



The Honourable Kathleen Wynne  
Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food  
Legislative Building,  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

To the Honourable Premier Kathleen Wynne,

On behalf of the Sustain Ontario alliance for healthy food and farming, we are writing to congratulate you on the successful passage of the Local Food Act. We are encouraged to see a commitment from our provincial government to direct more tax dollars to Ontario's agri-food sector, strengthening our economy, building our food infrastructure and contributing to better access to fresh, healthy local products.

Because we believe so strongly in the Local Food Act, we are concerned by any threats to its successful implementation. One such threat, the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), puts buy-local programs that would set local food goals and targets at risk.

The CETA would be the first of Canada's international trade agreements to cover procurement by Ontario's MUSH sector. As you are aware, Ontario's hospitals, universities, municipalities and other publicly-funded entities have been leaders in implementing buy-local food policies.

While CETA allows for local preferences in contracts under a certain amount (currently \$315,000 for procurement of goods by provincial government entities), we are concerned that some large institutional food contracts would exceed this threshold, interfering with their ability to give priority to local food. Furthermore, under the CETA's proposed procurement rules, "recurring contracts" will be valued cumulatively over one year. If weekly or monthly institutional food contracts are considered "recurring contracts," then an institution prioritizing local food in contracts would be far more likely to exceed the annual CETA threshold of \$315,000.

Such restrictions would severely limit the ability of provincial institutions and/or municipal governments to establish local food contracts for health-care facilities, correctional facilities, schools or other broader public sector institutions. Furthermore, Ontario is home to Canada's largest food processing sector and these processors purchase approximately 65% of goods produced on the province's farms. The asymmetries between the export and domestic sectors, amplified by the CETA, may negatively affect Ontario's local food strategy, as well as farmers and food processors. In the past, free trade agreements negatively impacted small-to-medium scale diversified farms while encouraging large-scale, export-oriented production.

The result for Ontario has been an increased vulnerability to drastic changes in weather and the global economy.

We are also deeply concerned by reports that the CETA will significantly increase imports of European cheese, which will harm Ontario's cheese-makers and the dairy farmers who supply them with milk. This increase would also undermine the supply management system, which matches milk production to domestic demand and must strictly control imports to function properly.

We strongly encourage you to consider the implications for the Local Food Act as well as the potential impact on the Ontario food and agricultural sectors before signing on to the CETA. Sustain Ontario and our allies are not against trade, but wish to ensure that trade deals be fair and transparent, with positive outcomes for domestic agriculture and provincial food security. We urge you to fully exempt Ontario's MUSH sector local food purchasing policies from the CETA's procurement obligations. In addition, we call on you to hold public and legislative hearings to examine the potential impacts of the CETA on the Ontario food sector and buy-local purchasing policies before Ontario gives its final approval to this agreement.

Many thanks for your consideration,



Karen Hutchinson, Co-chair of the Advisory Council



Bryan Gilvesy, Co-chair of the Advisory Council

cc: Minister of Rural Affairs Jeff Leal  
Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment Dr. Eric Hoskin  
Minister of Finance Charles Sousa  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Linda Jeffrey  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Deb Matthews  
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Brad Duguid