

Food Charter

“Planning Food Into Our Future”

The Durham Region Food Charter reflects the community’s vision for a food secure Durham Region focused toward building a just and sustainable local food system as a foundation for population health.

Based on community participation a sustainable local food system will improve the economic viability of Durham Region’s food industry, work in harmony with natural heritage systems as well as the built environment, and promote overall health.

“Food Security: means a situation in which all community residents are able to obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice, and the ability of the agricultural community to support this system.”

(Growing Durham Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 128 (2009))

A food secure Durham Region is financially sound, environmentally responsible and socially just, contributing to the future well being of our region and its residents.

Essential Foundations To Build Upon

A just and sustainable local food system will be resilient when supported by comprehensive and integrated mechanisms. These will incorporate physical elements with sound economic, environmental, social, and political policies to ensure a secure food supply.

- Establish a citizen based advisory committee which would oversee the principles of the Food Charter with quantifiable benchmarks and set goals.
- Calculate the food needs for anticipated population growth and establish a baseline to work towards self-reliance in food security.
- Incorporate food security principles into key strategic regional and local policy documents as an integral part of creating sustainable and complete communities.
- Promote the development of a local food system that supports local agricultural production.
- Establish an educated consumer base that understands and supports the local agricultural sector.
- Encourage establishment of institutional, industrial and commercial local food procurement policies.
- Influence sustainable resource management through water conservation, protection of natural heritage systems, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, responsible waste management and protect agricultural land for production by minimizing encroachment through responsive land-use planning.
- Identify potential impacts to farmers and food production attributing from climate change and include in mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- Develop Durham’s local food economy as a key economic driver for the Region.
- Measure Regional Food Security annually to assess effectiveness of multi-sector initiatives.

Sustaining Local Agriculture

Cultivation of a sustainable local agriculture will enhance Durham Region’s urban and rural economic development, create employment, secure a regional food supply, encourage a culture of environmental stewardship and conserve resources.

Build Capacity through Local Food Production

- Protect agricultural lands for production.
- Promote the agricultural industry as a viable career option.
- Extend local education and training opportunities.
- Develop local food processing capacity.
- Encourage the diversification of the local agricultural sector.
- Support networks that provide information about local food choices and availability.

Environmental Stewardship

- Acknowledge and promote sustainable urban and rural agricultural practices.
- Recognize the sustainable food system cycle from production to responsible waste resource management.
- Value the rural community's role in providing environmental services to the general public.
- "Protect the long-term ecological function, connectivity and biodiversity of natural heritage systems"
(*Provincial Policy Statement, 2005*).
- Ensure the supply and the quality of water for local agriculture.

Facilitate Access to Locally Produced Food

- Produce foods locally to support regional self-reliance and food security.
- Ensure the availability of local foods within neighbourhoods.

(*Examples: Community supported agriculture, Farm Gate, Farmer's Markets, Retail and Wholesaling. Urban food production in parks, residential and school yards, "green" building design including rooftop gardens, community and market gardens...*)

Community Partnership

A just and sustainable food system will be supported by a regional community where residents are connected participants working in partnership with each other and with all levels of government. It acknowledges the importance of its interconnection with other food systems.

- Nurture and improve communication between the community, food producers, and key stakeholders in developing regional food system solutions.
- Engage the broader community in research and development of local initiatives that improve regional food security.
- Encourage community participation in the decision making process.
- Foster social cohesion by embracing cultural diversity and food traditions.

Health and Well Being

A just and sustainable food system will be equitable and respect human dignity. It is a system in which all residents will have access to safe, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate food.

Accessibility and Social Equity

- Advocate for social equity
(*Example: Sufficient social assistance and disability benefits, jobs at living wages, adequate transportation and affordable housing to enable individuals and families to afford Durham's Nutritious Food Basket*)
- Support access to nourishing food to meet the lifelong nutritional needs of all Durham Region residents.

Education

- Develop educational tools to inform residents about the connections between health, nutrition, food choices and disease prevention in homes, schools, and other institutions.
- Build food skills and food safety knowledge.
- Initiate social marketing to raise awareness and encourage consumers to purchase locally produced and processed food.
- Support community food programs and planning that reduce the need to access emergency food resources.
- Encourage individual and communal self-reliance.

Culture of Food

- Enhance the dignity and joy of growing, preparing and eating food.

"Planning food into our future ensures healthier people and healthy communities"