



Toronto
Green
Community

LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Food is a basic human right. It is essential for survival, along with air, water and shelter. It's also fundamental to social and cultural interactions, and plays an important role in how we identify with groups. Having access to fresh, healthy and culturally appropriate food is one of the key definitions of "food security", and food access is closely linked to our local food supply.

"Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life"[Food and Agriculture Organization. 2002. The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001. Rome.

Our Industrial Food System

One of the main problems with our food supply is the way in which it is produced. The industrial food system is the method we have used to feed people in North America since WWII and is based on the economics of scale. Industrial farms are highly mechanized, specialized, and input reliant, and often rely on specialized seeds that grow under industrial conditions but may produce a product that is subpar in terms of flavour and/or nutrition.

The Impacts of the Industrial Food System

Though it produces large quantities of inexpensive food, the industrial food system has many negative impacts on the environment, human health, animal welfare and the economy:

Environment- Industrial farming creates a lot of waste, and interferes with natural processes within the soil. Monoculture crop farming relies heavily on the use of pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers. High concentrations bio-accumulate in the soil, ground water and on vegetables and fruits.

Health- In addition to the dangers of consuming harmful chemicals, the industrialized food system produces large quantities of carbohydrate-rich, nutritionally deficient food products for supermarket shelves. These products have been shown to increase the risk of diabetes, heart disease and obesity particularly in young children.

Animals- Animals raised for production and consumption of food are often kept in large-scale factory farms, which are typically very dirty and create a crowded living environment that is not conducive for an animal's health.

Economy- Since 1941, the number of small, family farms has declined steadily in Canada. Because of the structure of the industrial agriculture system, the farmers growing your food only receive about 20% of every dollar you spend on food and as a result, most small farmers are in debt. Government subsidies are granted primarily to industrial-scale farms, creating the conditions to support monoculture farming and the production of inexpensive, nutrient-deficient food products

Why Local?

Building a local and sustainable food system is a great way to address many of the problems created by our current industrialized food system.

So What Does “Local” Food Really Mean?

Definitions of what constitutes “local food” vary widely; the CFIA currently defines “local” food as:

food produced in the province or territory in which it is sold, or

food sold across provincial borders within 50 km of the originating province or territory CFIA. 2013.

It is important to note that “local food” does not necessarily mean “sustainable food,” but only refers to the location of production. While many local farms do support sustainable growing and animal husbandry practices, it is not required. For more information on sustainable farming practices, visit localfoodplus.ca

Freshness and Taste- Nothing beats the taste of freshly picked, fully ripened vegetables and fruit! Local produce often contains less harmful preservatives (essential for food traveling long distances) and provides you and your family with more nutritionally-rich, quality foods. Local food isn't limited to produce- look for fresh farm eggs, dairy, artisanal cheeses, meat, honey and preserves at your nearest farmer's market and local food retailers!

Support for Rural Communities- When you purchase from local producers and suppliers, either directly or through a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), the full value of your food dollars go directly toward supporting your local regional foodshed and providing an income for farmers in the community. For a directory of CSA's in Ontario, go to csafarms.ca.

Confidence in Our Food- Whether you grow your own vegetables, or purchase from farmers and growers, you have more say in what goes into your food. Many farmers are more than happy to answer your questions about how they grow their crops, while community gardens can empower you to start growing your own fresh, organic food!

A Healthier Environment- By purchasing directly from farmers, at farmer's markets, items with the Local Food Plus logo or by growing your own, you can reduce the distance your food travels, thereby reducing carbon emissions and leaving a smaller ecological footprint! For more information on Food Miles, visit foodlink.ca

How to Get involved and Help Build a Sustainable Food System

Grow your own food- Join a community garden (tgcn.ca) or start growing at home!

Support Farmer's Markets – Visit farmersmarketsontario.com and tfmn.ca for a directory of markets near you!

Activate - Get involved with organizations working toward changing public policy around local and sustainable food systems: Toronto Food Policy Council - tfpc.ca, Food Forward: pushfoodforward.com,

Sustain Ontario: sustainontario.ca

Volunteer - Get to know other food organizations in Toronto doing good work:

FoodShare- foodshare.net, NotFarFromthe Tree- notfarfromthetree.org The Stop- thestop.org

Toronto Green Community

40 St. Clair Avenue East, Suite 200. Toronto, Ontario M4T 1M9

Tel: 416-781-7663

Email: info@torontogreen.ca

Facebook: [tcg.ca](https://www.facebook.com/tcg.ca)

Website: www.torontogreen.ca

Twitter: [@tgreencommunity](https://twitter.com/tgreencommunity)



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