Oxford County
Food Security Policy Development
by Ryan Turnbull, Mary Ferguson, Cathy Lang and Bradley Lang
Acknowledgements

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Special thanks to:
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Food Security - a community is food secure when all people have access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food in adequate amounts and to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.1

Food Policy Council - a food policy council is an officially sanctioned body of representatives from various segments of a provincial, regional, or local food system, and selected public officials or community leaders, asked to examine the operation of a local food system, and provide ideas or recommendations for how it can be improved.2

Food Policy - any legislative or administrative decision made by a government agency, business, or organization which effects how food is produced, processed, distributed, and purchased, designed to influence the operation of the food and agriculture system. This includes the types of foods consumers have access to, information available pertaining to place of origin, and the rules and regulations that influence many aspects of farming.3

Sustainable Food System - a food system that links growers and consumers in supply chains that incorporate

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shared values around sustainability, health, and resilience.4

Food Charter

a statement of values and principles to guide a community’s food policy. People from a broad spectrum of community interests and organizations typically meet and discuss their concerns and desires around food and agriculture policy in order to come up with a common vision and set of principles. This forms the basis of their own unique, local, community food charter. When a food charter is adopted by the municipal council it becomes a public document to guide decision-making.5

Community Food Assessment

a participatory and collaborative process that examines a broad range of food-related issues and resources in order to inform actions to improve community food security.6

Community Development

a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest possible reliance upon the community’s initiative.7

GMO

Food Desert

genetically modified organism\(^8\)

an area “vapid of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and healthy food providers.”\(^9\)

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background
In 2011, the Oxford Health Unit accessed funds through the provincial government’s Healthy Communities funding stream to facilitate the development of Food Secure Oxford with the Woodstock and Area Community Health Centre. This led to the development of a partnership to draft Oxford County’s first Food Charter. Challenges in implementing the Charter and coordinating food security work across the County highlighted the need to engage municipal government champions and other stakeholders to forge new partnerships grounded in local communities. This context formed a backdrop for the project work described in the following report.

1.2 Healthy Communities Funding
In 2012-2013, Healthy Communities Funding was specifically directed toward engaging municipal leaders in addressing food insecurity in Oxford County. The idea was to initiate a locally centered policy development process to address relevant food security issues unique to each Municipality. It was envisioned that this work would be led and sustained by local food champions and leaders in the long term. The County aimed to gain Municipal government support, and kick-start the development of working groups or food policy councils to promote and create appropriate and relevant interventions in each municipality.

1.3 Project Objectives
The main objectives for this project included the following:
1. To engage multiple stakeholders in Municipalities across Oxford County to give feedback on the needs of their community for improving food security as perceived by local people;
2. To use the information from each community to spark discussion in open forums, i.e. town halls, hosted in interested Municipalities, and begin to mobilize community action/initiative around potential policy development or change;
3. To renew and sustain local groups with a continued interest and energy for addressing food security issues in their local community

1.4 Consultant Team
The consultant team for this project consisted of a collaborative of three consulting companies that have regularly worked together on projects related to food and agriculture. The team consisted of Cathy Lang, Principal of C. Lang Consulting; Mary Ferguson, Principal of EkoNomos; Ryan Turnbull, Principal of Eco-Ethonomics Inc.; Bradley Lang, Research Associate of Eco-Ethonomics Inc. In addition, Lauren Baker, Food Policy Coordinator with the Toronto Food Policy Council, acted as an external advisor for the project.
2.0 Food Security Policy Development Process

2.1 A Community Development Approach
The consultant team developed a community development approach for the policy development process in consultation with key staff at the Oxford County Health Unit.

In this context, ‘community development approach’ refers to a process in which the local community is consulted and engaged to identify its own needs based on what they believe, think, perceive, and value. Participants are given numerous opportunities to share their insights and voice their concerns. The community is further guided to think about how it wants to address these issues and, ultimately, initiate actions or projects to bring about desired changes.

The community development approach afforded local residents in each Municipality the opportunity to give important feedback and share their thoughts and perceptions of food security in their individual municipalities and in Oxford County generally.

2.2 Focus on Municipalities in Oxford County
Of the eight municipalities in Oxford County, three initially expressed interest in being involved in the food security policy development process. Through the project, two of these municipalities were more active and were assisted in beginning a conversation with residents about food security, engaging their citizens, council members, social service organizations, farmers/producers, food businesses, and representatives of related public institutions.

2.3 Collecting Information and Listening to the Community
The consultation process included the following steps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps in the Process</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Launch</td>
<td>Several meetings and conversations were held to plan the work and clarify the objectives and approaches of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Profiles</td>
<td>Both Oxford County Health Unit staff and the consultant team researched and compiled a profile of each municipality consisting of relevant socio-economic information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey</td>
<td>A survey, open to the general public, was designed and posted online. The survey was promoted extensively by Oxford County over the radio, in local newspapers and through word of mouth. Hard copies of the survey were also made available to service agencies for their clients to fill out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
<td>A list of key individuals with an interest or stake in food security issues was requested from a representative in each municipality. These stakeholders were asked to participate in an in-depth interview on food security. Additional prospects for interviews were identified through the online survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Hall Meetings</td>
<td>A total of three municipal town hall meetings and two cross-municipal town hall meetings were scheduled. One of the municipal meetings was cancelled due to low registration. These events were planned to give stakeholders an open public forum to express their thoughts, perceptions and viewpoints on food related issues affecting them and fellow citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>A report for two municipalities and one overall County report were produced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community profiles were created with the help of Oxford County Health Unit staff, who assisted in gathering available information in relevant areas; for example, from the Community Health Centre’s (CHC) database. The consultant team reviewed agricultural data, census information, and other applicable statistics and reports to compile community profiles related to a number of key indicators of food security. Some of the data reviewed included:

1. Demographic information
2. Population health data
3. Agricultural census information
4. Economic data (on food businesses)
5. Unemployment
6. Social services
7. Cost of food and cost of living

Key informant interviews were conducted with individuals in each municipality who were knowledgeable of, or had a unique perspective on, food security in their community. The aim was to gain more detailed feedback in each local context. The interviews were designed in order to identify not only issues and barriers affecting the food security of people in each municipality, but also potential actions that may make a difference to Oxford County food security.

A survey was designed and posted online. It was advertised widely to collect input from people across the County. The aim of the survey was to gather information on food security from a larger cross section of the population than targeted interviews or town halls might produce. Target demographics for the survey included service providers, farmers, and in general people of diverse socio-economic statuses and ages. The online survey was accessible for over a month, and town hall participants were encouraged to fill it out, and further, to send the survey link to any other contacts. The survey was also distributed on paper to accommodate those without convenient access to the internet.

### 2.4 Town Hall Meetings on Food Security

Two municipal town hall meetings and two separate cross-municipal town hall meetings were planned and coordinated in locations across Oxford County. The municipal town hall meetings were designed to be open, public forums for the engaged communities. Information on food security collected on each municipality was presented at the meetings, and discussion was facilitated on how to galvanize community action to improve food security. The two cross-municipal meetings were held as open forums for anyone residing or working in the County to discuss food security. One of these cross-municipal meetings was specifically for representatives of service agencies.

In all, the project incorporated the discussion, feedback and opinions of 56 Town Hall Participants, 15 Interviewees and 123 online survey respondents.

### 2.5 Limitations of the Process

Community development processes take time to implement successfully. The provincial funding program guidelines impacted this process as it was implemented within and across the municipalities of Oxford County. Specifically, the project activities needed to be completed in a very short time frame following funding approval. This had the effect of inhibiting greater community engagement. Despite this time limitation, the reach of the project was significant. Municipal champions were identified, community leaders and stakeholders brought forward...
their concerns and ideas for action, and public education on food security took place through the media and town halls. The tools developed and information collected through the survey, interviews, research, and town halls will be invaluable for the ongoing efforts in Oxford County to improve food security.

3.0 The Food Security Context in Ontario

3.1 Food Security Initiatives across Ontario
Food security initiatives and food policy development processes have been taking hold in communities across Ontario. Over the last five years, there have been many local food and food policy initiatives implemented in the province. This activity has included the formation of Food Policy Councils, the development of Food Charters, and Community Food Assessments. The map below shows 22 sites where promising practices in the food security and food policy are being implemented.

![Map of food security initiatives across Ontario](image)

3.2 Activities in Other Communities
For the purposes of this report, the consultants reviewed developments in food policy in rural municipalities in Southwestern and Central Ontario. From this review, it is evident that many of the municipalities have completed a community food assessment. Further, many have developed a food charter and have moved into an implementation phase.

The following is a list of the Municipalities identified in the scanning exercise, their community leadership group, and actions they have taken:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Community Leadership Group</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brant</td>
<td>The Brant Food System Coalition</td>
<td>• Community Food Assessment&lt;br&gt;• Determining future priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatham-Kent</td>
<td>Food Link Chatham-Kent</td>
<td>• Community Food Assessment&lt;br&gt;• Advising City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham Region</td>
<td>Durham Food Policy Council</td>
<td>• Supporting existing projects&lt;br&gt;• Food charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elgin St. Thomas</td>
<td>Local Foods for Local People</td>
<td>• Food Charter&lt;br&gt;• Networking; community and government engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guelph-Wellington</td>
<td>Guelph-Wellington Food Round Table – a stakeholder group of partners and volunteer providing HR</td>
<td>• Research; advocating food policy&lt;br&gt;• Building a network with local food systems&lt;br&gt;• Establishing toolkit for charter signatories&lt;br&gt;• Policy recommendations&lt;br&gt;• Food Charter Working Group; policy recommendations&lt;br&gt;• Food charter&lt;br&gt;• Pilot projects&lt;br&gt;• Emergency Food Services Report&lt;br&gt;• Integration Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haliburton County</td>
<td>Harvest Haliburton &amp; Harvest County Food Net</td>
<td>• Food charter&lt;br&gt;• Local Food Coalition Report (Status &amp; Restructuring Opportunities)&lt;br&gt;• Food access projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halton Region</td>
<td>Halton Food Council</td>
<td>• Networking&lt;br&gt;• Education&lt;br&gt;• Food system analysis and evaluation&lt;br&gt;• Policy change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Community Food Security Stakeholder Advisory Committee</td>
<td>• Advice&lt;br&gt;• Charter&lt;br&gt;• Self-sufficiency assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntsville</td>
<td>Unity Implementation Committee</td>
<td>• Advising&lt;br&gt;• Charter development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huron County</td>
<td>Huron County Health Unit</td>
<td>• Currently planning for development of Food Charter and Healthy Policy lens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kawartha Lakes</td>
<td>City of Kawartha Lakes Agricultural Development Advisory Board &amp; Kawartha Lakes Food Charter Working Group</td>
<td>• Plans&lt;br&gt;• Charter&lt;br&gt;• Assessments&lt;br&gt;• Local buying program&lt;br&gt;• Local Food Policy Council&lt;br&gt;• Agricultural Action Plan&lt;br&gt;• Impact and Development Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston and region</td>
<td>Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Healthy Eating Working Group</td>
<td>• Projects&lt;br&gt;• Assessments&lt;br&gt;• Impacts and Development Study&lt;br&gt;• Research&lt;br&gt;• Food charter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Leading or Promising Practices

The food policy development scan, and an interview with project advisor Lauren Baker of Toronto’s Food Policy Council, revealed a number of leading municipalities in both rural and urban food policy development. Although, the focus of this report is on rural food policy development, the consultant team chose to include profiles for two leading urban centers for comparison, and to identify promising practices that may be transferable to other communities.

The following profiles detail each municipality’s context, process, actions completed and key learning in developing food policy. Promising practices are showcased in the text boxes below.

**Guelph-Wellington**

The Municipality of Guelph-Wellington, has been leading the way in food policy development through the Guelph-Wellington Food Round Table (GWFRT), which began in 2009. Since its inception, the Food Round Table has brought together many groups, community members, and public and private partners to help establish a food charter and implement community driven initiatives essential to realizing its vision.

The four groups are: Food Access, Food Charter, Distribution and Community Gardens. Through these working groups GWFRT reports that over 2500 hours were spent by partners and volunteers addressing food related initiatives in 2011.

**Simcoe County**
Simcoe County Farm Fresh Marketing Association was established in 2005. Comprised of farmers, farmers’ markets, restaurants, health, food system and government partners, the alliance aims to promote local food production and distribution.

In April 2011, Simcoe County began public consultations to create its Food and Agriculture Charter, led by the Food Partner Alliance of Simcoe County. In 2012 the first draft of the Charter was made available for further public input. As the charter development continues, the Simcoe County Health Unit is reviewing its plans and identifying recommendations to improve food access in the region.

The Food Partner Alliance of Simcoe County continues to hold public consultation events. In addition, public workshops are being held to transfer knowledge regarding co-operative projects and farming operations.

Promising Practices:

1. Local Food Marketing Alliance – partnership of industry, government and health stakeholders
2. Phased development of Food Charter for interim community consideration
3. Public consultation and collaborative action planning

Kingston and Region

Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Healthy Eating Working Group began its efforts in building a food charter in 2011 by assessing individual food council initiatives and their impact on community food accessibility. The working group hosted feedback meetings with agency partners and food access leaders. In 2012, the Working Group engaged the community in visioning sessions to help shape the draft Food Charter.

The Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Healthy Eating Working Group completed its Food Charter in 2012. The working group is in the process of seeking endorsement of the charter by City of Kingston Council.

Promising Practices:

1. Establishment of a Working Group
2. Development of Food Charter with interim community feedback and engagement
3. Research based on existing Food Security projects and engaging Food Security leaders
4. Public consultation

City of Edmonton

The City of Edmonton began the development of its Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy on the understanding that a great deal of public consultation would be part of both the capacity building process, and the development of strategies and recommendations. To facilitate this consultation, an Advisory Committee was struck in October 2011. Comprised of experts in
Recognizing that Edmonton is a rapidly growing region, and that this growth will increase pressures on services, jobs, land and infrastructure, the Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy prioritized the city’s local food system. The primary focus was on what they could do locally by integrating existing city plans and priorities.

**Promising Practices:**
1. Formation of an Advisory Committee of food expert stakeholders
2. Developments of Food Strategy with key outcomes, goals and objectives
3. Extensive public and stakeholder consultation
4. Defining the local food system
5. Integrate Food Strategy with existing municipal initiatives
6. Formation of a food policy council
7. Focus on farmland preservation and urban agriculture

**City of Toronto**
Formed in the 1990’s, the Toronto Food Policy Council is a subcommittee of the Toronto Board of Health. The Council is composed of stakeholders from across the food system, as well as City Councilors. The Council championed the writing of the 2008/9 Toronto Food and Hunger Action Plan, the 2001 Toronto Food Charter, the 2010 Toronto Food Strategy, and has facilitated City engagement with the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee and Golden Horseshoe Farm and Food Alliance.

In 2008, the Toronto Board of Health began developing a Food Strategy, working with a multi-stakeholder steering committee. In 2009, they began a consultation and community engagement process. More than 60 community organizations were convened from across the city via forums led by City Staff and the Toronto Food Policy Council. This engagement process included under-represented community groups whose inclusion was facilitated by Toronto Public Health. The Board of Health endorsed the food strategy in 2010, and a staff team within Public Health was created to implement the strategy.

**Promising Practices:**
1. Extensive public stakeholder group consultations
2. Development of Food Charter
3. Formation of Community led Food Council with formal ties to the Board of Health
4. Engagement of diverse community members representative of population
5. Strong and committed staff team
6. Assessment of current state of Food System
### 3.4 Indicators of Food Security/Insecurity

Identified food security/insecurity indicators are outlined in the table below. These indicators were prioritized for data collection for Oxford County’s municipalities, in consultation with key staff at the Oxford County Health Unit. Some information was readily available from existing databases and census data. However, many indicators are not tracked at the municipal level, and data related to some indicators is not available at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Unit of Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population Health and Food Nutrition and Disease Prevention</td>
<td>Rate of obesity</td>
<td>Number of reported cases of obesity in relation to population size – expressed as a % of each municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child obesity</td>
<td>Number of reported cases of childhood obesity in relation to population size – expressed as a % of each municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily dietary intake by age group compared to the recommended Canadian food guide</td>
<td>Age specific information on recommended dietary intake vs. actual (by food group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incidence of chronic disease</td>
<td># of individuals in relation to population size – can be expressed as a percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malnutrition</td>
<td>Vitamin deficiency in IU per 100 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recreation and physical activity</td>
<td>Average amount of daily or weekly exercise in minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, Poverty and Social Justice</td>
<td>People in poverty</td>
<td># of people below the poverty line; % of total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social assistance</td>
<td># of individuals on social assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                                                          | Amount of social assistance vs. cost of fulfilling healthy, nutritional dietary needs | $ total for monthly income minus relative cost of housing compared to the average monthly cost of a “nutritious food basket”
|                                                                          | Homelessness                                                              | # of individuals who have visited shelters and community services for the homeless |
|                                                                          | Access to food for low income families                                    | # of food programs and community supports available in the community; # of people those programs serve; compared with the total # of low income food insecure people |
|                                                                          | Quality of food accessible for low income families/individuals            | Nutritional value of the average meal served at community shelters and kitchens |
|                                                                          | Employment/unemployment rate                                               | # of unemployed people as a % of the total population                          |
|                                                                          | Average income levels                                                     | Average income level for each age group and education level as a % of the total population |
| Food and Economic Development                                            | Total food expenditure                                                    | $ value of total food spending                                                  |
|                                                                          | Average food spending per person                                           | Average total $ value spent on food per month by individuals                   |
|                                                                          | Average food spending per household                                        | Average total $ value spent on food per month by household                     |
|                                                                          | Average food spending per agency, group or community organization         | Average total $ value spent on food per month by community organization or agency |
|                                                                          | Total part-time employment in food industry (incl., production, distribution, processing, retail and food service) | # of part-time employees                                                        |
|                                                                          | Total full-time employment in the food industry (incl., production, distribution, processing, retail and food service) | # of full-time employees                                                        |

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10 In “The Cost of Healthy Eating in Oxford County”, the nutritious food basket was estimated based on 67 foods and items from all four food groups that are priced at the lowest price available in stores regardless of brand.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Metric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Service</td>
<td>Spending on non-local food vs. local food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiplier effect of spending more on local food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison of total average spending on local vs. non-local food products, by individual, household and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$ increase on local food x the economic multiplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Climate Change</td>
<td>Genetically modified organisms grown locally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of genetically modified foods/organisms grown/raised locally and the total amount or volume of each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fossil fuels used for transportation of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tonnes of CO2 emissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fertilizers used in food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total volume of fertilizers used in local food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of species and varieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pesticides used in food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total volume of pesticides used in local food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Energy expenditure per person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total energy expenditure for food production per person in barrels of oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and Community Building</td>
<td>Slow food initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of initiatives;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local food promotion campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of local food campaigns and their effect on local food sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culinary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of programs and education courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to nutrition education in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of school programs in nutrition; total service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to nutrition education in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of programs and resources for nutrition education in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General awareness of recommended daily food intake (Canadian Food Guide)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution of Canadian Food Guide information; survey results of awareness; average consumption of the population in relation to recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food related events and festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of separate food related events/festivals; # of attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to culturally diverse food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total number and variation of culturally diverse food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of community gardens; # of people that are participating in their maintenance and benefiting from their yield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community kitchens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of community kitchens; # of participants using the kitchen per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meal programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of community meal programs (i.e. Meals on Wheels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Total food producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total # of food producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total volume of food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total gross farm cash receipts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total $ figure for all cash receipts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural growth or decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% increase or decrease in # of food producers in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average farm size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average acreage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value added agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of value-added agriculture businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organic food producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of organic and transitional food producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food producers serving the local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of food producers in a 100 mile radius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing and Manufacturing</td>
<td>Local abattoirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of local abattoirs; total sales; units of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food processors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of food processors; total sales; units of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food manufacturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of food manufacturers; total sales; units of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Distribution</td>
<td>Local distributors for “local food”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of distributors that service the local market with local products; volume of food distributed; total sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-local distributors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of distributors that service the local market with non-local products; volume of food distributed; total sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community shared agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of CSAs; # of individual members served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance of delivery</td>
<td>% breakdown of delivery of major distribution paths by distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail, Marketing and Purchasing</td>
<td>Farmers markets in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total farm gate sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retail chains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local food retailers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent retailers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and Consumption</td>
<td>Food service businesses (e.g., restaurants and caterers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culinary programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average household food consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local food consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutritional value of average individual daily consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of meals consumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content of average meal consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumption of trans-fats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumption of sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumption of fruits and vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste Management</td>
<td>Local recycling facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total organic waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Composting facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.0 Food Security in Oxford County: Key Findings

5.1 Community Profile
Following is general information that contributes to the community profile for Oxford County as a context for food security planning:

General
- The total population of Oxford County was 105,719 in 2011, with a growth rate of 2.9% since 2006.
- Oxford County covers a total of 2039 square kilometers, with a population density of 51.8 per square kilometer

Demographics
- The total number of census family households is 30,830.
- The number of lone parent families is 4295, or approximately 14%.
- The total number of private dwellings is 43,367.
- The number of census family persons is 90,200 with an average of 2.9 persons per census family household.
- As of 2011, the number of residents over 65 years of age in Oxford County is 17,530, with 16,290 living in private households; 10,210 of those live alone.
- While 22.8% of Ontario residents are visible minorities, only 2.5% of Oxford County’s residents are visible minorities.
- The cultural diversity that exists across Oxford County can be observed in the non-official languages spoken, namely: Dutch, German, Polish, Italian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

Income and Employment
- The median family income after tax in 2006 in all private households was $50,991; $72,282 in two parent households, and $25,516 in one-person households.

Cost of Living
- The average rental price for an apartment in Oxford County in 2010 ranged from $481 for a Bachelor apartment, to $722 for a 3-bedroom apartment.
- Of private dwellings in Oxford County, 25% are rented compared to the provincial average of 34%.
- The average value of owned dwellings is approximately 25% less than the provincial average.
### Cost of living and income scenarios for Oxford County as of 2010\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Monthly Income</th>
<th>Total Monthly Expenses</th>
<th>Monthly Fund Remaining</th>
<th>Percentage of income required for rent</th>
<th>Percentage of income required to purchase healthy food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family of Four, Ontario Works</strong></td>
<td>$1908</td>
<td>$1467.16</td>
<td>$440.84</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner</strong></td>
<td>$2514</td>
<td>$1457.16</td>
<td>$1046.84</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family of Four Median Ontario Income</strong></td>
<td>$5775</td>
<td>$1467.16</td>
<td>$4307.84</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One Person Household Ontario Works</strong></td>
<td>$1757</td>
<td>$1261.08</td>
<td>$495.92</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One Person Household, ODSP</strong></td>
<td>$606</td>
<td>$849.21</td>
<td>($221.79)</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One Person Household, OAS/GIS</strong></td>
<td>$1201</td>
<td>$785.56</td>
<td>$415.44</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Poverty and Social Supports
According to 2006, only 5% of the population in Oxford County falls into the low-income cut-off (LICO).\(^2\) This is less than half the Ontario average rate. Oxford County also has lower proportion of low-income households with children under 18 (5.8%), compared to an average across Ontario of 13.7%. This does not mean that there is no poverty in Oxford County, but that on average the degree of poverty may be lower, relative to other regions.

In 2010, an average of 1612 families and individuals in Oxford County received Ontario Works assistance each month.

### Health
From 2003 to 2007, diseases of the circulatory system have the highest mortality rates and ratios for Oxford County as compared to other diseases leading to mortality. In Oxford County, the prevalence of circulatory system diseases causing death is consistently higher than the Ontario average. This is supported by the following two statistics:

- 21% of the population (12yrs and older) have hypertension
- 4.5% of the population (12yrs and older) have heart disease

Some relevant health statistics related to chronic health conditions in Oxford County are as follows:

- 59.5% of population 18+ are overweight or obese (2009-2010)
- 29.5% of population 12-17 are overweight or obese* (2009-2010)

Oxford County statistics have also shown that 34.6% of preschoolers were obese, overweight, or at risk of becoming overweight.\(^3\)

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\(^1\)This table has been reproduced with permission from Oxford County and originally appeared in the Oxford Community Profile produced in 2011. See bibliography for more details.

\(^2\)[http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/2009002/s2-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/2009002/s2-eng.htm)

\(^3\)[Reading & Carr, 2011](#)
General conclusions that can be derived from this information are that:

1. Overall, and in each age group, Oxford County residents have higher rates of obesity, and are more likely to be overweight than Ontario residents in general.
2. Oxford County residents between the ages of 45-64 years olds have the highest proportion of obesity than any other age group.
3. Except in the 20-34 years age group, Oxford men have a higher rate of obesity than Oxford County women.

Nutrition
Information collected and self-reported by Oxford County residents on their dietary information shows that 40% of the population consumes 5+ fruits and vegetables per day (12yrs and older). This means that 60% do not consume the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables.

When questioned about familiarity with Canada’s Food Guide, 14.5% of Oxford County students had no familiarity with it, while 33.3% of students feel their knowledge of Canada’s Food Guide impacts their daily food choices.

Students in most grades occasionally use their knowledge of Canada’s Food Guide in their daily food choices:

- 18.6% of grade 10 students are not familiar with Canada’s Food Guide
- 19.2% of male students are not familiar with Canada’s Food guide, while 8.2% of female students are not aware
- 37.8% of female students occasionally use Canada’s Food Guide in their daily food choices, while 30.1% of male students

Agriculture
- Oxford County has a total land area of 2039 km².
- 89% of Oxford land is farmed, and 91% of farmland is 1-3 prime agricultural land.
- The County has the second highest income from farm gate sales in the province.
- The total annual gross farm receipts for all census farms in Oxford County totaled $697.5 million.
- A total of 1,815 census farms were operating in Oxford County as of the 2011.

Food Industry
The 2011 survey in Oxford County showed that the average cost of healthy food per week for a family of four is $187.59, approximately 10% higher than the provincial average ($177.83).

Food Security in Oxford County
Recent research shows that, as of 2009-2010, 9.3% of residents in Oxford County feel food insecure, a 4.6% increase from the 2008-2009. The use of community food banks is an indicator of food insecurity in the county. The Salvation Army in Woodstock, the largest city centre in Oxford, reported 412 new clients in 2010. The food bank fed a total of 3001 people in

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2010. A total of 35.7% of these recipients were women, 30.2% were men, 25.3% were children under 12 years old, and 8.8% were children aged 13-17. Clients are able to return to the food bank every six weeks, and at least half of clients returned to the food bank six times a year.

5.2 Community Feedback

Fifteen (15) in-depth stakeholder interviews were conducted as a part of this project. The interviews were used to record the perceptions of people knowledgeable about food security, and engaged in working towards a more food secure community. Most of the interviews were with people in the three municipalities who initially expressed interest, but others were included based on referrals from survey respondents. The interviews included questions on the meaning of food security, the local food context, current activities and initiatives, visions of a food secure community, issues and areas that need addressing, barriers, policies, and identification of stakeholders for participation in the town hall meetings (see Appendix 7.1 for the Interview Guide).

An analysis of interviews revealed three major themes, or food security priority areas, challenges and issues needing attention. These themes were: 1) Health and Nutrition, 2) Accessibility, and 3) Affordability.

On the Meaning of Food Security

Throughout the interviews, it was apparent that many individuals were either altogether unfamiliar with the term “food security”, or had a limited understanding the term’s meaning. Most people associated “food security” with “food safety”, and not a multi-disciplinary perspective spanning health, social services, agriculture, business, tourism, employment, government, and institutions. When asked, “What does food security mean to you?” responses ranged from “healthy food”, to “not having to go hungry to buy a bus ticket”, or “I assumed it was safe food.” Most responses can be organized into a number of categories as outlined in the table below. Respondents’ names have been omitted to preserve anonymity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Safety</td>
<td>“I assumed it was safe food.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We must always be cognizant of food security, meeting CFIA regulations and Oxford Health Regulations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Safe food supply”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Being able to have food that is free of chemicals and pesticides – safe and healthy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hunger and Poverty</td>
<td>“We can count on when and where our next meal is coming from.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction</td>
<td>“Very simple – everyone has access to food and can eat healthy; money should not be an issue.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not having to worry where my next meal is coming from”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not having to be hungry or worry about being hungry”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not having to go hungry to buy a bus ticket”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“People need to have enough money and the ability to get to where it is sold.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Agriculture Practices</td>
<td>“We need to ensure the next generation [of farmers].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Grown sustainable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Health</td>
<td>“Healthy food”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Understand what is healthy and how to get it”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I want my children to be as healthy as possible.”

5. Social Justice and Human Rights

“It’s a matter of fairness.”
“We live in a wealthy country with great land and clean water. People not having enough food to eat is a human rights issue.”

6. Multiple Perspective

“People have easy and affordable access to healthy food that they want to eat, that meets their cultural needs.”
“I think of access and the ability to have it and get healthy food.”

7. General

“Without food security, we have nothing.”
“I want to exercise control over the food I eat.”

Very few of these perspectives on food security are multi-dimensional; most of the responses focus on safety, poverty reduction and health. These are the common understandings with which people approach the food security conversation in Oxford County. When comparing the survey responses and town hall meeting conversations to the interviews, most interviewees did not immediately relate food security to a “local food” movement.

Local Food Context

When asked to describe their local food context, interviewees shared observations that were relevant to their area of residence and surrounding community. It was apparent that each community context contained many differing perspectives on food security. Perspectives on access and awareness seemed to differ the most depending on where residents resided.

Through the 15 interviews conducted, descriptions of six of eight of Oxford County Municipalities were collected. The following descriptions of municipal activities and contexts are based on interviewee statements.

Tillsonburg

Interviewees from Tillsonburg described their local context as having three major grocery stores, one summer farmers’ market, plenty of fast food restaurants and many seniors who trust the food system to provide them with safe products. They expressed a desire for increased education and training on healthy eating and cooking in schools, and for the population generally. Two community churches and one food bank provide food to low-income families on a regular basis. They felt that the processed food industry and its marketing are persuasive. There is also no public transportation. Both of these factors put children at risk of developing unhealthy eating habits.

Southwest Oxford

Residents South-West Oxford said that there was no transportation and no walkways for people to walk to town, making the population dependent on automobiles to access food. Small producers are going out of business (15 orchards have disappeared), and agricultural production is focused on corn, soy, and wheat. People are consuming a lot of processed food for convenience. Very few people take lunches to work, and the fresh food box is only available during the summer months. One interviewee said, “We need to promote the eating fruit and vegetables.”

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16 Copies of a more in-depth report on this municipality are available from the Oxford Health Unit.
17 Copies of a more in-depth report on this municipality are available from the Oxford Health Unit.
East Zorra-Tavistock
According to East Zorra-Tavistock community members, there is a visible trend of “healthy eating”, as evidenced by school campaigns on healthy eating. Health is clearly a priority to many people; they are walking more and eating more consciously, and fewer people are overweight as a result. Locally grown food is considerably more accessible than 10 years ago, but there is still not enough access to local food in the wintertime.

Blandford-Blenheim
Access to food is limited in Blandford-Blenheim. The closest grocery store is not within walking distance. Due to the lack of public transportation, most people must rely on cars to get their food. Some education on healthy food exists, but this has not greatly affected the habits of most citizens, many of whom suffer from being overweight and other diet-related health issues. Once a month, the local church serves people that don’t have enough to eat.

Zorra
Interviewees from Zorra describe the municipality as a ‘driving community’; people customarily travel some distance by car for their food. Most of the locally grown food is shipped out of Oxford County, while food from elsewhere is imported. In short, locally grown food is rarely sold locally. The main sources for purchasing food in Zorra include grocery stores, farmers’ markets and farm gate. People are generally more overweight now than in the past, but appear to be relatively healthy compared to other places in the County. Most people do the majority of their cooking at home.

Woodstock
Most people, especially those who have alternative food preferences or special dietary needs, must go to a number of food outlets by car to access their food requirements. People eat out often; this may contribute to children being overweight. Woodstock has a vibrant farmers’ market in the summer time, but people typically shop at big chain grocery stores. Schools provide programming on nutrition and healthy eating, but don’t provide snacks, which can be an issue for those students that come to school hungry.

What’s already happening?
Across Oxford County, there are many food related initiatives already underway, including:

- Food Banks
- Shelters
- Food Hamper Delivery Service
- Healthy Eating Program in Schools
- Buy Local Map
- Cooking Without the Box
- Community Garden
- Good Food Box
- Soup Kitchens
- Community Dinners
- Potlucks
- Community Shared Agriculture
- Woodstock Soup Bowl
- Cheese Trail
- School Breakfast Programs
- Meals on Wheels
- Farmers Markets
- Green Box Program
- Public Health Department
- Oxford Tourism
- Cooking Classes
The Vision of a Food Secure Community

Combining all interview responses into an overall vision for a food secure Oxford produced the following themes, consistent with the current charter that states, “All Oxford County residents will have access to, and can afford to buy safe, nutritious food that has been produced in an environmentally responsible way that sustains our rural communities”:

**Human Rights**
- Dignity and equality for everyone

**Children and Youth**
- Children go to schools with healthy meals
- Youth learn to cook

**Healthy Food Accessibility**
- More farmers markets (in walking distance)
- Less imported food and more locally grown food
- Improved access to healthy food
- More people grow their own food
- More grocery stores sell local food
- All people have food choices
- It is easy to access healthy and nutritious food
- A database or website provides access to all resources and services related to food and food security
- Places exist where local farms could drop off food and people could come and pick it up
- Organic food is more accessible
- Increased access to local produce and meats
- Chain grocers stock more local food
- Local food is visible in stores

**Education and Awareness**
- People know, or can learn, how to preserve and cook healthy foods
- Greater knowledge of how food is produced
- People understand food and proper nutrition more
- More awareness of social programs supporting food security
- More information available on local food products

**Physical Well Being**
- People are slimmer and look healthier
- Residents exercise on a regular basis
- People eat healthy foods, and have more energy
- People feel better; “how you eat is how you feel”

**Government**
- Government thinks beyond the “bottom line”
- Governments support local initiatives
Mentality and Expectations
• People are confident that they won’t go hungry tomorrow

Farming and Food Production
• Producers get a fair price
• More local food or agri-businesses: processing plants, dairies, bakeries and canneries
• More organic farms

Business
• More incentives, encouragement and options for ‘healthy food’ businesses

Social Services
• More food related services and programs for low-income people
• Social services offered are more appealing and accessible

The Challenges to Achieving a Food Secure Oxford
Through the interviews, Oxford residents were able to discuss food security issues in more depth. Though many of the interviewees’ understandings of food security were very specific at the outset, as the interviews progressed they expressed viewpoints that confirmed the complexity of the concept. Interviewees brought up many interrelated issues, crossing boundaries and sectors, affecting the achievement of a food secure community.

Interviewees were asked a series of related questions about key issues, barriers and priorities that need addressing. The issues identified can be grouped into three overarching theme areas. These are: 1) Access to Food, 2) Affordability, and 3) Health and Nutrition. Each of these areas can be broken down into subcategories and related issues.

1. Health and Nutrition—this was identified as essential to raising the level of food security in the community, and is closely tied to education and awareness. Interviewees report a number of issues related to health and nutrition. Education and awareness of health and nutrition emerged as a top priority and theme for people across Oxford County.

   Major issues identified in this area include:
   a. Rates of Obesity and Diabetes are High — Oxford County residents experience a higher than average incidence of chronic diseases related to diet.
   b. Unhealthy Eating Habits are Common — people are generally consuming too much salt, fat, sugar, artificial flavors, and preservatives, and have diets that are generally high in protein and carbohydrates.
   c. Food Allergies are Prevalent — food allergies are more prevalent today than in the past, and it is very difficult for individuals in Oxford to have their specific dietary needs understood and met.
   d. Youth are Overweight — the prevalence of overweight children and youth is high, and visible to community members. This is perceived as being due to family lifestyles and eating habits that are reinforced at home. One interviewee said of healthy eating that, “it starts with the conversations at home”.


e. **No Advanced Health Food Skills/Food Literacy Programs** – many of the courses, classes, and programs offered on food and nutrition are very basic. They do not assist individuals in advancing their skills and understanding to a sophisticated level.

Significant barriers to progress were also identified by interviewees. The barriers that relate to health and nutrition are:

a. Low awareness of programs and services for people moving into some of Oxford’s municipalities
b. Ability of big business marketing campaigns to make unhealthy products appealing
c. Awareness of health and nutrition is not widespread
d. Lack of funding for educational programs
e. Lack of connection with where healthy food comes from

2. **Access to Food** – this area is a priority gleaned from interview responses across all municipalities. More issues around food access were identified than in any other area. The major issues include the following:

a. **Transportation** – for many communities across Oxford County, no public transportation exists. This creates a major barrier to accessing food for both seniors and community members who do not have a vehicle.

b. **Agriculture and Local Food Production** – food is being produced across Oxford County. Yet very little of it is sold or made available directly to the surrounding communities. Generally, people are not buying local food because it’s not available. Another issue identified was a lack of diversity in crop production. Most farms produce cash crops only. Many small producers (often engaged in value added production) struggle to survive.

c. **Local Food Distribution** – the current food system limits certain options for food distribution. No system is in place for distributing locally grown food to consumers within the region. Distribution systems are designed for large-scale producers with significant yields to ship products internationally. Most small processing facilities and abattoirs have disappeared, leaving a significant gap in the food system for small producers and family farms.

d. **Local Food Retail** – Generally, grocery stores say they carry locally produced food. Yet foods from Oxford County including eggs, chickens, fruits, and vegetables are not readily available. Farmers’ markets do not operate year-round; fresh local produce is available only in season. Another related issue is the long distance many residents must travel in order to purchase food.

The following is a summary of the barriers to accessing local food that were identified:

a. Corporate competition and market dominance
b. Government policies that do little to support small, family, or startup farms
c. Gaps in the food system
d. International demand
e. Lack of local processing infrastructure
f. Lack of incentives for retailers to sell local food
3. Affordability of Food – issues grouped under this theme are related to the economy, cost of living, level of income, unemployment, and food prices. Making food affordable was a priority for most people interviewed. Ensuring food affordability for those living on low incomes was of particular concern.
   a. Cost of Housing – According to interviewees, the cost of housing is lower than other areas. However, for people who have low incomes, or who are on social assistance, the cost of housing represents more than 50% of their monthly income. This may leave them without the resources necessary to satisfy their food requirements and perpetuates a dependence on unhealthy food because it is perceived to be cheaper and more convenient.
   b. Unemployment – Although Oxford County has a lower unemployment rate than the provincial average, the rate is rising as employers struggle to maintain market position and are forced to lay off employees in large numbers.
   c. Income Levels Relative to the Cost of Living – two-income households are more likely to be able to afford healthy eating, whereas single income households and those on social assistance may struggle to afford healthy food.

   Barriers to affordability include many interrelated factors, but interviewees identified a few important obstacles that need to be overcome:
   a. It is more expensive to eat healthy.
   b. The price of food is dependent on the weather, season, fuel prices, and the cost of labor.
   c. Organic, local, fresh, healthy and sustainably produced food is more labor intensive and therefore expensive.
   d. Social assistance is not indexed to the cost of living.

4. Safety and Risk – Several participants identified food safety and risk as an important issue. Emergency shortages, extreme weather events, and industrial farming practices were all flagged as important issues that could contribute to food insecurity.
   a. Agricultural/Farming/Processing Practices – Insecticides and pesticides are being used regularly for producing the foods we eat. These practices may affect the health and safety of food. Food contamination risks were also noted as major issues related to farming and processing practices.
   b. Emergency Preparedness – Many individuals do not store sufficient food in case of an emergency. Fewer people today know how to grow, prepare or preserve their own food. The food system is fragile and susceptible to many types of shock that could leave communities vulnerable in a crisis.

5. Community and Culture – Interviewees pointed to a lack of citizen engagement and overall lack of shared responsibility in the community related to food security. There is a need to build a sense of community where people help those in need and make sure their neighbours are fed.

Policies
Interviews pointed to a general lack of food policy knowledge. Some interviewees described policies that were not working well, or were perceived as creating obstacles to a more food secure community. The one policy mentioned by interviewees as a step in the right direction was the Oxford County Food Charter.
Agriculture policies were a particular focus for the interviewees. Generally, policies were said to encourage the production of cash crops (i.e. corn and soy) and that “very little of this (production) ends up on plates, except in terms of processed food”. Further, regulations restrict family farms’ ability to sell their products at the farm gate.

Other policies that were mentioned fell into four different categories:

a. **Organizational Policy** – Food bank policies generally restrict both the frequency with which service recipients can access assistance, and the amount of food they may be given for each visit. Requiring an address and ID as a prerequisite for using the food bank may prevent those who need nourishment the most from getting the help they need.

b. **Municipal and Regional Policy** – Oxford Health regulations are more stringent than other Counties. Some municipalities in Oxford have no strategic plan. Municipalities operate independently and sometimes act in a manner counter to Oxford County policy.

c. **Provincial Policy** – The Ministry of Transportation has policies that prevent producers from selling their products at the roadside along highways. OMAFRA’s policies on mandatory water testing and insurance are viewed by some as onerous and unfair to small producers.

d. **Federal Policy** – Canadian Food Inspection Agency policies require a more stringent standard of health and safety for foods produced domestically than for foods produced in other countries. One interviewee said, “We have a high standard for food safety which doesn’t always serve us as Canadian producers.”

**Stakeholders**

Interviewees were asked who should be involved in planning and implementing improvements in food security in County of Oxford. Many groups were mentioned repeatedly, indicating some agreement among interviewees about who should be involved. In all, the variety of stakeholders identified shows the complexity of the food security field. No single organization can be accountable. Rather, working towards food security in Oxford will require collaboration among diverse people and groups, across communities and sectors.

The following list includes the main stakeholder groups identified:

a. **Government**
   a. MPP
   b. City Council
   c. Public Works

b. **Health Organizations**
   a. Hospitals
   b. Public Health
   c. Health Units

c. **Social Service Organizations and Clubs**
   a. Food Banks
   b. Shelters
   c. Service Providers (for low-income)

d. **Faith Community**
   a. Pastors
b. Ministers
c. Congregations
e. Farmers and Producers
   a. Local Producers
   b. Processors
   c. Wholesalers
   d. Commodity Groups
f. General Public
   a. Concerned Citizens
   b. Community Leaders
   c. The General Public

5.3 Online Survey Results
The online survey was open to the public for just over one month in March 2013. A total of 123 responses were gathered from across Oxford County. This exercise engaged community members, and gave residents who could not be involved in town halls or interviews an opportunity to voice and document important opinions, contributing to an inclusive food security strategy for the Oxford.

When broken down into the 8 municipalities of Oxford County, the proportion of respondents from each area is mostly representative of their respective population size. Woodstock, as the major urban center and the most densely populated area in Oxford County, had the most number of responses to the survey, representing 40%. Tillsonburg, Ingersoll and Southwest Oxford ranged between 13-17% of the respondents, while the other municipalities each represented between 2-4% of the respondents.

Each respondent self-identified as belonging to one of 13 stakeholder groups. The groups that were most represented were: the general public (30%), health services (27%), community and social services (19%), farmers and agricultural workers (6%), environmental organizations and faith groups (5%).

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents were female, and 25% of them were male. Respondents were distributed relatively evenly between the ages of 25-64.

Family income for the majority of respondents was over $40,000. 48% of respondents reported earning a combined household income of $80,000 or more, and 40% earned between $40,000 and $79,999. Only 11% of respondents earned below $40,000, pointing to an underrepresentation of low-income families in the survey results. The number of individuals per household was between two and four, which is representative of collected population statistics for the area.

Household spending on food reported by respondents ranged from as low as $200 to over $500 per month. These numbers corresponded generally with the number of individuals in a given household.
Certain groups were underrepresented. These groups included persons in single-parent households, those living on low income, youth, and the elderly.

**Food Security**

Respondents to the survey were evenly mixed between those for whom “food security” was unclear and those who understood the term well. In total, 49% said either, “I have never heard of it before.” or, “I’ve heard the term but don’t really know what it means.” On the other hand, 51% said either, “I understand the term well.” or, “I use the term frequently and am involved in improving food security.” This suggests that the survey itself may have served to educate, or improve the understanding or awareness of those that found the term “food security” unclear.

**How familiar are you with the term “food security”?**

- 12% I have never heard of it before
- 17% I’ve heard the term but don’t really know what it means
- 39% I understand the term well
- 32% I use the term frequently and am involved in improving food security

In an attempt to gather some general information on the food purchasing behavior of Oxford County residents, participants were asked to identify the top three places where they purchase food. The overwhelming majority of survey respondents, approximately 95%, purchased their food requirements from big chain grocery stores. Farmers’ markets were the second most popular, with 60% of respondents purchasing from them. Food service premises (restaurants, take outs and cafeterias etc.) were identified by 38% of respondents as their third choice for purchasing food. Respondents mentioned growing their own produce in their own home gardens as an alternative.
If it is too great, the average distance that people live from their closest food outlet is a good indicator of food insecurity, as it suggests the presence of a food desert. In order to evaluate this indicator, respondents were asked to estimate the distance to their nearest food outlet.

Most respondents, approximately 68%, answered that they had a food outlet within five kilometers of their residence. This is a reflection of the larger number of survey respondents that live close to or within Oxford’s three major town centres: Woodstock, Tillsonburg and Ingersoll respectively. Filtering out those that reside in more populous towns, responses confirm that many of the people living in rural areas of Oxford County must travel five to ten kilometers, or ten to twenty kilometers to their nearest food outlet.

**How near is the closest food outlet where you can purchase food?**

Emergency preparedness is an important aspect of food security, and measures how prepared the average citizen is to survive an extreme weather event or energy shortage. Most respondents...
(40%) answered that they have a month’s worth of food stored at home, while 34% said that they had enough food to eat for a week. A small number of individuals said that they only had a few days worth of food, which would leave them vulnerable should an emergency situation arise.

**In case of emergency, how long can you survive with the food that you have stored?**

- A few days: 3%
- A week: 8%
- A month: 16%
- More than a month: 34%
- Not sure: 40%

A somewhat surprising result of the online survey was the number people that grow their own food themselves, or have family members that grow their own food. The majority of respondents (57%) said that someone in their family grows food for personal or communal consumption. This is a significant finding in that many individuals consulted through the town halls and interviews expressed the opinion that people in their community had lost their connection with where food comes from, and what goes into producing good quality, healthy food.

**Do you or your family members grow any of your own food?**

- Yes: 43%
- No: 57%

Survey respondents were asked to identify the factors affecting their food choices and purchasing decisions. In the Oxford County survey respondent group, 89.2% said nutrition was the most influential on their decision-making, with price being a close second at 76.7%. Moreover, “locally produced” was identified as a major factor by 72.5% of respondents.
Survey participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with a number of statements that covered a broad range of topics central to food security. This helped to gauge where community opinions may be aligning or diverging from each other. Respondents were generally in agreement on the statements. In fact, if “strongly agree” and “agree” responses are grouped together, we can see that for five statements there was over ninety percent agreement. The top five statements for which there was the most agreement are listed below in order from greatest agreement to least:

1. “Sustainable and environmentally sound farming practices are important to me.”
2. “Some people in our community cannot adequately feed their families.”
3. “I am concerned about the nutritional value of the food I eat.”
4. “The local education system has an important role in food education.”
5. “I am aware of how to get information on food nutrition and healthy food options.”

The first statement in the list above was the only statement that not one person who responded to the survey disagreed with. It seems that no matter which municipality in Oxford County people reside in they feel that sustainable farming practices are important.
One of the statements in the above graph was phrased in the negative. Thus, results for that question trended sharply opposite to the others. There was strong disagreement with the statement, "The affordability of healthy food is not an issue in our community". This shows that the majority of people believe this is in fact a pressing issue for their community.

When asked to rate the affordability of healthy food in their community, most people rated healthy food moderately affordable, meaning that their budget may be stretched when purchasing food requirements. Also, a significant percentage of respondents (20%) find healthy food barely affordable and almost the same proportion (19%) find food very affordable.
When asked how easy it is to access healthy food in their community, a majority of respondents said it is “moderately easy” to access healthy food. Roughly a third rated accessibility of healthy food as “extremely easy”. A small number of respondents (9%) said that healthy food was “not very easy” to access, meaning that for these community members many barriers to access exist.

How easy is it for you to get healthy food in your community?

1. **Cost/Price** – Healthy food is assumed to be more expensive.
2. **Transportation/Distance** – Because food outlets are so few, and far from where people live, people are required to travel some distance to get their food.
3. **Lack of Availability** – This is primarily due to seasonality of production, and because grocery stores often don’t carry local, healthy, fresh foods.
4. **Lack of Knowledge and/or Information** – Respondents expressed a lack of knowledge about both where to buy healthy foods, and even what to buy.
12% of respondents answered “none”, “nothing” or “doesn’t apply”, suggesting that they perceive no barriers to accessing healthy food.

The online survey incorporated a second opinion poll that asked respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on what food related initiatives or strategies should be supported in their community.

Analysis of the chart below shows that agreement on some of the strategies is very high. Top responses were those where the combined percentage of “important” and “very important” responses together was over 92%. The following list rates the seven top initiatives, by level of importance to respondents:

1. Access to local food products (96%)
2. The local economy (96%)
3. Healthy eating (94%)
4. Sustainable farming (93%)
5. Farm protection (92%)
6. Education and awareness (92%)
7. Food employment and skill development (92%)

For strategies related to “healthy eating”, “the local economy” and “sustainable farming”, not one survey respondent indicated that these were “not important”.

It should be noted that “food tourism” was considered the least important to respondents, although in some surrounding counties this strategy has been recognized as a powerful driver of local economic development and market transformation for local food products.

Quotations:

“Our government needs to financially assist supporting agencies that not only address food security, but healthy food choices and dignity.”

“Provide... a representative on County Council to work together to ensure all families are adequately provided education and available nutritious foods all year round.”

“Better education and links to resources”

“Establish a County Committee that: a) publicizes information on the issues, b) has open recruitment from both rural and urban representatives including both food secure and insecure citizens for committee members, and c) disseminate widely the actions and plans of the committee”

“Encourage institutions, hospitals, schools and retirement homes to use locally grown food.”

“Talk to farmers and understand them...”

“Bring stakeholders together to participate in dialogue about the problems that low-income folks are faced with when they try to access healthy food.”

“The County administration should take the lead on creating food policies...”
How important is it for people and organizations in our community to support the following:

- **Very important**
- **Important**
- **Somewhat important**
- **Not important**
- **Undecided**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy eating</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The local economy</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food-related businesses (attract businesses from the food industry)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm protection (lands are set aside for farming use vs other uses)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable farming (farming does not harm present or future environment)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to local food products (easy to buy locally grown food)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and awareness about food and farmland issues</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing hunger in our community</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food employment and skill development</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and culture</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food tourism</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking Ahead
When respondents were asked what local governments could do to assist in improving food security, 81 respondents out of 123 answered the question. Yet, those who did respond provided detailed and thoughtful suggestions, which have been grouped together as follows:

1. Publicize issues and raise awareness.
2. Educate the public on healthy food and eating; develop a strategy for educating the public on all aspects of food including health, cooking, and nutrition.
3. Improve accessibility to information on where and how to get healthy food
4. Provide financial resources – Provide financial resources for targeted community initiatives that will improve food security.
5. Provide Leadership – “Without clear leadership this initiative will fall by the waste [sic] side again.”
a. Dedicated staff  
b. Representative on County Council  
c. Form a committee – both secure and insecure individuals and both Rural and Urban  

7. Incentivize local production and consumption:  
   a. Support local farmers – “Listen, talk and attempt to understand farmers”  
   b. Allow farmers to sell their products from home or roadside  

8. Protect farmland through strong community planning to ensure corporations cannot takeover.  
9. Encourage the growth of more options for local food retail:  
   a. More farmers markets (and all season)  
   b. Community gardens  
   c. Food tourism  
   d. Grocery stores  
   e. Food coops  

10. Provide home delivery – Bring healthy products to people who have limited mobility.  
11. Develop local food charters – Each municipality should be engaged in a process of developing a food charter for the community.  

Survey respondents were asked to comment on what they or other community members could do to improve food security in their community. The 76 responses to this question can be grouped into the following seven theme areas:  

1. **Buy Local** – Even if it costs more, most respondents said that they need to support their local producers by buying their products.  
2. **Educate Ourselves** – Improving awareness about healthy food and nutritional eating, and improving access to local food options was a priority for respondents.  
3. **Donate to Initiatives** – Individual can look for successful groups and organizations that are making a difference in the community around improving food security and donate money to them. In addition, donating food that would otherwise go to waste (e.g. fruit from fruit trees), can assist local organizations in serving the community.  
4. **Volunteering, and/or Community Engagement** – Getting involved in local initiatives aiming to improve food security was seen a popular option for community members. Donating time is often more valuable and easier to afford than direct financial contribution.  
5. **Grow Our Own Food** – Respondents identified growing their own food and feeding their neighbors as an important contribution that they could make to improve food security.  
6. **Work Together and Figure Out Our Main Concerns** – A few respondents said getting organized and working together was important. Part of the process was to get clear on the major or priority issues relevant in Oxford County.  
7. **Promote, or Spread the Word** – Another way that respondents said that they could help was by “word of mouth” promotion.

**Quotations:**

“Vote with our dollars”

“Buy from your neighbours”

“Grow our own fruits and vegetables”

“Leave the foreign stuff on the shelf”

“Get rid of food banks in their present form”

“A lot more education especially for the younger generation”

“Organize ourselves”

“Donate excess food”

“Start alternative businesses that promote sustainable food, affordability, other actions that don’t just rely on government or hand-outs…"
When respondents were asked about what food programs/initiatives they would like to see in their community, it is apparent from the following list that people have many worthwhile ideas:

1. Breakfast program in schools
2. Community gardens
3. Food basket or food box
4. Farmers markets (more and all-season)
5. Healthy cooking, canning and preserving classes
6. Grocery stores
7. Food vouchers (i.e. dignified access to healthy food for low-income individuals)
8. Food cooperatives
9. Higher taxes for companies selling unhealthy food
10. Map of local food products/vendors for each community
11. Eliminate food banks
12. Local food festivals
13. Community food centre (CFC)
14. Home economics and educational programs in schools
15. Supports for producers
16. Local food charters
17. Farm protection through better planning
18. Improved access to healthy food through transportation and/or delivery

**Stakeholder groups that should be engaged**

Many respondents said that there were no local groups helping to increase food security in their community, or they didn’t know of any. Also, a significant number of responses included a question mark at the end of the answer, indicating a level of uncertainty about the response. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that many people are not aware of what is going on in their community related to addressing food insecurity. Participants in both interviews and town hall meetings also mentioned that there was a general lack of awareness of current food security issues and initiatives in communities.\(^{18}\)

Only one person out of 79 respondents who answered this question mentioned the organization Food Secure Oxford. This indicates that the initiative is not well known in the community and therefore has not achieved the profile and reputation needed to play a leadership role in moving the food security agenda forward.

**5.4 Cross-Municipal Town Hall Meetings**

In addition to two municipal town hall meetings in South-West Oxford and Tillsonburg, two cross-municipal town hall meetings were held on March 19, 2013. The first cross-municipal event was designed to engage service providers from across the region in the conversation on food security. Stakeholders representing over twenty service organizations active in Oxford County attended this meeting. The agenda and presentations for the town hall can be found in Appendix 3.

The second town hall, held March 19, 2013, was open to members of the public from across the County of Oxford. Thirteen individuals, including mayors of the municipalities of Tillsonburg,\(^{18}\)Tillsonburg and South-West Oxford reports are available through Oxford Public Health
Tavistock and East-Zorra Tavistock, attended the meeting. Other groups represented at this meeting included public services, producers, churches, and community service organizations.

Several people from Tillsonburg who also attended their municipal town hall meeting also came to the cross municipal town hall evening session. These individuals formed a discussion group to do more detailed planning work during the meeting to address food security issues in Tillsonburg. The planning outcomes arising from this group discussion have been included in the municipal report for Tillsonburg. The larger group participated in a cross-municipal town hall meeting while the Tillsonburg sub group worked on developing an action plan.

Results from both cross-municipal town hall meetings have been combined to represent the overall Oxford County community perspective.

During the town hall meetings information on indicators for food security were presented to the participants in the form of a community profile. Participants were then asked to identify other indicators they thought might measure food security in their community. The following is a list of themes into which indicators were grouped and some examples for each:

1. **Accessibility** – Participants mentioned affordability, knowledge of where to buy local, volume of food grown and sold locally, transportation, and physical ability as all being important indicators of accessibility to healthy food.

2. **Education** – Town hall participants were clear advocates for food education and felt that knowledge and awareness of where food comes from, how to cook and prepare it, and what is nutritional are all indicators for food security.

3. **Community Support** – Community involvement and support of initiatives for achieving a more food secure community was identified as an indicator of food security. Community support of local producers was also an important indicator of food security.

4. **High Quality Food Available** – Participants noted that sustainable production, freshness, nutritional value, and variety of foods were all related to the quality of food they buy or grow. Most individuals felt that these were important qualities of healthy food.

5. **Demographics** – Various types of demographic information were cited as indicators for food security/insecurity. The numbers of people who are living on low income, housing, economic and health data, and rates of fixed income families, and/or spending more than 50% of their income on rent were all mentioned as food security indicators.

Cross-municipal town hall participants also identified major issues and barriers to achieving a food secure community. The barriers can be grouped into the following four categories:

1. **Lack of Leadership** – Participants identified an overall lack of leadership in their local communities, both in government and otherwise, and cited this lack of municipal support as a major barrier. The lack of communication among social service providers, and the prevalence of silos across the social service sector were also identified as challenges. A collaborative, coordinated community strategy, with strong leadership, was identified as a means to address these barriers.

2. **Lack of Funding** – The small number of financial resources available to address food insecurity in the communities was noted, and the lack of regular investment for ongoing and sustained activities was said to be another barrier to progress. Likewise, increasing financial support for low-income families on social assistance was identified as another area that needed attention, so that these families can afford to buy adequate amounts of healthy foods.
3. **Lack of Education and Awareness** – The need to encourage more healthy food choices and inculcate knowledge about nutrition by educating the public more was identified as important. Another major barrier was the general lack of visibility, knowledge and recognition of the degree to which some people of Oxford County and its municipalities are food insecure. It was noted especially that municipal council members were unaware of the extent of the problem.

4. **Lack of Accessibility** – A common accessibility barrier that was mentioned repeatedly is a lack of transportation. Isolation of vulnerable segments of the population was another barrier, as was affordability and availability.

Cross-municipal town hall participants identified community initiatives and actions, both current and potential. Some of these are already underway but all were identified as actions that could be part of a solution. The initiatives below are grouped into the same theme areas related the above issues and barriers:

1. **Improving Leadership**
   - Tillsonburg Resource Network (potentially as a lead organization)
   - Food Secure Oxford
   - Some good leadership of churches, municipality, farmers and others in South-West Oxford could be supported

2. **Improving Funding**
   - Foodland Ontario grant
   - Healthy Communities Partnership grants

3. **Improving Education and Awareness**
   - Healthy snack programs in schools
   - Programs for canning preserves
   - Dining programs
   - Fusion nutrition program
   - Breakfast program in schools
   - Community gardens
   - Cooking groups
   - Like skills – cooking on a budget
   - Food security as part of the school curriculum

4. **Improving Accessibility**
   - Meals on wheels
   - Operation Sharing
   - Foodland delivers groceries
   - Community gardens
   - Soup kitchens
   - Local gardens to donate to soup kitchens
   - Garden Fresh Box
   - Cooking Without the Box
   - Chrissey’s Catering
   - Food for Friends
   - One-stop-shop (multi-service café)
   - Lunch Bunch groups
   - Food banks
   - Local food markets and co-op store
Policies identified by the town hall participants as relevant to achieving greater levels of food security are:

1. **Proper municipal planning should protect Land Use Policies** – fertile farmland, which includes careful zoning.
2. **Natural Heritage Policies** – Designate farmland as a part of the natural heritage of rural counties and use these policies to protect the land as cultural.
3. **Procurement Policies for Local Grocery Stores** – A percentage of their inventory should be dedicated for local products.

Next steps identified by the town hall participants addressed the gaps identified throughout the project:

1. **Start an Oxford County Resource Network**
2. **Communicate and Engage Neighbors across Municipalities**
3. **Educate Town Councils**
4. **Get Municipal Governments to Recognize Food Security as an Issue**
5. **Allocate a Percentage of the Tax Pool to Improving Food Security**
6. **Hire a Dedicated Staff to Coordinate Food Security Work Across the County**
7. **Start a County Wide Healthy Food Campaign**

### 5.5 Lessons Learned

The lessons presented below are the perspective of the consulting team, and follow from a review of the results of all consultations, including the survey, interviews and town hall meetings.

1. **Limited understanding of what the term “Food Security” means** - People who were consulted have diverse understandings of the facets of food security. Most people in Oxford County are not aware of the many ways in which a community can be food insecure. One common viewpoint associates food security with food safety. Other perspectives focus on healthy and local food access. Some citizens in Oxford County believe that food security is only a relevant concern for low-income people, while others hold a broader definition of food security as a concern for all people. Farmers have a very different perspective on the issue of food security and local food system. This is unsurprising given their role in growing and distributing food, and stewarding land for sustainable production.

2. **Denial and Lack of Awareness of Food Insecurity** – Time and again citizens and community leaders raised the concern that there was a culture of “denial” prevalent throughout municipalities in Oxford. Such a culture may include a pervasive lack of awareness of, and corresponding policy gap to deal with, the link between poverty and food security. Some felt that this denial impeded social justice for marginalized or vulnerable community members.

3. **Perception of “Going Nowhere” and the Need for Coordination and Action Planning** – In numerous discussions, the consulting team encountered an attitude or perception that the policy development process was “going nowhere”, because similar initiatives in the past have not resulted in significant change. This defeatist attitude marks a challenge to realizing helpful change as it divides people just as they begin to seek out promising
Oxford County

avenues for positive action. This attitude was particularly prevalent among service providers.

4. **Need for New Approaches to Collaboration** – The service sector does not feel adequately resourced to deal with food security issues. The multifaceted nature of the food security issue requires collaboration among organizations, and across sectors. Despite this, the consulting team sensed a culture of territoriality among service agencies and government departments that must be addressed. Silos will need to be bridged if a more comprehensive approach is to be taken.

5. **Need for Relevant and Action Oriented Policy Direction** – Most people did not have a sense of the many types of food policies that are or could be in place to improve food security. While most were able to identify some conditions related to food insecurity, and activities that could address these conditions, it was more difficult for people to see how strategies and policy development could support and sustain action at the community level. The fact that policy development takes time and requires engagement of government and key decision makers may, in part, be why policy intervention is not “front of mind” for most people.

6. **Healthy Communities Funding is Project Based and Not Conducive to Sustained Change** – The Healthy Communities funding approval process created tight timelines, and unclear expectations. The development of effective food policies requires an incremental community development approach that is difficult to activate and sustain with very short term, sporadic funding. This investment strategy could present a barrier to real progress.

7. **Broader Investment Strategy is Needed** – Funding related to aspects of food security work in the County is often project based. There is little continuity of funding to build a broader strategy and sustain current efforts for the longer-term. Partnerships will be necessary to leverage existing and new resources for addressing key food security outcomes. Ideally, the provincial Healthy Communities Partnership funds can help mobilize the leadership of, and partnerships among, municipalities, the County and other funders such as United Way and private sector partners. These partnerships would greatly assist in the realization of a broader strategy, and could support important local food security initiatives and policy development.

8. **Differences in Community Readiness across Municipalities** – There are people in some of the municipalities who are already meeting about and acting on food insecurity. Further, Tillsonburg and South West Oxford had elected officials who were engaged in the process. Other communities lacked municipal champions or community leaders. In our experience, effective leadership and is required for a community development process to work well and have the longevity required for the development of policy solutions. In municipalities where there was leadership from key stakeholders including the municipality, faith groups, service providers, and farmers, there is a greater sense of readiness and possibility.

9. **Lack of Information at the Municipal Level** – Much of the data and information needed to create community profiles was unavailable on the local or municipal level. Some data that is accessible does not fit with municipal boundaries, or is aggregated in ways that are
not helpful in assessing key indicators of food security and supporting food policy action. Most of the data that is collected is focused on negative indicators rather than positive indicators, and does not capture positive changes in food security in the County over time. Information on common indicators is not being shared across County departments, for example, economic data, social services data, and health data. These combined factors mean that people are not well informed about the current state of food security/insecurity in the region and in their local communities. They therefore often rely on their own observations, perceptions and those of the people in their social networks to understand and assess the relevant issues. This in turn leads to people having an incomplete picture of what is going on.

10. **Lack of Interest from Municipal Government** – Elected officials in most of Oxford County’s Municipal governments chose not to participate in the process. Food security, for whatever reason, was not a priority for them. This lack of interest on the part of some Municipal leaders could make cross-municipal or county level policy development difficult to realize. Educational tools and new processes are needed to engage elected officials.

11. **Perception of County vs. Municipality** – There was tension throughout the town hall meetings that pointed to friction between the county and municipalities. Some citizens and community group representatives in the Municipalities felt unsupported, underfunded, or simply not linked to broader Oxford County work in this area. This speaks to a need for an action plan that recognizes food security issue as a responsibility shared between the municipality and other food system actors.

12. **Difficulty in Engaging Low-Income and Food Insecure People** – Very few individuals who struggle with food insecurity were able to be reached through this process. Despite attempts to engage organizations that advocate on their behalf, and to distribute paper versions of the online survey for those who do not have access to an internet connection, the most vulnerable stakeholders in the community continue to be marginalized. The timing of the project and the strategy chosen to fit those timelines did not allow sufficient opportunity for agencies and organizations to reach out to low-income, isolated, or vulnerable people.

13. **Barriers to Farmers as Part of the Solution** – Farmers are key players in food security. Yet, much of the food farmers grow in Oxford County is for net export. Predominantly, farms in the region grow commodities crops. Some farmers are interested in contributing more to local food security by growing for local markets, but policies are often not supportive of this. There are few incentives for farmers to dedicate more of their production capacity to healthy food that could be locally consumed. Policies and incentives focused on this issue could contribute to a more food secure Oxford.

### 6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for Oxford County
After an in-depth analysis of the key findings, the consultant team has prepared a set of recommendations for Oxford County as follows:

Focus on Leadership Development
1. Gather and share information that is important for assessing progress on key food security indicators across County departments and municipalities.
2. Invest in education on food security policy and development, in all municipalities. Identify a food security/food policy champion at the county level to reach out to other councilors and/or mayors.
3. Use information and priorities identified throughout this process to educate the Oxford County Council and its Municipal partners, and identify, and engage the support of champions in each Municipality where possible.
4. Alleviate the Municipal/County tensions by focusing on connecting the “leadership” wherever it comes from across Oxford County to a Food Secure umbrella organization or network. This may be a good role for Food Secure Oxford which could provide the following services and supports in the future:
   o Gather and develop a set of downloadable resources and make them available on the Food Secure Oxford website to support policy development.
   o Continue to map and share information on local food security activities and strategies across municipalities, and build on what is working.
   o Engage local partners and leadership in each municipality and connect them to information on Oxford County’s food system and food security.
   o Set up a cross-municipal Food Policy Council to advise the Oxford County Council.
5. Review the municipal and county reports and survey results with champions across municipalities to identify and share information on priorities for change. Encourage a culture of collaboration and shared leadership in addressing key priorities. Focus on key areas for policy development identified in the survey including: addressing hunger; promoting access to local food and supporting the local economy; protecting farmland and promoting sustainable farming; and promoting healthy eating.

Provide Resourcing
6. Provide resourcing to a community group involved in food security work or hire a coordinator at the county level with skills and experience in convening, building collaboration, and community development and outreach. The co-ordinator’s role should be to assist in helping people with an interest in food security across the County to network, share information across municipalities, develop localized strategies, find common purpose, and move forward on community-engaged policy development.
7. Leverage new funding and support from a variety of sources to bolster the food security work of Oxford County and municipal-level groups so that people have a sense of accomplishment and momentum. Use the funds to develop a broader food security strategy for the County. Provide Healthy Communities seed grants to community initiatives to ensure the policy development work continues towards implementation.
8. Focus immediate funding, resources and support on the communities that are most ready to participate in the policy development process.
9. Promote and support the inclusion and engagement of young people, the elderly, low-income, isolated, and food insecure residents to ensure their needs and voices are considered in the development of community strategies and policy.
Develop a Community of Practice for a Central Collaborative Network

10. Continue to engage people across sectors and across municipalities in food systems and security solutions (e.g. farmers, service providers, church leaders, citizen activists, government staff and elected officials).

11. Implement a regular food security indicators survey, and share the results with all food security champions and Municipal leaders. Identify positive changes in food security indicators over time to focus on the strengths and assets of the county and inspire positive action.

12. Link key people working on food security in Tillsonburg and Southwest Oxford to the resources already compiled through Food Secure Oxford. Continue to make accessible online policy documents, tools for community action, information on local food security initiatives, and promising practices in other locations.
7.0 Appendices

7.1 Bibliography


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MacRae, Rod, and Kendal Donahue. "Food Policy in Cities: Innovation From the Bottom Up, a Preliminary Analysis of How Canadian Cities are Involved in Food System Change”. PDF File.


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7.2 Interview Guide

Oxford County - Food Security Policy Development

Interview Guide

Key Stakeholders
1. Municipal government representatives
2. Community groups
3. Service providers
4. Local producers
5. Food business operators
6. Other?

Introduction
Oxford County has received funding through the Healthy Communities Fund (Partnerships Stream) from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to engage the community in a collaborative policy development process in the eight municipalities. Of the eight municipalities, four expressed interest in being involved.

The approach we’ve taken to this initiative is to invite citizens and community leaders in each interested municipality to provide feedback on issues, and come together to discuss directions for food security policy planning and action.

We began the process by collecting relevant information on food security indicators in each municipality to create a profile that can help inform the food policy planning and action process. We’re now reaching out in several ways, through community forums, online surveys and interviews, to give people a chance to share their thoughts on food security related issues and ideas.

A few general points:
• XX provided your name as someone who could provide us with important feedback to support this process.
• Information gathered from this interview will be used to:
  o Identify some key areas /themes in each community that are important topics for discussion at the town hall meetings
  o Identify work that may be done by local citizens beyond the forums
• The information you share will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated with the comments you make
• The interview should take approximately ½ hour
• We thank you for your participation!!!
Personal Introductions
1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and your involvement or interest in “food” related initiatives?
2. Are you familiar with the term “food security”?  
   a. Yes/No  
   If no, then:

   **Definition:** Food security exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

   If yes, then:
   b. What does food security mean to you?
   c. Why is food security important to you?

Interview Questions

3. Can you describe the local food context for me? Alternatively: what is it like in your municipality and the county for people to get the food they need and want? (ask them to paint a picture with words)

   Use the following list to help probe: (these are just a few examples)
   a. How do people generally access food?  
   b. What is available?  
   c. Do people walk to get their food or drive?  
   d. How far do people travel?  
   e. What habits and trends are you noticing in food production and consumption?  
   f. Are people eating out?  
   g. Are they shopping at the local convenience store?  
   h. Are people overweight?  
   i. Are nutritional snacks or healthy lunches provided in schools and daycares?  
   What about other institutions (e.g. seniors facilities, group homes)?  
   j. Do some people not have enough to eat?  
   k. Are there food programs that assist people who don’t have enough to money to buy food?  
   l. Do you think people have enough information on healthy food and nutrition?  
   m. Are there particular groups of people you think are most vulnerable with respect to food security? Who are they? Why?

4. What does a food secure community look like to you? How is it different from the way things are now?  
   a. What significant changes would need to take place in order to achieve the vision you described?
5. What things are already happening in your municipality or in the county related to helping all people access healthy and safe food? Are there some success stories you can tell us about?

6. What would you say are the top three issues related to food security in your municipality that should be addressed first?

7. From the following list, describe any other specific issues or initiatives that come to mind related to food security: (please describe the issues or initiatives in each area you identify)
   a. Public transportation?
   b. Affordability of healthy food?
   c. Cost of housing/rent?
   d. Unemployment in your community?
   e. Agriculture and local food production in your community?
   f. Local food distribution in your community?
   g. Local food retail in your community?
   h. Income levels relative to the cost of living?
   i. Awareness of dietary needs and nutrition?
   j. Chronic illness related to eating habits?
   k. Other? _______

   [Note: Interviewer's will probe for more detailed information based on the issues that are identified]

8. What in your opinion are the top 3 barriers to addressing these issues in your municipality?

9. Are you aware of any policies that positively address food security and the issues you've identified? What policies would you consider to be a barrier to achieving a food secure community in your municipality?
   a. If so, what are they? How would they need to change?

10. Is food security related to the work that you do? If it is, then how so? What is your role? If not, then can you relate it to your work in any way? (probe for whether they see themselves as taking a lead in the process and in what way)

11. How can you use a “food perspective” to further your work, personal or professional goals?

12. What final thoughts do you have that could help address some of the key issues/barriers to achieving a higher level of food security in your municipality, cross-municipality, or in the county?

13. Who else do you think should be involved in this process? Why? Who might take a lead in your municipality/community?

14. Who would you like to see participate in the municipal town hall meeting in your community or the cross-municipal forum?
Section 1

Introduction

This survey is designed to find out how much people know about food security, what is being done in our communities, and what’s important to you and the people living in each municipality across Oxford County.

We appreciate you taking the time to give us your feedback. The survey will only take 7-10 minutes.

This survey is being conducted as part of a Healthy Communities project by Oxford County Public Health. Your privacy is important to us. We will discuss survey results in general, but individual survey submissions will not be shared and we will not release your personal information without express permission.

What is Food Security?

What is food security? Food security exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Many rural communities across Ontario are working together to improve people’s access to healthy, affordable and sustainably produced food. The health of communities can be improved greatly when government, community partners, businesses and the public work together to focus on food.

This survey is part of a community-based initiative focused on giving people who live in municipalities across Oxford County a chance to participate in developing food security policy and programs.

Section 2

Questions

1. How familiar are you with the term “food security”?

- I have never heard of it before
- I’ve heard the term but don’t really know what it means
- I understand the term well
- I use the term frequently and am involved in improving food security
2. What are the top three places you most often get your food?

- Food premises (i.e., restaurants, cafeterias, take-out, pizza delivery, etc.)
- Convenience store
- Local independent grocery stores
- Big chain grocery stores (e.g. Zehrs, Sobeys, Food Basics, Foodland, etc.)
- Local farms (directly)
- Community food baskets (delivery)
- Local food bank or food donation program
- Farmers market
- Other ________________________________

3. How near is the closest food outlet where you can purchase food?

- Less than 5 kms
- Between 5 and 10 kms
- Between 10 and 20 kms
- Between 20 and 30 kms
- Over 30 kms

4. In case of emergency, how long can you survive with the food that you have stored?

- A few days
- A week
- A month
- More than a month
- Not sure
- Other (please specify) ________________________________

5. Do you or your family members grow any of your own food?

- Yes
- No
If yes, please indicate what type of food you grow.

________________________________________

6. What factors influence your choice of foods to eat? (Check all that apply)

☐ Family/culture
☐ Price
☐ Availability
☐ Nutrition
☐ Education
☐ Safety
☐ Other ____________________

☐ Brand familiarity/value
☐ Friends
☐ Advertising/trends
☐ Special needs (diet/health)
☐ Taste
☐ Locally produced

7. Please rate the statements below by placing an “x” in the appropriate box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some people in our community cannot adequately feed their families.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e.g., not enough food, or lack of healthy food)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am concerned about the nutritional value of the food I eat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affordability of healthy food is not an issue in our community. (everyone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>can afford to buy healthy food and enough food)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am aware of how to get information on food nutrition and healthy food</td>
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<tr>
<td>options.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable and environmentally sound farming practices are important to</td>
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<tr>
<td>me. (I expect farms to run in a way that protects and doesn't hurt the</td>
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<tr>
<td>environment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>In our community there are places within easy driving, walking or public</td>
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<tr>
<td>transportation distance to purchase good, healthy food.</td>
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<tr>
<td>People in our community cannot easily get safe, nutritious and good</td>
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<tr>
<td>tasting food for a number of reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe there is sufficient food available in our area in case of an</td>
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<tr>
<td>emergency or natural disaster.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a good system of support in our community for people and</td>
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<tr>
<td>families facing hunger issues.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Oxford County | 56
Our municipal land use and planning policies protect farmland and support farming in our community. (i.e., we are a "farmer friendly" community)

The local education system has an important role in food education. (kids should learn about agriculture in school)

8. How affordable do you think healthy food is in your community?
   - Very affordable – You have no problem affording nutritious food for and your family
   - Moderately affordable – Your budget is stretched when purchasing your food requirements
   - Barely affordable – Your healthy food purchasing makes you short on cash for fulfilling other needs
   - Unaffordable – You cannot afford the healthy products that you know are essential to your health

Please comment: ______________________________________________

9. How easy is it for you to get healthy food in your community?
   - Extremely easy – healthy food is easy to get and very few barriers (e.g., cost, transportation) exist
   - Moderately easy – healthy food takes some work to get and there are some barriers that get in the way
   - Not very easy – healthy food takes lots of work to get and many barriers get in the way
   - Not at all easy – healthy food is almost impossible to get in my community

10. What makes it difficult for you to get healthy food in your community? (please provide your answer in the box below)

______________________________________________________________________________________

11. How important is it for people and organizations in our community to support the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy eating</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable farming (farming does not harm present or future environment)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm protection (lands are set aside for farming use vs other uses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food-related businesses (attract businesses from the food industry)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
12. What do you think your municipal and/or county government can do to support the improvement of food security in your community?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

13. What do you think you and other community members can do to improve access to healthy, safe and affordable food for everyone in your community?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

14. What kind of food programs, policies or initiatives would you like to see in your municipality?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

15. Do you know of local groups or community leaders who are working to help people get food that is healthy, safe and affordable? (Please name all of the ones you can think of in the box below)

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

16. Would you be willing to tell us more in an interview on food security in your community if needed?

☐ Yes
□ No

17. Can we contact you for more information?

□ Yes
□ No

18. Please enter your name and contact information in the boxes below. Your personal information will not be shared or used for any other purpose without your permission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. If you know anyone other than yourself who would be interested in participating, please enter their name and contact information below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 3

Demographic Information

20. Sex:

□ Male
□ Female

21. Age range:

□ Under 25
□ 25 to 34
□ 35 to 44
□ 45 to 54
□ 55 to 64
□ 65 and over
22. Total Annual Family Income:
- Under $20,000
- $20,000-$39,999
- $40,000-$79,999
- Over $80,000

23. Number of People in your Household:
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 4+

24. Approximate Monthly Household Spending on Food:
- Under $100
- $100 - $199
- $200-$299
- $300-$399
- $400-$499
- $500 +

25. Choose the interest group which best describes you from the following list:
- General Public
- Health Services
- Farmer/Agricultural Organization
- Food Service Business
- Community/Social Services
- Education
- Environment
- Land Planning
- Economic Development
- Faith Community
- Food Distribution
- Elected Official
- Agri-tourism
26. Municipality of Residence

- Blandford-Blenheim
- East Zorra-Tavistock
- Ingersoll
- Norwich
- Southwest Oxford
- Tillsonburg
- Woodstock
- Zorra

- Other (please specify) __________
Food Security
Town Hall Meeting

South West Oxford
Oxford County 2013
Cathy Lang and Ryan Turnbull

Objectives

The objectives of the town hall meeting are to:

1. Define food security for South West Oxford by mapping the food system
2. Identify specific issues and opportunities in South West Oxford
3. Outline local current activities already underway related to health and food security policy
4. Review policy development effective practices in other rural municipalities and regions
5. Discuss next steps in South West Oxford
Agenda

1. Registration
2. Welcome and Intros
3. Forum Overview and Objectives
4. Food Security and You
5. Food Security Policy in Other Regions
6. Community Action to Date
7. Addressing Food Security Issues
8. Municipal Profile
9. Moving Forward in Your Municipality
10. Feedback and Closure

Explore the question:

What does food security mean to you?
Interview Feedback

Meaning of Food Security

- “I assumed it was SAFE FOOD”
- “If we don’t have food security then we have nothing”
- “We need to ensure the next generation”
- We must always be cognizant of food security, meeting CFIA regulations and Oxford Health Regulations,
- “People have easy and affordable access to healthy food that they want to eat, that meets their cultural needs”
- Not having to worry where my next meals
- Not having to be hungry or worry about being hungry
- Not having to go hungry to buy a bus ticket
- “It’s a matter of fairness”
- “We live in a wealthy country with great land and clean water. People not having enough food to eat is a human rights issue.”

What is Policy?

Definition: A proposed or adopted course or principle of action; guides decision making
Understanding Food Policy

What is food policy and why is it important?

Examples of Food Policy

1. Food Charter
2. Farmland Protection
3. Integrating a Food Lens into Strategic Priorities in Municipal Planning
4. Institutional Procurement
5. Guidelines for Sustainable Food Production
6. Supporting Local Distribution System
7. Agricultural Development Plan
8. Emergency Preparedness
What’s Happening in Your Municipality?

- What initiatives and policies do you already have in place?
- Who’s involved?
- What have the results been?

Food Security in Ontario
Examples of Food Security Initiatives

- Formation of a ‘municipal food council’
- Designated “local” section in grocery stores
- Community Food Centre in Perth
- Community garden
- Community shared agriculture (CSA)
- Food tourism
- Food box program
- Local produce auctions
- Incubator kitchens
- New farmer training

Addressing Food Security Issues

What are the major issues contributing to food insecurity in this municipality?
Municipal Profile

Population of South West Oxford
- Total population = 7,544 (in 2011)
- Population has reduced by 45 residents since 2006
- Most residents were employed in agriculture and manufacturing
- # of seniors = 930 (12% of total pop. in 2011)
- # of census family households = 2195 (in 2011)
- 8% single parent households
- 28% of population 15+ without a diploma, degree

Municipal Profile (cont’d)

Economic Indicators (South West Oxford)
- Median total family income = $71,167 (in 2005)
- Unemployment rate is 3.5% (half the provincial average)
- Prevalence of low income families after-tax = 3.4% (in 2005)
Municipal Profile (cont’d)

Agriculture in South-West Oxford

- Total # of Farms = 307
- Cattle Ranching = 90
- Hog and Pig Farming = 24
- Poultry and Egg = 16
- Sheep and Goat = 11
- Grain = 95
- Vegetable and Melon = 8
- Fruit and Nut = 6

Municipal Profile (cont’d)

Agricultural Industry in South-West Oxford

- Total farm cash receipts = $135,953,308 (South-West Oxford)
- Land for crop production = 71,818 acres (284 farms reporting in South-West Oxford)
- Total wages and salaries paid to agricultural workers = $8,092,772 (South-West Oxford)
Interview Feedback

Local Food Context

- No pedestrian walkways to walk to town
- Obesity is an issue - higher than average rates across Oxford
- People access food through grocery stores
- Summer time fresh food boxes
- Most people find a car necessary to access food
- Very few people take their lunch to work
- People are consuming a lot of processed foods for the convenience
- Need to promote eating fruit and vegetables
- There are people working on making food in kitchens for people without enough to eat
- Small producers are going out of business (15 orchards have disappeared from Oxford)
- Many family farms have wives that work full-time off the farm to supplement the income
- “Healthy food consumption is not growing locally….”

Vision of a Food Secure Community

- What is your vision?
Interview Feedback

Vision of a Food Secure Community
- Less imported food
- Fair price for food producers allows them to support the family farm
- Greater knowledge of how food is produced
- People are confident that they won’t go hungry tomorrow
- People are slimmer and look healthier
- Government gets beyond simple “bottom line” thinking
- Improved access to healthy food
- Adults and kids would be knowledgeable about what to eat and healthy
- Classes to teach girls to cook with crock pots – people would learn to cook more healthy food
- Healthy eating and exercise and improved recreation

Barriers
- Education is number one (this was mentioned by all the interviewees)
- OMAFRA can do a lot more – make the packers more accountable
- Education for vegetables and fruit and healthy food – health prevention
- MTO has regulations against selling on the highway – need to be more educated to make regulations that better suit the producers
- Transportation
- Income level and employment
- Education – generational nutrition – health

Needs
- Accessibility
- Education
- Money and income
- Land prices - they have gone up
- Wholesale payout to producers is too low – “packers don’t negotiate with us and we get paid at the end of the season. There is no alternative wholesaler”
- “Everyone would go to a local wholesaler if they gave us a better price”
Interview Feedback

Policies

- Health and Safety - “We have a high standard for food safety which doesn’t always serve us as Canadian producers”
- MTO’s policies on selling food at the side of the road
- We find Oxford Health Regulation are often more stringent that others.
- “I need to have my water tested every 2 months, water put through sterilizer, I must buy extra insurance – feel that policies of Ontario are really counterproductive – the polices create a barrier”
- County food charter is good
- “not sure how policy promotes farmgate sales”
- Yes – policy about “we can’t afford” to reduce poverty – short term economic stuff drives us downward
- Trickle down policy doesn’t work
  - Invest in people
  - “Economies are for people”

Moving Forward

- What can be done to improve food security in the short and long term?
- What are the priority areas that need attention?
- What actions is the community committed to taking?
Playing a Role

Who needs and wants to be involved?

Before you Leave…

• Thanks!
• Feedback
• Survey
Cross-municipal
Town Hall

March 19th, 2-4pm and 6-8pm
Open General Meeting
Elmhurst Inn
415 Harris St.,
Ingersoll, ON
N5C 3J8