

Simcoe County FOOD & AGRICULTURE CHARTER



The Food and Agriculture Charter of Simcoe County is a document that outlines the vision and principles about food our community considers most important.

Rather than a policy document, a charter is a guide for making decisions intended to improve the local food system for all residents of Simcoe County.

The residents of Simcoe County created this document for their community, and anyone can carry out the vision and principles outlined in the Charter, including but not limited to: government, educators, volunteers, county residents, and individuals and groups who fund community activities.

VISION

Food is essential for life and optimal health, yet there are many members of the community who face barriers when attempting to access nutritious food, such as lack of income and lack of transportation. Additionally, unlevel global playing fields in regards to labour standards and costs, agricultural subsidies, urban sprawl, environmental concerns, increasing energy costs, and an aging workforce are some examples of the many types of challenges facing the future of farming in our county.

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Agriculture is one of the primary industries that helped establish the different regions that would ultimately become the County of Simcoe, and still remains one of its largest economic drivers. For farming to remain a vital part of our economy for generations to come, and to ensure regional food security, agricultural lands as a natural resource will need to be protected. Now one of Canada's fastest growing regions, as the population of Simcoe County continues to grow, so will the demand for nutritious food.

Made up of the people, places, and processes involved in the production of food, our local food system includes such functions as the growing, harvesting, marketing, processing, packaging, storing and distribution of food; as well as the purchasing, preparation, eating, and disposal of food waste and packaging.

The Simcoe County Food and Agriculture Charter emerged from a shared community responsibility to establish a fair and sustainable local food system for all.

Residents of Simcoe County identified opportunities for building a local sustainable food system. The following six principles are founded on the values of our community and encourage actions that will result in a fair and food-secure system for all:



Equal Access to Healthy and Personally-Acceptable Food for All

The people of Simcoe County need easy access to enough healthy, personally-acceptable, and locally-produced food to maintain a healthy diet.

Working together to remove the physical and financial barriers to food access, promote healthy eating, and increase access to places where people can buy, grow or otherwise obtain healthy foods, is an important step towards eliminating hunger.

Food must be affordable for consumers and producers to ensure food security and food system sustainability.



A Close-Knit Community Achieved through a Celebration of Food and Culture

Promoting the celebration of local food, culture, and diversity is an excellent way to bring people together. The people of Simcoe County should preserve the rich history of our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, Francophone, and other early settlement communities, and encourage festivities that highlight new customs, cultures, traditions and talents related to food and agriculture from both the urban and rural perspectives. All people of Simcoe County should have opportunities to celebrate food and culture. Simcoe County should be recognized as a healthy, vibrant community and natural environment with unique soil conditions, range of vast waterways, and urban and rural landscapes that produce a rich diversity of foods.



Long-Term Economic Growth and Prosperity

Enhancing opportunities for local food and agriculture-related businesses or producers (both large and small scale) to produce, store, package, promote, sell, and deliver their products locally and elsewhere is important for a sustainable food system and long-term economic growth. This includes stimulating local economic development by building partnerships between local businesses, farmers, organizations, governments, and institutions to encourage success in the profession of agriculture.

The people of Simcoe County will benefit from more opportunities to buy and sell locally-produced foods and related products.



Agricultural Sustainability

The business of agriculture requires specialized knowledge and skills. A solid succession plan to ensure success in the profession of farming is essential to long-term local food production and a sustainable food system. Additionally, land-use planning is vital in planning for the future.

The people of Simcoe County should seek new opportunities for increasing food production in both rural and urban areas, advocate for the protection of farmland, and support increased educational opportunities in agriculture (for both large- and small-scale farming) using both traditional and innovative applications. Agriculture-related businesses require assistance in overcoming challenges related to financial, regulatory, environmental, geographical and other types of barriers.



Environmental Responsibility

The people of Simcoe County require clean air, water, and soil, and should encourage policies, practices, and programs that work to preserve the environment and ensure food system resilience.

Risks to the environment need to be addressed for the protection and preservation of our water, soils, agricultural areas, and ecosystems.

Best practices through traditional and innovative technologies must be a priority.



Increased Education and Skills Development for a Healthier Community

Access to information and skills development regarding the connections between our food choices, our health, the economy, and our environment is necessary for both individual and regional food security.

The people of Simcoe County desire a community built around food and agriculture that supports the sharing of knowledge and skills. Topics may include food skills and healthy eating, rural and urban farming, social justice, the relationship between culture and food, and local food and agricultural history.

SUPPORT THE CHARTER

The Food and Agriculture Charter of Simcoe County was created by the community for the community to create awareness and foster participation to ensure a food secure future for Simcoe County. By supporting local actions consistent with the Charter, individuals, businesses, organizations, and government can all play a role in creating a healthy future for Simcoe County.

By signing the Charter, a group, individual, or organization is in agreement that they support and endorse the vision and principles included within the Food and Agriculture Charter of Simcoe County.

To pledge support and endorse the Charter's vision and principles, sign the online Charter at fpa.simcoe.ca

ORGANIZING PARTNERS

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the guidance of the following organizations in the development of this Charter:

