

**Local Food in Perth County**

by

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### **Author's Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

Interest in local food has increased during recent years; however, the necessary infrastructure is not yet in place for farmers to fully access local markets. While consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of buying local food, farmers and producers still face many barriers to success in this market. Despite confirmed public desire and growing enthusiasm for local foods, farmers in Perth County continue to face barriers to fully benefitting from this growing market.

This research has been conducted as an investigation of one aspect of sustainable communities - the potential contributions of a more local food system in the Perth County community. Using a qualitative methodological approach, this case study research examined Perth County's food system, barriers facing producers, the potential contributions of a distribution system and culinary tourism to a healthy food system, and the overall sustainable development of a community. Key informants included farmers and producers, and local distribution companies.

A vibrant local food system can make significant contributions to the sustainability of communities and, thus, should continue to be pursued within Perth County. Interviews with 18 area producers discovered that a majority found distribution to be a significant barrier to success. This research examined the potential for a local food distribution system that serves as a mechanism for area farmers to increase the consumption of local food and strengthen culinary tourism in the region

Culinary tourism is the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry and can make significant contributions to strengthening a local food system. Initiatives already underway to establish Perth County as a culinary and agri-tourism destination will contribute to and provide incentives for developing a stronger local food system in the region. Considerations of sustainable development must be integral to this food systems work and, therefore, the entire realm of social, economic, and environmental impacts of Perth County agriculture must be considered. Perth County has a relatively healthy food system, yet clearly possesses the potential to create a much more localized one.

Based on the findings from this study, it is recommended that a feasibility study on the most appropriate distribution model to serve Perth County producers be undertaken.

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# 1 Introduction

## ***Introduction***

This study examines key components for healthy local food systems, using a case study in Perth County, Ontario (See Figure 1: Map of Perth County). The study investigates how to increase local consumption of food grown and produced in Perth County including how to expand market opportunities for local producers, identifying barriers and opportunities. As one area of focus, this research project analyzes the potential for a local food distribution system in Perth County. Recognizing there is a range of key actors involved in local food systems development, this study focuses on the perspectives of a selected group of farmers and producers.

Initial literature search garnered several definitions for “local food,” with designations based on factors including: geographical distances, regional distinctions, what can be grown where, social connections among farmers or among farmers and consumers, or ecological boundaries. Foodland Ontario, for example, considers “local food” very broadly as food that is grown within the province of Ontario (Foodland Ontario). This research project defines local food as *food that is grown within Perth County*.

This research has been conducted as an investigation of one aspect of sustainable communities - the potential contributions of local food systems in the Perth County community. G. Chanan et al (1999) define a sustainable community as:

...one in which there exists, from a mixture of internal and external sources, a self-renewing basis of economic viability, quality of services and social capital sufficient to support a good quality of life for all inhabitants, improve conditions and opportunities where they are inadequate, face new problems creatively as they arise, and pass on to future inhabitants the tangible and intangible assets to achieve the same or higher standards (16).

Sustainability is recognized as important in food systems research (Feenstra, 1997; Hines, 2000; Ilbery, 2005). Advocates working to transform food systems typically frame their work with sustainability as an end goal, calling for a “regenerative food system” (Kloppenburg et al, 2000), a “local food system” (Feagan, 2002) or a “foodshed” (Halweil, 2004).

A poll conducted by the Friends of the Greenbelt reported that eight in ten of respondents prefer to buy locally-grown produce (Greenbelt Foundation 2007 Awareness Research).

Local food is important because of its potential environmental and social benefits. Supporting local food is identified as one way to encourage sustainable development and foster community. Local food systems can also have significant economic impacts on local communities. Blouin (2009) states, “Supporting small-scale agriculture could be a priority for public policy, as an avenue towards developing a sustainable and socially just agriculture sector” (5). Blouin also argues that small-scale farming should be

supported by state and civil society organizations as an incubator for innovative practices and sustainable methods of production (2009: 5).

Local food studies are considered to be important. There is an identified need for studies on the concept of local food chains, their impacts on people and the environment as well as on policy initiatives to support them (Blouin, 2009). Research has investigated the benefits of local food systems, however, some significant gaps still exist. For example, within the local food movement in Ontario, there still is no established definition of what a local food system is (Landman, 2009). There is a need to critically examine the social and economic benefits as well as potential drawbacks of local food systems. Buy local campaigns, for example, may uncritically conflate positive attributes with localization instead of thoroughly examining the impact of local food systems (Born and Purcell, 2006).

Interest in local food has increased during recent years; however, the necessary infrastructure is not yet in place for farmers to fully access local markets (Landman, 2009). A greater number of Canadian community members are seeking local food increasingly, however, and recognizing the value and importance of supporting their local producers. An Ipsos Reid study conducted in 2006 found that for a majority of Canadians, the top two reasons for buying locally grown fruits and vegetables are that it helps the local economy (71%) and support family farms (70%) (New Wave Consumers).

Despite confirmed public desire and growing enthusiasm for local foods, farmers in Perth County continue to face barriers to fully benefitting from this growing market (Food Distribution, 6 April, 2009). In an effort to transcend such barriers, the Stratford Tourism Alliance (STA) created the “Savour Stratford Perth County” brand and developed an integrated culinary tourism strategy in 2008. Savour Stratford Perth County represents a partnership between Stratford and Perth County tourism and economic development organizations and is working with the regions’ farmers and chefs to build a strong authentic ‘food culture’ and to promote culinary tourism in Stratford and Perth County (Stratford Tourism Alliance).

Stratford’s food history makes it an ideal candidate for culinary tourism. Culinary tourism, “includes any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates, and/or consumes food and drink that reflects the local, regional, or national cuisine, heritage, culture, tradition, or culinary techniques” (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, 2005: 17). The Culinary Tourism in Ontario Strategy and Action Plan 2005-2015 identified wine and food tourism as important economic drivers to help increase tourism (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, 2005).

Stratford and Perth County have been cultivating a local culinary heritage since 1832. Stratford is home to one of Ontario's oldest farmers' markets, operating since 1855, as well as the influential Stratford Chefs School where chefs have been training for over 25 years (Stratford Tourism Alliance). Perth County has a rich agricultural background and is characterized by smaller-than-average farms generating higher-than-average net

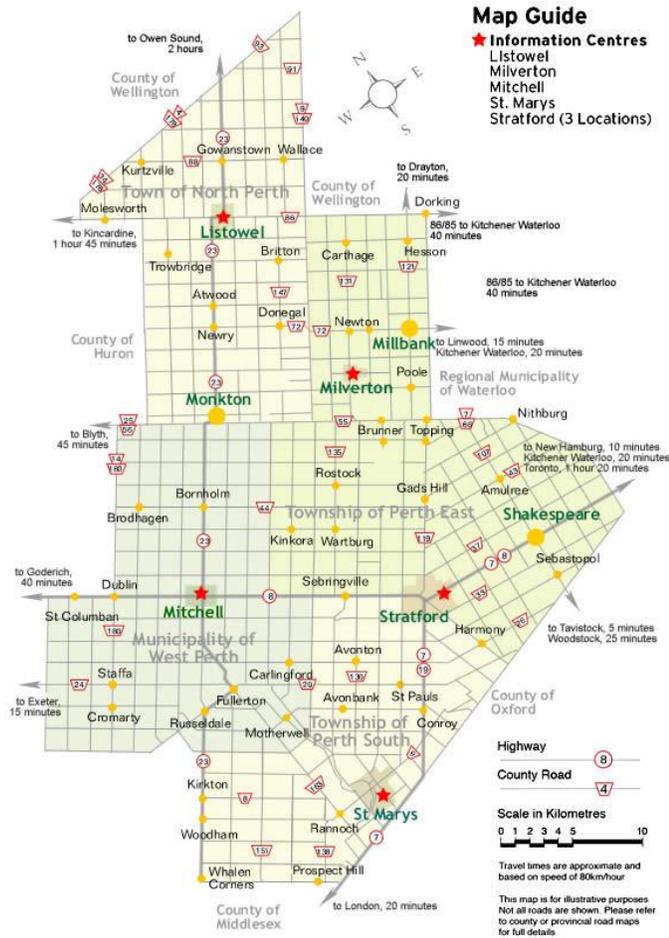
revenues (Schumilas, 2009). The Stratford Shakespeare Festival, launched in 1952, has long since established Stratford and area as a tourist destination for theatre-goers. The STA is working at diversifying the tourist base and developing marketing strategies to promote the region as a local food destination, capitalizing on the growing popularity of culinary and agri-tourism (Stratford Tourism Alliance). The STA recognizes that culinary tourism can not create a healthy local food system on its own, but believes that an appropriately developed culinary tourism program can be a positive contributor to healthy and sustainable local food systems.

Alongside culinary tourism lies agricultural tourism or agri-tourism. Defined as, “travel which combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations – all within a tourism experience,” agri-tourism can strengthen the culinary tourism experience (Marketing on the Edge, 2002: 17).

STA’s marketing is designed to encourage tourists to discover local agricultural products and learn more about Perth County’s producers (Stratford Tourism Alliance). The strategy builds upon existing advances in the local food arena. For example, the Huron-Perth Farm to Table committee produced a local food map in 2008 which lists contact information for farms open to the public in the two counties along with details on their products and special farm attractions. The map is for use by local consumers and tourists interested in discovering local food opportunities within the two counties (Visit Perth, March 14, 2009). Given the current activity, its status as a tourism destination,

and Perth County's strong agricultural sector, the region makes an ideal candidate for a tourism-focused case study in local food studies.

Figure 1: Map of Perth County



Source: [www.visitperth.ca](http://www.visitperth.ca)

## ***1.2 Research Questions***

The main question for this research is: Can local consumption of food grown and produced in Perth County be increased and, if so, how? Additionally, the research aims to answer the following questions:

- i. As part of understanding production capability, what foods are currently being cultivated and raised in Perth County?
- ii. What are the key requirements for a healthy food system?
- iii. What are the current barriers to local consumption facing Perth County producers?
- iv. What are key requirements for a local food distribution system in Perth County?
- v. What is the most appropriate distribution model for Perth County?
- vi. Based on the findings of this case study in Perth County, what does this research suggest about the benefits of a more localized food system from the perspective of producers?

## ***1.3 Research Purpose***

This thesis argues that a vibrant local food system can make significant contributions to the sustainability of communities and, thus, should be pursued within Perth County.

Perth County has been examined as a case study in order to investigate desired components for a healthy local food system. Specifically, culinary tourism is being developed in the region and has been examined in this research for its potential contributions to the local food system. Additionally, the study examines the potential for a local food distribution system that can serve as a mechanism for involving area farmers in increasing consumption of local food and strengthening culinary tourism in the region.

#### ***1.4 Research Goals***

This research project has had several procedural goals relative to local food systems within Perth County:

- i. Compile a complete and detailed inventory of products available and food grown in Perth County including seasonal availability and farming practices used.
- ii. Gather information regarding the current distribution practices used by producers to gain access to their markets including frequency, method of delivery, delivery routes, number of clients, and outstanding needs not being met.
- iii. Collect information and testimonials from other distribution systems that supply local food.

- iv. Examine how best to implement a local food distribution system in Perth County.
- v. Identify and examine the contributions a localized food system can make to the sustainability of a community within which it is based.

### ***1.5 Rationale and Conceptual Framework***

Since the 1987 Brundtland Report, a major focus in the environmental community has been on pursuing sustainable development. As part of the sustainable development initiative, localization studies argue against globalization and in favour of local businesses, talent, and resources (Blouin, 2009; Channan G et al, 1999; Halweil, 2004). Relocalization of communities has been proposed as a strategy to encourage more sustainable development (Hines, 2000; Marsden, 2008). Relocalizing a community extends to the food system which can have significant environmental, social, and economic impacts. Therefore, localized food systems and the changes made in the process can contribute to sustainable development. Furthermore, localization research suggests that strategies that strengthen the health of a local food system should be pursued (Hines, 2000; Marsden, 2008). As one aspect of local food systems, culinary tourism proponents envision a rich and diverse food system with enthusiastic farmers and producers that have strong partnerships with area chefs and restaurants. Advocates see culinary tourism as one important means of strengthening local food systems (Montanari, 2009; Wolf, 2006).

To enable partnerships between producers and chefs and strengthen the authenticity of the culinary tourism experience, an efficient and effective local food distribution system is required. Having a distribution system that connects local consumers with local producers increases the capacity of local food systems, strengthens culinary tourism strategies and, thus, contributes to sustainable development.

Roseland (1998) identified the benefits of a strong, vibrant local food system, which includes increasing the overall sustainability of a community. He lists the benefits of sustainable food systems and states:

A just and sustainable food system protects the land which produces the food; supports the local economy through local production; empowers communities through self-reliance, and gives them increased food system security; enhances community well-being through increased health, decreased illnesses; increases sense of community; and increases environmental health because of reduced transportation of food. Local food systems are inherently tied not only to the health of individuals, but to the short and long-term economic, social, and environmental health of communities. (47)

While literature has established the various benefits of local food similar to those presented by Roseland (Blouin, 2009; Feenstra, 1997; Peters, 2008), there remains a lack of information about how to increase consumption, especially on a case-specific basis (Landman, 2009). This study will add to the existing literature on barriers and opportunities facing farmers producing for the local market. It is also the first of its kind to collect feedback from Perth County producers regarding their specific experiences related to the local food system.

Initial investigations for this research suggested that one important barrier facing Perth County farmers who want to gain access to and benefit from the growing local food movement is distribution and transportation of their products, particularly for smaller, newer, and/or seasonal farmers. During a food distribution meeting on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009, farmers in Perth County reported that they typically look to sell to the immediate area's businesses and restaurants as well as Toronto<sup>1</sup> and area restaurants and farmers' markets (See Figure 2: Map of Southwestern Ontario). However, costs, time, and logistics prevent many from fully accessing these clients. Farmers who currently make deliveries within the Perth County and Toronto area expressed concern with the current process. Some producers choose to avoid distribution completely and engage in farm-gate sales only (Food Distribution, 6 April, 2009).

### ***1.6 Chapter Summary***

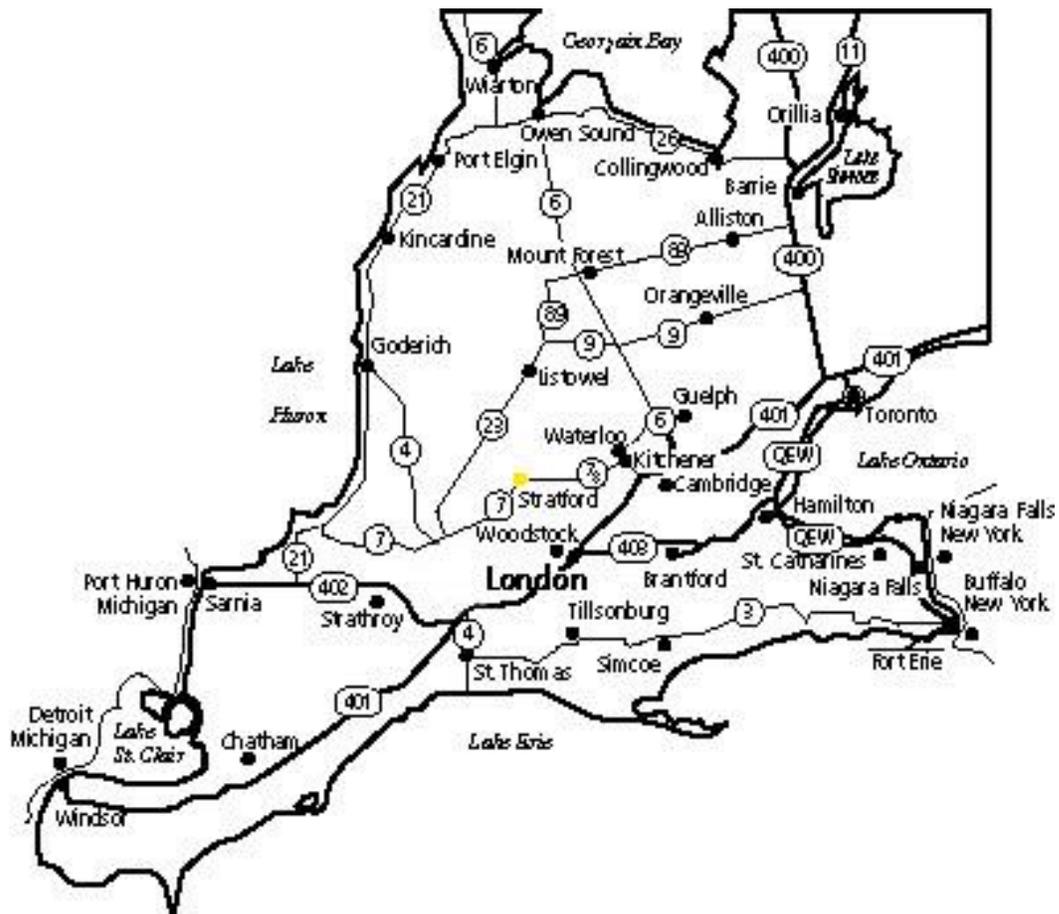
The Stratford Tourism Alliance and its various partners aim to establish Stratford and Perth County as both a culinary tourism and agri-tourism destination. Perth County is well-poised to become a major destination in this tourism sector because of its agricultural production, quality restaurants, and highly skilled chefs (Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance). Becoming an agri-tourism and culinary tourism destination is important because of the potential economic contribution and other benefits outlined in the Literature Review (See Chapter 3). Reaching out to producers in the area, compiling information on products being grown and raised in Perth County, and

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<sup>1</sup> Producers sell to Toronto, 135 km east of Stratford, because of its proximity, large population, and high number of restaurants and retail outlets.

discovering the obstacles preventing producers from achieving greater market exposure and economic success were identified tasks in the early stages of this tourism strategy. This research has sought to make a theoretical and empirical contribution to the initiation of this necessary work.

Figure 2: Map of Southwestern Ontario



Source: <http://londonmiddlesex.ogs.on.ca>

## **2.0 Methodology**

### **2.1 Methodology**

To address the research questions for this study, qualitative research using a case study design was conducted in the region of Perth County, Ontario. Research methodologies included a literature review, participant observation, surveys, and interviews. The survey (Appendix A) was conducted online or via telephone. Interviews were conducted with farmers and producers (Appendix B) and managers of food distribution systems (Appendix C).

The case study approach was an appropriate method for this research. Case studies are preferred when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, the investigator has little control over events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2009). This research met all three criteria. Yin (2009) provides the following definition of a case study:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that
  - Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
  - The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.
2. The case study inquiry
  - Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result

- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (18).

Information was gathered from a literature review, participant observation at various meetings, workshops and community events, a survey, interviews with producers, and interviews with distribution system representatives. The interviews with producers sought answers as to why they sell locally and how they go about doing so, building upon the initial survey.

The case study method is also preferred when examining current events, particularly when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated, as this adds two sources of evidence: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews with the persons involved in the events. The case study's strength is its ability to deal with the variety of evidence, such as documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations that may present themselves during research. The benefit of the case study methodology is that issues that are often examined separately can be examined together in the context of a single example (Yin, 2009).

There is concern that case study research does not produce the most rigorous findings available, fails to provide the ability for scientific generalizations, and results in long, unreadable texts. It is also worth noting, however, that there is also concern about the validity of randomized field trials or "true experiments" (Yin, 2009). On balance, the

benefits of the case study approach outweighed its limitations for this research. In general, for exploratory studies like this one, a case study approach appears to have considerable merit because it is able to optimize understanding of the case itself, rather than generalization (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

## ***2.2 Ethical Considerations***

This study was reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo in July, 2009. Written and/or verbal consent was obtained from all participants and all information gathered through the course of the study has been kept confidential.

## ***2.3 Limitations***

Due to the nature of the research and circumstances under which this study was conducted, several limitations arose. A thorough exploration of local food system development would require investigation of all food system players including producers, processors, distributors, and consumers, but was not possible given constraints of time and resources. This thesis focuses primarily on local farmers and producers, which limits the information gathered to their perspectives.

The research also made an assumption at the outset that claims about the benefits of culinary tourism for local food systems and its potential contributions to sustainable development are well founded. While the results of the research do not challenge those claims, a thoroughly balanced study might have started from a more critical

position. However, since the STA had already endorsed culinary tourism prior to the onset of the research, this study worked with existing assumptions.

The purposive sampling procedure also presents limits. An invitation to complete the survey was sent primarily via email while some producers were contacted via phone. A request for interviews was also sent out primarily via email. Therefore, the sample was subject to the biases inherent in participant self-selection. Those who were passionate about the research topic were likely more inclined to respond to the interview request. Producers who were not experiencing barriers and obstacles may have been less likely to respond. Farmers who do not regularly use e-mail might also have been excluded, particularly since high-speed Internet is not yet available to all rural areas in Ontario. This limits the views and opinions available to this case study.

Finally, this research's area of focus was on farmers and producers in Perth County. The scope of this study did not allow for the inclusion of restaurateurs, chefs, or government officials during the interview process. Statements from these stakeholders would have been useful to provide a context for and to critically assess the claims of producers. Studies of the perspectives of other key actors in the local food system in this region would provide a useful starting point for further research in this area.

A comprehensive analysis of the entire food system is beyond the resources and time available for this study. Despite these limitations, this study provides a useful overview of the Perth County food system, the barriers and opportunities facing producers, and the opportunities for local food system development in Perth County.

## **2.4 Survey**

A survey was created to collect data from agricultural producers in Perth County and its surrounding area. The survey was preliminary research aimed at identifying producers with an interest in local food. A list of proposed questions was created and a similar study in Ottawa was consulted to create a list of potential questions to include (New Economy Development Group). Feedback was also solicited from staff at the STA and the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance. Survey questions covered information about the specific products being grown or raised at each farm, farming practices and current methods of distribution. The open-ended survey questions also offered each producer the chance to describe in their own words any unique and/or superior attributes of their products (see Appendix A).

As outlined in the introduction, this research project set out to gather general information about the barriers and challenges facing local food producers and their impressions of Perth County's food system. To begin this ambitious effort, a comprehensive database of producer information was collected via the survey (Appendix A). Approximately ninety producers were notified of it via email and telephone conversations using the Official Contact List received from the Stratford Tourism Alliance and the Huron-Perth Buy Local Buy Fresh local food map forms. Fifty-eight producers completed the survey, which represents a favourable response rate of 64.4%. The survey included their farming practices, products they grow or raise, current methods of distribution, and where their products are available along with their contact information. This data was used as a starting point as it gathered initial information that

was later built upon during the interview process. It was also used to create an online database that is searchable by product and/or farm name and includes a seasonal availability function. The website, launched by the STA in the fall of 2009, is geared for extensive use by chefs and encourages them to place orders directly with farmers after learning of the products available in Perth County.<sup>2</sup> According to The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, the collection of this type of data is significant for regions pursuing the establishment of culinary tourism. The *Culinary Tourism in Ontario: Strategy and Action Plan 2005-2015* states that, “One of the most important critical success factors for emerging culinary tourism destinations is the creation of an inventory within each region of the province” (2005: 33).

## **2.4 Interviews**

### **2.4.1 Interviews with farmers and producers**

One-on-one interviews were conducted with 18 local farmers and producers who had completed the survey. Interview questions covered the successes and barriers to the local food market, reasons for producing and selling for the local market, and improvements to be made on the local, regional, as well as national level. Questions also focused on the need for a distribution vehicle and what it should entail. Interviews were conducted from October, 2009 to February, 2010.

Interviews were conducted with producers from a variety of agricultural backgrounds. Six were meat and/or egg producers including beef, lamb, pork and chicken. Seven

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<sup>2</sup> The online inventory can be found at: [www.welcometostratford.com/producers/php](http://www.welcometostratford.com/producers/php)

were fruit and/or vegetable growers, three of whom are Certified Organic. Two were producers of artisanal cheese and two were producers of value-added products, specifically preserves and gluten-free, bean flour mixes. One was the General Manager of the Ontario Coloured Bean Growers.

The purpose of the eighteen interviews with farmers and producers was to expand on the survey responses and gather information about the food system in Perth County. They also provided insight into policy and government regulations that affect the local food system. Interviews were chosen for this portion of the data collection because the open-ended format allowed for much more detailed responses to the questions than a survey could garner (Yin, 2009).

Interviews were semi-structured. The questions centred on the barriers and opportunities within the local food system of Perth County and specifically touched on the common obstacle of distribution. The questions expanded on the survey and contributed to the research objectives. All interviewees were asked an initial series of questions. Additional and ad hoc questions were included based on the discussion. Interviewees also had the opportunity to include information not covered in the interview questions which often led to highly insightful discussions. This semi-structured approach allowed for flexibility and garnered the most information from each interviewee. It also allowed each interview subject to focus on topics that they felt were most important.

### **2.4.2 Interviews with Distribution Companies**

To examine what was currently being done in terms of Perth County's small (i.e. localized) distribution systems, and to determine the utility of these systems to this community, a second set of interviews was performed with two of the systems' operators. Interviewees were asked to describe the logistics and practices of their companies and their own vision of how these fit into a local food system for Perth County.

### **2.5 Participant Observation**

This research also included participant observation through the attendance of several meetings and conferences including Sustain Ontario's *Bring Food Home* conference, Savour Stratford Perth County Regional Food Summit, and the Huron Perth Farm to Table committee meetings. These events were invaluable in providing political and economic context for the research, in confirming or raising questions about interview responses, and in identifying and gathering useful reports, documents, and other forms of secondary data.

### **2.6 Chapter Summary**

Qualitative research using Perth County as a case study was undertaken including a survey, interviews, participant observation, and a literature review. The case study approach was most appropriate for this research examining the food system in Perth County.

### **3.0 Literature Review**

To explore and engage with the major themes characterizing contemporary local food systems research, a comprehensive literature review was conducted. Major themes include: sustainable communities, food security, food systems, food sovereignty, culinary tourism, agri-tourism, and localization.

Secondary literature in the form of reports, feasibility studies, and recommendations was gathered from sources provided by key informants, conferences attended on the subjects of local food and culinary tourism, and academic literature. This data was used to complement the information gathered from interviews.

#### **3.1.1 Definition of Local Food**

Integral to this study examining Perth County's food system is a clear definition of what comprises local food. There are a variety of definitions provided in the literature. The many local food projects that exist provide additional insight. For example, Food Down the Road, a Kingston, Ontario-based not-for-profit organization, defines local food as food grown within a 100 km area surrounding the consumer's home. However, they argue that this definition is not a strict one but, rather, a guideline for sustainable food system development (McBay, 2007). A 100 mile guideline was popularized by Smith and MacKinnon, authors of *The 100 Mile Diet: A Year of Local Living* (2007).

When conducting their research on the barriers and opportunities to direct marketing between farms and restaurants in Colorado, Starr et al (2003) found Peter Berg's 1983

term “bioregion” most appropriate. A bioregion takes both human settlement and ecology into account while ensuring the area is diverse enough to support the production of most material necessary for human life (305). Starr et al (2003) found this distinction useful when defining local food.

Other definitions in the literature reflect political, geographical and/or regional divisions, or, alternatively, are based on what products can be grown within a specific area. For the purpose of this study, the definition of local food was based on the geographical boundaries of Perth County (see Appendix A). It did, however, allow for the inclusion of producers outside this area when appropriate, For example, if nearby producers offered products not grown within the county or their farms were situated outside the region but they consistently serve the population of Perth County, they were included in our study. Three producers from outside of Perth County were interviewed. This definition was chosen because it coincided with the STA’s definition of local food.

### **3.1.2 Definition of “Selling Locally”**

Eighteen producers selling in the local market were targeted for this research and during the interviews, these farmers were asked about their motivations for local marketing. For this research the definition of selling locally was based on the “social distance” concept which characterizes short food supply chains based on relational criteria where information and knowledge of the consumer are the defining features (Ilbery and Maye,

2005). This research included the following two categories in its definition of selling locally:

- 1) Face-to-face: Consumers meet the producers face-to-face and purchase the product directly from them.
- 2) Spatially proximate: Consumers are aware of the product's local origins when they purchase it in a local outlet (Ilbery and Maye, 2005).

### **3.1.3 Food Systems**

Also central to this research is a definition of food system. According to McCullum et al (2005), a food system is, "a set of interrelated functions that includes food production, processing, and distribution; food access and utilization by individuals, communities, and populations; and food recycling, composting, and disposal. Food systems operate and interact at multiple levels, including community, municipal, regional, national, and global" (181).

Feenstra (1997) states that local food systems are, "rooted in particular places, aim to be economically viable for farmers and consumers, use ecologically sound production and distribution practices and enhance social equity and democracy for all members of the community" (28).

Blouin et al (2009) discuss the importance of food systems aiming to maximize social, economic, and environmental benefits and to provide a definition of a local food system that reflects these attributes, defined as, "Integrated food production, distribution and

consumption system operating within a designated geographical area for the purpose of achieving sustainable development goals” (11).

Food systems are unique to their specific region. Kneen (1993) explains that a sustainable food system is rooted in a particular ecology and bio-region and, therefore, each food system is unique but some may share similar features.

### **3.1.4 Localization**

Literature by Roseland (1998), Kneen (1992), and Hines (2000) along with many others has established the benefits of promoting a relocalized community, especially for agricultural economies.

Hines (2000) defines localization as a process which reverses the trend of globalization by discriminating in favour of the local. Depending on the context within which the concept is used, “local” can be defined as part of the nation state, the nation itself or a regional grouping of nation states. Policies that bring about localization increase the control of the economy held by communities and/or nation states (Hines, 2000). They should result in increased community cohesion, reductions in poverty and inequality, and improvements in livelihoods, social infrastructure and environmental protection and, overall, an increased sense of security (Hines, 2000). Localization requires the government’s provision of a policy and economic framework which allows people, community groups and businesses to rediversify their own local economies (Hines, 2000).

Localization can also be pursued at the grassroots community level (i.e. not necessarily initiated via government intervention). Hines (2000) argues that localization can be “built” by mapping local human, institutional, and resource assets and then combining and strengthening these for the local economy. Localization can also be built by using individuals’ skills, local associations where people assemble, and formal institutions (e.g. private businesses, schools, libraries, hospitals, and social service agencies) (Hines, 2000).

Shuman (1998) also provides a comprehensive definition of localization as, “...nurturing locally owned businesses which use local resources sustainably, employ local workers at decent wages and serve primarily local consumers” (Shuman, 1998: 28). He highlights that control is given back to communities to increase their self-sufficiency and reduce their dependence on imports. Shuman (1998) states that the end goal of localization is to ensure the transition to a more localized economy that aims to provide basic needs sustainably, improve human rights, reduce the power gaps between groups and genders, and increase equity and democratic control over decision making (Shuman, 1998). He provides the main potential advantages of localization which, briefly stated, include:

- 1) Maximizing the devolution of political power and democratic accountability
- 2) Taking control of the economy
- 3) Protecting the environment

- 4) Improving social and environmental conditions plus positive technological developments
- 5) Developing a positive role for competition
- 6) Creating trade and aid rules for self-reliance (34-36).

There are criticisms of local food systems. These critiques raise important opportunities and challenges. The most common critique is based on the assumptions that may be made about local food. The “local trap” refers to the assumption that food that is sourced locally is also ecologically sustainable and socially just (Born, 2006: 195). Born and Purcell (2006) condemn ‘buy local’ campaigns for uncritically conflating so many sub-issues within the overall issue of localization, including environmental and social concerns. They believe these assumptions are quite common and widely accepted among food activists. They argue that, regardless of its scale, the outcomes produced by a particular food system are contextual in that they depend on the actors and agendas that are empowered by the particular social relations within that system (Born and Purcell, 2006). Furthermore, Born and Purcell (2006) point out that face-to-face interaction between consumers and producers does not necessarily ensure the provision of better information to the consumer nor does it guarantee more sustainable food.

Buckingham and Theobald (2003) echo the argument that a localized food system does not guarantee more ecologically-responsible or socially-just agricultural production. Instead, there may be competing focuses as the “push factor” for local economic

development may fluctuate between an emphasis on local goods and service provisions and environmental re-mediation and protection (Buckingham and Theobald, 2003).

DuPuis and Goodman (2005) reiterate that “local” is not necessarily an innocent term and needs closer examination. They warn of localist food politics, implying that food production-consumption is undertaken within an ethical framework (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005). They state, “Instead, the local in agro-food studies is currently taken for granted as a ‘purified’ category and treated as a context or locale that is conducive to the emergence of new ecological forms incorporating ‘alternative’ social norms” (author’s emphasis, 368).

Hinrichs and Kramer show that local food system movement members tend to be white, middle-class consumers and fear the movement threatens to be socially homogenized and exclusionary (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005).

A focus on local economies has been criticized as elitist because of its potential to take attention away from addressing the problems associated with globalization including the need for international income redistribution (Buckingham and Theobald, 2003).

Critics also suggest that relocalizing economies is a luxury for more developed countries, arguing that it is significantly easier for local economies to grow when all people have access to a guaranteed basic income, health care, childcare, and education opportunities (Buckingham and Theobald, 2003).

Many authors emphasize the importance of food system changes being initiated from the grassroots at the local level if production processes are to become less ecologically degrading and the negative consequences of globalization are to be resisted

(Buckingham and Theobald, 2003). To achieve more sustainable communities, it is argued that the combined process of ecological and socio-economic relocalization is a critical process (Marsden, 2008).

The risk of local food being improperly associated with other values has led to comparisons of the local food movement to that of the early organics movement.

Feagan (2007) is leery of the concept of local being “bastardized” in ways comparable to those which have been applied to the corporate appropriation of the concept of organic food. Thus, there are many complex as well as conflicting meanings being tied-up in the discourse of local food (Feagan, 2007). Local food should not be assumed as environmentally and socially superior. Rather, a local food system that takes social and environmental issues into account should be pursued.

### ***3.2 Benefits of Local Food Systems***

A significant amount of literature discusses the environmental and social benefits of enhanced local food systems. Authors including Feagan (2007), Hinrich (2000), and Blay-Palmer (2008) argue that more localized food systems offer significant environmental advantages and present opportunities for increasing the health and sustainability of communities.

The environmental benefits of local food systems are held to be multi-faceted. It is commonly argued that the emission of greenhouse gases can be greatly decreased when the distance that food is transported is reduced. According to a study conducted by Anika Carlsson-Kanyama of Stockholm University, a basic diet including some meat,

grain, fruits and vegetables composed of imported ingredients can require up to four times the energy and greenhouse gas emissions of an equivalent diet from domestic sources (Halweil, 2004).

Literature suggests that the impact of one's food choices has far-reaching implications that may not be immediately obvious. Halweil (2004) discusses a case study in the United States that examined the link between farm size and the health of rural communities. The study concluded that smaller farm plots coincided with a higher quality of life, lower poverty rates, and lower crime rates among other positive outcomes (Halweil, 2004). Halweil (2004) celebrates the connections between local food systems and population health stating, "...the best hope for good nutrition will continue to be local food" (85).

Roberts (2008) focuses on the economic benefits a localized food system can deliver, specifically in the employment sector. He argues that it fosters job creation through direct employment as well as backward linkages, which encompass industries that enable agricultural production such as farm tool repairs, and forward linkages that involve the processing of raw agricultural output into products like ice cream (Roberts, 2008).

Much discussion about the economic impacts of local food systems focuses on specific implications on the rural population itself. As Halweil (2004) asserts, "Rebuilding local food systems might offer the first genuine economic opportunity on farm country in

years, a pressing need in view of the huge amounts of money leaking out of rural communities” (54).

Money spent on local food has significant multiplier effects on the community’s economy. For example, a dollar spent locally “is usually spent 6 to 15 times before it leaves the community. From \$1, you create \$5 to \$14 in value within that community” (Mitchell, Northwest Earth Institute). Farmers and other market vendors buy their raw materials, equipment and other goods and services locally as well as other goods and services. Consumers who purchase directly from farmers at farmers’ markets also typically spend more money at the surrounding stores and restaurants, which furthers the local economic growth. The multiplier effect formula used by Farmers’ Markets Ontario to determine the economic value to surrounding businesses as a result of farmers’ market traffic is three times the actual sales by the vendors (Gurin, 2006).

A 1999 study of farmers’ markets in Ontario estimated the annual sales at farmers’ markets in the province to be close to \$500 million and the total economic impact to be approximately \$1.5 billion. The same study also found that, “Provincially, we estimate that on an average summer Market week, approximately 8,000 people are involved in sales and related tasks at Farmers’ Markets across the province. This would suggest that a total of 24,000 people are directly and indirectly involved in preparing and selling the goods we find in Farmers’ Markets” (Cummings et al, 1999: 57-59). Farmers’ markets can create new job opportunities, particularly for farm families who often staff the produce stand (Cummings et al, 1999).

Stagl (2002) discusses the contributions local food markets make to sustainable development: decreasing the need to transport goods; increasing the ability to address an array of consumer demands; offering proximity of producers to consumers which leads to a possibility for consumers to learn about sustainability and generates trust; offering a variety of products; and extending to new consumer groups. A full definition of sustainable development is provided later in this chapter.

### **3.2.1 Social Concepts**

Putnam (1995) defines social capital as, “the shared knowledge, understandings, and pattern of interactions that a group of people bring to any productive activity.” Social capital includes networks, norms and levels of trust that increase a society’s productive potential and contributes to a stronger community fabric. It refers to the organizations, structures, and social relations that people build themselves, independently of the state of large corporations (Coleman, 1990).

Roseland (1998) has written extensively on the subject of social capital and argues that social capital differs from other forms of capital because it is not limited by material scarcity and, instead, is only limited by imagination. Therefore, Roseland (1998) argues that social capital suggests a route toward sustainability because it replaces the fundamentally illogical model of unlimited growth within a finite world with one of unlimited complexity not bound by the availability of material resources. It is important to know where to locate and how to multiply social capital for sustainable community development (Roseland, 1998).

Community “civicness” is key to maximizing the role of communities as agents for sustainable development (Selman and Parker, 1997). It stimulates social life, enhances productivity, and facilitates action thus becoming a proxy for successful policy implementation (Putnam, 1993). Community “civicness” is also an important component of sense of place, which is critical for community sustainability (Roseland, 1998).

Hinrich (2000) is another author concerned with the social aspects of local food systems. She examines the premise that trust and social connection characterize direct agricultural markets and distinguish local food systems from their global counterparts. These social benefits are referred to as “social embeddedness” which includes social ties, assumed to modify and enhance human economic interactions that are often seen as the hallmark of direct agricultural markets. This embeddedness then becomes an important part of the “value-added” product offered in the farmers’ market experience that can generate valued societal ties, familiarity and trust between consumers and producers (Hinrichs, 2000). Such social benefits cannot be replicated by a global food system and herein lies one of the competitive advantages of local food systems. A study of farmers’ markets in Ontario found that, “Customers suggest that the market is a key community icon that can serve to reinforce and help retain community identity ... customers pointed out that farmers’ markets represent an excellent alternative to mainstream supermarket shopping with a friendly, relaxed atmosphere that cannot be duplicated anywhere else” (Cummings et al, 1999: 13)

### **3.2.2 Distancing**

The social embeddedness Hinrichs attributes to the local food experience is absent when consumers are “distanced from their food,” another phenomena addressed in local food systems literature. Distancing is an important aspect of society’s connection to food and reflects the amount of social capital that is present. Kneen (1992) defines distancing as, “increasing the physical distance between the point at which food is actually grown or raised and the point at which it is consumed” (24). According to Kneen (1992), as control over the direction and management of the food system passes from those who grow and consume the food to the hands of fewer and fewer people in corporate boardrooms, the distance between a crop and the farmer and consumer is vastly increased. Therefore, consumers are increasingly removed from their food in the industrialized food system (Kneen, 1992).

### **3.2.3 Food Miles**

The notion of food miles quantitatively measures this distancing. Food miles are used to represent how far foods travel from the farm to consumer and are a tool intended to help people realize the environmental impact of their food choices (Iles, 2005). Iles (2005) explains that employing food miles is an attempt to represent the “missing objects” which he defines as, “things that people created to help materialize, or make more accessible, otherwise invisible phenomena in their everyday lives” (166). Food miles, therefore, are used to represent missing objects so that questions can be raised about the operational assumptions of the production system like global sourcing, year-

round availability, processing, centralized distribution, retailer control over production conditions and large volume commodity measures (Iles, 2005).

### **3.3.1 Globalization and Food Systems**

Many authors argue that, under conditions of globalization, the mass industrialization of agriculture has effectively obstructed consumers from developing an awareness of the environmental impact of their food choices. Iles (2005) argues that the underlying structural causes of environmental damage in industrial agriculture are missed because they are too remote for consumers to visualize. Therefore, consumers are removed from the environmental impacts as well as from decisions being made concerning the environment (Iles, 2005). Those in favour of sustainable agriculture advocate shorter distances between consumers and their food. Advocates believe that consumers with a closer connection to their food will be more likely to demand producers be held accountable for any potential ecological degradation (Iles, 2005).

Differences between local and global food systems are well documented. Feenstra (1997) provides a detailed chart outlining differing characteristics between local and global food systems:

**Table 1: Feenstra’s Comparison of Local and Global Food Systems**

<b>Local Food System</b>	<b>Global Food System</b>
Diversity of crops	Monocultural
Money stays in the community	Money leaves the community
Community capitalism: based on theories of civil and civic engagement	Corporate capitalism: based on theory of neo-classical “free market” economies
Relies on large number of farms; Farms vary in size and structure	Relies on a small number of large farms
Vary in degree of specialization, capitalization, and mechanization	Large-scale and industrialized agriculture
Environmentally sound	Highly capital-intensive, mechanized, specialized
Short trade routes; multiple layers; vibrant rural population	Environmentally degrading
Decisions reached locally with bottom-up controls	Long trade routs; market concentration; rural de-population
Self; reliance; citizen participation	Global decisions with top-down controls
For local and regional consumption	Creates a dependency culture; consumers; production oriented toward export or distant markets

Source: Feenstra (1997): 7-8.

Benefits attributed to a local food system are in direct contrast to the negative characteristics evident in the increasingly globalized world food system. Reviewed literature concurs that the promotion of local food systems is a direct alternative response to an increasingly globalized and industrialized agricultural system and to the negative consequences that result from it (Blay-Palmer, 2008; Hines, 2000).

The rise in popularity of local food is, in part, a rejection of globalization and the resulting industrialization of agriculture that accompanied it (Roseland, 1998; van Donker, 2009). Blay-Palmer explains that the North American food system has been steadily industrialized since the early 1800's while society has moved from a largely localized consumption practice to an industrial commodity system of mass consumption subsumed into the market economy. As this industrial food system has evolved, direct production-consumption connections were weakened and people became increasingly distanced from their food and those who grow and raise it (Blay-Palmer, 2008).

Local food is part of a larger localization movement which resists the trend to globalization by discriminating in favour of the local (Hines, 2000). Localization extends beyond simply examining food sources and aims to return control to the community in all aspects of decision making (Shuman, 1998).

Many of the arguments in favour of local food are based on discouraging trends in agriculture that authors largely attribute to industrialization. For example, the number of farms in Ontario fell from nearly 200,000 in 1921 to 57,211 by 2006. Farm size continued to increase growing from 676 to 728 acres between 2001 and 2006.

Meanwhile, the average age of farmers has increased and the number of new farmers has decreased (Blay-Palmer, 2008: 63-65). A reduction in the number of farms and an increase in the size of them suggests that family farms are being replaced by larger, industrial farms.

### **3.3.2 Local Foodshed**

Halweil (2004) argues that long-distance food is harmful to the environment because it requires more packaging, refrigeration, fuel, waste, and pollution. He also claims that, when food is increasingly imported, the constellation of relationships within local foodsheds is lost. Halweil (2004) provides a definition of the local foodshed as, “that sphere of land, people, and businesses that provides a community or region with its food” (12). He lists some of the benefits including: chefs using fresher, tastier, less processed foods; farmers providing a diversity of products in one location for consumers; and the creation of farmers’ markets. He argues that these benefits remain a tiny counterweight to the global agro-industrial food system because of the many barriers facing local food such as: agribusiness monopolies that eliminate competitors; cheap fossil fuels that encourage long-distance shipping; a disconnect between farmers and consumers; and agricultural policies that discourage local farms, farmers’ markets, and food cooperatives in favour of factory farms, mega markets, and long-distance trade. He also explains that the long-distance transport of food has become a defining characteristic of the modern food system (Halweil, 2004). This offers consumers unprecedented choice and the ability to consume exotic produce, engage in cross-

cultural experiences, enjoy fusion cuisine, and perform dietary exploration. Meanwhile, the transnational system can overlook local cuisines, varieties, and agriculture and often includes infinite flavouring, packaging and marketing reformulations of the same few raw ingredients. Long distance travel also requires more packaging, refrigeration, fuel, and generates more waste and pollution. Farmers deal with a complex food chain instead of selling directly to their neighbours, and are often paid less as a result (Halweil, 2004).

### **3.3.3 Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is a common theme within the discourse on local food systems as more localized food supply chains are being proposed as one vehicle for sustainable development (Blouin, 2009). The most widely used definition is from the Brundtland Report which states, “Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987: 8). Roseland recognizes the variety of interpretations of the term that exist but argues that the general summation of its meaning is, “...a *different kind of development*. It must be a *pro-active strategy to develop sustainability*” (author’s emphasis, 4).

Contributions of a local food system to sustainability have been noted in the literature. Blouin (2009) states, “Supporting small-scale agriculture could be a priority for public policy, as an avenue towards developing a sustainable and socially just agricultural

sector” (5). Thus, local food systems research includes promoting sustainable development and food sovereignty, not simply decreasing food miles. That is, local food systems studies should integrate social, economic, and environmental aspects (Blouin, 2009).

### **3.3.4 Food Security and Food Sovereignty**

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, “Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels, exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2006).

Hines (2000) argues that the World Trade Organization’s Agreement on Agriculture does not encourage food security. Rather, it promotes the Northern model of industrialized efficiency where self-reliance is out and trade is in. Instead, Hines (2000) says that the new goal should be self-reliance, sourcing food locally whenever possible and sourcing from world resources as a last resort (215).

Community food security emphasizes long-term, systemic, and broad-based approaches to address food insecurity. A food secure community is one within which all residents are able to obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, and nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes food security and social justice (McCullum et al, 2005).

Halweil (2004) argues that current international trade rules prevent nations from achieving food sovereignty and prevent nations from safeguarding and developing domestic and local food production. He says, “Local labels, country-of-origin labeling, procurement policies, and quality standards are often seen as barriers to trade, but countries should be able to determine what foods cross their borders, including the power to forbid imports of a given food during its domestic harvest season” (140).

### **3.3.5 Barriers and Opportunities for Local Food Systems**

Literature exists on the barriers to and opportunities for local food system development. Many of these barriers were also mentioned by the interview subjects for this research (discussed in detail in the Results section). A report authored by Roppel et al (2006) entitled “Farm Women and Canadian Agricultural Policy” also included findings from interviews with farm women discussing obstacles they have faced. In their findings, interviewees mentioned the following as threats to farmers:

- i. increased freight costs, lost access to railroad loading points, rural road systems
- ii. high volume, export-oriented industries
- iii. farming as a lonely, high-pressure, potentially dangerous occupation
- iv. large distributors squeeze local products off the shelf by undercutting prices or threatening to discontinue supplying a retailer who stocks local products
- v. mass media as harmful to the public perception of farmers
- vi. organic producers are losing their competitive edge to corporate interest (e.g. President’s Choice’s organic line) (21-23, 52-53)

Soots (2003) summarized barriers to developing a local food system in Waterloo Region as identified by her interview subjects and presented in the table below:

**Table 2: Soots' Organizational Summary of Barriers to Localizing the Food System in Waterloo Region**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Economic Barriers	Current Economic Paradigm	-International Trade and World Markets  Corporate Control  Market Demands: Efficiency, Convenience, Consistency
	Socio-Economic Issues in Farming	- Discouraging Trends  - Limited Time and Marketing Skills
Political & Institutional Barriers	Government & Regulations	- Land-Use Planning  - Zoning Regulations  - Health & Food Safety
Socio-Cultural Barriers	Consumer Attitudes & Behaviour	- Consumer Ignorance  - Lifestyle/Convenience Culture  - Tastes, Desires, Demands
	Rural-Urban Disconnect	
Environmental Considerations	Natural Environment	- Seasons, Climate, Soil

Source : Soots, 2003 : 59

Wormsbecker's (2007) thesis also compiled a summary of barriers as part of her multi-case study of local food systems in Nelson, British Columbia; Lethbridge, Alberta; and

Waterloo, Ontario. They were broken down into five categories. Worsmbecker summarized the barriers as:

- i. Consumer: consumer awareness/education, convenience, demand for inexpensive food/low food prices, older demographics supporting local
- ii. Policy, Regulations, and Corporate Barriers: Land Use Policy, Health and Safety Regulations, Federal/Provincial Agricultural Policy Not Conducive to Small-Scale Agriculture, International Trade Obligations, Transnational Corporate Influence
- iii. Processing Infrastructure: Provincially Inspected Abattoirs
- iv. Retail : Consolidation of Food Retailing, Cost Competitiveness in Retail and Accountability of Institutions, Storage and Delivery of Product for Small Stores
- v. Farmer and Agricultural Capacity Barriers: Oversupply of Agricultural Commodities, Competitive Farming Community, Limited Local Farmers/Land, Time/Knowledge Required for Direct Marketing, Unstable Pay at Farmers' Markets, Lack of Certified Farmers' Markets, Falling Farm Incomes and Rising Cost of Land, Risk Aversion of Farmers (40-63).

Starr et al (2003) discuss the barriers specific to direct marketing between farms and restaurants in Colorado including the logistical burden on the food buyer; the ability of farmers to deliver regularly; product availability: the unavailability of pre-processing of raw ingredients; and the required increase of labour costs. They also summarized the reasons why restaurants do not buy local food including: service-related issues of dependability; reliability; convenience; the preference for having one supplier; and the inability to get refunds (Starr et al, 2003).

### **3.3.6 Food Distribution**

Distribution is frequently raised in literature as a significant barrier to local food systems (Blay-Palmer, 2008; Metcalf Foundation, 2008; Starr et al, 2003). A distribution system that serves local food producers is an important component of a healthy food system. Blay-Palmer (2008) highlights the importance of this and states, “However, if the few farms are to grow into a system, there needs to be an intermediary co-op or distributor to link farms together and stabilize demands” (83).

A 2008 report concluded that there is a need to connect smaller and mid-sized food production to food distribution networks, a need for a way to broker connections to larger retailers, and a “food courier service” especially for value-added products (Metcalf Foundation, 2008, 31-32). A distribution system is a perceived need by many working in local food systems research. Four distribution models are presented in Section 5. Literature reviewed for this research and statements from local producers suggest that a distribution system that serves area producers effectively would greatly contribute to the pursuit of a more localized food system and, in turn, enhance the culinary tourism experience in the region.

### **3.3.7 Culinary Tourism and Agri-tourism**

Culinary tourism can encourage the pursuit of a local food system. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (1994) defines tourism as, “The activities of persons temporarily away from their usual environment for not more than one year for virtually

any activity, except the pursuit of remuneration from within the place visited” (Smith, 2008: 289).

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism defines culinary tourism as, “any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates, and/or consumes food and drink that reflects the local, regional, or national cuisine, heritage, culture, tradition, or culinary techniques” (Culinary Tourism in Ontario, 2005: 12).

The term was first coined by academic Lucy Long in 1998 to express the idea of experiencing other cultures through food. It includes all unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences, although many only think of wineries and fine dining establishments when attempting to define culinary tourism (Wolf, 2006).

Culinary tourism has been identified as making significant positive contributions to the viability of communities and as a lever for local economic development (Montanari and Staniscia, 2009). Montanari and Staniscia (2009) conclude that:

- i. The relationship between quality food and tourism is a lever for local development in marginal areas;
- ii. This development is sustainable because of its intrinsic nature: preserving traditional products, traditional landscape, using traditional ways of production, brings sustainability, the long history of traditions is the guarantee of sustainability;
- iii. Those processes allow the maintenance of environment and the survival of local communities that, in other situations, would be pushed away from marginal areas;
- iv. The survival of local communities gives chance to new creative classes to emerge; these new young creations will emerge since they have to satisfy the needs of postmodern tourists or they would not survive;

- v. Those processes of development should be sustained by public actors through a bottom-up approach;
- vi. Development is as such if quality food and tourism are strictly linked to territory and if they respect its peculiarities (1463-1483).

Culinary tourism is reputed to promote economic development and the creation of sustainable food systems on national, regional, and local levels (Culinary Tourism in Ontario, 2005). According to the Ministry of Industry (Canada), between 1987 and 2003 tourism spending on food and dining-out in Canada by domestic and international tourists averaged 16.2% of total expenditures, which at \$45,966 million ranked second following expenditures on transportation (Kim et al, 2009).

Wolf (2006) outlines the benefits of culinary tourism for residents and the community concluding that it can:

- i. Provide additional jobs
- ii. Promote cross-cultural awareness and understanding
- iii. Offer greater economic prosperity
- iv. Grow the tax base
- v. Benefit neighbouring communities through overflow and transient business
- vi. Helps unify disjointed communities
- vii. Fosters additional business opportunities and, therefore, support services (25).

Hall and Mitchell (2002) outline a strategy that maximizes economic and social leverage between producers and the tourism industry:

- i. Reduce economic leakage by using local vs. external sources (ex: packaging materials)

- ii. Recycle financial resources in the system by buying local goods and services (local dollar multiplier effect)
- iii. Add value to local produce before it is exported; use local food as an attraction to tourists, reinforcing the local economy
- iv. Connect local stakeholders to create new linkages (ex: producer coops, buy local campaigns)
- v. Attract external resources like finance, skills, technology (ex: use internet to connect with customers outside of region)
- vi. Emphasize local identity and authenticity in branding and promotional strategies (ex: place of origin labels)
- vii. Sell direct to consumers via farm shops, direct mailing, farmers' markets, food and wine festivals, etc
- viii. Create a relationship between consumer and producer (83-84)

Culinary tourism is deeply rooted in agriculture as it is based on the availability of raw agricultural ingredients such as ripe fruits and vegetables, or fresh meats and fish that are inherently part of the culinary experience. The way chefs prepare the raw ingredients creates culinary art, as well as unique and memorable culinary tourist experiences (Wolf, 2006).

Agri-tourism encompasses many terms including: agricultural tourism, agro tourism, farm tourism, farm vacation tourism, wine tourism, and agri-entertainment. It provides "county experiences" to travelers with the goal of generating revenues for farmers and surrounding communities (Williams, 2004).

Culinary tourism tends to be inherently more urban-oriented than agricultural tourism, focused on more populated areas with a concentration of restaurants, cafés, cooking schools, and customers. However, culinary tourism also exists in rural areas, especially

in wine-producing regions (Wolf, 2006). Culinary tourism is a subset of cultural tourism because cuisine is a manifestation of culture, whereas agricultural tourism is defined as a subset of rural tourism by the Travel Industry Association of America and includes activities such as visits to farms, farmers' markets, "u-pick" fruit orchards, ranch stays, and "agritainment" (Wolf, 2006). Wolf (2006) explains that agritourism focuses more on the technology and process of farming, whereas culinary tourism focuses more on prepared food and drink; there is, however, a recognized degree of cross-over.

Wolf (2006) explains the economic impact of culinary tourism while also highlighting the integration of agri-tourism stating:

Additional examples of the economic impact of Culinary Tourism are scarce, but the message is clear. Culinary Tourism is potentially a very lucrative niche that holds strong potential for economic and community development...Tourism based around food and drink helps support the livelihoods of local agricultural producers and promotes the maintenance of high quality and purity in food and drink. When tourists fill otherwise empty restaurant tables, more sales are made. More sales mean more profit and more capital to reinvest in the community. The local tax base benefits as well. Culinary Tourism can make significant contributions toward sustainable community and economic development (Wolf, 21).

### ***3.4 Components of Healthy Food System***

Soots (2003) undertook a visioning process in her research with community members to develop a vision of a healthy, sustainable food system in Waterloo Region. From this, she derived a list of the desired components of a healthy local food system.

**Table 3: Vision of a Healthy Local Food System in Waterloo Region**

PRODUCTION	PROCESSING & DISTRIBUTION	SUPPORT MECHANISMS	SUPPLY & CONSUMPTION	COMMUNITY
Farmer Livelihood	Local Processors	Political Support	Consumer: Awareness Appreciation Skills	Vibrant Community
Preservation of Family Farm			3 A's: Availability Accessibility Affordability	Local Culture
Healthy Environment: Sustainable Production	Markets: Small Independent Lively Throughout Community	Community Support	Healthy Food Safe Food	Celebration of Food
Urban Agriculture			Variety Diversity	

Source: Soots (2003): 48

### ***3.4 Literature Review Summary***

The literature review covered topics relevant to this research including: food systems, localization, sustainable development, culinary tourism, components of a healthy food system, benefits of local food systems, and the barriers and opportunities to them. This provided the necessary background information and complemented secondary literature and interviews.

## 4.0 Results

### *4.1 Results of the Interviews and Surveys*

The 58 surveys that were completed identified farmers and producers engaged in selling to the local market and established the initial contact from which producers were then contacted for interviews. Participant observation affirmed and confirmed the reported interview results that follow.

The 18 interviewees for this study were diverse with respect to the regions in which they sell their product and had a variety of customer markets including the Perth County area, Toronto and area, London, Kitchener-Waterloo, and the Niagara Region.

Interviewees were also diverse in regards to their selling methods. Some sold through farm gate sales, Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) programs with home delivery, farmers' markets, online ordering, sales to restaurants, and/or retail outlets. A majority (15 of 18) of them were from Perth County, however, three interviews also included producers who are situated outside the region but serve it regularly. All of the producers interviewed market a majority<sup>2</sup> of their products locally,<sup>3</sup> that is, sales where they have a relatively close connection with the end consumer (ie: selling directly to the

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<sup>3</sup> A loose definition of "marketing a majority of your products locally" was provided as making up the bulk of their total sales. Four producers stated they marketed their products locally 100% and one replied 99%.

<sup>4</sup> Except for Producer E who is the General Manager for the Ontario Coloured Bean Growers Association. She provided useful insight as she is involved with her daughter's direct-sales business and is interested in seeing increased sales of local beans and pulses.

customer or through a retail location that maintains the ability to identify the specific producer).

The issue of distribution had been highlighted by many as a major obstacle when the preliminary research began. A general meeting with producers to discuss distribution in April, 2009 found that many cited it as a major obstacle to accessing and serving the local food system in Perth County. Therefore, interviews included questions on this topic in addition to questions about Perth County's food system as a whole.

#### **4.1.1 Motivations for Selling to the Local Market**

Interviewees shared their motivating factors for selling locally which were largely financial but also social. The most common response from 13 of 18 producers was that selling to the local market is the shortest, most direct money route resulting in a majority of the food dollar going to the producer.

Another common response from eight producers was grounded in the social aspects involved in selling locally and the appeal of developing a close connection with the consumer. Interviewees mentioned they enjoyed knowing their customers, get satisfaction from producing good products, and appreciate seeing customers happy and being able to interact with the consumer and ask them what products they want.

A passion and commitment to contributing to the local food system was common amongst all producers. Producer J stated that her small-scale farming operation started with her family because they wanted to raise their own meat and know what they were

eating. The operation expanded as they started receiving requests from friends and neighbours. Producer L said that he sold his products locally because of the ability to, *“Connect with the end user and to tell our story.”* He receives satisfaction from growing high quality products and seeing his customers happy. Producer J echoed these sentiments and stated, *“It’s enjoyable to have customers come out, see the farm...they have confidence in our product.”* The producers interviewed felt they were doing consumers a service by providing healthy, nutritious, and safe food. With the occurrence of food safety scares increasing, this role becomes increasingly important. Producer B felt that agricultural practices in other countries were of particular concern and stated, *“With imports from all over the world, what is inspected? Let’s get it all inspected!”*

Referring to questions consumers may have about their food, Producer L stated, *“I don’t think there’s anybody better to answer those questions than the person who produces the food.”* To explain her reasons for selling locally Producer N echoed the sentiments about the close connection with consumers, and simply stated, *“It just makes sense for the world doesn’t it? Why would you sell any other way?”*

Other reasons producers provided for selling locally were that it can be easier for niche marketing, it is more economical to sell at their farm gate, or because of the nature of their specific product (e.g. a highly-perishable product that is in high demand and needed every week).

#### **4.1.2 Need for a Distribution Vehicle**

Of the eighteen producers interviewed, fourteen felt that Perth County needs a distribution vehicle. Of these fourteen, four indicated that while they believed producers in the Perth County area needed a distribution vehicle, they would not use it themselves. Feedback about what the distribution vehicle should entail was then collected from those that were interested. From the onset of research it was assumed the vehicle's purpose would be to increase access to local food for individual consumers, restaurants, and retail locations.

A model that was popular amongst a majority of respondents included a central location that could act as a depot for their products. Producers J, K, and M said they would be willing to drop off their product at a central location. Producer P would prefer the distribution vehicle pick-up product at the farm itself and Producer C felt this would be necessary for producers that were not close to the depot location. Five producers (B, D, H, I, O) would be open to either option.

There were differing ideas about the more specific details of how the system should operate. For example, Producer D felt the distribution vehicle should be managed by someone who is not a producer and who could act as an ambassador of the products being distributed. Producer C said that the vehicle should be a not-for-profit venture that includes producer and consumer involvement and is run by the community with decisions about the costs and logistics being made collectively. Two respondents felt that the vehicle should be producer-led and paid for and managed by those who are

using the service. Producer K felt strongly that it should not be run as a co-operative but, rather, as a business so that everyone involved could make a profit.

Producer O had very specific recommendations and felt a successful distribution vehicle would need to be able to service all of a restaurant's needs, that is, offer produce, meat, cheeses, herbs, and possibly frozen produce. The competitive advantage that this distribution vehicle would have is the traceability of its products. Therefore, Producer O felt the vehicle should include control over the entire food chain including what the animal is fed and how the product is handled. Furthermore, this respondent felt the creation of a distribution vehicle should also include a farmers' market, retail store, and depot in one location, eventually expanding to include packaging and processing facilities. Finally, the number of people involved should be kept to a minimum as there would not be a large profit margin.

There were some concerns expressed during the interviews about implementing a distribution vehicle. For example, Producer N stated, *"The problem is, the more layers you put in it, the harder it gets, and more difficult for consumer. Once it's through distributors, the mark-up to consumers increases."* Other concerns included: needing a coordinator to ensure fairness; the challenge of restaurants not always knowing what products they require ahead of time; expanding beyond serving only Stratford as there are many restaurants in other areas of Perth County; and some proprietary/confidentiality/competition issues (e.g. concern about whether the driver would divulge to others which producers were sending their product to what outlets).

### **4.1.3 Barriers to the Local Food Market**

Interviewees were asked to identify barriers that prevented success when selling to the local market; everyone but Producer I identified at least one barrier they have encountered. The barriers that were mentioned by the producers can be organized into three categories that are comparable to those in other food systems research: Infrastructure, Attitudes and Education, and Government Support.

### **4.1.4 Infrastructure**

The most commonly mentioned infrastructural barrier was a distribution system for local food. Producers B, D, K, M, and P cited the lack of an efficient distribution system as a significant obstacle. Producers D, Q, P and J cited the Stratford Farmers' Market as a barrier to selling to the local market due to high registration fees, not being accepted as a vendor and its low aesthetic appeal.

Changes were also suggested for the major grocery retailers as they are currently seen as a significant barrier. Producer G felt it was very important for producers to gain access to national chains and that the two major chains should be lobbied to introduce protocols for accepting small volume lots for specialty destinations. He explained, *"The bread and butter is getting it into the national chains that carry local products because that's where the majority buy their food."* He went on to explain that, currently, large chain grocery stores require that products be available for distribution nationally. That is, if a product is to be in one store, it must be possible for it to be carried in all stores. For example, he reported that meat products must be federally inspected to be carried

in the larger retail outlets. However, there are only four federally inspected plants in Ontario which limits smaller producers' access to the national grocery stores.

Producer E replied that Perth County does not need more retail locations, but rather requires the development of a willingness to carry local products amongst existing ones, as well as willingness from consumers to pick-up at the farm gate. Creating a new venue – separate from the existing farmers' markets – that showcases local vendors was mentioned as one way to increase consumer access to sustainable, local food. Producer E identified requirements for a central kitchen that producers could use and other facilities for entrepreneurs.

#### **4.1.5 Attitudes and Education**

A recurring theme was the need for consumer education. Four interviewees mentioned that government could help get the word out. Producer B felt that articles about farming issues would be much more beneficial if they were run in national newspapers explaining, *"If they put it in the major papers and magazines, the general public may wake up and say 'we want better, we deserve better and our farmers want to provide it."* Producer H suggested the government legislate grocery stores to buy local products.

Responses about the awareness of consumers included, *"Still a lot of lack of awareness and commitment"* (Producer C); *"Access is good if people seek it out"* (Producer J); and *"I wish the restaurants would be a little bit more enthusiastic about it"* (Producer L).

Producer D lamented that all disincentives to purchasing local food need to be removed to get people to try it at least once and explained, *“If I don’t drop off the vegetables on people’s front porch...they won’t drive out here to get it. What else will it take?”*

Producer E pointed-out that consumer education needs to be increased so that consumers are aware of why it may cost more to buy in Ontario.

When interviewees were asked, *“What is required for a successful local food system in Perth County?”* a recurring theme was again consumer education. Producer D called for an extensive education campaign that shows consumers that not all food is grown or tastes the same and that, *“Cheap carrots are cheap for a reason.”* He also would like to see chefs educate themselves as well as their wait staff by visiting farms and becoming aware of the products grown or raised in the area. Producer D also felt students at the Stratford Chefs School could also receive education earlier in their career about local food and seasonality so that, when they graduate and work in new restaurants, they are more apt to source food locally.

Producer Q felt that responsibility also rests with the consumer explaining, *“If they can’t figure out that it’s not local, I don’t know what to say. On some level the consumer is responsible for their choice. It’s a little bit my responsibility to educate them.”*

Producers C, M, and R indicated that a lack of marketing skills can be a barrier for individual farmers. As Producer C pointed out, marketing requires a very different skill set from farming.

Producer J felt a localized system with collective marketing of local food would encourage farmers and provided the example of the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! local food map. Marketing skills were mentioned by Producers C and K who felt that farmers were in need of education about how to approach a restaurant about ordering their product and how to market directly to the customer. For some, according to Producer L, *“It is a mental block. They need to know how to get their feet wet. They know they can produce it and that it would sell...it’s the marketing of it.”* Producer N stated that farmers need to learn how to take advice and that they tend to be *“cowboyish.”*

Producers A, D, F, and R referred to the need for flexibility from all involved when operating within a local food system. For example, chefs must take seasonal availability into consideration when planning menus and be open to using different cuts of meat or ordering whole animals. Producers felt that individual consumers must have the same flexibility as well. Interviewees acknowledged that the need for flexibility extends to producers who should be willing to work at potentially inconvenient hours and provide the cuts customers want.

When interviewees were asked, *“What would encourage farmers to grow for the local market?”* a majority of responses included guaranteed fair prices and eager consumers for their product. Producer N explained that farmers need to know they can make a living at farming and that it can be very difficult to look at a model different than conventional farming if it is not believed to be profitable.

Another issue that stands out is the notion that fruits and vegetables do not yet play as significant a role in local food systems as meat and dairy. Producer C felt that, *“Society doesn’t give enough respect to fruits and vegetables. Canadians’ diets are lacking in them but the emphasis is put on meat.”* Producer D stated that, *“Ordering the vegetables is delegated to the low man on the totem pole in the kitchen.”* Furthermore, he felt that people recognize the craftsmanship that goes into producing high quality wine and are beginning to do the same with artisanal cheeses and charcuterie.

However, the belief remains that all vegetables are created equal. He argued that vegetables need more respect and to be seen as an equally important meal component. It was also suggested that a majority of restaurants have large meat but small vegetable portions because people tend to judge the value of their meal by the size of their meat portion.

Fresh produce is also an area susceptible to “menu fraud” – a concept mentioned by two producers and an emerging issue as the popularity of local food increases.

Producer D stated that, *“Produce seems to be the one area that is the most shady,”* explaining that restaurants will order minimal amounts of product but continue to use the farm name on the menu, thus committing menu fraud.

The issue of menu fraud was also raised by Producer K, a beef farmer who had been made aware of restaurants listing his farm name despite rarely ordering from him. He also explained that the “grass-fed beef” claim is being misused because, often, the beef

is not raised on grass for its entire lifespan but, rather, spends the last 100 days being fed grain.

#### **4.1.6 Government Support**

Producers B, C, G, I, J, K, M, and N indicated that government support and programs need to be changed. Producer B recommended specific government action and suggested a levy be put on non-domestic fruits and vegetables that are imported during Ontario's growing seasons. Producer C agreed that requirements need to be put in place by the provincial government so that changes would be made on a larger level and not just within Perth County. Producer B asked for more independent research to be conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) noting that, currently, a large amount of research is carried out by private seed companies.

Several suggestions included: increasing access to government funding for setting up artisanal production; grants for necessary infrastructure (e.g. for stand-up freezers) for businesses selling local products; grants for home sales; and government-funded food festivals that pay producers to attend and provide tastings to the general public. Other comments about the government's support referred to not being able to sell chicken and eggs beyond the farm-gate; small kitchens not receiving certification; and small abattoirs being at risk of closing because of new regulations.

Conversely, Producer F felt that the government has a variety of programs, provides education and retraining and that it is the producers themselves that need education. Additionally, Producer R stated that OMAFRA provided support to farmers.

The question, “Is the current agricultural policy conducive to a local food economy?” continued the discussion of barriers and garnered a variety of responses. The responses ranged from “No” to “*They are improving*” to “*I think so. They say they are.*”

Producer A’s response was, “*Government programs tend to be for the bigger farmers. We do not qualify and there is too much red tape.*” Producer C echoed this explaining that the focus is on “big” agriculture and monoculture crops. The advertising initiative, Foodland Ontario, was declared a good program by Producers E and H, however, it was critiqued by Producer C for only representing a very small part of the industry. Similarly, Producer C felt that the supermarkets’ feature of local food is too small and does not make up a large enough portion of what the stores offer in total, rather than just three or four items. Furthermore, most of the produce section beyond the designated “Ontario product” space is imported even though it often could be provided locally. This respondent also felt the supermarkets’ definition of ‘local’ as the entire province of Ontario is too broad. Producer E was more positive and felt the grocery store flyers and television advertisements that featured farm families were a good thing. It was mentioned by Producer O that it would be useful if agricultural policy discouraged large retailers against carrying imported products during Ontario’s season and undermining local products by selling them as a loss leader.

The regulations relating to abattoirs were mentioned again by some during this part of the interview as not being conducive to an enhanced local food system. Producer R

explained that abattoirs are getting further and further apart and some are *“being squeezed out”* because of Canadian Food Inspection Agency’s regulations.

Producer I felt that, generally, the regulations were *“fine because of quality control”* while Producer K responded that he was aware of problems with poultry and dairy regulations but was not sure about those for fruits and vegetables. Producer L was supportive of current regulations and attributed them to keeping other substandard competitors away.

An important issue that was mentioned during this part of the interviews was that government regulations are not always effectively applied to smaller producers.

Producer G cited dairy regulations – small producers are treated the same as a large industrial producer and, therefore, have to adhere to the same guidelines as large dairy corporations. For example, regulations do not currently adjust the number of samples required from small-scale producers. Currently, inspectors take the same number of samples from a large company as an artisan producer. This was one example of a regulation that needs to be adapted to small-scale operations. Another provided was abattoir regulations that were felt to be overly burdensome for smaller operations.

Producer G described them as a, *“Knee jerk reaction to the issue of food safety. One meat plant servicing an entire nation has a greater deal of risk. The repercussion is that they clamp down on everybody and this does a disservice to those that used to rely on small abattoirs.”* Overall, Producer G felt that, *“Entrepreneurial development in food products and food production is stymied by overly burdensome regulations and*

*legislation tends to lag behind.”* There were several recommendations for action including: government support for a considerable increase in the amount of research conducted; elected officials that are educated on agriculture; and the inspection of all food products entering the country.

The responses from the interviews about the barriers and opportunities in Perth County are summarized in the table below.

**Table 4: Summary of Barriers and Opportunities in Perth County**

Major Theme	Barriers	Number of Respondents	Opportunities	Number of Respondents
Infrastructure				
	Distribution System	5	Existing stores could carry more local products	2
	Stratford Farmers' Market	4	Consumers picking up at farm gate	3
	Grocery Stores ie: dropping their prices,	3	Create a new venue to showcase sustainable food from local vendors	1
	Requires more time to coordinate	1	Central kitchen & other facilities for entrepreneurs	1
	Few abattoirs accept lamb	1	Farmers' markets	2
	Location of farm: need to be highly visible	1	Existing local food distribution systems	2
	Cost of production (labour, fertilizer, etc)	3		

	Price	3		
Attitudes & Education				
	Farmers are “cowboyish”	1	Farm issues being covered in national newspapers	1
	Lack of marketing skills	4	Increase consumer education	3
	Farming not seen as profitable	1	Chefs conduct farm visits	1
	Fruit & vegetables not as profitable	2	Increased education in chefs school	1
	Lack of consumer flexibility, inconvenient times	2	Collective marketing initiatives	1
	Matching what the consumer wants with what you offer	2	Farmers must be willing to be adapt to market	1
Government Support				
	Needs changes/improvement	8	Help “get the word out”	3
	Lack of access to funding	1	Increased independent research	1
	Regulations (farm gate, abattoirs, labelling)	4	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food & Rural Affairs	1
	Too much paperwork	1	Foodland Ontario ads	2
	Need small-scale processing operations	1	Help recover costs for restaurants using local food	1

### 4.3.1 Perth County's Food System

Interviewees were given the definition of a food system as, “a set of interrelated functions that includes food production, processing, and distribution; food access and utilization by individuals, communities, and populations” (McCullum et al, 2005: 181). Based on this definition they were asked if Perth County has a strong local food system. Sixteen producers (A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K,L,M,O,P,R) indicated it is stronger than other regions but improvements could be made. The responses could be effectively summarized by Producer D's answer in particular, “...*the production end is really well covered, distribution is spotty at best, and utilization by restaurants and people needs improvement.*”

Producers E and G mentioned that Perth County is very agricultural and Producer Q mentioned that the region is favourably represented by several notable growers. Producers A, B, J and R mentioned that the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! food map, Savour Stratford Perth County Culinary Festival, and the Stratford Tourism Alliance's initiatives were examples of support for producers, and thus contributed to the strength of the food system. Producer O stated that there is a higher awareness within Perth County's population about local food than other regions.

Producer N felt that the Perth County food system is not at all what it could be and stated, “*90% of Perth County, maybe more than that, has bought into the industrial model and to me it's abhorrent.*” Producer Q shared that he does not see a strong network of agricultural partners but also “*doesn't see people poking each other in the*

*eye either.” He added, “Is it a good system? I don’t really see it as a system. I do my thing. I have a market I’m focused on.”*

Producer C expressed concern about a distribution system that transports Perth County products outside the region (i.e. to restaurants in Niagara, Toronto, etc.) because that is about *“shipping stuff away from the local area.”* She also felt it was imperative that a distribution system not simply focus on Stratford restaurants and retail locations but expand into other parts of Perth County. This raises the critical question of what a distribution system’s role is within a localized food system. While a local food distribution system can be a tool to increase the consumption of local food by individual consumers in the region, it also is intended to provide greater revenue to individual producers, thus contributing to a more sustainable livelihood for them. Perth County producers are often able to receive a higher price for their products when they sell to clients in the Niagara, Toronto, and London areas where there are a larger number of restaurants and retail locations (Food Distribution, 6 April, 2009). Therefore, there is large incentive for them to distribute their products beyond just the consumers in the region of Perth County.

Both Producers D and G mentioned the prospect of creating a Perth County label for food grown and raised within the region. Producer D envisioned a “Perth County Guild of Farmers” – a regulatory agency that acts as a quality filter for customers and a system that assures a high standard of quality for food produced in Perth County. He felt a guild is the most appropriate designation because it would be tied to the nutritional

quality and flavours of the region, that is, the *terroir*, and therefore delineates why the food tastes better and is of a higher quality. Producer D went on to explain the guild would need an auditor as well as a core group of farmers to form a cooperative. And that regulating its use in restaurants could prove to be challenging. The creation of region-specific branding based on an area's *terroir* is a relatively new concept and could prove to be a successful component in Perth County's culinary and agri-tourism development.

#### **4.3.2 Requirements for a Successful Local Food System**

Producer L said a successful local food system requires enthusiasm, quality and freshness and stated, *"I don't think anything will hurt us as much as poor quality."*

Other responses involved more of a vision for Perth County's food system. Producer N responded that what was required was, *"Fair, sustainable, accessible, pride – all that; where people recognize the craftsmanship that goes into producing high quality food."*

Interviewees were then asked, "What does a healthy food system look like to you?"

Throughout the interviews the issue of grocery retail monopolization was mentioned several times especially in response to this question. Producers felt concern about the large percentage of consumers doing a majority of their shopping at grocery chains because of the limited access smaller producers have to those stores. Producer C would like to see a return to more small grocery stores and stated, *"Half of what large grocery stores have is not food. Consumers need to see a clear indication of where their food comes from and in a larger store this can be very difficult to accomplish."*

Producer C suggested that farmers' markets should become more accessible to the entire population through more "neighbourhood" markets that may have fewer farmers but also a greater connection between the consumer and producer.

Producer F responded that a healthy food system has short distribution chains and strong communications between all participants along those chains, commenting that, *"The less people involved, the better communications will be."* Producer L responded that it includes enthusiastic producers and consumers and the shortest distance as possible between them. Producer J replied that producers must be accountable for the food they grow, stating that *"probably 99% of producers are 100% proactive in the way they grow their food so you are known to your customers."* Producer R stated that a healthy food system has, *"food grown locally that travels little before reaching consumers, enough of a customer base within the community to support it, and no genetically modified crops."*

Producer N provided an especially succinct vision to what a healthy food system looks like and answered that it involves fresh, high quality food that there is a demand for with every farmer making a living on their land. She stated that in a healthy food system, *"Farmers should be able to pay their mortgage, they should be able to have piano lessons for their kids, hockey lessons for their kids; they should be able to afford at least that standard of living. And the consumer needs to be able to pay way more for their food in order to sustain it."* This respondent also mentioned frustration with the argument that is made against increasing food prices because some people may not be

able to afford it, and argued that social inequality and the price of food are separate issues.

These responses largely coincided with the requirements of healthy food systems outlined in other research, especially Soots' analysis of the Waterloo Region which is directly east of the Perth County region chosen for this case study (See Discussion; see Figure 2).

#### ***4.4 Summary of Results Chapter***

Interviews with 18 producers garnered detailed responses about their motivations for selling locally, barriers and opportunities in the local food market, the Perth County food system, and requirements for a successful local food system.

The main motivations interviewees gave for selling to the local market were financial, however, social aspects were also common in their responses. The barriers identified by interviewees were largely consistent with reviewed literature and included distribution, regulations, and consumer behaviour. Requirements for a successful local food system in Perth County given by interviewees included passionate producers with appreciative consumers.

## **5.0 Distribution**

### ***5.1 Alternative Distribution Models***

Distribution was presented as a significant barrier by fourteen producers during interviews and, thus, was explored in greater detail. There are several examples of distribution systems that aim to serve small-scale producers and provide customers with local food. The 100 Mile Market positions itself as a farmer-driven company of approximately 120 producers for whom the company performs the sales, marketing, distribution, and logistics functions. It currently serves restaurants and retail locations in Toronto, London, Kitchener-Waterloo, Norfolk County, and the Niagara region with plans to expand in Perth County. Chefs are able to buy farm-specific products because of the short distribution chain. The mandate of 100 Mile Market is presented on their website:

The 100 Mile Market will be an agent of change to promote economically sustainable local food growing, production and distribution, support of the family farm and consumer access to readily available, more nutritious food choices at affordable prices and at reduced ecological and environmental costs. ([www.100milemarket.com](http://www.100milemarket.com))

The company recently signed an agreement with the larger distributor, Gordon Food Service, which will expand their client base (Toronto Star, 2009).

The 100 km Foods Company operates in a similar manner. It is a two-person business launched in April of 2008 that delivers produce from 20 to 35 farms to approximately 40 restaurants and hotels in the Toronto area. 100 km Foods picks up product weekly from the Niagara, Creemore, and Uxbridge areas which is then taken to its Toronto depot location before being delivered to clients. In 2009, the company partnered with a local foods store to also deliver weekly food boxes with meat, cheese, and fresh produce.

The La Ferme distribution company has been operating for 25 years and distributes 80 to 90% Canadian product, with a majority from Quebec and Ontario. The company picks product up from Montreal, Niagara, Toronto and Stratford and sells from Kingston on east, London/Stratford on west and down to Niagara. They receive fresh product Monday to Wednesday and typically ship orders Wednesday to Friday. Ninety-five percent of their orders are placed by phone. La Ferme handles the sales generation in addition to distribution and is able to name the direct source of products. Their trucks are refrigerated and able to handle fresh as well as frozen meats, often picking them up directly from the abattoir. La Ferme adds 15 to 30% to the cost they receive from the producer. Atlin described an interesting challenge with producers that were previously selling direct to restaurants often providing it at prices that are lower than La Ferme is able to offer it (2 April, 2010). In these cases, the company often ends up with less of a margin on that product because they are unable to significantly increase the price once they start distributing it. La Ferme does not deal with produce but indicated they are always interested in new producers from the Perth County area (Atlin, interview).

**Table 5: Summary of Existing Distribution Systems**

Distribution Company	Based in	Regions Sourced	Regions Served	In Operation Since	Mark up %	Distribution Model
100 Mile Market	Kitchener	Perth County, Norfolk County, Kitchener-Waterloo, etc	Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, Niagara, Norfolk County (plans to expand)	2009		Pick up from producer, deliver to restaurants and retail outlets; no warehouse
100 km Foods	Toronto	Niagara, Creemore, Uxbridge	Toronto	2008		Pick up from producer, deliver to restaurants; also deliver weekly food boxes; has warehouse
La Ferme		Montreal, Niagara, Stratford	Kingston, London, Stratford, Niagara	1985	15 to 30%	Meat and Cheese only; pick up from producer; has warehouse

***5.2 Recent Research on Alternative Distribution Systems: A Perth-Waterloo-Wellington Perspective***

The Canadian Organic Growers Perth-Waterloo-Wellington chapter published a report in July, 2009 based on research into local and organic producer-controlled distribution systems. The findings concluded that the conventional distribution systems currently in place do little to serve small-scale producers. Furthermore, the study reported that

current value chains that distribute food on a large scale basis benefit from economies of scale in storage, distribution and marketing. Their size allows them to be economically efficient and, therefore, deliver products to the consumer at the lowest possible price (Schumilas, 2009). Because of this, there is limited value for small scale producers due to the mismatch of scale between large distributors and processors, and small farms. There are also added technological demands placed on small-scale producers such as: field cooling, climate controlled storage, and state of the art packaging if they wish to utilize this large-scale distribution (Schumilas, 2009). Therefore, the report, states, “This system effectively excludes smaller scale producers who can neither produce the quantities necessary for entry nor afford these new technologies” (Schumilas, 2009: 3). Alternatives to large-scale distribution systems are beginning to emerge as farmers “take back the middle” and begin to manage the processing, packaging, storage, distribution and/or retail either themselves or within collectives of other producers. The goal of these initiatives is to create diversified, decentralized systems where farmers maintain a greater control over marketing and distribute directly to consumers. The report recognizes that competing with commodity marketing is not possible. Therefore, producers have to target customers who understand the costs, benefits and uniqueness of their products and are willing to pay the true cost of food. Direct marketers are uniquely positioned to build customer relations over time, build trust and personal loyalty, create an emotional bond, and convey information about the farm to their customers (Schumilas, 2009).

One of the report's key findings is that most producers engaged in one of these types of systems had not examined their packaging, storage, marketing and distribution costs as distinct from the costs of production. However, these costs are quite significant and understanding them will help producers improve their efficiencies and create new ways to market and distribute. The report recommends that producers track and review these costs and, ultimately, pass them along to consumers as a separate cost. This should be a consideration of new distribution systems that are pursued.

A meeting with the author of the report illustrated serious challenges that should also be examined when researching or pursuing a local food distribution system (Schumilas, March, 2010). In Schumilas' experience, many farmers assumed that selling their product through a distribution system would automatically result in greater profitability. However, after two years, the farmers interviewed for the report were not certain this had occurred. In fact, many were required to make additional sales (upwards of 25 to 30%) to compensate for the costs incurred by the distribution system. There was a perception of efficiency that was not always realized within the distribution system. Some producers even questioned if they should have simply advertised to a greater extent instead (Schumilas, 2009). The fourteen producers interviewed for this research who indicated a need for a distribution system had motivations for both increasing revenues and reducing the amount of time they were personally spending delivering their products. The interview suggested that potential discrepancies between a

distribution system and the desired outcomes of producers need to be further investigated.

Schumilas also raised the issue of a risk of losing the direct consumer relation that is a competitive advantage of local food when small-scale producers engage with distribution systems (Schumilas, March, 2010). As discussed in the Literature Review, Hinrich (2000) has established the significance of social capital generated between producers and consumers through direct transactions. Finding alternative ways to nurture their relationships and continue to foster this critical social capital will be a challenge to producers if they are no longer personally delivering their products.

Critiques of local food systems suggested that closer connections between the consumer and producer do not necessarily guarantee more sustainable farming practices and, therefore, perhaps do not need to be of significant concern within distribution systems. However, the eight producers interviewed indicated such social interaction as a motivating factor to sell their products locally. Therefore, these connections should be taken into account when establishing new distribution ventures. Additionally, one could suggest that a consumer with a relatively short distance between themselves and a producer could potentially impact said producer's agricultural practices or, at the very least, the consumer could choose to support certain production methods through their purchases. As Producer L indicated in his interview, customers influence the products he chooses to grow. Is it that unreasonable to suggest

consumers may also be able to influence production methods? At a minimum, shorter supply chains enable consumers to make informed choices.

Schumilas echoed concerns raised in the Critiques of Localization section of the Literature Review and mentioned the potential for “greenwashing” in the realm of local food. As the popularity of local food rises, there is greater risk that consumers will equate all agricultural products that are grown or raised locally with food that has been sustainably produced. However, the production methods must also be considered by consumers. According to Schumilas, the terms “local” and “sustainable” are being used to resist the switch to “Certified Organic” (Schumilas, March, 2010). This situation was raised by Producer D who felt that farmers neglecting to become certified organic do a disservice to the overall food system and that the, “System would be healthier if only those who are really serious about producing food took part in it.” He chooses to be certified organic as a way to be accountable to consumers who want a level of assurance with their food which supports the earlier argument that consumers can influence production methods.

The term “sustainable” is being increasingly used in reference to agricultural products yet there are currently no regulations to monitor this designation. Therefore, should anything not certified organic be considered as not environmentally sustainable? It raises another important challenge of local food distribution systems: what is the best way to communicate production methods to the end user?

Within the Canadian Organic Growers report, three different models of producer-controlled distribution systems were examined: Community Shared Agriculture, direct marketing cooperatives, and online farmers' markets (Schumilas, 2009).

### **5.2.1 Community Shared Agriculture**

Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) is defined as a “....partnership between farmers and community members working together to create a local food system” (O’Hara and Stagl, 2001: 89). CSA farmers may produce fresh vegetables, fruits, meats, fiber and related products directly for local community members. CSA differs from direct marketing in that its members commit to a full-season price in the spring, sharing the risks of production (O’Hara and Stagl, 2001). O’Hara and Stagl (2001) attribute CSAs with reducing waste and emissions, re-establishing local expertise and recovering lost dimensions of social interactions. Community building occurs through direct marketing and shared risk between farmers and the CSA members. CSAs also typically practice environmentally sustainable production (Schumilas, 2009).

The CSAs interviewed for the report relied on marketing their products through multiple channels. The share pricing varied across the different CSAs and the report concluded that the price of a share needs to be set by the actual cost of production, not what consumers are perceived to be willing to pay (Schumilas, 2009). A typical CSA farmer interviewed for this report spent a full quarter of their time and almost a third of all costs on the marketing and distribution required for the CSA. The significant percentage spent on distribution also included the producer’s time spent packaging, washing,

transporting, etc. (Schumilas, 2009). The report concluded that single farmer CSAs had some of the highest gross returns but producers do their own marketing and distribution and other farm revenues were not included so data was not entirely comparable (Schumilas, 2009).

### **5.2.2 Direct Marketing Cooperatives**

Direct marketing rose as a response to food production and distribution shifting from a regional to a national/global system. Small producers that were unable to meet the price, volume and delivery requirements of supermarket chains turned to direct marketing as a means to diversify their income and capture a share of the consumer dollar (Roth, 1).

A direct marketing cooperative is a collective of producers who join together to assemble products at a central location(s) and package and distribute the produce through one marketing label. It is most common among dairy, grain/oilseeds, and poultry producers and less common in fruit and vegetables. Collectives reduce the time and resources each farmer spends on marketing and distribution and can give small producers access to larger institutional markets and processors (Schumilas, 2009). The cooperatives purchase products from the producer and a marketing fee to cover storage, packaging, distribution and marketing (which varies from 6% to 30%) is subtracted. Profits are then divided among members usually based on amount of business each producer conducts (Schumilas, 2009).

A successful direct marketing cooperative is Harmony Organic which sells organic milk throughout Ontario. Sales at the multi-million dollar company are rising in the double digits each year, and its farmers produce some 6 million litres of organic milk annually. Before the recent recession, revenue rose more than 30 per cent annually (Globe and Mail, 2010).

The benefits of collectives are that the producers are able to set the price, retain control and the profit remains within the producer group. However, a large amount of planning time is required and there is typically a failure to recognize the significant administrative costs (producers usually underestimate the marketing and distribution costs). For example, the producers from one co-operative interviewed for the Canadian Organic Growers report realized their actual transportation costs were 14% higher than the delivery fee they were charging to customers (Schumilas, 2009).

### **5.2.3 Online Farmers' Markets**

Finally, the report examined online farmers' markets. These can apply to a single farm or collective of producers and emulate a typical farmers' market. Growers in the study post what is available along with photos which consumers can browse and then place an order directly from the producer. Payment can be made online or at a set delivery location. Producers can deliver their orders themselves but, typically a paid market manager sets up the online system, picks up orders, and oversees pick-up location logistics. There are several benefits to the online farmers' markets. Customers have a choice of what they order, the hours are flexible, producers set the prices and post what

is available each week, and the system sends out an email when the orders are ready so everything is fresh. It can also generate labels, packing lists, and invoices, relieving producers of these tasks. The drawbacks may include: difficult transportation logistics, the proper mechanisms must be in place for sharing information and communicating, the need to find a dependable market with educated, loyal consumers in addition to the legal and regulatory issues (e.g. when selling to institutions, grading of eggs, and supply-managed goods) (Schumilas, 2009).

#### **5.2.4 An Alternative Distribution System for Perth County**

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010 a follow-up meeting took place with one of the producers previously interviewed. Upon reflection and discussion following the initial interview, Producer N began to investigate the potential for an alternative distribution model to serve Perth County producers. This model was discussed which included a downtown Stratford location to be rented by Producer N that would serve as a depot where producers could drop off their product. Producers that required their product to be picked up from the farm would be charged a fee depending on distance and quantity. Producers would be responsible for making their own sales and the distribution vehicle would deliver to restaurants in surrounding cities and regions. Restaurants would be charged a flat “drop-fee” and offered product at wholesale prices, encouraging them to place larger orders, potentially from multiple producers, to take full advantage which distinguishes it from the distribution systems discussed earlier. This model would operate as a “low-profit” operation, rather than a not-for-profit, aiming for an approximately ten percent

profit margin. The drop-fee charge would be set so as to cover the operational costs including salary for both a full-time driver and a full-time manager for on-site logistics. Producer N suggested the distribution vehicle operate on a set schedule of where to deliver each day of the week. For example, the vehicle would serve the Niagara/Hamilton, London/Windsor, Orangeville/North Toronto areas one day a week each and spend two days delivering to Toronto.

The flat drop fee appears to be a unique approach to financing a local food distribution system in that a similar model was not found during the research process. This model has not been tested and has potential benefits and obstacles. It is essential for the flat drop fee to be set so that it covers all operating costs. Producers using this system would remain responsible for generating their own sales and would communicate with their customers directly. This could maintain the personal connection, or social capital, between the producer and consumers that is so important in local food systems.

This proposed distribution system offers an alternative to the three models researched in the Canadian Organic Growers report and would conceivably enable producers to retain more of the dollar share than with one of the pre-existing local food distribution companies.

### **5.3 Chapter Summary**

A distribution system that serves local producers is an important aspect of culinary tourism as well as an integral component to healthy, local food systems. Models of distribution that address the many challenges at the local level are still emerging. This

review has identified some of the opportunities and challenges associated with models currently in use. It also presented a new model that has been proposed to serve the area.

Ideally, a mix of distribution systems would be available in Perth County as the most appropriate model varies for individual producers. Several producers currently sell their products through existing smaller distribution companies including 100 Mile Market and La Ferme, however, these are a limited number. There are currently CSA models in Perth County but these are most effective for farmers with a variety of products. A direct marketing cooperative for Perth County as a region has been suggested and could potentially be a useful marketing tool but is both time and labour intensive. It is unlikely that an online farmers' market would benefit Perth County producers as it would require regular updates and few producers in the area are consistently online.

Producer N's model would allow for producers to maintain close connections with their consumers which is beneficial in distribution systems. It also includes producers dropping off their orders at a central location which was preferred model amongst interviewees. It is the position of this research that the potential of Producer N's proposed model should be assessed. Further, it is the position of this research that any future recommendations for pursuing a distribution model must be based upon a careful consideration of potential political and economic barriers.

## **6.0 Discussion of Findings and Conclusion**

This study explored the food system in Perth County in order to identify barriers and opportunities facing producers, the needs associated with setting up a distribution system, and the pursuit of culinary tourism.

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research and discusses them in terms of key questions and issues for the development of a local food system in Perth County. Based on this discussion, recommendations and conclusions are provided.

### ***6.1 Summary of Findings***

The primary findings of this research can be summarized and discussed according to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

The producers interviewed were, at least to some extent, operating within an alternative system from the industrial agricultural model. Their reasons for rejecting the traditional food channels were particularly significant. While many of their reasons identified a better monetary return, social reasons also play an important role (see Results).

The main question for this research was: How can local consumption of food grown and produced in Perth County be increased? There were additional research questions that are addressed below:

- i. As part of understanding production capability, what foods are currently being cultivated and raised in Perth County?

A significantly detailed list of products being grown and raised in Perth County was generated through the completion of the survey by 58 producers (see Methodology).

- ii. What are the key requirements for a healthy food system?

Soots’ list of ideal components for a healthy, sustainable food system has been adapted for the purposes of this research as a framework to use in addressing this research question and assessing the health of the Perth County food system.

**Table 6: Summary of Perth County Food System**

Main Components of a Healthy Food System	Existence in Perth County
Production	1
Processing & Distribution	3
Support Structures & Mechanisms	2
Supply & Consumption	2
Community	2

(Scale: 1= Good; 2=Moderate; 3=Poor)

### **1. Production**

The participant farmers in this study were concerned about the ability to maintain a secure livelihood, which was also a common fear amongst the interview subjects in

Soots' earlier research. The job security of farmers across the province/country is threatened as the number of farmers has been on a decline and the income of farmers who remain on the farm continues to decrease. According to Blay-Palmer (2008), "Realized net income for Canadian farmers fell for the second consecutive year in 2006 to its lowest level since 2003" (61).

However, the Perth-Waterloo-Wellington area is characterized by smaller-than-average farms generating higher-than-average net revenues, and has the largest concentration of organic producers in the province, thus signaling a focus on sustainable production in the region (Schumilas, 2009). Similar to Soots' (2003) study, producers discussed what comprised "sustainable production" and the answers incorporated a wide range of responses. For example, Producer D is an advocate of Certified Organic producers and feels that they are a key component to a healthy food system. Conversely, Producer K felt that, despite not being Certified Organic, his farming is more ecological with a low-till method on 300 acres. He felt that organics is appropriate when done in the right situation and on a smaller scale. Urban agriculture normally includes community gardens, roof-top gardens, and backyard food production. While urban agriculture is certainly relevant to local food systems, these initiatives lie outside the boundaries of this research. It is worth noting, however, that backyard gardening is prevalent in Perth County and there are community gardens in place at schools, the local YMCA, and McCully's Hill Farm (Slow Food Perth County).

While further investigation into farming statistics and urban agriculture in Perth County is required, it appears the production component of healthy food systems is strong in Perth County.

## **2. Processing and Distribution**

Access to processing facilities for local producers was mentioned as a barrier during the interviews, specifically a lack of abattoirs and community kitchen. However, the Perth County region has several independent markets located in Mitchell, St. Marys, Mitchell, Listowel, and two in Stratford, including one of the oldest in the province.

Due to the lack of processing facilities and distribution being named as a barrier by a majority of the farmers and producers interviewed for this research, the component of Processing and Distribution receives a ranking of Poor in Perth County.

## **3. Support Structures and Mechanisms**

Concerns about political support on the provincial and national were voiced, however, local level support from municipal government in Perth County was not mentioned when interviewees were asked if there was government support for local food.

Suggestions for how the government could assist the development of a local food system were given by producers interviewed and included educating the public, implementing regulations that are conducive to small-scale operations, and conducting more research.

Citizen and community support is very important for local food systems. The desire for more support from Perth County restaurants was mentioned during producer interviews. Producer D said that the utilization by restaurants and people needs improvement and that Stratford restaurants are not ordering sufficient amounts of local product. Producer L echoed this stating, "I wish the restaurants would be a little bit more enthusiastic about it." Producer D also noted that consumers in Perth County are not at the same level of sophistication as he believes is the case in other regions in terms of customer appreciation and citizen engagement in local food systems. He lamented, "If I don't drop off the vegetables on people's front porch...they won't drive out here to get it. What else will it take? Sometimes you have to take away all the disincentives to get people to try it once." However, the several established farmers' markets in the area suggest that a portion of the community is supportive of local producers. Unique instances of relatively high levels of consumer awareness were also mentioned by two producers. Producer B mentioned the cooking class at the local high school and felt more of this type of education should occur. Initiatives are underway in the region to increase consumer awareness including: the Screaming Avocado high school culinary program at Stratford Northwestern Secondary School: community gardens; cooking classes for children at the YMCA; the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! map, and the Savour Stratford Perth County strategy, which includes the Savour Stratford Perth County Culinary Festival. This research found that consumer support and awareness is good in some ways but requires growth in others. Thus, the Support Structures and Mechanisms in Perth County is ranked as Moderate.

#### **4. Supply and Consumption**

The Canadian Organic Growers report states that, “With their proximity to growing urban markets and the increasing demand for local and organic products, producers in this area are experimenting with direct marketing approaches such as farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture projects (CSAs) and on-farm marketing” (Schumilas, 2009: 3).

Accessibility includes making local food accessible for all members of the community regardless of location, level of income or social status. Access can be gained through neighbourhood markets, food box programs and community gardens (Soots, 2003).

Producers interviewed felt there was not a shortage of local food in Perth County.

Producer D stated that, “...the production end is really well covered.” There was a need for greater accessibility mentioned through larger amounts of local food in retail locations and more farmers’ markets opening. Producer L wondered if cost was a deterrent to more restaurants serving local food, while Producer N felt the social issues of people being able to afford local food was a separate issue from the price of local food, as discussed in the Results section.

An effective distribution system is essential to culinary tourism and, on a larger level, to a healthy food system. It could increase the capacity of restaurants to feature local food on their menus, and increases the strength and authenticity of the culinary tourism experience. Increasing the availability, accessibility, and affordability of local food for all

community members is a major motivator for wanting a local distribution system and an area that requires further investigation.

Perth County producers pride themselves on providing healthy, nutritious food, and frequently mentioned this as a motivation in interviews, as discussed in the Results section. Food safety was not a concern of this research.

Perth County is fortunate to have many small, diverse farms situated on rich agricultural land. As stated earlier, the Perth-Waterloo-Wellington area is characterized by small yet productive farms and, therefore, represents a favourable case study for successful, varied and diverse agriculture (Schumilas, 2009). The supply of local food in Perth County is large yet the consumption of it could be increased, therefore the Supply and Consumption component in Perth County is ranked at Moderate.

## **5. Community:**

Soots purports that healthy local food systems are embedded in a lively, active community with a vibrant local culture that promotes and supports local agriculture and food production with a sense of celebration around food (Soots, 2003). A summary of Perth County's community is provided Section 3: Support Structures and Mechanisms. The region's enthusiasm for local food is showcased by the Savour Stratford Perth County Culinary Festival. This two day festival celebrates local chefs, restaurants, farmers and producers, and artists. Last year's festival drew between eight to ten thousand attendees and was enthusiastically supported and attended by the

community. For its third year the festival has partnered with the Stratford Garlic Festival – held the weekend before – to offer a full week of culinary programming between the two festivals (Savour Stratford). Perth County is a region rich in agriculture with enthusiastic farmers and producers and has much to celebrate. As producer D stated, “We should be proud of what our region has to offer, feel good about it.” While improvements can be made, Perth County’s ranking for Community is Moderate.

Therefore, while improvements could most definitely be made, this research concludes that Perth County has a strong food system as a foundation to build on. Processing and Distribution present the largest challenge to achieving a healthy local food system. Improvements to this component could also assist with the Consumption component.

iii. What are the current barriers facing Perth County producers?

Eighteen producers explained the barriers facing them when operating in the local food system. The barriers and obstacles mentioned by Perth County producers are very similar to those discussed in other food systems studies: consumers are “distanced” from their food (Blay-Palmer, 2008; Kneen, 1992; Seccombe, 2007); government support and regulations are lacking (Donald, 2009; Landman, 2009; Miedema, 2009); there is a lack of an effective distribution system (McCullum, 2005; Landman, 2009), consumer education needs to increase (Landman, 2009; Miedema, 2009), and many farmers lack essential marketing skills (Maxey, 2006).

- iv. What are key requirements for a local food distribution system in Perth County?

The concern about distribution was identified early by producers as a pressing need.

Four models have been presented here. The proposed distribution systems may go far in alleviating some of the obstacles being faced by Perth County producers.

This research has not reached definitive conclusions regarding which distribution system will be most effective for the Perth County region, however, analysis indicates that distribution is an obstacle that needs to be overcome for both the enhancement of culinary tourism and the overall strength of a local food system. Without the appropriate production and distribution supports in place, the number of farmers will continue to decline and consumers' access to local food will remain limited (Landman et al, 2009). A clear solution to the obstacle of distribution facing local producers is not readily arrived at and attempts are ultimately challenging and risky with no guarantees. A detailed feasibility study should be conducted to determine the best approach to remedying the distribution challenges facing Perth County producers.

A study of this size and scope cannot provide a definitive answer about the most appropriate distribution model nor can it provide recommendations for all the best approaches to encouraging a localized food system in Perth County. This research does provide, however, a strong foundation for further investigations.

- v. Based on the findings of this case study in Perth County, what does this research suggest about the benefits of a more localized food system from the perspective of producers?

As discussed in the Results section, the most common response about the benefits of selling in a local market according to producers was monetary. Within a localized food system producers hope to be able to retain a larger share of the dollar when selling their products. Additionally, interviewees highlighted the social benefits when selling locally. Social interaction, the ability to receive direct feedback, and connecting with the end consumer were all listed as advantages.

These benefits are in addition to the social, economic, and environmental contributions of local food systems as discussed in the Literature Review.

## ***6.2 Contribution of the Study***

This study has contributed to the existing literature on local food systems and has undertaken the important task of collecting case-study research for Perth County. The survey conducted was the initial research to identify farmers producing for the local market. The interview process which is described above resulted in an increased awareness and formal documentation of eighteen producers' perceptions of Perth County's food system, including the barriers and obstacles they face and suggested opportunities to overcome them. The interviews also reflect the varying experiences

producers have had and underline the importance of being mindful of the diversity that exists amongst small-scale producers.

### ***6.3 Recommendations***

It is recommended that Perth County continue to pursue its development as a culinary and agri-tourism destination as a strategy for contributing to a strong and healthy local food system. The specific benefits of local food systems have been established in the literature review as well as the broader contributions to sustainable development.

It is further recommended that efforts continue to create a model distribution system as one means of creating a more connected food system that meets the distribution, processing, and marketing needs of Perth County producers and farmers. It would be beneficial to conduct a feasibility study of the various distribution models presented in this research to determine which may best serve the farmers and producers of Perth County. Further investigation is also required to determine if farmers and producers are able to generate more revenue when using a local distribution system based on any of the models identified in this research.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

This study examined the barriers and opportunities facing Perth County farmers producing for the local market. It was also the first of its kind to collect feedback from Perth County producers regarding their specific experiences within the local food system. Finally, it has highlighted the support culinary tourism and agri-tourism can offer towards the goal of a stronger local food system.

Initiatives already underway to establish Perth County as a culinary and agri-tourism destination will contribute to provide incentives for developing a stronger local food system in the region. Considerations of sustainable development must be integral to this food systems work and, therefore, the entire realm of social, economic, and environmental impacts of Perth County agriculture must be considered.

There was recognition by farmers and producers interviewed that they are experiencing success when selling in the local market, however, improvements could be made. The barriers to the development of a localized food system revealed in the study revolve around: infrastructure, attitudes and education, and government support. These findings confirm the results of Soots (2003) which noted many of the same barriers when speaking to farmers in Waterloo Region. A distribution system that serves local producers is an integral component to realizing a more local food system and, thus, requires further investigation including assessing Producer N's proposed model.

Distribution systems must also be assessed to determine if they are improving the economic situation of the producers that utilize them.

The opportunities discussed revolved around themes similar to the barriers that were mentioned. Stand-out points included infrastructural and government support as well as an overall increase of education. Overall the producers interviewed see the situation as improving but contend that major changes are still required. The desire and vision for a more sustainable local food system in Perth County was present among all participants in this study.

While many of the barriers and opportunities appear to be somewhat universal, each community has its own characteristics which will determine how best to pursue a localized food system. Perth County's strong agricultural sector with enthusiastic and dynamic producers along with a demonstrated population of local food enthusiasts bodes well for significant development to be made in this arena. Overcoming policy and regulatory barriers would provide vast potential at the community level to move toward a more localized food system. While a broader consumer education campaign carried out by the government was suggested during interviews, building on consumer education and awareness can also be done on the local level without larger changes to policy and regulations.

This research has concluded that Perth County has the foundations of a healthy food system, yet clearly possesses the potential to create a much more localized one.

Critiques of local food systems have been presented in the Literature Review and raise

important issues. The pursuit of a more localized food system must include a balanced view that analyzes and takes into account potential drawbacks and negative consequences.

Two key areas identified by this research for further development are: development of an appropriate distribution system linking local farmers with restaurants and tourism operators; and, as a related topic, broader strategies and mechanisms for linking local consumer to local producers in order to enhance consumption of local foods in Perth County by visitors and residents.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questions

Savour Stratford Perth County is compiling an on-line searchable database that includes a complete listing of products available in and around Perth County. Savour Stratford Perth County is a culinary tourism strategy that includes the following partners: Stratford Tourism Alliance, Perth County Visitors Association, Buy Local! Buy Fresh! committee, Huron County, Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance, The Perth Community Futures Development Corporation, Plowman's Association, County of Perth, Slow Food Perth County, and Canadian Organic Growers.

The Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance is leading efforts in research, education, and product development to build capacity for culinary tourism in Ontario. The OCTA is developing a province wide product inventory to which the information gathered in this survey will be added.

Please complete the following survey in as much detail as possible.

Thank you very much for your time.

1. Please provide your full contact details:
2. Are you open to selling your products to chefs and restaurants?
3. Please select all products that you grow or produce.  
If you grow or raise products not included in the lists, please write them in the space provided.  
Products that you make available through your farm, but are sourced or produced from other farms, are covered in following questions.
4. Do you grow vegetables and/or fruits?
5. Please select any fruits and vegetables you grow. If you grow products not included, please list them in the space provided.
6. Do you raise meat and/or eggs?
7. Please select any of the following that you raise. If you raise something not included, please list it in the space provided.
8. Please list the name and location of the abattoir(s) you use:
9. Please explain how you sell your product:  
(e.g. pork farmer: Smoked centre cut pork chops, stuffed loin chops, bacon

burgers OR half an animal, whole animal, etc)

Feel free to copy and paste this information from an existing document.

10. Do you produce dairy products?
11. Please select any of the following dairy products you produce. If you produce something not included, please list it in the space provided.
12. Please describe the specifics of your product(s):
13. Do you grow or produce herbs and/or grains?
14. Please select any of the following herbs and/or grains you grow or produce. If you grow or produce something not included, please list it in the space provided.
15. Do you produce any types of oil?
16. Please list the type of oil(s) and describe the details of your product:
17. Do you produce prepared foods, preserves, maple syrup, breads or honey?
18. Please select any that you produce:
19. Do you produce wine?
20. Please describe your wine products:
21. Do you sell products not grown or raised on your farm?
22. We recognize that farms sell products that are not grown on their farm. We would like to include this information for chefs. Please only list products which are sourced within 100 miles of your farm.
  - If you offer other products, please provide the name and location of the farm where you source items from that you do not grow or produce yourself.  
If there are products not included in the list, please write them in the space provided
23. Are you a member or certified with any of the following? Please check all that apply:
24. Please provide your organic certification number:
25. Please describe your farming practices and choose all that apply:
26. Are you involved in a Food Safety Program? If yes, please explain.

27. Many buyers - from restaurants to grocers - look for quality, price and "something special" in food products.
- Use this space to tell us what is unique about your product (ie: what makes it better or more competitive as compared to others.) It might be how you grow or raise it, etc. Please write the information as you would like it to appear on your individual farm page.
28. How can a chef or restaurant purchase your product(s)? Please provide specific details for all that apply:
29. Do we have your permission to make your contact and product information available on a Savour Stratford Perth County online searchable database? This information may also be shared with the Perth County Visitors Association and be made available on the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance website.

## Appendix B: Farmer and Producer Interview Questions

### Background:

- 1) Can you tell me to what extent you market your product(s) locally?
- 2) Why do you sell locally?
- 3) Has selling locally been financially successful for you?
- 4) If no, what do you believe to be the main reason(s) for your lack of success in selling locally?
- 5) What barriers prevent success when selling to the local market?
- 6) What benefits are there to selling locally?

### Local food System:

- 7) In the literature a food system is defined as: “a set of interrelated functions that includes food production, processing, and distribution; food access and utilization by individuals, communities, and populations.” Do you believe Perth County has a strong local food system?
- 8) Is there support for farmers to sell locally?
- 9) If no, what could/should be changed?
- 10) What would encourage farmers to grow for the local market?
- 11) Is the current agricultural policy conducive to a local food economy?
- 12) What is required for a successful local food system in Perth County?
- 13) What does a healthy food system look like to you?

### Tools:

- 14) Stratford Tourism Alliance and its partners is planning to host the second annual Food Summit. What education would be most useful to helping you advance local food and culinary tourism? (example: training sessions (using online tools), topics at the Food Summit, marketing your product, guest speakers, etc)
- 15) Do you feel an online, searchable database will be a useful tool for you?
- 16) Does Perth County need a distribution vehicle?
  - i. Why or why not?
  - ii. What should it entail?
- 17) Could the 100 Mile Market help with the distribution problems you are currently experiencing?
- 18) Are there any topics or issues relevant to this research study that have not been addressed in the survey that you would like to discuss?

## **Appendix C: Distribution Company Interview Questions**

- 1) Are there any complications with picking up directly from the farm?
- 2) Do farmers pay for this service? Are all operating costs met by mark-up of products?
- 3) Have orders been consistently met? Any problems of farmers not being able to make orders?
- 4) Are orders placed online or by phone?
- 5) Does this service include any type of marketing on behalf of the farmers?
- 6) Do farmers have concerns re: missing one-on-one connection with chefs?
- 7) What challenges have you faced?
- 8) Did you experience any unexpected obstacles?
- 9) What recommendations would you give for Perth County?