing field
- Participation in decision-making
- Financial capacity, allocation of resources
- Scale-appropriate regulations and feasibility studies
- Education

Stakeholders were asked to name specific policy changes as they related to the changes they would like to see. Stakeholder recommendations were often framed in terms of ongoing policy work in their networks. For instance, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has clear policy recommendations for municipalities. Sustain Ontario has clear policy direction in a number of areas, reflected in their committee structure. Government at all levels has policies pertaining to GGH food and agriculture that are in various stages of redesign following or preceding the current coordinated review.

The policy recommendations collated from these topics are identified at the end of each topic, and aggregated in the next section.

Local sourcing at independent retail

Independent retailers with local food procurement practices (mid-scale grocery stores such as Fiesta Farms, as well as convenience stores, and restaurants like the Farmhouse Tavern in Toronto) have championed the support for local farmers at their retail outlets. In addition to the increase in attention to locally sourced food at the independent retail level, new projects like Toronto's subway markets offer healthy food options (Grab2Go) at accessible locations. The city has also championed new Healthy Corner stores projects similar to the initiatives in Philadelphia and other U.S. cities (<http://thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/corner-store>). In Brazil, local food sourcing has been accompanied by policies to ensure the availability of healthy foods in low income areas, and fair pricing for basic food items (Rocha 2000).

Policy drivers include:

- Fair price-setting combined with incentives to supply under-utilized markets and low-income groups
- Funds and training to stimulate these projects
- Support for food hubs like 100km Foods to aggregate regional production to supply regional markets

Climate change responsiveness

Food growers are aware of and addressing the impact of climate change, as volatile weather patterns increase and the pattern and intensity of insect populations and plant diseases shift. The agricultural sector has also seen an increase in knowledge and application of techniques that improve soil health, prevent erosion, reduce chemical use and manage water sustainably.

Policy drivers include:

- Support for research stations like the Muck Research Station in the Holland Marsh to expand research into climate-resilient agriculture
- Funding tied to implementation of climate resilience in all forms of agriculture (including urban)
- Reduction of or increased cost contribution requirements for emergency support (crop insurance) for agri-food businesses not implementing climate resilience mechanisms within five years after transition incentives are issued

Technology innovations

Technology is also a site of ongoing change and upgrading, including the increase in online markets. The online marketing and home delivery businesses have increased the necessary level of technical expertise for many buyers and sellers.

Policy drivers include:

- Definitions for local food that focus on regional production (not provincial)
- Public training (online, in person) to facilitate transition to online procurement for institutional buyers
- Discounted access to regional rail systems for transport of goods to local markets

Direct marketing from farmer to consumer

Although the retail sector has seen consolidation, with independent stores purchased by mass market chains or closing their doors, there has also been a rise in local procurement for retail and restaurant markets. The retail sector has seen a proliferation of farmers' markets, box programs and local food sourcing at stores and institutions, as more consumers look for local and fresh food. Labeling initiatives to identify origin and other characteristics (e.g., Local Flavour Plus) have accompanied these changes.

Producers can sell through existing markets that fit their volume better (farmgate, farmers' markets, on farm stores) rather than expanding to meet mass market requirements at considerable risk and expense. Local food maps and farm fresh associations, as well as regional food events, have increased the profile of local food; the infrastructure from distribution to year-round markets is still being built. Food security organizations mentioned in interviews that a significant barrier to spending their procurement budget on local producers is simply not knowing how to find the suppliers (given all the other demands on their time and lack of agricultural expertise). Some School Nutrition Programs have been working to change this (Nelson 2014).

Other innovations include by-law changes to facilitate urban agriculture (Hamilton) and farmers' markets (Toronto). These may be hard-won victories in the first municipalities that lead the way, but are more easily replicated once the benefits are proven.

Policy drivers include:

- Further development of by-law changes to facilitate farmers' markets and urban agriculture
- Public support for regional infrastructure for agri-food supply chains
- Municipal and regional policies to set percentages for institutional procurement of local food
- Mandates and budget to support food policy councils and agricultural committees at all regional government offices

Increase in local food at mass market

There are several opportunities to increase local food at mass market, all of which depend on assets that are currently in operation to different degrees. Large distributors (and mass market distribution centres) can increase their efforts to access regional food as much as possible through source-based procurement priorities. Local food availability at mass market would be facilitated by permitting individual chain stores to purchase from regional producers again. An increase in promotion based on seasonality would help re-educate consumers not to expect the same product every day of the year. Sellers (producers, packers) must also find pricing, volumes and terms conducive to the sale.

For large buyers (mass market, hospitals, schools), a shift to local food can mean a significant mismatch in scale as well as approach. The mass market strategy is to offer a few local items to test the market, and to replace high volume items with privately labeled examples that are often supplied by the same local supplier, but may have adjustments to recipes and ingredients to meet lower price points or consumer preferences. The limited item approach has failed in some instances where the cost of delivering small amounts to mass market or food service companies was not matched by the revenues generated for the suppliers. When local food is part of the same supply chain as other products, this is less likely to be an issue. When local food is a separate supply chain, there are logistical and infrastructural challenges in increasing the flow of local food to mainstream markets which might need incentives to be overcome.

Policy drivers include:

- Support for mass market to accommodate smaller trucks (flexible dock ramps)
- Support for mass market to allow individual stores to buy from regional farmers within a certain area (based on reducing restraint of trade attributes of procurement practices)
- Requirement for formal pricing contracts with third party authority to administer grievances (combined with incentives to purchase regional foods)

Institutional procurement

Many stakeholders have begun to work on facilitation of institutional procurement, to reduce the barriers for regional producers and to develop these new markets for regional supply. The shift requires transitions for suppliers and buyers; in order to move from direct sales to institutions, suppliers must meet the more restricted food safety rules, provide a year-round supply as much as possible, meet contract pricing (often low, based on volume) and be able to provide the volume that this market requires.

To enable a CRFS approach institutions must be able to shift to a more seasonal menu, prepare from fresh ingredients, work with more than one supplier, and perhaps shift cost savings from food to another area of operation. A shift from pre-prepared meals to fresh food can reduce costs because raw ingredients are more affordable than prepared dishes, and tend to reduce waste (and the cost of

disposal). The change would also better ensure the nutritional levels of meals in hospitals, long-term care, and schools) by controlling the ingredients from the start. New trade deals threaten to restrict or prevent preferential treatment for local suppliers. Important work has been done (MacRae 2014) to identify the way forward for local procurement policies that avoids challenges under trade deal agreements.

Policy drivers include:

- Policies to ensure widespread formalization and implementation of public procurement policies for local food (with percentages and budgets to meet policy goals)
- Policies to facilitate the exit without penalty from contracts with suppliers not providing local food sufficient to meet commitment
- Policy directions to the Ontario Food Terminal during expansion to support increased access to local food through the terminal

Aquaponics and other urban food production

Urban food production for local markets represents one important kind of innovation that is specific to urban areas, but has the potential to be replicated or to lead to more system-wide change. Innovations like urban agriculture, inland shrimp farming and aquaponics can increase the locally available protein; aquaponics can open new ways to produce protein in or near urban areas. Urban bee-keeping efforts, urban perennial (fruit and nut) production, food processing waste reduction, and edible forests may only exist in small numbers but with umbrella organizations like the Urban Toronto Beekeepers' Association, Not Far From the Tree, Provision Coalition and others to spread the word and offer tools for replication, the innovation could become systemic change, just as urban agriculture (fresh vegetables) has become a significant area of urban food system change.

Policy drivers include:

- By-laws coupled with public education to support range of urban food production
- Policy to implement community composting connected to community agriculture
- Development of policy and funding support for harvest of urban food products
- Review and revision of by-laws to permit specific types of urban animal husbandry for food and fibre

Mid-scale aggregation, distribution and processing infrastructure

Mid-scale infrastructure was by far the most frequently mentioned opportunity and need. Several interviewees emphasized the need to link sectors that tend to conduct their activities in siloes. The research explored the ongoing agricultural focus (government and industry) on mass market and export, despite dwindling returns. The research showed that part of the problem is lack of appropriate scale infrastructure, including lack of knowledge about how to access regional markets, whom to contact, and how to manage local distribution costs effectively.

The stakeholders explored a range of interventions that shorten supply chains, establish regional processing, distribution and transportation and rebuild the food systems around regional production for regional markets³. This set of recommendations became the basis of several primary policy recommendations aggregated from the CRFS Toronto project.

³ See the Nourishing Communities work on food hubs: <http://nourishingontario.ca/publications-and-presentations/food-hubs-lit-reviews/>.

Interviewees recommended:

- A return to direct producer sales to retail, including chain stores
- Further development of direct sales opportunities for small scale, near urban growers
- Technology (online ordering, logistics) to facilitate the operation of food hubs
- The development of food hubs
- The implementation of small and regional processing facilities
- Support for traceability for regional producers

In each case, experimentation or demonstration of the viability of the solution has already been done. [100km Foods](#) has been a leader in rebuilding local food infrastructure; the business has continually and rapidly expanded since it was launched, indicating that there is a ready market for the aggregation and distribution of local foods in urban areas. Supermarkets have begun to test direct procurement (for individual stores) to meet customer demands for local. Local food maps and support for new farmers' markets, as well as distributors like 100km Foods have increased access to urban markets for near-urban growers.

Examples of technology advances include the FoodReach online portal and [Open Food Network Canada](#)⁴, as well as other online technology used by food banks (Link2Feed), hubs (100km Foods) and food hubs for institutional buyers (e.g., the SCOR food hub).

A few food hubs have demonstrated the viability of the model; the business case is bolstered by the long-term effectiveness of organizations like Foodshare, and independent distributors like Flanagan's who began before the term "food hub" was in use. VG Meats provides an excellent example of sophisticated traceability for a regionally focused abattoir that aggregates and distributes from various farms, including their own.

Mid-scale distribution and markets can be supported by consumers and policy-makers alike as it may be the most promising solution to achieve regional food system regeneration. Mid-scale processing infrastructure can also be rebuilt, although that can take time. The renewal of mid-scale infrastructure that has been lost faces various barriers. For instance, Niagara's extensive loss of fruit tree orchards following the CanGro plant closing would take years to regenerate even if the infrastructure was there. The trees and orchard infrastructure are gone on many farms, which have been replanted with other crops or sold for development. Likewise, the new incubator projects in Toronto (FoodStarter) and Northumberland County (Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre) consumed considerable time and money for start-up.

The development of food hubs has also faced various challenges. Existing large scale markets have advantages of volume and supply that new entrants have trouble matching. Consumers resist any significant premium on local food, despite the current lack of level playing field. The Nourishing Communities research group produced important work and case studies on the food hub sector in Ontario (<http://nourishingontario.ca/publications-and-presentations/>).

The Greenbelt Fund has invested over a number of years in the development and feasibility assessment of food hubs and regional food infrastructure in Ontario. As Naccarato from the Greenbelt Fund remarked in the interview, there are two quite separate systems now, one with efficiencies and economies of scale, and the other benefiting from flexibility and rapid responsiveness, with procurement matched to online ordering and little physical aggregation or storage. Although there may

⁴ See Nourishing Communities at <http://nourishingontario.ca/food-hactivism/>.

be a place for both systems, the latter offers some solutions to challenges that stakeholders have identified, but lacks policy and financial supports to expand smoothly and to meet its full potential.

Although only a few new food hubs have been launched recently, their impact has been significant. For instance, the food processing/ aggregation hub in Smith Falls (outside the GGH) linked local producers, food entrepreneurs, a regional distributor (Wendy's Mobile Market⁵) and partnered with the municipality to increase the availability of regional food in eastern Ontario. They now offer their own distribution services.

Other innovations in distribution include FoodReach (aggregating food for community agencies and school food programs), and Foodshare (combining aggregation for agencies and school food programs with consumer direct programs like the Good Food Box, Good Food Market and Mobile Market, as well as kitchen training and meal preparation (both to sell and to provide). Innovations also include the shift towards distribution and local food procurement that was championed by Community Food Centres © but is also being taken up by the food banks with their strong logistics and infrastructure assets. These projects maintain a focus on food security solutions and can improve food access in local areas while developing models for the mid-scale infrastructure needed for the food system overall.

Innovations in processing and food business incubation infrastructure (e.g., [Food Starter](#), the [Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre](#), [Two Rivers Food Hub](#)) can be expensive; a review is needed to test feasibility and cost scenarios, as well as structural options (public/ private or public/ non-profit partnerships, etc.).

Policy drivers include:

- Facilitation of zoning to allow mid-scale aggregation and distribution close to regional production and regional markets
- Development of appropriate scale regulations for mid-scale processing and food handling
- Development of policy measures to support diverse uses on agricultural land

Level playing field

The notion of a level playing field was raised by the agricultural community, particularly by mainstream producers who felt that non-Canadian producers have an unfair advantage in access to chemical tools and lower labour costs. The consolidated power of the retail chains has meant that food producers feel like the playing field is not level when it comes to price-setting (except in the case of supply management). One innovative thinker suggested we should consider supply management for vegetables in addition to the existing programs. The recent history of agriculture has been the erosion, except in the supply managed sectors, of the ability to maintain fair pricing in a sector, a function that before free trade could be undertaken by sector associations.

The desire for a level playing field was noted also by alternative producers who do not have access to the support payments, programs and crop insurance that mainstream producers can draw on. These payments are public funding totaling \$5.3 billion in 2015-2016 according to one Government of Canada report (2016: 9), but they are directed to mainstream production.

⁵ See From Miller (2010) *From Land to Plate* (<https://sustainontario.com/2010/11/10/3416/news/from-land-to-plate>) for a history of this company's early years; also a Nourishing Communities case study: <http://nourishingontario.ca/wendys-country-market/>.

Policy drivers include:

- Expansion of supply management to other commodities
- Policies to support formal contracts with mass market with penalties for breaking contracts
- Policies to create support payments or other incentives for alternative producers (organic, small-scale, ecological)

Improve food access for all without negative impact on agricultural community

The proposal to establish community shops, that offer a full range of food with credit provided for low income shoppers (a model pursued on a small scale in Toronto with Parkdale's [Co-op Cred Program](#)) seeks to "level the playing field" in a different way, by making access to food no longer contingent on income level. The new basic income pilots (2017) apply a similar philosophy with a broader impact to disconnect food from the market and recognize the right to basic needs such as food.

The need for a basic or guaranteed income was frequently cited in interviews and discussions. Local advocates from Toronto, Hamilton and other municipalities have advanced the basic income idea for some years. Nationally, Food Secure Canada has been a key leader in the policy initiative. The basic income advocacy activities link to more modest calls for changes to social assistance to allow low income people to afford food as well as rent, or to initiate a program like SNAP in the U.S. SNAP can be used with credit-style cards to reduce the stigma associated with food stamps (e.g., Toronto's "Put Food in the Budget" campaign). The recognition of the need for these solutions crosses sectors; food growers want a situation in which 1) they are paid fairly for their products, and 2) consumers can afford these fair prices. This lifts struggles for improvement into the realm of economic system change, where it seems that diverse stakeholders can agree.

There was also widespread commitment to a national food policy, and a national school food policy, both measures in which Canada lags behind comparable nations. Stakeholders in interviews mentioned the need to prioritize food policy, even to enshrine it as an essential service, which would define food formally as necessary to life. As an essential service it could not be withheld or arbitrarily removed. Such policies involve the recognition of the right to food (so far not implemented in Canada). The recognition of the right to food constrains governments to ensure that all people have sufficient food, regardless of their ability to pay. This policy direction links to the widely supported strategy of local food procurement policies at publicly funded institutions: hospitals, schools, universities/ colleges, government offices. Consultations for the new national food policy were announced in May 2017, with a rapid timeline to complete consultations by September 2017.

Policy drivers include:

- A national food policy
- A national school food policy
- Sufficient social assistance, through a guaranteed income or other measures, to ensure that everyone can afford to eat healthy food

Participation in decision-making

Although only one interviewee identified the need for more participation in decision-making, this was a theme that ran through discussions about bureaucracy. In many cases, interviewees did not object to regulations in general (particularly food safety regulations or protection of the environment). However, they voiced opinions that without consulting their interests, new regulations could not address the actual sectoral context, or legislate a solution that actually addressed the problem.

In the case of food security organizations, unless they are a mandated committee of a municipality or region, the interviewees reported struggles to advocate and achieve engagement with their needs at a policy or regulatory level.

Policy drivers include:

- Mandates and budget to support food policy councils and agricultural committees at all regional government offices
- Accountability policy for government consultations to ensure responsiveness to participant input
- Policies to encourage more consultations like the coordinated review, across all system areas

Financial capacity, allocation of resources

Changes to the allocation of financial resources was a frequent recommendation from stakeholders⁶. Ten interviewees directly named access to financial resources as a need, both for their own sector and for food systems in general. For food security organizations as well as many consumers, financial resources have dwindled.

Most food security organization representatives named poverty reduction and basic or guaranteed income as a necessary part of the solution. The call for a guaranteed income reflects a desire for systemic change to a system that inevitably links poverty with hunger as well as to other abuses of human rights.

The food security sector was also more likely to name the need for stable funding. For the entrepreneur-focused projects, access to start up and operational capital, as well as the ongoing and increasing costs of meeting bureaucratic requirements were all described. There is clearly a place for a range of financial instruments to address transition to regional infrastructure for healthy food produced more regionally and accessible to everyone.

Financial resources are a challenge for consumers as well. Financial constraints reduce consumers' flexibility in food choices as well as their capacity to spend the time to locate fresh healthy food. Options that are convenient to people working long hours and multiple jobs have been reduced; rising transit prices may limit consumer shopping options as well. The reduction has increased car dependency as well as unhealthy eating practices, but may also increase interest in home delivery options for those who can afford them.

Another financial topic raised occasionally was the need for support for the next generation of farmers. Young people returning to the family farm face barriers to access such as the capital to purchase quota and/or land from their parents, or the lack of access to additional farmland in the area nearby (due to capital or because the land has been converted to another use). For farmers entering the field from non-farming families, the barriers are similar but greatly increased with the challenges of entering a new community, using alternative techniques (diverse crops, direct sales, organic farming), and with the need to access training for novel approaches to farming like agroecology, or mixed cropping.

⁶ See also Nourishing Communities: <http://nourishingontario.ca/publications-and-presentations/food-hubs-lit-reviews/> .

Policy drivers include:

- Tax policies to facilitate succession of established farms to family members and to unrelated new farmers
- Financial, permitting and zoning mechanisms to encourage new and alternative types of farming
- Policies to drive healthy food access funding and community financing as in the U.S., Nova Scotia and other parts of Canada (e.g., Community Economic Development Investment Funds: see <http://farmworks.ca/about/>)

Scale appropriate regulations and feasibility studies

The idea of scale appropriate regulations was frequently mentioned across the supply chain; permitting and food safety regulations have been designed with large scale operations in mind, and are often not well matched to the needs, capacity and physical characteristics of mid or small-scale. The mismatch can delay or halt projects that could meet some of the needs of regionalization of the food systems.

There was a clear recognition that the business case for novel (mid-scale) enterprises of all kinds was needed, as well as perhaps better assessment of the relative costs of different kinds of development. [Cost of Community Services](#) studies in the U.S. and in Canada for [Red Deer, Alberta](#) have shown that agriculture and industry bring money into a regional or municipal area. On the other hand, residential development is shown in these studies to have a negative impact on the public budget. Although development charges are used sometimes to transfer the cost of housing to the main beneficiaries (the developers) these are used unevenly and are not fully effective in Canada (Slack 2006).

Policy drivers include:

- Scale-appropriate regulations and feasibility assessments for mid-scale infrastructure like regional food hubs
- Policies that mandate Cost of Community Services for areas under development
- Financial and tax policies linked to actual return on investment to municipality for different forms of development

Education

Almost every stakeholder reported that their organization or sector engaged in some form of education, from practical training for new workers to specific business training offered at business incubators, to formal training at specialized high school or college programs. Several interviewees mentioned the need to revive extension-style services in which government staff provide expertise in the field for producers. The value of the Muck Research Station to agriculture north of Toronto has been recognized well beyond the Holland Marsh itself.

Research and education is particularly lacking and underfunded for measures that shorten supply chains. However, some excellent interventions can act as models for further action. For instance, the [Ecological Farmers of Ontario](#) mobilized funding to create extension and mentoring arrangements for ecological farmers (for whom there is little support of any kind from government). Durham College, with an excellent food and farming program that links budding chefs with urban agriculture practices to build new farm to table enterprises, is committed to increasing their already impressive research work. They hope to act as an extension agent with knowledge of the specific climate and soil in eastern Ontario.

Policy drivers include:

- Research and educational opportunities directed at regional agriculture and regional infrastructure needs linked to shorter supply chains
- Reinstitution of public extension services for agri-food businesses (through Ministry of Agriculture or other Ministry)
- Extension services linked to universities through public granting process

Fair labour practices and decent work

Many stakeholders mentioned a need to change the agricultural labour system (a need that can be extended to food services as well). There was an interest in creating systems that made the jobs effective for Canadians. Stakeholders understand that agricultural jobs are both highly skilled and seasonably variable, requiring long hours from trained workers during the season, and a reduction of work hours in the off-season.

The insecurity of the jobs (tied to seasonality and the vicissitudes of the agricultural economy) seems to be the central challenge cited against hiring Canadians; in fact, this problem would need to be addressed if the migrant workers movement demands for status on entry were met⁷. However, sectors that have full-time and/ or permanent work (e.g. livestock, or integrated businesses like Martin's Family Fruit Farm or Pfennings', with value-added as well as fresh produce distribution activities) seem to have little trouble retaining and attracting local workers. Since farmers tend to "name" their migrant workers, so that the same person is brought back every year, providing more job security through status and access to Canadians' workers' rights does not conflict with these general practices.

New mid-scale infrastructure would increase the security of workplace opportunities, as regional food hubs, farm-based value-added activities, and diverse marketing strategies are more likely to have full-time and/ or year-round positions. Public money could be devoted less to working out deals with countries with workers desperate for employment, even if it means leaving their families for most of the year, and more to supporting year-round work in agriculture. For the question of the low pay and low tenure security in other parts of the food system, from large retailers to cafeteria workers, the answers move back into the realm of economics and basic income. If people were able to pay more for food and to ensure healthy food for their families due to more stable incomes or lower housing costs, they probably would, whether or not the assistance was tied explicitly to food purchases.

Policy drivers include

- Revised labour practices, government support and subsidy programs to ensure the necessary skilled labour for all food system areas with tenure security and fair compensation for work
- Policies to provide paths to status for migrant farmworkers, especially those with tenure security (returning every year to the same job)
- Policies to improve mid-scale and farm-based infrastructure to increase the number of year-round jobs in the sector

⁷ See for instance the work of Professor Janet McLaughlin and others: <https://www.wlu.ca/academics/faculties/faculty-of-human-and-social-sciences/faculty-profiles/janet-mclaughlin/index.html>; <http://www.migrantworkerhealth.ca/AboutUsGeneral.html> as well as the work of Charles Levkoe and others at <http://www.foodandlabour.ca/>.

Key policy recommendations

The most frequently mentioned policy recommendations across the food systems were also policy strategies that have inspired significant collaborative efforts. These are summarized below.

The review of stakeholder input provides guidelines for eight key policy recommendations:

1. Develop and support transition to increased mid-scale infrastructure (regional processing, distribution, marketing)
2. Establish financial resources that support a range of scales and stages
3. Establish scale-appropriate regulations and feasibility assessments for mid-scale infrastructure like regional food hubs
4. Increase research and educational opportunities directed at regional agriculture and regional infrastructure needs linked to shorter supply chains
5. Provide sufficient social assistance, through a guaranteed income or other measures, to ensure that everyone can afford to eat healthy food
6. Establish a national food policy and a national school food policy
7. Ensure widespread formalization and implementation of public procurement policies for local food (with percentages and budgets to meet policy goals)
8. Revise the labour practices, government support and subsidy programs to ensure the necessary skilled labour for all food system areas with tenure security and fair compensation for work

Conclusion: action planning for policy recommendations

In the final project phase, the policy recommendations were presented for discussion and prioritization to the CRFS Task Force. Three recommendations were identified as underway at a national level (national food policy, guaranteed income and labour policies). Institutional procurement was also deemed to be underway through the institutions as well as in recent projects of the GHFFA.

The Task Force recommended ongoing focus on mid-scale infrastructure development, drawing on the first four recommendations. The activities recommended encompass physical infrastructure (food hubs, mid-scale processing facilities, mid-scale transportation solutions) as well as “soft” infrastructure such as financial initiatives and education to expand regional food system engagement for producers and consumers.

The research team conducted focus groups and discussions with a focus on these topics. Three scenarios for food hub development were explored, including 1) aggregation and distribution food hubs; 2) combination food hubs with aggregation, distribution and scale-appropriate processing and 3) food access food hubs (aggregation and distribution to community organizations and others providing food to low income and marginalized groups).

The consultation yielded action plans to develop the food hubs, with three separate sets of activity (see Appendix C and D). The attached materials provide action planning template forms for each type of food hub that can be used by stakeholders in the future to develop a detailed plan, address challenges and risks, and identify stakeholders and resources.

This consultation work will be widely disseminated with the final completion and release of the project reports. Stakeholders have been able to review drafts of the reports as well. Task Force recommendations have been incorporated into revisions to engage different sector inputs and encourage wide dissemination and application of the work. Partners can support the communication and promotion of these results through newsletters and other communication opportunities (such as the Wilfrid Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems FLEdGE research project website, TFPC’s communications, or Sustain Ontario’s news blogs). With sufficient dissemination, the impact of the project can continue to ripple outwards through multiple sectors and through the work of diverse stakeholders long after the end of the project.

Appendix A: Stakeholder list and affiliations

Last name	First name	Organization	Area	Sector
Commodities				
Bakker	Sarah	Field Sparrow Farms	Kawartha Lakes	beef, chicken
Brubacher	Don	Ontario Potato Board	Ontario	potatoes
Ciceran	Kelly	Ontario Apple Growers	Ontario	apples
Downey	Trevor	Downey Farms	Simcoe	potatoes
Martin	Steve	Martin's Family Fruit Farm	Waterloo	apples
Mous	Cathy	Chicken producer	Niagara	chicken
Opsteen	John	Chicken producer	Halton	chicken
Schillings	Hubert	White Feather Farms (chicken)	Durham	chicken
Holland Marsh				
Eek	Avia and Bill	vegetable producer	Holland Marsh	carrots
Hambly	Christina	Gwillimdale Farms	Holland Marsh	carrots
De Haan	John	Gwillimdale Farms	Holland Marsh	carrots
MacDonald	Mary Ruth	Muck Crops Research Station	Holland Marsh	research and education
Mott	Jody	Holland Marsh Growers Association	Holland Marsh	network
Shepphard	Matt	Bradford Co-op	Holland Marsh	agricultural supply
Schrestha	Jane	Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit	Simcoe	health
Smith	Paul	Smith Gardens	York	carrots
Toronto				
Conway	Shawn	FoodReach	Toronto	food security
Dwyer	Jacqueline	Black Farmers Collective	Toronto	vegetable producer
Livingston	Noel	Black Farmers Collective	Toronto	vegetable producer
Cheng	Amy	Red Pocket Farm	Toronto	world crops producer
Dinner	Ayal	Greenest City	Toronto	urban agriculture
McCauley	Dana	Foodstarter (with Lisa Reed, intern)	Toronto	food business incubator
Martyn	Emily	Regent Park Community Food Centre	Toronto	food security
Nicholas	Bruce	Ontario Food Terminal	Toronto	food hub
Leo	Gianfranco	Ontario Food Terminal	Toronto	food hub

Noble	Ryan	North York Harvest	Toronto	food security
Pearlman	Mark	FoodReach	Toronto	food security
Rebick	Alvin	Foodshare	Toronto	food security
Sawtell	Paul	100km Foods	Toronto	food hub
Teitel-Payne	Rhonda	Toronto Urban Growers	Toronto	urban agriculture
Kuhns	James	Toronto Urban Growers	Toronto	urban agriculture
Durham and Northumberland Region				
Drummond	Mary Ruth	Durham Food Policy Council	Durham	network
Znajda	Sandra	Durham Food Policy Council	Durham	network
Jibb	Stacey	Durham Region	Durham	government
Mellor	Trissia	Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre	Northumberland	food business incubator
Mullin	Joe	Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre	Northumberland	food business incubator
Stevenson	Ross	Durham College Food and Farming program	Durham	education
Werry	Marlene	Durham College Food and Farming program	Durham	education
City of Hamilton				
Hickey-Evans	Joanne	City of Hamilton	Hamilton	government
Jacks	Mike	Goodness Me (Hamilton)	Hamilton	retail
Kalinowski	Katherine	Good Shepherd (Hamilton)	Hamilton	food security
Lukasik	Lynda	Environment Hamilton	Hamilton	food security
Lee	Juby	Environment Hamilton	Hamilton	food security
Santucci	Joanne	Hamilton Food Share	Hamilton	food security
Taylor	Celeste	Hamilton Food Share	Hamilton	food security
Peel Region				
Hatch	Chris	Mississauga Food Bank	Peel	food security
Williams	Melanie	Peel Region	Peel	government
Hutchinson	Karen	Headwaters Communities in Action	Dufferin, Peel	network
Wong	Anita	Ecosource	Peel	urban agriculture
Halton Region				

Burr	Chris	Halton Food for Thought	Halton	food security
Cruikshank	Gayle	Halton Food Council	Halton	network
Matsubuchi-Shaw	Moirra	Halton Food Council	Halton	network
DeMarchi-Meyers	Anna	Region of Halton	Halton	government
McKay	Jessica	Region of Halton	Halton	government
Mikulak	Michael	Region of Halton	Halton	government
Garrison	Lynn	Region of Halton	Halton	government
Richardson	Meagan	Feeding Halton	Halton	food security
Hadju	Brenda	Feeding Halton	Halton	food security
Reaume	Jamie	Country Heritage Park	Halton	education
Fiset	Lorraine	Country Heritage Park	Halton	education
York Region				
Banfield	Charles	York Region	York	government
Stonehocker	Joan	York Region Food System Alliance and York Region Food Network	York	food security
Greavette	Kate	York Region Food System Alliance and York Region Food Network	York	food security
Gomes	Antonio	Cavaleiro Farm	York	mixed crop producer
Guelph/ Waterloo				
Pfenning	Jenn	Pfenning's Organic Farm	Waterloo	vegetable producer
Armitage	Simon	The Seed, Guelph Community Health Centre	Guelph	food security
Niagara Region				
Barron	Rhonda	Bridges Community Health Centre/ Fort Erie Food Security Network	Niagara	food security
Corkum	Diane	Project Share	Niagara	food security
Hodgson	Bill	Niagara Region	Niagara	government
Acs	Eric	Niagara Region	Niagara	government
Souter	Betty-Lou	Community Care	Niagara	food security
Provincial and regional networks				
Hassanali	Meena	Provision Coalition	Ontario	waste
Freeman	Anne	Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network	Greenbelt	network

Geerts	Helma	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs	Ontario	government
Groff	Phil	Sustain Ontario	Ontario	network
Macpherson	Kathy	Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation and Greenbelt Fund	Greenbelt	network, funder
Naccarato	Franco	Greenbelt Fund	Greenbelt	network, funder
Puterborough	Carolyn	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs	Ontario	government

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Appendices C, D: Scenarios and Action planning for mid-scale infrastructure

The Toronto CRFS assessment found that regionalisation of food systems requires the rebuilding of scale-appropriate (small and midscale) processing, storage, distribution, etc. Despite the high agricultural productivity of the area (the Greater Golden Horseshoe), opportunities for regional processing have dropped significantly: producers must send raw ingredients abroad for processing, weakening the overall food system as the higher manufacturing margins go to other regions or countries. A 2016 online asset map database for the agri-food sector in the Toronto city region shows a significant gap in fruit and vegetable preserving and meat product manufacturing.

Explorations of why regional producers continue to focus on mass market and export, despite dwindling returns, showed that part of the problem is lack of appropriate scale infrastructure, including lack of knowledge about how to access regional markets, whom to contact, and how to manage local distribution cost effectively. The rise of food hubs may remedy this challenge, particularly if the food hubs feature processing capacity as well as distribution (by comparison, the food hubs that have risen rapidly with USDA support in Canada are mostly focused on regional aggregation and distribution).

The Toronto CRFS Task Force therefore recommended to focus on mid-scale infrastructure development, drawing on the first four recommendations. The activities recommended encompass physical infrastructure (food hubs, mid-scale processing facilities, mid-scale transportation solutions) as well as “soft” infrastructure such as financial initiatives and education to expand regional food system engagement for producers and consumers.

New mid-scale infrastructure was also thought to increase the security of workplace opportunities, as regional food hubs, farm-based value-added activities, and diverse marketing strategies are more likely to have full-time and/ or year-round positions. Mid-scale operations can have higher quality jobs, not necessarily in terms of pay, but in terms of supportive workplaces, opportunity for advancement, and a broad set of responsibilities that can bring a job out of the realm of routine. Co-ops, collectives and many family run businesses offer an opportunity for democratic functions (consulting with workers, providing for innovation by individuals) that large corporations cannot afford.

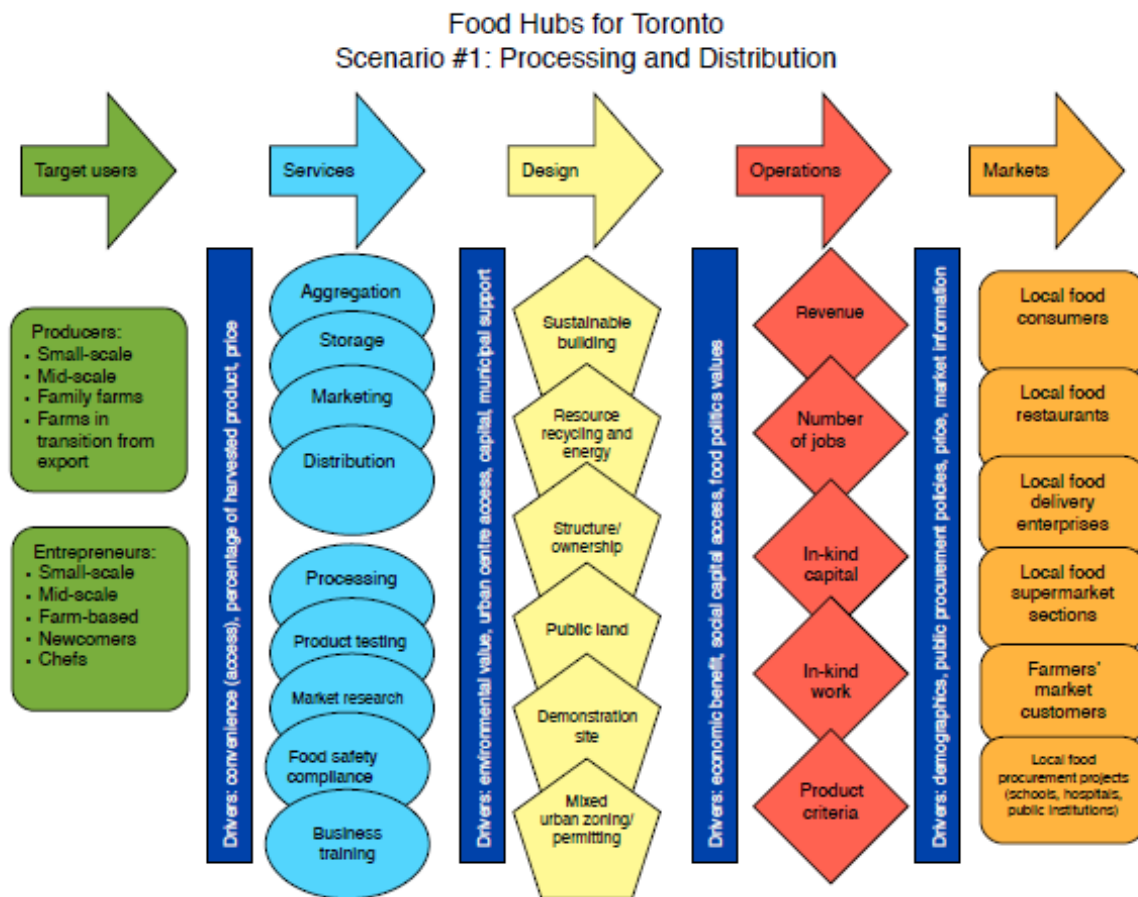
Mid-scale infrastructure for agri-food systems would include policies, regulations and regional/ municipal plans that facilitate and incubate food hubs, mid-scale processing, regional distribution, and diverse food and farm activities. Infrastructural challenges include the barriers to small and mid-scale processing (for instance, regulatory, tax and capital barriers). New regulations may allow more on-farm processing, improving the landscape for farmers who primarily produce but may do light processing to create higher margin value-added products. Tax rules need to be reviewed, as on-farm processing can result in the much higher industrial tax rate, even if it is a small percentage of the operation.

The Toronto CRFS research team conducted focus groups and discussions with a focus on these topics. Three scenarios (see Scenario development, Option 3) for food hub development were explored, including

- 1) Aggregation and distribution food hubs
- 2) Combination food hubs with aggregation, distribution and scale-appropriate processing and
- 3) Food access food hubs (aggregation and distribution to community organisations and others providing food to low income and marginalised groups).

The first scenario focused on policy considerations and interventions for both processing and distribution and included producers and entrepreneurs as target users. The services identified are grouped into two categories with the first including aggregation, storage, marketing and distribution and the second including processing, product testing, market research, food safety compliance and

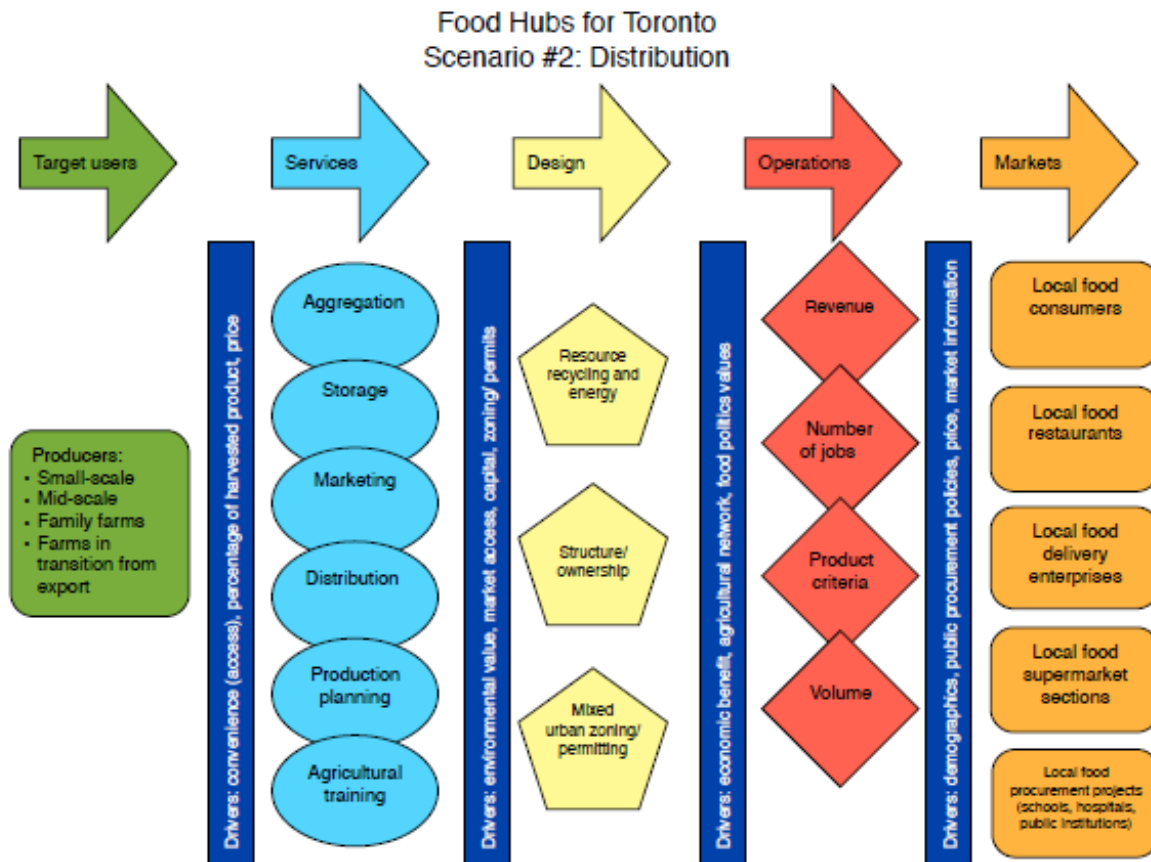
business training. Under the heading of design there were six categories identified, including sustainable building, resource recycling and energy, structure and ownership, public land, demonstration sites, and mixed urban zoning and permitting. Operations included revenue, number of jobs, in-kind capital, in-kind work and product criteria. Marketing as the last category covers local food dimensions including consumers, restaurants, delivery enterprises, supermarkets, farmers' markets and procurement projects. Drivers linking target users and services included convenience/ access, percentage of harvested product and price. Moving from services to design, drivers considered were environmental value, urban centre access, capital availability and municipal support. Going from design to operations, the drivers were economic benefit, social capital access and food politics values. Finally, drivers from operations to markets included demographics, public procurement policies and market information.



Source: S. Miller, 2017

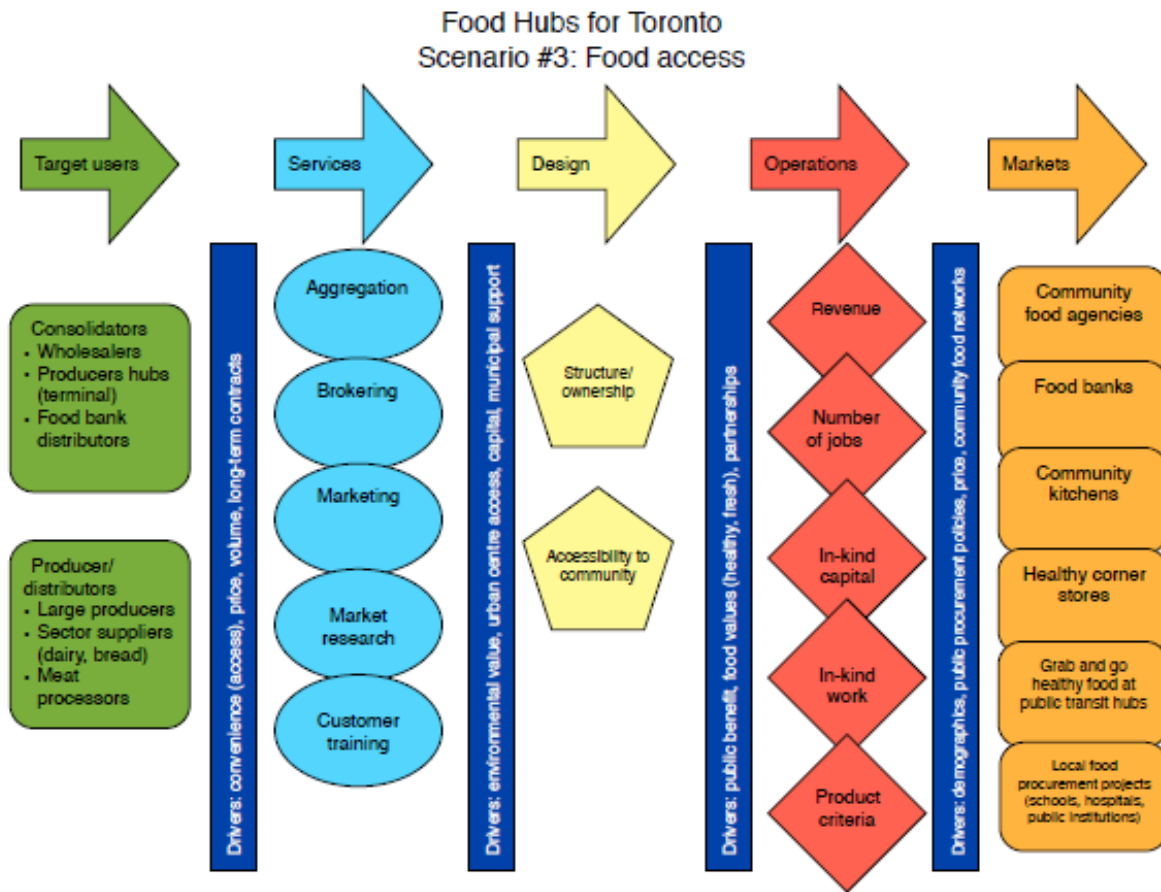
The second scenario, distribution, was a pared down version of the first scenario that also included processing. Under targets only producers were named. For services only the first tier as aggregation, storage, marketing and distribution were included. Design only included resource recycling and energy, structure and ownership, and mixed urban zoning and permitting. Operations also included revenue, number of jobs, and product criteria. Under markets the required supports were identical, except farmers' markets were not on this list. In addition, the distribution scenario included product planning and agricultural training under services and volume was a consideration on the operations side. Drivers are also very similar between the first two scenarios. The differences of note are between services and design wherein the distribution scenario specifies zoning and permits as one aspect of the more general municipal support identified in Scenario 1. While the drivers from operations to markets are the same,

between design and operations, Scenario 2 agricultural networks but not the more general social capital access.



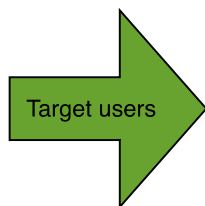
Source: S. Miller, 2017

Scenario 3, food access approaches the food system from the pull side of the food systems and so is different from the first two scenarios. The target users identified fell into two categories: consolidators and producers/ distributors, with services included as aggregation, brokering, marketing and market research, and customer training. The drivers between these two dimensions included convenience/access, volume and long term contracts. Under the heading of design, only structure/ownership and accessibility to community were raised, with the driving forces moving to operations as public benefit, food values including whether the food is health and fresh, and partnerships. Operational considerations were identical to Scenario 1, while market considerations differed as community food agencies, food banks, community kitchens, healthy corner stores, grab and go food at public transit hubs and finally local food procurement projects. The drivers between operations and markets included demographics, public procurement policies, price and community food networks. As would be anticipated under Scenario 3, there were very strong social justice and equity considerations as part of food access.



Source: S. Miller, 2017

Scenarios were developed using an action planning template as outlined below. These tables can also be used by stakeholders to further develop a detailed plan, address challenges and risks, and identify stakeholders and resources.



Producers:

- Small-scale
- Mid-scale
- Family farms
- Farms in transition from export

Entrepreneurs:

- Small-scale
- Mid-scale
- Farm-based
- Newcomers
- Chefs

Challenges

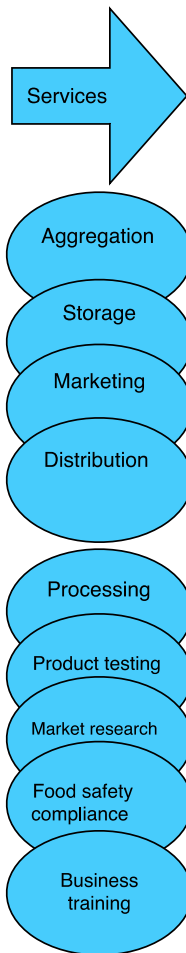
Solutions

Resources

- Existing
- Needed

Who (stakeholders)

INPUT LINK



Drivers: convenience (access), percentage of harvested product, price

Challenges

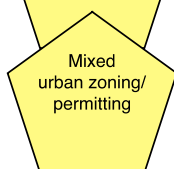
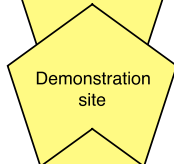
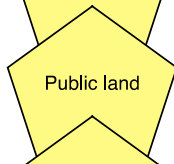
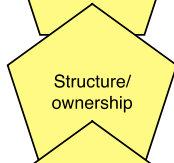
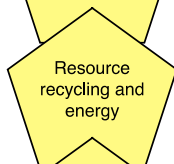
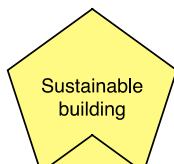
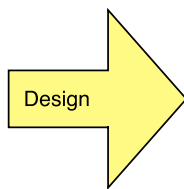
Solutions

Resources

- Existing
- Needed

Who (stakeholders)

INPUT LINK



Drivers: environmental value, urban centre access, capital, municipal support

Challenges

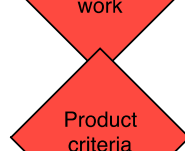
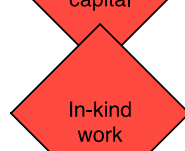
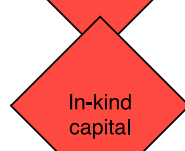
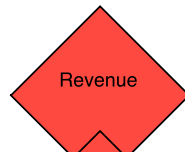
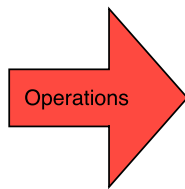
Solutions

Resources

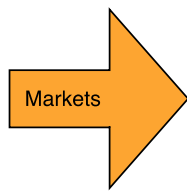
- Existing
- Needed

Who (stakeholders)

INPUT LINK



Drivers: economic benefit, social capital access, food politics values
Challenges
Solutions
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing• Needed
Who (stakeholders)
INPUT LINK



Drivers: demographics, public procurement policies, price, market information
Challenges
Solutions
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing• Needed
Who (stakeholders)
INPUT LINK