



# SUSTAIN

Alliance for healthy, just and sustainable food & farming  
Working across Indigenous Territories / Ontario

## Buy Local Food

With trade in fruit, vegetables, meats, and beverages to be affected by the Canada-U.S. trade conflict, it is time for Ontario to, more seriously, invest in its local food economies.

Ontario faces challenges with food processing and distribution infrastructure, access to financing, and support for small-scale abattoirs, limiting local food production and procurement.

'**Buy Local**' encourages the increased demand, purchase, and use of food, beverages and farm products that are **grown, raised, or harvested within specific regions in the province**, including those that undergo local processing. The definition of "local" can vary by region and may include counties, large municipalities, districts, territories, bioregions, or multiple jurisdictions within a self-defined area.

### Provincial Definition (Bill 26 - Local Food Act):

- "Local food" refers to food **produced or harvested in Ontario**, including forest and freshwater foods.
- Also includes **food and beverages made in Ontario**, provided they contain ingredients **produced or harvested in Ontario**, subject to regulatory limitations.

### Recommendations include:

- Increase access to distribution and processing infrastructure
- Improve access to financing
- Promote small-medium scale abattoirs
- Change Regulations that restrict selling/buying local fish, eggs, and meats
- Increase local food procurement by the Public Sector
- Support Farmers' markets and reduce entry barriers for farmers
- Promote agri-tourism

## **About this Document:**

Sustain is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance of organizations that work through collaborative action towards productive, equitable and sustainable food and farming systems that support the health and wellbeing of all people in Ontario/Indigenous Territories. These policy recommendations have been developed through a participatory process between September 9, 2024 and February 7, 2025 engaging 90+ organizations, as well as academics who contributed expertise, across Ontario/Indigenous Territories.

This is not a finished product. It is being shared based on the election being called.

The process to date has included:

- A survey of food and farming organizations about policy priorities
- A policy grey literature review
- Multiple meetings among organizations in Sustain-facilitated networks
- 2 rounds of review by Sustain network organizations
- Review by academics working in respective policy areas

Sustain is sharing out this work widely, educating voters for the Provincial Election 2025, knowing there is more work to do.

## **Next steps:**

Sustain will continue to gather expertise and solutions in the months to come, building increasing participation and consensus on priority recommendations.

Importantly, Sustain will facilitate network engagement across organizations to work with all MPPs who form the next provincial government, and staff, to implement these recommendations over the next four years. Sustain recognizes and looks forward to elevating the leadership and expertise of organizations to do this policy work from within the networks.

To join this network, please email Rosie at [networks@sustainontario.com](mailto:networks@sustainontario.com)

## Increase access to regional infrastructure

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### Key Issues:

- **Limited access to distribution and processing infrastructure** hinders small and medium-sized farmers' ability to enter and thrive in regional markets.
- **Lack of infrastructure** creates challenges for farmers wanting to sell locally.
- Lack of infrastructure **impedes the development** of resilient and sustainable food systems.

### Recommendations:

- **Food Hubs:** The Ontario government should invest in the creation and expansion of regional food hubs across the province. Food hubs act as shared-use facilities that help manage the aggregation, processing, and distribution of food products from local and regional producers, enabling them to access broader markets. Depending on local needs they can also be centres for shared kitchen facilities, food rescue, composting, and urban agriculture.
- **Improve Infrastructure in Local Food Markets<sup>1</sup>:** Improving local food infrastructure such as processing facilities, distribution networks, dry and cold storage are essential to building a robust, sustainable food system.
- **Build Supply Chain Resilience:** Investing in infrastructure to create a more resilient food supply chain will help strengthen regional food systems and allow small farmers to thrive in the marketplace.
- Create a seed funding program to encourage **alternative, locally owned, food retailers**
- **Lower Entry Barriers for Farmers:** By reducing the entry barriers for farmers, including the cost and complexity of accessing markets, it will be easier for local food producers to sell directly to consumers and businesses.

### Existing Examples:

- In Sault Ste. Marie, Harvest Algoma and Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN) are partnering in the launch of a [commercial food incubator](#) to support entrepreneurs with shared-use kitchen spaces and business development resources.

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<sup>1</sup> (Hermiatin et al., 2022)

- British Columbia’s provincially funded Food Hub Network includes fourteen commercial food hubs, showcasing successful models of food hub integration and support for local food businesses<sup>2</sup>
- The USA has approximately 400 regional food hubs, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach across different regions<sup>3</sup>.

## Improve Access to Finance

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### Key Issues:

- **Limited access to financing** for food entrepreneurs, especially those in local food systems is a key barrier
- **Fair and appropriate financial support** is crucial for developing sustainable food hubs and enabling small food businesses to scale.
- **Current funding options** often do not align with the specific needs of local food initiatives.
- **Critical gap** in accessible and tailored financial resources for small food businesses and local food systems.

### Recommendations:

- **Improve Access to Finance:** It is essential to create more accessible and suitable financial products for food entrepreneurs, especially those focused on "Buy Local" initiatives. This includes funding that is specifically designed for the unique challenges of building local food hubs and supporting small food businesses.
- **Fair Finance Fund Expansion:** Ontario’s [Fair Finance Fund](#) has been addressing this gap by providing financing options for small and medium-sized food enterprises. This initiative should be expanded to further support the growth of food hubs and related businesses.
- **Include Social Finance Options:** social finance instruments, such as Community-Driven Outcomes Contracts (CDOCs), could provide flexible, outcomes-driven funding aligned with measurable community benefits. Examples including [Peel Region’s Community Investment Program](#) and [Raven Indigenous Capital’s CDOCs](#)

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<sup>2</sup> (Fawcett-Atkinson, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> (Bielaczyc et al., 2023, p. 7)

highlight the potential for these tools to foster growth and innovation, in Southern and Northern Ontario.

- **Support for Early-Stage Entrepreneurs:** The [Small Scale Food Processor Association](#) (SSFPA), in partnership with SVX (an impact investor), is developing an early-stage investment fund aimed at food business founders who are ready to commercialize their businesses. These entrepreneurs require investments to grow, not just loans, and this fund will help meet that need.
- **Create an Ontario Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit** to incentivize private investment in local food systems and infrastructure. This would support the growth of food hubs, small producers, and agri-tourism ventures and strengthen community-driven economic development, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This would attract the financial support needed to build resilient local food systems while empowering communities to invest in their futures.
- **Build Business Development Infrastructure:** Food hubs should not only serve as food banks but also as business development hubs. These hubs should support entrepreneurs in starting and growing their businesses by offering infrastructure like kitchen space, coolers, freezers, and small-scale warehousing, as well as access to regional distribution centers.
- **Policy Development for Food Production:** A robust food production policy is necessary to help reshape food systems in Canada. By supporting local food hubs and regional co-packing and warehousing centers, we can enhance food system resilience. However, this must be accompanied by policies that ensure fair compensation for farmers, ensuring that value chains support all participants equitably.
- **Learning from International Models:** The USA has implemented funding for value chain coordinators, who link farmers with buyers such as restaurants, institutions, and food hubs. This program has proven effective and could be replicated in Canada to strengthen local food systems.

### Existing Examples:

- The Small Scale Food Processor Association is building a national resource to support food entrepreneurs, with resources available from concept to commercialization. This initiative is being expanded to include French-language and Indigenous resources, and contributions from across the country are welcomed. For more information, visit [SSFPA Resources](#).

- The Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre in Colborne, south of Peterborough, is an example of county-funded food processing infrastructure that supports local businesses. Visit [OAFVC](#) for more information.
- [Manitoba's Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit \(CEDTC\)](#) encourages local investment in food enterprises and other community-driven initiatives. The CEDTC provides a 45% tax credit to Manitoba residents who invest in eligible community enterprises.

## Promote Small and Medium-Scale Abattoirs in Ontario

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### Key Issues:

- **Significant shortage of abattoirs and meat processing capacity**, with farmers often facing year-long wait times to access processing services<sup>4</sup>.
- **Small and medium-sized farms** are disproportionately affected by this lack of capacity, creating barriers to local food production and market access.
- **Rising operational costs** threaten the sustainability of abattoirs, many of which are designated as "industrial" by **Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC)**, resulting in higher property taxes.
- The Canadian meat processing industry is **highly concentrated**, with **Cargill the world's largest private company**, and JBS, a Brazilian company, processing over **95% of beef production in Canada**<sup>5</sup>.
- This concentration forces many farmers to sell their animals into **corporate distribution systems**, limiting their ability to process meat to their specifications or make independent retail decisions.
- **Small and medium-scale abattoirs** offer an alternative, allowing farmers more control over processing and the sale of their products<sup>6</sup>.

### Recommendations:

- **Reduce Burdens on Small and Medium-Scale Abattoirs:** There is an urgent need to reduce financial and regulatory burdens on small and medium-sized abattoirs to ensure their sustainability.

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<sup>4</sup> (McLeod, 2021; Mississippi Mills, 2024)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nfu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-04-21-Concentration-of-meat-packing-makes-Canada-vulnerable.pdf> & (Mosby & Rotz, 2020)

<sup>6</sup> (McLeod, 2021)

- **Offer Property Tax Credits:** The Ontario government should offer property tax credits to small and medium-scale abattoirs to help alleviate the financial pressure caused by increased property taxes.
- **Property Classification Changes:** Consider revising property classification for abattoirs to better reflect their role in supporting local food systems and encouraging their viability. \*(Further research needed on this).
- **Support New Abattoir Creation:** Support the development of new small and medium-scale abattoirs in Ontario through the expansion of programs like the Meat Processors Capacity Improvement Initiative (2020).
- **On-Farm and Mobile Abattoirs:** Allow on-farm abattoirs and mobile abattoirs to operate and sell meat directly from farms. This could provide farmers with more flexibility and reduce reliance on centralized processing facilities.
- **Support for Training and Certification:** Provide financial support for training and certification, such as Red Seal Certification, for workers in abattoirs. This would ensure that workers have the necessary skills and qualifications to safely and efficiently process meat, helping to address workforce shortages.

### Existing Examples:

- The [Small Scale Meat Association](#) is a valuable resource that advocates for and supports small-scale abattoirs across British Columbia. They offer guidance and resources for abattoir owners and workers, helping to promote industry standards and sustainable practices.
- In **British Columbia**, mobile abattoirs and small-scale processors have been successfully used to help local farmers process meat on-site, cutting down on costs and transportation issues.
- The [Meat Processors Capacity Improvement Initiative](#) by the Government of Ontario (2020) has already begun to address capacity issues, offering funding to improve meat processing facilities and expand operations in the province. This program should be further expanded to support small and medium-scale abattoirs.

### Additional Considerations:

- **Break Up Monopolies:** To increase market access and ensure fairer pricing for farmers. There is a growing call to break up the monopolies held by large federally-regulated abattoirs, such as Olymel, Cargill, and Maple Leaf.

- **Increasing Farm Sizes:** Encouraging farms to increase the number of animals they raise could help smaller producers capture a larger share of the market.
- **Cross-Border Issues:** The current and proposed cross-border regulations, especially for communities close to the U.S. border, are often prohibitive and arbitrary, hindering the ability of farmers to move livestock efficiently across regions for processing.
- **Quality and Animal Welfare:** Shipping grass-fed animals across Canada and feeding them grain instead of grass can diminish the quality of meat and affect the welfare of animals. This undermines efforts to improve sustainable and humane food systems.

## Change Regulations that restrict selling/buying local fish, eggs, and meats

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### Key Issues:

- **Regulations limit small-scale Ontario producers** in selling and distributing local fish, eggs, and meats, creating barriers to market access.
- **OMAFRA regulations** restrict the sale of local fish and meats, disproportionately affecting smaller farmers, fishers and food producers.
- **Nutritional labeling requirements** for local meats are cost-prohibitive, making it difficult for small-scale meat producers to enter the market.
- **Sale of ungraded eggs** at farmers' markets is restricted, limiting access for smaller egg producers.
- **Limitations on the number of birds** Ontario producers can raise negatively impacts the sustainability and profitability of small egg and meat producers.

### Recommendations:

- **Address Limits on Selling and Buying Local Fish and Meats:** The Ontario government should work with stakeholders, including First Nations communities, to address the limits imposed by OMAFRA on selling and buying local fish, meats, and wild game. Engaging First Nations in discussions about the sale of fish and wild game is essential to ensuring culturally appropriate and sustainable practices.
- **Amend Nutritional Labeling Requirements:** Nutritional labeling requirements should be amended to ensure they are more accessible and appropriate for small-scale meat producers. Currently, the cost and complexity of meeting these



requirements can make it prohibitive for small producers to sell local meats. Scale-relevant, accessible labeling standards would make it easier for these producers to enter the market while still ensuring food safety and consumer protection.

- **Allow for Sale of Ungraded Eggs at Farmers' Markets:** Small producers should be allowed to sell ungraded eggs at farmers' markets, provided they adhere to basic health and safety standards. This change would reduce the burden on small farmers and increase access to fresh, locally produced eggs for consumers.
- **Review Retail Space Storage Regulations:** Review and revise the regulations governing the storage of eggs, meats, and fish in retail spaces to make it easier for small-scale producers to sell their products without excessive costs or complicated requirements.
- **Review Caps on Birds for Small Producers:** Currently, small-scale producers are limited to raising only a small number of birds (often 100). This limit should be reviewed and adjusted to allow producers to raise between 200 and 300 birds, increasing their market share and improving the economic viability of small egg and meat producers.

### Existing Examples:

- In **British Columbia**, the provincial government has taken steps to ease restrictions on small-scale egg production and sale, allowing farmers to sell ungraded eggs at farmers' markets without excessive regulatory hurdles. [This initiative](#) has provided more opportunities for small farmers and increased the availability of fresh, local eggs.
- **Alberta** has made strides in creating a more flexible regulatory environment for small-scale meat producers. The province's regulations allow small producers to sell locally raised meat directly to consumers, and it has streamlined nutritional labeling requirements to make it more accessible for small producers.
- **Quebec** has a growing network of small-scale producers that sell both ungraded eggs and locally raised meats at farmers' markets. These producers benefit from the province's supportive regulatory framework, which includes less restrictive rules on food labeling and sales, promoting a more diverse local food economy.
- The [Fair Trade Certification Program](#) has been a successful model for small-scale producers in many parts of the world, ensuring ethical practices and sustainable sales of local food. If applied to Ontario's local fish, meat, and egg producers, this

program could help boost the market presence of these products while ensuring fair compensation for farmers and fishermen.

## Increase the Procurement of Local Food by Public Sector Organizations

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### Key Issues:

- **Local Food Act (2013)** designed to promote local food procurement within Ontario
- Legislation has been criticized for its ambiguous procurement targets and lack of clear guidelines<sup>7</sup>
- Public sector organizations have only met the "most basic preconditions" for local food procurement, even after nearly a decade of the Act's implementation<sup>8</sup>.
- In 2013, the **Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)** expanded the definition of "local food" to include food produced within the province or territory where it is sold or within 50 km of the originating province or territory
- This definition was intended as a temporary measure, but its status remains unclear.
- If left unchanged, the definition of "local" could continue to be overly broad and fail to prioritize regional and local businesses, particularly those involved in the production of grains, which are often overlooked in favor of vegetables and meat.

### Recommendations:

- **Set Clear, Transparent, and Measurable Targets:** Public sector organizations should be given specific and measurable targets for both regional and provincial food procurement and their targets and rates should be made public. These targets should be based on a comprehensive analysis of current procurement practices, the agricultural economy, local food networks, and the resources available within the community<sup>9</sup>.
- **Establish Realistic Procurement Goals:** Targets should be realistic and achievable, considering the capacity of small producers to meet institutional demand. This includes assessing the ability of producers to provide enough food at

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<sup>7</sup> (Sumner & Lapalme, 2019, p. 28)

<sup>8</sup> (Sustain Ontario, 2021)

<sup>9</sup> (Mohawk College Sustainability Office, 2017, p. 21; Megens et al., 2015, p. 18)

prices competitive with imports, and ensuring that contracts are structured in a way that supports local procurement while still being economically viable.

- **Pair Targets with Financial Incentives:** Financial incentives should be provided to strengthen local food infrastructure in areas identified as needing support. These incentives would help improve the capacity of local producers and ensure they can meet procurement targets, particularly in the public sector, including healthcare and school food systems.
- **Support Processing Capacity:** Public procurement, especially in healthcare, often requires raw, unprocessed food. To ensure small local producers can participate, investments should be made in training and internal processing capacity within public sector institutions. For example, cafeteria staff need to be trained to process raw vegetables, which many local producers would provide, making it easier for these foods to be used in public sector kitchens.
- **Influence Contractual Language:** Large public sector contracts often prioritize specific suppliers, limiting the ability of smaller producers to compete. Changing contractual language to prioritize local food procurement

### Existing Examples:

- [MEALsource](#) is a group purchasing organization that supports healthcare and school food procurement. MEALsource could play a significant role in assisting with strategies for negotiating contracts that prioritize local food procurement, making it easier for small-scale producers to enter these markets.
- **Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance's '[Serving up Local](#)' project** increased local food purchasing in long-term care homes by influencing contractual language. This initiative shows that it is possible to make significant strides in public sector procurement when the right contractual terms are in place. Case studies from this project can provide valuable insight into the potential for expanding local food procurement in other sectors.
- The [Center for Good Food Purchasing](#) provides a comprehensive framework for public institutions to prioritize local, sustainable, and equitable food purchasing. Ontario could benefit from integrating similar frameworks into public procurement systems to further enhance local food purchasing.
- Open [Food Network Canada](#) is adding features to its platform for codebase for procurement - where an institution or other large buyer can order by pooling small amounts of the product from multiple local growers.

## Additional Considerations:

- **Overcoming Trade Barriers:** Re-localizing food procurement faces challenges due to trade issues, with local producers struggling to compete with imports from countries that have less stringent labor and environmental regulations. Addressing these issues through social procurement or lobbying for trade policy changes could help level the playing field for local food producers.
- **Advocacy for Local Grain Production:** Local food procurement policies often focus on vegetables and meat, but local grains (wheat, oats, barley, etc.) must also be included to build a truly local food system. Ontario's food procurement strategy should encourage the production and inclusion of local grains in institutional food systems.

## Ensure viability of farmers' markets and reduce entry barriers for farmers

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### Key Issues:

- Farmers' markets in Ontario play a vital role in local economic development and serve to promote more resilient and sustainable food systems<sup>10</sup>.
- Regulations governing these markets vary significantly across health units, with inspectors having considerable discretion (which can create inconsistencies and confusion for market organizers and vendors).
- Many farmers' markets struggle to remain financially viable while meeting regulatory criteria.
- Farmers' markets are often perceived as inaccessible and cost-prohibitive, particularly for low-income families, who may not be able to afford locally produced food<sup>11</sup>.
- This limits the potential for these markets to address food insecurity, especially in communities that would benefit most from access to fresh, local produce.

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<sup>10</sup> Food Secure Canada. (2024, March 5). Strengthening local food systems: public markets in Canada as a versatile alternative. & Gusto, C., Diaz, J., Warner, L., & Monaghan, P. (2020). Improving food access through farmers market incentives: barriers, strategies and agency perceptions from market managers. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9(3), 254–260. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2020.093.022>

<sup>11</sup> (Donovan et al., 2016)

## Recommendations:

- **Provincial Guidance for Municipal Regulations:** The Ontario government should provide clear, consistent guidelines to municipalities for farmers' market regulations to support the viability of these markets and ensure uniformity across the province. Policies should be developed in consultation with **Farmers' Markets Ontario** to align with the needs of market organizers.
- **Provincial Incentive Program:** Implement a **food price reduction coupon** program that can be redeemed at local farmers' markets for individuals and families living with food insecurity. This would make access to locally produced food more equitable and affordable to those with low incomes.
- **Health Practitioner Collaboration:** Partner with the **Ministry of Health** to allow healthcare practitioners to "prescribe" vegetables and distribute vouchers that can be used at farmers' markets. This initiative would improve nutrition and food access for low-income patients.
- **Inclusive Voucher System:** Introduce a gift card or voucher system for farmers' markets that is available to all community members, reducing stigma and ensuring that both food-insecure and general consumers have access to the same resources with varying amounts allocated to each group.
- **Market Box Initiatives and Donation Incentives:** Establish systems for unsold produce to be donated to local food programs and provide **tax incentives** for farmers who donate excess food. These incentives would help reduce food waste and increase the availability of fresh food for those in need. Explore greater connection to food rescue apps e.g. Flashfood, Too Good to Go, FoodHero

## Existing Examples:

- **Nova Scotia's [Nourishing Communities Food Program](#):** This program offers food price reduction coupons redeemable at local farmers' markets, helping low-income individuals access fresh produce.
- **British Columbia's [Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program](#):** Provides coupons to low-income residents, enabling them to purchase fresh food at farmers' markets.
- **Wellington County Farmers' Market Bucks Program:** This program provides financial support to low-income families, allowing them to purchase fresh produce at farmers' markets.

- **Community Food Centres of Canada’s [Market Greens Pilot Program](#):** Health practitioners could prescribe vegetables to patients and distribute vouchers for local food retailers, demonstrating a successful model for integrating healthcare with food access.

## Promote Agri-Tourism

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- Emerging as a valuable revenue stream that enhances the financial viability of small and medium-sized farm operations.
- By diversifying income through activities like farm tours, accommodation, and local food experiences, agri-tourism can offer significant economic benefits to rural communities and local economies.

### Key Issues:

- Still a relatively new concept for some municipalities
- Often faces regulatory challenges
- Entrepreneurs looking to invest in farm tourism or other value-added activities frequently encounter barriers due to local zoning restrictions (which may not account for or allow agritourism activities).
- Limited or no funding opportunities available to support the development of these ventures
- Lending agencies, such as [Farm Credit Canada \(FCC\)](#) and the [Agriculture Credit Corporation](#), do not currently provide funding for these types of activities.
- Revenues are often not counted toward farm income, which can limit their financial viability.
- Food served during agritourism events remains in a regulatory grey area, complicating the ability of farmers to include food service as part of their offerings.

### Recommendations:

- **Review of Local Zoning:** Mandate a review of local zoning regulations to identify and eliminate barriers to agritourism development. This review should ensure that municipalities have clear, supportive frameworks for integrating agri-tourism into local economic plans.
- Allow **farm signage** to promote local farmgate sales
- **Incentives for Agri-Tourism Ventures:** Create targeted financial incentives to support the development of agri-tourism ventures, such as tax breaks, grants, or subsidies for farmers who wish to expand into agritourism activities.

- **Promote Regional Agri-Tourism Initiatives:** Elevate the importance of regional agri-tourism on platforms such as **Destination Ontario** by promoting these initiatives as a priority for economic development in rural areas.
- **Capacity-Building Programs:** Develop capacity-building programs for those interested in entering the agri-tourism sector. These could include training on value-added processing, accommodations management, and harvest helper programs, which would help equip entrepreneurs with the skills needed to succeed in the agri-tourism industry.
- **Address Liability and Insurance Concerns:** Offer guidance and support to address concerns around liability insurance for agritourism activities, which is often a barrier for farm owners looking to offer experiences like farm tours or events. (See [‘Growing Agritourism Act’](#))
- **Chef and Local Food Training:** Incorporate chef training programs into the provincial curriculum to help support the demand for local food in agritourism activities. This would encourage local sourcing and enhance the quality of food offerings on farms, making them more attractive to tourists.
- **Access to Finance:** Improve access to financing for agri-tourism ventures through programs like the **Fair Finance Fund**. These funds should be tailored to the needs of local food systems and agri-tourism ventures, offering loans and grants specifically designed to support these businesses rather than just general agricultural loans.

### Existing Examples:

- **Farm Credit Canada (FCC)** offers resources and financial advice to farmers, though currently, it does not fund agri-tourism activities directly. However, supporting lobbying for more targeted funding options from agencies like FCC for these ventures would help make agritourism a more accessible option for small and medium-sized farms.
- The **SSFPA (Small Scale Food Processing Association)** is working on expanding financial resources, including venture capital and specific funding for women in agriculture. They have information on how to access finance for local food systems and agri-tourism ventures through their [venture capital and women's pages](#).
- **Foodland Ontario** and other regional tourism platforms are increasingly promoting agri-tourism activities, providing opportunities for farm owners to showcase their businesses and draw in tourists seeking local, authentic farm experiences.

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## Appendix A - Definitions

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**Food Hubs:** shared-use facilities that manage the aggregation, processing, and distribution of food products from local and regional producers (Bielaczyc et al., 2023, p. 14).

**Food System:** a social-ecological system that comprises all the activities involved with food (e.g., production, consumption); the ultimate goal of the system is ensuring food security for all (Vroegindewey & Hobdod, 2018, p. 3).

**Public Sector Organizations:** “schools, hospitals, universities/colleges and other government-connected facilities, including provincial and municipal food services” (Sustain Ontario, 2021).

**Value Chain:** the sequence of value-added activities through which raw materials are converted to products as well as the institutions and businesses which link together the production process (Vroegindewey & Hobdod, 2018, p. 2).

In contrast, **Supply Chain:** “the supply chain focuses on operational efficiency and costs, [whereas] the value chain focuses on innovation and product development based on consumer demand” (Sustain Ontario, 2012).

**Value Chain Resilience:** the “capacity of a system to continue providing a desired set of services in the face of disturbances, including the capacity to recover from unexpected shocks and adaptation to ongoing change” (Vroegindewey & Hobdod, 2018, p. 4).

## Appendix B- Public Procurement:

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“The [Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, 2022](#) (BOBIA), proclaimed on January 1, 2024, leverages Ontario’s purchasing power to deliver better value for taxpayers. A new regulation under BOBIA which came into effect on April 1, 2024 supports a strategy under BOBI and requires public sector buyers — including hospitals, schools, colleges and universities — to give preference to Ontario businesses under specific thresholds when conducting procurements for goods and services, such as acquiring food for cafeterias.

When a public sector entity procures a good or service under the thresholds specified in the regulation, it can use one of two methods to give preference to Ontario businesses. The public sector entity can:

- limit participation in procurement processes to only Ontario businesses, or
- give a 10% evaluation advantage to Ontario businesses if the procurement opportunity is not limited to Ontario businesses

By enabling greater access to procurement opportunities for Ontario businesses, the government is ensuring a strong domestic market and a resilient supply chain for Ontario. The government has set a target goal of \$3 billion to be spent on contracts awarded to Ontario businesses through to 2026.

We also partner with commodity groups who work with schools to bring more local food into their communities.”