

# WORKING TOWARDS A STRONG, LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM IN RENFREW COUNTY

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## What is a Food System?

A food system is a network connecting the food production, processing, distribution, access, consumption, and food waste management sectors.

### FOOD SYSTEM SECTORS:

**Production** » planting, growing, raising and harvesting of food, including rural and urban agriculture.

**Processing** » altering raw food stuffs to create a different, more refined product (e.g., preserving, cooking/baking, preparation, meat processing, and grain milling).

**Distribution** » the distribution and storage of both raw and processed food and the wholesaling, retailing, and purchasing of food products. Distribution takes place from farms to processors, wholesalers, grocery stores, markets and restaurants.

**Access** » the accessibility and affordability of food as well as the preparation of both raw and processed food. This takes place from the farm to grocery stores, to farmers markets, to communities and households. People buy food based on family need, food preferences, cultural background, religion, nutrition, values, attitudes and beliefs related to food and/or food advertising. Choices are made within certain constraints such as money, time to shop for food, time to prepare food, skill and confidence in food preparation, facilities available in the home, access to shops and transport, likes, dislikes and allergies. Choices are also limited by the food supply.

**Consumption** » includes eating in both the public and private realm. Preparing and sharing food plays an important role in developing family and community relationships.

**Food Waste Management** » refers to handling organic waste across the food system as well as reducing the amount of waste produced.



A STRONG LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM is one in which all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally-acceptable food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way and that sustains our rural communities. A strong food system can result in broad environmental, economic, social and nutritional benefits.

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## WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM COUNCIL?

Across Ontario, Canada, the US and beyond groups of community representatives provide leadership and stewardship to their local Food System. Although these groups have different names, a common one is a Food Council. The current project in Renfrew County is working to create a [Renfrew County Food Council](#). The Council will connect stakeholders from all of the food system sectors described earlier.

## TYPICAL ACTIVITIES OF A FOOD SYSTEM COUNCIL:

- Cultivate partnerships among the six food sectors
- Research and analyze the existing condition (e.g. strengths and needs) of a community's food system and the activities within it—a Community Food Assessment
- Provide leadership to strengthen and address issues in the local food system
- Map and publicize local food resources such as local food producers, processors, distributors and programs such as community gardens and community kitchens
- Promote the purchase of locally produced foods by government funded agencies and institutions
- Support initiatives that increase access to locally produced foods such as community gardens and farmers markets
- Improve coordination and partnerships among existing food initiatives
- Support the development of new programs and influence policies that address gaps in a community's food system
- Act as a voice for the community's food system
- Educate officials and the public to increase support for and involvement in the local food system

**If you produce, process or distribute food, manage food waste OR have an interest in the promotion of local foods you can help:**

- Spread the word about forming a Food Council in our area
- Watch for the food sector mapping survey and give input
- Join the contact list to get updates

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**For further information or to join our working group contact:**

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i Calgary Food Committee. Food Assessment and Action Plan. May, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.calgary.ca/CA/cmo/Pages/Calgary-Food-System-Assessment-and-Action-Plan.aspx>

ii Region of Waterloo Public Health. A Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region. April, 2007. Retrieved from: [http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/researchResourcesPublications/resources/FoodSystem\\_Plan.pdf](http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/researchResourcesPublications/resources/FoodSystem_Plan.pdf)