



## Getting Started

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In November 2012, a workshop, “Stirring the Pot”, organized by EcoPerth, was held in Beckwith Township to discuss how to support local farmers in Lanark County. One idea discussed was the development of a Food Charter that could outline what the community thought was important in a food system.

The enthusiastic response to the 2012 workshop led to a Planning Meeting in March, 2013 organized by EcoPerth and the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. Forty-eight community members interested in food security, farming and community sustainability came together to talk about what to do next. Attendees had heard about food charters in other locales in Ontario, both their development and their use. They discussed their vision for a Lanark, Leeds, and Grenville Food Charter and identified what was important to each of them. Eighteen people volunteered to form a Steering Committee to bring the ideas at the workshop to life.

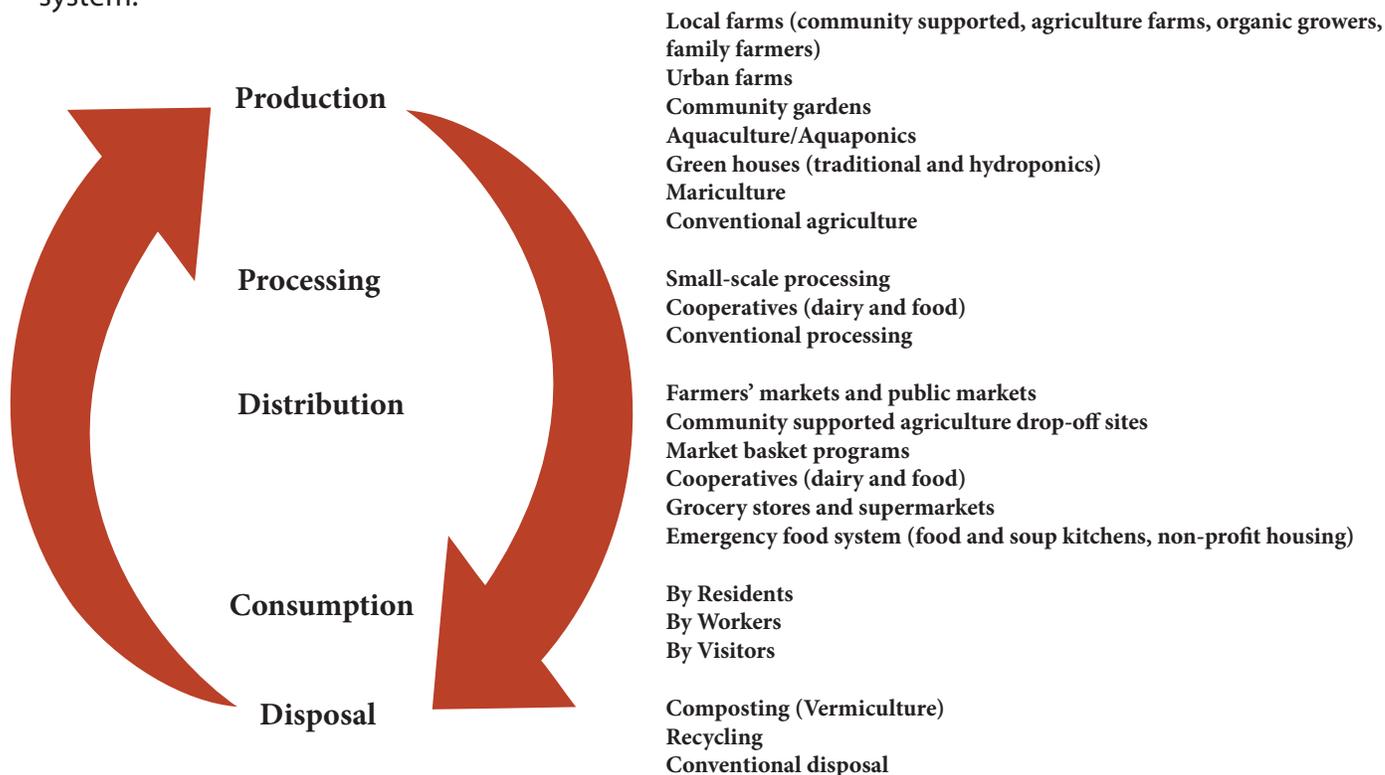
### Steering Committee

Bill Dobson, Doug Struthers, Edwina Lee Fort, Elaine Murkin, Emily Beelen, Glennis Harwig, Jeff Kohl, Kara Symbolic, Lianne Arndt, Maria Breton, Meena Tipper, Nancy Wildgoose, Wendy Chapman, Shelly McPhail, Katie Nolan



## Development of the Food Charter

A food charter is a document shaped by community members that describes local values and priorities concerning food. A food charter brings together people and organizations that have interests in different parts of the food system and helps them to develop a common language and vision so that they can work together. The food system consists of everything from growing food to processing, transporting, storing, selling, buying, eating food and dealing with food waste. From producers to eaters, we all fit into the food system.



**Figure 1. Adapted from "The Food System (A Planners Guide to Community and Regional Food Planning; American Planning Association Report #554)".**

The Steering Committee reviewed food charters and how they had been developed elsewhere in Canada. They combined this information with suggestions from community members at the Planning Meeting in March, 2013 to create a draft Food Charter for Lanark, Leeds and Grenville. They also chose the name "foodcore LGL (Leeds, Grenville, Lanark)" for the initiative. The name symbolized how food is at the core of every community's wellbeing.

An essential part of a community food charter is that it reflects community values and interests. So the Steering Committee took the draft food charter to the community through focus groups and an on-line survey. The on-line survey was advertised in the media and through word of mouth and was available from November 2013 to February 2014.

## The Community Voice

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Over 500 people (502) responded to the survey – 71% were women and 26% were men. The age range was under 20 years to over 65 years, with 41% being in the 50-65 year range. Household income level ranged from less than \$20,000/year to over \$100,000/year. At least five residents from every municipality participated in the survey. Respondents included community members, farmers, health service providers, educators, social services providers, food retailers and food processors.

### Food Charter Vision

Respondents to the survey were asked to comment on the draft vision of the Food Charter:

“Healthy food contributes to physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. Food is a basic human right and all should have the means to obtain healthy food and safe water. The food system includes everything from growing food, to processing, storing, preparing, transporting, selling, buying, and eating food. From producers to eaters- we’re all part of the food system”. We believe farmers, growers, producers, consumers, community organizations, businesses, institutions and local government should work together to:

- Provide safe, healthy, nutritious food for all,
- Support local farmers, growers, processors, distributors and retailers,
- Enhance the local economy, and
- Protect or enhance farmland, water, soil, and air

Many suggestions by the participants were made and so the Steering Committee revised the vision statement as follows:

**“Everyone in our community should have the means to obtain healthy food and safe water. We believe farmers, growers, producers, individuals, community organizations, businesses, institutions and local governments should work together to create and support a strong healthy food system for all.”**

## Food Charter Goals

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The respondents were asked to indicate the importance of the proposed goals of the Food Charter. Almost all rated the first five of the six goals as “important or very important”. The 6<sup>th</sup> one was supported by about two-thirds of respondents. All six goals were retained in the Food Charter.

- ▶ Everyone has enough healthy food to eat. 99%
- ▶ Our environment is healthy. 97%
- ▶ Our communities are healthy, economically diverse and resilient. 97%
- ▶ Our farmers, growers, producers, processors and retailers are supported. 97%
- ▶ Food and farming are celebrated. 91%
- ▶ Everyone has the opportunity to develop food skills and knowledge. 65%



## Priorities

The respondents expressed strong support for all of the priority areas identified by the Steering Committee so they were included in the final version grouped under the relevant goals.

Priority Areas	Important
Everyone has access to safe, culturally appropriate food and clean water.	97.4%
Agricultural land is valued, protected and enhanced.	96.3%
Farmers, growers, producers, processors and retailers use practices that maintain and enhance the environment.	96.5%
Farmers, growers, producers and all food workers have adequate income and safe work environments.	96.3%
The production, processing, storage and distribution of locally-produced food are supported.	96.8%
Healthy food is available wherever people live, work, learn and play.	94.2%
Farmers and future farmers have access to land, education, mentoring, training and equipment.	94.9%
People understand the connections between food choices, our environments and health.	95.1%
There are increased opportunities to buy, grow or otherwise obtain healthy foods in rural and urban settings.	96.4%
Everyone has the opportunity to develop food skills; to grow, purchase, cook and preserve healthy food.	93.9%
More food is produced and consumed locally, thereby reducing transportation over long distances.	95 %
Food waste is reduced and or/reused (e.g., composting).	94%
Farmers, growers, consumers, community organizations, businesses, institutions, and local governments work together to create a food system that promotes community resilience.	95.9%
People understand the importance of agriculture and where their food comes from.	92.6%
Community members can come together to grow, cook, share and enjoy food.	82.1%
We celebrate the historical, cultural and spiritual importance of food.	66.9%

## Good Ideas

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Survey respondents had many ideas for specific activities to make the Food Charter come alive in the community and these are being considered by the Steering Committee as they develop the implementation plan.

### Children and Youth

- ✓ Charter can be celebrated by removing junk food from schools.
- ✓ Allow access to lunch programs.
- ✓ Incorporate food and nutrition education as part of the school curriculum.
- ✓ Ensure school canteens have more access to healthy food.
- ✓ Address the problem of childhood obesity.

### Community

- ✓ The celebration and support of local food.
- ✓ Involve educators and faith-based institutions in food knowledge and spreading the message.
- ✓ The tri-county community is a unique community with a mixture of rural and suburban mixture with its own experience.
- ✓ Address the need for some form of low-cost public transportation system so that people in rural communities can get to urban centres to buy groceries.
- ✓ Pay attention to deforestation issue.
- ✓ The expectation to find implementation or action based on what is written in the food Charter document.
- ✓ Create a county wide food share program.
- ✓ Support a national food rating system to make it easier to choose health options.
- ✓ The Food Charter must reach the unprivileged minorities.
- ✓ Find means to meet the demands at local food banks.

### Food Production and Sale

- ✓ It is important to keep the charter about the local economy and knowledge about food production.
- ✓ Encourage small organic family farms which market directly to the consumer.
- ✓ Allow resources for the younger generation to take part in the agriculture business.
- ✓ Provide education for garden spaces and community gardens.
- ✓ Provide more local sustainable model in agriculture.
- ✓ Allow backyard kitchens.
- ✓ Run the farmers market to operate a minimum of six hours a day for one possibly two days.
- ✓ The implementation should focus on vibrant farm market.
- ✓ Connect local consumers with producers perhaps through cooperatives.

## Moving Forward

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The results of the community survey and the revised Food Charter for the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and Lanark County was released and celebrated at a community meeting on March 27, 2014. Over 70 people from across the tri-counties came together to share their support for the Food Charter and discuss what the food charter meant to them and their community.

Since the March meeting the steering committee has continued to meet to discuss how to bring the Food Charter to action. The Steering Committee gratefully acknowledges the strong community support of the food charter. The thoughtful contributions made by the respondents to the survey and the focus groups held around the region ensured that the Food Charter truly is of the community and for the community. The website <http://www.foodcorelgl.ca/> will keep everyone up-to-date on the work being done and will also include opportunities for community members to be involved in bringing the charter to life.



*“Everyone in our community should have the means to obtain healthy food and safe water. We believe farmers, growers, producers, individuals, community organizations, businesses, institutions and local governments should work together to create and support a strong healthy food system for all.”*

### Acknowledgements:

foodcoreLGL would like to thank Rim Zayad for her work on the food charter consultation and launch and Dr. Paula Stewart for preparation of the report.

# Food Charter

## for United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and Lanark County

Everyone has the right to food. Food contributes to physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. The food system includes everything from growing food, to processing, storing, transporting, selling, buying, preparing, eating food and managing food waste. From producers to eaters – we are all part of the food system.

### **Our Vision**

Everyone in our community should have the means to obtain healthy food and safe water. **We believe farmers, growers, producers, individuals, community organizations, businesses, institutions and local governments should work together to create and support a strong and healthy food system for all.**

### **We envision a future in which...**

#### **Everyone has enough healthy food to eat:**

- Everyone has access to, and can afford, safe, healthy, personally-acceptable food.
- Healthy food is available wherever people live, work, learn and play.

#### **Our farmers, growers, producers, processors and retailers are supported:**

- Farmers, growers, producers and all food workers have adequate incomes and safe work environments.
- Agricultural land and natural environments are valued, protected and enhanced.
- The production, processing, storage and distribution of locally-produced food are prioritized.
- Farmers and future farmers have access to land, education, mentoring, training, and equipment.

#### **Everyone has the food skills and knowledge they need:**

- People understand the connections between food choices, our environment and health.
- Educational opportunities are supported within the community for all ages to learn how to grow, purchase, cook and preserve healthy food.

#### **Our environment is healthy:**

- Ecosystems and biodiversity are valued, protected and enhanced.
- Surface and underground water resources are safe, accessible and protected.
- Farmers, growers, producers, processors and retailers use practices that maintain or enhance the environment (e.g. soil, air and water).
- More food is produced and consumed locally, thereby reducing transportation over long distances.
- Food waste is reduced and/or reused (e.g. composting).

#### **Our communities are healthy, economically diverse and resilient:**

- Farmers, growers, consumers, community organizations, businesses, institutions and local governments work together to create a food system that promotes community resilience.
- There are increased opportunities to buy, grow or otherwise obtain healthy foods in rural and urban settings.
- More food is produced, processed, stored and consumed locally, thereby creating jobs and stimulating the local economy.

#### **Food and farming are celebrated:**

- Community members can come together to grow, cook, share and enjoy food.
- We celebrate the historical, cultural and spiritual importance of food.

*I/we endorse the Food Charter for United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and Lanark County*

*(Individual or Organization - will appear on foodcorelgl.ca )*

*(Phone and email - will be confidential)*

For more information or to endorse: visit [www.foodcorelgl.ca](http://www.foodcorelgl.ca) • email [foodcorelgl@gmail.com](mailto:foodcorelgl@gmail.com) • call 613-283-2740 x4273