



**A Discussion about Food Literacy
Within the Context of the
*Local Food Act***

***June 2014
DRAFT For Discussion***

**Based on Submissions
Made to the Standing Committee on Social Policy
During the Local Food Act Hearings**

About Sustain Ontario

Sustain Ontario – the Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming was established in 2009 to be the provincial voice for organizations looking to improve our food system into one that is healthy, equitable, ecological and financially viable. Sustain Ontario works collaboratively to connect members, showcase food system innovations and champions, explore and research pressing issues in the food system, and advocate for a healthy and sustainable food system.

Sustain Ontario members represent diverse sectors - farming, health, environment, business, education, academia, government and non-profit. Sustain Ontario engages with its membership and supporters to take a collaborative approach to research, policy development, and action by addressing intersecting issues related to healthy food and local sustainable agriculture.

Sustain Ontario is a project of Tides Canada Initiatives Society (TCI). TCI is a shared administrative platform that provides professional organizational support (e.g. governance, financial management, HR, and regulatory compliance) to 40 social justice and environmental projects.

The **Ontario Edible Education Network** has been established as an initiative of Sustain Ontario to bring together groups in Ontario that are doing great work to connect children and youth with good food. The network better enables these groups to share resources, ideas, and experience, work together on advocacy, and facilitate efforts across the province to get children and youth eating, growing, cooking, celebrating, and learning about healthy, local and sustainably produced food.

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1.0 Introduction

On November 6th 2013 Ontario's local food movement achieved a major step forward with the passing of the *Local Food Act, 2013*. The goal of the legislation is **to support, promote, and celebrate the good things grown and made in Ontario**.

The passing of the Act came after three readings and a series of committee hearings where amendments to the legislation were proposed and subsequently voted upon by the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Various organizations, including Sustain Ontario and some of its members, had the opportunity to voice their views on potential amendments to the Act through both written submissions and presentations.

A major theme that consistently ran throughout the submissions and questioning periods of the October 2013 hearings was the **urgent need for food literacy for all Ontarians**. This perspective was voiced by nearly all of the various groups and government officials that were present at the hearings and by many voices outside of the official process.

"I had the opportunity to travel around the province and do round tables...to discuss the food act and what people thought should be in it and what we should do. **I don't think there was a single round table we held from one end of the province to the other where education wasn't the number one issue for everyone involved...** We've heard some alternative or different types of things we could do to further that education: to educate not only our children but their parents as to buying wholesome Ontario food for the table."
Ernie Hardeman PC MPP

Many opinions were expressed during the hearings about the potential benefits that greater food literacy education could bring about:

- "Human health and illness prevention starts with a strong food literacy component in our school curriculum and ends with a healthier population and a less taxed health care system." - Ontario Federation of Agriculture.
- "A fundamental cornerstone of a strong local food system is the food literacy of consumers." - Ontario Apple Growers
- "We would like to propose adding another purpose to the bill to complement the economic-awareness-raising purposes that are already in place, and that is to support healthy eating through increased food literacy and food skills, as well as access to local foods ... By articulating that additional purpose, you really get a potential for stronger impact on health." - Dietitians of Canada
- "We believe the key to really accomplishing the goals of stronger food systems in Ontario lies in improving the food literacy of all Ontarians ... Not only will food

literacy programming strengthen Ontario's local food system but it will surely translate to a healthier population in the medium to long term." - Sustain Ontario

- "We really think the key is ... home ec, education. These kids are our future consumers. They are our future voters. They will be involved in procurement when they're older, and they'll be using our health care system." - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association
- "If Canada's Food Guide alone could teach healthy eating, we wouldn't have a problem with kids eating too much junk food. The problem is more complex. Canada's Food Guide is already in the curriculum, and is supposedly taught in nearly every grade. It's not enough" - Green Thumbs Growing Kids

The comments above show that stakeholders **strongly associate food literacy with the potential to reduce future health care budgets and achieve a healthier population** in the long-term. Food literacy was also discussed as having much potential to support Ontario's food system and economy through increased local food procurement, and that **food literacy education is needed in any effort to build stronger food systems.**

A number of food literacy concepts were repeatedly mentioned as being essential for building a strong food system in Ontario and for achieving broader health, economic, and socio-cultural goals. When many of these themes are drawn together, the submissions discuss food literacy as the understanding of:

1. Local agriculture and where food comes from;
2. How food systems impact individual health, broader societal and economic wellbeing, and the environment;
3. How to grow, access, prepare, and prefer healthy, safe and nutritious food.

During the second reading of the *Local Food Act* in the spring of 2013 an amendment was proposed to add food education to the curriculum of every grade level. This debate continued in the Standing Committee on Social Policy hearings in October. While this amendment was not passed, a provision was included in the amended version of the Act that requires the Minister of Agriculture and Food to establish goals or targets to aspire to in the area of improving food literacy in respect of local food.

This paper summarizes the perspectives of groups that made submissions to the *Local Food Act* hearings, by referencing the direct quotes that were provided during the submission process, in an effort to communicate how Ontario stakeholders view the concept of food literacy and to inform how the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food could advance food literacy within the context of the *Local Food Act*.

2.0 Food Literacy: What Does It Mean?

2.1 Understanding where food comes from: learning about local agriculture

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association stated that there is a need to “focus on where food comes from. Only two per cent of the Canadian population works to feed the other 98, so awareness of agriculture is important.” OFVGA told a story during the hearings that emphasized their point.

“I’ll give you a little quick story. I volunteer at the Royal Winter Fair. Last year, we had a loop going of horticultural planting and harvesting. A lady was standing watching. She was middle-aged and a very average, normal-looking person. I could tell she was going to ask me something. She turned at the end and said, “Carrots, they grow in the ground.” I thought of a lot of smart things to say, but I said, “Yes, and so do potatoes and beets.” How do you tell somebody like that to eat local or buy in season when they don’t even know that carrots grow in the ground?”

Green Thumbs Growing Kids concluded their Deputation to the *Local Food Act* with a similar anecdote. “While spreading seeds in one of our school gardens, a child around 9 or 10 asked, ‘is this going to be animal or vegetable?’ This, my friends, is why our kids need school gardens.”

Many additional submissions highlighted the **need to educate Ontarians about where food comes from:**

- “Young people are driving for more knowledge about the food system, about where food comes from, and it would be excellent to get more of that in the classroom and more food education that’s practical, hands-on, that involves growing or farm tours or work in the kitchen. Things around food jobs would be very beneficial.” - Food Forward
- “Students need to know where food comes from, and how and why to choose healthy foods. They need to know this from their own experience.” - Green Thumbs Growing Kids
- “We are certainly in favour of anything that increases Ontarians’ knowledge of their food and where their food comes from.” – Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers
- “Incorporation of community gardens on school properties could bring together curriculum, action and tasting, all supporting food education and increasing food literacy in Ontario schools. This concept could culminate in a ‘local food soup day’, perhaps declared provincially and as part of a Local Food Week campaign. These types of concepts cost little but have a huge impact on raising child and youth awareness of where their food comes from.” - Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance

2.2 Understanding how food systems impact individual health, the economy, broader societal wellbeing, and the environment

Embedded in the submissions to the *Local Food Act* was the concept that food literacy involves a comprehensive understanding of Ontario's food systems and **how these food systems impact the health of individuals, the wellbeing of our society, our economy, and our environment.**

- “Local food education will help ensure youth are educated about the relationship between local food systems, the environment, and their health.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
- “It’s not about giving kids food; it’s also about interacting with that food. It’s also about interacting with those farmers and ensuring that there is programming at schools that is working around that food so that kids understand where it’s coming from and that they have a chance to cook it.” - Sustain Ontario
- “We have got to educate these kids about home ec, and I’m not talking about learning how to make Baked Alaska. I’m talking about mandatory - boys and girls, school gardens, understanding agriculture, basic food skills and learning what is local and why it’s important to our economy.” - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association
- “We really are lacking food skills and an awareness of what is a healthy food and certainly what is a local food, and how that contributes to our health, so lots of opportunities for that there.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

2.3 Understanding how to grow, access, prepare, and prefer healthy, safe and nutritious food.

“Education is not just teaching somebody how to cook the food, but where do you go to find it?” - Alliance of Ontario Food Processors

Knowledge of how to grow, access, prepare and prefer healthy, safe and nutritious food came up repeatedly as a needed component of food literacy education. During submissions to the *Local Food Act* several groups advocated for an increase in programming of this nature.

- “People need to know how to cook, they need to know how to can and preserve it, and they need to understand how important local fresh food is to their better health.” - Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- “An evidence-informed food literacy and food skills component in mandated curriculum for K to 12 ... would include things like food access, food selection, nutrition education, food preparation, cooking, budgeting ... There are certainly

nutrition lessons incorporated currently, but there is a lack of food literacy and food skills. Providing opportunities for all Ontario children to develop these fundamental skills through the education system will support healthy eating, and it will also contribute to the increased use of local Ontario food products.”- Dietitians of Canada

- “Really, what’s at the core of it [school gardens] is the opportunity for each child to have that ownership and agency, a full sense of engagement with something that tastes good and smells good and isn’t candy; it came from the ground. And then you planted a seed, and—oh my God!—you got something you could eat. There’s a magic in that.” - Green Thumbs Growing Kids
- “When we talk about education, I think one of the things we need to be looking at is education as to how to read a label ... an understanding of labels, an understanding of our whole food safety system. Educate the public on the great things we do here in this province and putting our system up against any other in the world. We need to educate as well and make people understand what GMO versus non-GMO is. What is organic? What is hormone-free? A lot of things that people don’t know — they think they know— to me, that’s part of education, not just teaching someone how to cook.” - Alliance of Ontario Food Processors.
- “Incorporation of community gardens on school properties could bring together curriculum, action and tasting, all supporting food education and increasing food literacy in Ontario schools.” - Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance
- “As farmers, we are supportive of food education initiatives that focus on nutrition, preparation, storage and handling.” - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
- “The national food strategy envisions a future where Ontarians will always have access to safe and nutritious food, and that consumers will choose foods that lead to a healthy lifestyle. Essential to achieving these objectives, we need to invest in food awareness programs, to create education campaigns to encourage Ontarians to value food as a source of nutrition and to avoid waste.” – Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- “Kids who have never tried fresh local foods have no way of knowing how good they taste. And growing your own connects you to the food in a deeper way from taste to waste, meaning you taste it more and waste it less. Research shows that children and adults alike eat better when they grow gardens, even in short seasons such as in Ontario’s north.” - Green Thumbs Growing Kids
- “We believe the key to really accomplishing the goals of stronger food systems in Ontario lies in improving the basic food literacy of all Ontarians. In the short term this means food awareness programs including nutrition and food preparation programming.” - Sustain Ontario
- “We need to make sure that food literacy is key. We have a generation or more who fundamentally don’t know how to make a meal. One of the goals we set out in the national food strategy is that if 16-year-olds were able, at the end of the day, to cook six nutritious meals from scratch, they would, first off, understand what nutritious

local food is, and they would have to go out and purchase it, so they would really understand it. That would go a long way to helping them understand. People don't know how to cook anymore. We've lost that in our society, and if we keep going, we'll lose it forever." - Ontario Federation of Agriculture

3.0 How Do We Advance Food Literacy?

Those who made submissions to the *Local Food Act* provided an extensive set of suggestions for how food literacy could be advanced in Ontario. These ideas have been summarized in the following sections.

3.1 Build on what is already happening

- “There’s an enormous amount of energy and assets in this province of people who are working with schools to bring local foods into schools through student nutrition programs, but also through teaching kids how to grow and cook again from scratch, and understanding their food and agricultural systems ... There’s lots of support that can be put towards some of these groups, such as FoodShare, The Stop and some of the more regional student nutrition programs that are doing this kind of work in schools. They’re working with teachers to bring in gardening programming and hands-on food skills into both after-school programs and into the classroom.” - Sustain Ontario
- “The province has some of the program infrastructure to support school gardens already – such as the Student Nutrition Program, the Healthy Schools Recognition Program and the Outdoor Education funding.” - Green Thumbs Growing Kids
- “Some initiatives have already taken place to encourage the development of partnerships between farmers, food processors and institutions. In many cases, this not only supports local farmers and farm businesses and provides healthy meal choices, but buying local can also result in cost savings for the institutions.” - Ontario Apple Growers
- “The Local Food Act, while limited in scope, aligns with a broader Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy ... We encourage the Ontario government to use the comprehensive Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy to inform the Local Food Act and further to support the OFNS as a framework for nutrition policy and program development. This strategy has resulted from engagement with over 40 stakeholders and numerous consultations with individuals, groups and organizations from across Ontario.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
- “Closing the gap between these programs with a modest funding increase that NGOs could access would support schools to offer high-quality programming on the school grounds for a fraction of the cost of treating diabetes and obesity later.” - Green Thumbs Growing Kids

3.2 Work together: cross ministerial and sectoral approach

- “We do support the promotion of food literacy in youth. The thing is, this act is not going to necessarily make that happen. There’s got to be a meeting of the minds between the Ministers of Health, Education and Agriculture for this ever to go anywhere, and paying lip service to it in this act is not going to get the job done, and we all believe that needs to happen.” - Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance

- “I think the ministers have to figure out how they’re going to be involved in the Local Food Act and how they can do something about local food literacy.” - Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance
- "A real example of comprehensive legislation is the 2010 Healthy Schools Act, District of Columbia. This 37-page legislation exemplifies a far-reaching vision and I include a copy of the Act with this deputation. The program is implemented via a 3 way partnership between private, non-profit and public sectors. With five key interlocking programs, this legislation combines local procurement, which is well-defined, school garden grants of up to \$10,000, universal feeding programs, environmental initiatives and physical activities." - Green Thumbs Growing Kids
- “We have to really be clear what it is that we mean by ‘success’—pointing back to ... this idea of our three ministries, education, health and agriculture, getting together and needing to discuss what it is that a successful local food system looks like down the road.” - Organic Council of Ontario
- “A great deal of work has been done on the Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy; now the need is to take some of that to the next step by having that cross-ministerial and intersectoral approach.” - Dietitians of Canada
- “What we’re calling for in the Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy—and I encourage you to look at that as a framework for your policy decisions—is that it’s a comprehensive approach and it’s multi-pronged. You need all these things to be working together to have an impact. As far as local food is concerned, it really does need to cross a few different areas.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

3.3 Develop stronger support infrastructure

- “I think that if we make it easier for people—I think that for school programs under Children and Youth Services, it’s daunting for some of these people that are getting the product. If they can work with grower groups, if we can develop a better infrastructure and make it easier for Ontario products to get to these institutions, whether it’s food hubs or whether it’s central procurement, I think it will happen naturally. I really do. We just have to make it easier for people. Most people, I think, want to do the right thing. It’s just that, a lot of the time, they just have to do what’s easiest, so we have to make it easier as an industry.” - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.
- “Almost every school board, every school, has a breakfast program. One of the problems is that the procurement system is helter-skelter. It’s all over the map. If it was easy for people to access Ontario-grown for those programs, it would make a big difference to Ontario farmers, in my opinion.” - Ontario Apple Growers
- “Why we aren’t working with some of the food hub models that are starting to come up in the institutions is a real surprise to me. I think there are lots of opportunities to work with farmers in the local community, whether it’s at the school level or at the hospital level in particular.” - Organic Council of Ontario

3.4 Teach food literacy in all of Ontario's schools

A vast majority of submissions made to the Local Food Act hearings emphasized the **importance of integrating education about food and agriculture into Ontario's school curriculum** and teaching children and youth about a wide range of skills that were put forward as being essential for food literacy.

- “Human health and illness prevention starts with a strong food literacy component in our school curriculum and ends with a healthier population and a less taxed health care system.” - Ontario Federation of Agriculture.
- “Longer-term investment in Ontario's food system includes a strong food literacy component in our school curriculum. - Sustain Ontario
- “I think most of us are supportive of looking at trying to promote food literacy in our schools.” - Grant Crack, Liberal MPP
- “CELA has seen proposals for other measures to be included in Bill 36, such as requiring food education in all grades in order to increase food literacy...consistent with the establishment of a robust local food system.” - Canadian Environmental Law Association
- “I know that when you put an issue into the curriculum in the schools, it works. My children ... come home with that sort of stuff, and it does affect what you put in the grocery cart, so it works.” - Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.
- “One of the keys to building the stronger local food system envisioned by the act is improving the basic food literacy of Ontarians, especially in the school system.” - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
- “To enable an added purpose of food literacy and food skills, we recommend that the *Local Food Act* be used to direct the Ministry of Education to work toward incorporating an evidence-informed food literacy and food skills component in mandated curriculum for K to 12.” - Dietitians of Canada
- “Education is the key...Recycling programs didn't happen because we legislated recycling and then we waited till people were grown up and asked them to recycle. We went after students when they were in grade 5 and grade 6, and we introduced blue box programs. We need to take the same approach to local food.” - Organic Council of Ontario

Numerous groups stated that food could be woven across many strands of the curriculum. The following quotes present some of the varying ideas on **what embedding food literacy into the Ontario curriculum might look like**:

- “An evidence-informed food literacy and food skills component in mandated curriculum for K to 12 ... would include things like food access, food selection, nutrition education, food preparation, cooking, budgeting. You heard from other presenters last weekend that food can be woven across many strands of the curriculum, and we certainly agree with that.” - Dietitians of Canada

- “If we are not teaching young children about food systems, we’re not looking at reports that this government has put out in 2006 and 2009 asking for a deeper connection between food and education, whether that’s school garden programs or it’s working back in home economics, we are really going to miss the boat...which is creating our new market for local food, and that should be every Ontarian who understands the value of the food system.” - Organic Council of Ontario
- “Adding food literacy to the curriculum means to me actually adding hands-on activities to increase student knowledge through experience.” - Green Thumbs Growing Kids
- “I think that there’s a real need to look long-term in trying to bring back those things [teaching kids how to grow and cook again from scratch, and understanding their food and agricultural systems] into our school curriculum and educating teachers on how to do that kind of work.” - Sustain Ontario
- “Local food education will help ensure youth are educated about the relationship between local food systems, the environment, and their health. As a minimum this should include food, agriculture, and garden-based education in across all grades.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
- “Young people are driving for more knowledge about the food system, about where food comes from, and it would be excellent to get more of that in the classroom and more food education that’s practical, hands-on, that involves growing or farm tours or work in the kitchen.” - Food Forward
- “We do not have a mandatory food skills program here in Ontario, and we’d like to see that, particularly at the high school level, where there is so little opportunity for that. There is room in the curriculum for it. It needs to be creative, problem-solving; it probably has to be cross-curricular, but it needs to happen.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
- “As farmers, we are supportive of food education initiatives that focus on nutrition, preparation, storage and handling - by bringing back home economics into the school system.” - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
- “School gardens bring learning to life, and life to learning. Paired with farm-to-school programs, they would support farmers, teach kids where food comes from, and promote local food.” - Green Thumbs Growing Kids
- “I certainly think we all agree that this hands-on approach is critical, through the schools. Hands-on learning, I think, is where everybody learns in a much better fashion.” - Mike Colle Liberal MPP

As is evidenced from the above quotes, the need to **ensure hands-on food skills education, such as cookery classes and school gardening programs in all Ontario schools, was mentioned repeatedly** during the *Local Food Act* Hearings.

It should be noted that The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario expressed concern about overloading teachers with curriculum changes. “I sat on a school board for a

period of time, and I have a little concern with continuing to put more and more stuff on the curriculum and forget what schools are for.”

Sunday Harrison, from Green Thumbs Growing Kids provided some reflections on the common concern about adding to the curriculum. “Using food as a way to integrate curriculum strands has way more legs than putting an add-on to say, ‘Okay. Well, now you have to teach something new,’ because they have too much to do.” Harrison went on to say:

- “I think the problem is the curriculum is overloaded, so you need to actually find ways to bring it together and to reintegrate strands and expectations. Food is a marvelous way of doing that.”
- “To actually use food as a cross-cutting inquiry has enormous potential, but I think the ministry needs to see curriculum development in a broader way again, which they did under the environmental piece, where all curriculum now has been filtered through that lens.”

Providing and supporting teacher training and professional development in the area of food literacy could also address the concern that was raised.

3.5 Educate all Ontarians, not just children and youth

While many submissions to the *Local Food Act* hearings highlighted the need to bring food literacy to children and youth in the school system, **stakeholders also noted that it was important to educate the broader population:**

- “It starts with really young kids in daycare, right? Touching and feeling the food, experimenting with the food, helping to prepare food, helping to shop for the food—growing food. It goes all the way from daycares right up to high school and beyond with some of the adult groups we have in our community who haven’t learned those food skills and where food comes from, and keeping that education going throughout the life cycle.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
- “We’ve heard some alternative or different types of things we could do to further that education: to educate not only our children but their parents as to buying wholesome Ontario food for the table.” - Ernie Hardeman, PC MPP
- “Local food education... would be more robust if this was extended to the community as a whole.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
- “The national food strategy envisions a future where ... consumers will choose foods that lead to a healthy lifestyle. Essential to achieving these objectives, we need to invest in food awareness programs, to create education campaigns to encourage Ontarians to value food as a source of nutrition and to avoid waste.” - Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

3.6 Increase consumption of healthy and local foods

Some groups advocated for food literacy as a **mechanism to increase the consumption and procurement of healthy and local foods**:

- “OFVGA is supportive of initiatives that will increase awareness and consumption of Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables. OFVGA is also supportive of ongoing efforts to encourage the use of local food in Ontario’s broader public sector institutions, such as schools.” - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
- “If people see the local foods—it’s not just buying them; it’s taking them home and doing something with them. We can start with educating kids on how to cook with some of these local foods, and they’ll take that information back to the parents. We just need more exposure to what those healthy foods would look like and how to prepare them.” - Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
- “Health care is the gorilla on everybody’s back these days, and the consumption of fruits and vegetables can only improve the health of Ontarians. With apples, it’s kind of a symbol of health, so we strongly encourage everyone to make sure that they have their apple a day because it keeps the doctor away.” - Ontario Apple Growers
- “We could create a market for Ontario-grown apples through our school boards in Ontario. We could get an apple a day to every kid in this province. That would support your growers and would reduce health costs, I think.” - Jonah Schein, NDP MPP
- “Education is the key ... If we are not teaching young children about food systems ... we are really going to miss the boat ... which is creating our new market for local food, and that should be every Ontarian who understands the value of the food system.” - Organic Council of Ontario

Student nutrition programs provide a variety of nutritious food and beverage choices to students before, during or after each school day. It was argued that **bringing local foods to Student Nutrition Programs could benefit all parties involved**.

When asked during the questioning period, “You’ve talked about a school student nutrition program. How would that help to support local food?” Carolyn Young, a representative of Sustain Ontario responded with:

- “Connecting farmer groups and farmers in Ontario to schools is a great cross-sectoral approach to both increase support to farmers in Ontario but also increase access in schools to healthy foods.”
- “It’s not about giving kids food; it’s also about interacting with that food. It’s also about interacting with those farmers and ensuring that there is programming at schools that is working around that food so that kids understand where it’s coming from and that they have a chance to cook it.”

The topic of student nutrition programs was closely tied to discussions about local procurement targets. When asked during the questioning period, “In terms of student nutrition in the schools, how would you feel about setting local procurement targets attached to student nutrition?” Lynn Roblin, a representative of the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity, responded with:

- “I think the student nutrition program guidelines already exist for the nutritional criteria of what’s in those foods, and I think that could be expanded to include some targets for increasing local food use.”
- “I know that OMAF and Dietitians of Canada, which I am a member of, are already looking at a healthy fundraising program as a pilot, looking at linking local farmers and their foods and using those foods for fundraisers. There are all sorts of creative ways that local foods can be put into schools.”

4.0 Successes: “What food literacy looks like on the ground”

Several groups talked about building upon innovative programs that already exist and then shared the following success that they have had. As mentioned above, “There are all sorts of creative ways that local foods can be put into schools.”

4.1 Fresh from the Farm

“Right now, we’re in the midst of a pilot project, in collaboration with OMAFRA and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association, to run a pilot for a healthy fundraising program called Fresh from the Farm. The numbers are still preliminary, but right now we’ve got, I believe, over 110,000 pounds of Ontario fruits and vegetables going to Ontario families through this healthy fundraising program. That’s an example of how various organizations can work together to contribute to advancement of local foods.”
- Dietitians of Canada

- Program where kids sell produce to the community
- 50% of the profits go back to the farmers, the school keeps 40% and the other 10% is used to maintain the program
- Fresh from the Farm is committed to delivering:
 - Healthy food choices
 - Opportunities for learning about agriculture and food in the classroom
 - Support for Ontario’s farmers and the local economy
 - Leadership by aligning with Ontario’s School Food and Beverage Policy and Ontario’s Local Food Act

4.2 Nutrition Month

“Dietitians of Canada also supports food literacy and food skills through our Nutrition Month campaign held every year in March. These Nutrition Month campaigns have tremendous reach across the province and the country, and we can strengthen children’s exposure to this messaging through mandated food literacy and food skills curriculum to bring about even more positive results.”

- In 2010, Nutrition Month focused on local foods, asking Canadians to celebrate food from field to table.
- In 2013, consumers were guided through selecting food, making their decisions at the grocery store.
- In 2014, continued with food skills emphasis by talking about cooking and enjoying healthy foods together.

4.3 Green Thumbs Growing Kids School Garden Program

“For 13 years our small community-based charity has partnered with schools to create gardens on school property, and lead workshops in the school gardens. Each season we offer hundreds of these garden-based workshops at three or four local schools.”

- “In winter, we make healthy soil with food waste and worm bins in classrooms.”
- “In spring, of course, we plant; in summer, we run garden programs for all ages.”
- “In fall, the students harvest and make recipes with the food, including potato dishes, kale chips, salad rolls, pesto and salsa.”

How does Green Thumbs Growing Kids do this?

- “We do it with very little public money, yet it is public school students who benefit.”
- “We use federal and local wage subsidies to hire youth to help run the summer programs, and keep the gardens productive.”
- “Staff and volunteers run everything on less than a shoestring, out of commitment to the idea of food literacy and environmental literacy.”

4.4 Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program

“Every week, there are 36,000 servings of fruit and vegetables going up north, and a large percentage is Ontario product. When we started this, a lot of parents said to us, ‘Oh, good luck. My kids don’t eat fruits and vegetables.’ We found from the food handlers that at the beginning there was some waste. These kids had never had broccoli, cauliflower—and we’re not talking way up north, we’re talking Sudbury.” - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

The response:

- “The food handlers said that within a month the waste wasn’t there. The kids were eating it.”
- “The teachers said that within a few months fruits and vegetables were coming in their lunch boxes and then the parents started calling the school saying, “Where do I get mini cucumbers? Where do I get cherry tomatoes?”
- “We created a market. Those were our little consumers. It was so easy.”
- “We were told by the teachers that kids were behaving better. Bullying was down.”
- “It was just win-win-win all the way along.”

“This is a great opportunity with this food act to get kids more involved and get fruit and vegetables programs right across the province.” - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.