

2012

Recommendations for Action

HEADWATERS FOOD SUMMIT & LOCAL FOOD TRADE SHOW

WORKING TOGETHER
TO BUILD OUR FOOD FUTURE

MONDAY, APRIL 23
HOCKLEY VALLEY RESORT

Executive Summary

On April 23rd 2012, **135** people from the Headwaters Region gathered together to develop a practical plan to bring out the best of their regional food system. This inaugural Headwaters Food Summit and Local Food Trade Fair included speakers, presentations, group discussions, and action planning.

Participants at the inaugural Headwaters Food Summit:

- Reflected upon opportunities, challenges and innovations to building a more sustainable food and farming system from a diverse range of presenters;
- Provided input into a shared vision, values and objectives for the Headwaters Food System;
- Learned more about current initiatives and assets within the region's food system; and
- Set clear priorities to move forward on in the next couple of years to ensure a more vibrant and robust food and farming system for the region

Participants reached consensus on the following five priorities to immediate action to strengthen the Headwaters Food System and identified a list of interested volunteers within each priority:

Growing Awareness - Raising awareness & educating re the how, why & where of food issues, including food access

Culinary Tourism - Profiling local farms and businesses to locals and tourists

School Programs - School-based food, farming & food literacy programs

Facilitating Distribution - Linking producers to consumers to strengthen our local food economy

Improving Policy - Reducing barriers and creating supportive environments to grow our sustainable regional food system

This report summarizes the work generated that day and offers a snapshot of work currently underway in the Headwaters Food system; synthesizes areas of emerging consensus for collective action; and provides a clear way forward for advancing a thriving and sustainable food system in the Headwaters region.



Introduction

In February 2012, a diverse group of for-profit, not-for-profit and public sector partners began collaborating to host the inaugural **Headwaters Food Summit & Local Food Trade Fair** with funding support from the Government of Ontario's Healthy Communities Partnership Fund and other local sponsors.

The Event's goals were

1. To identify the elements of a shared vision for a regional food strategy.
2. To explore how to work collaboratively to develop a regional food strategy that:
 - Supports a diverse, sustainable and just food system
 - Promotes economic vitality by connecting regional food producers, distributors, restaurateurs, chefs, caterers, food retailers, food processors and consumers
 - Facilitates access to safe, healthy and culturally relevant food for all residents of Headwaters
 - Supports food education and literacy
 - Markets and promotes the Headwaters Foodshed and our local food culture
3. To create a diverse leadership group to champion the Headwaters food strategy.

The **Summit's** 135 participants (see Appendix # 8) represented virtually every part of the region's food system, including: farming, food processing, distribution, restaurateurs, caterers, food policy, food access, education & academia, health, hospitality & tourism, public sector, and funders. Their shared hopes for the **Headwaters Summit & Local Food Trade Fair** (see Appendix # 3) included:

- Networking and make new connections
- Discovering synergies between us
- Finding new suppliers or buyers
- Learning more about local food and what's going on in Headwaters
- Making healthy local food more accessible to all
- Reaching consensus on 1 or 2 shared priorities

Presentations

Keynote presentations (see Appendix # 2) brought information and innovative ideas forward for participants to consider. The [Summit Agenda](#) (see Appendix #1) and summary of the **2012 Headwaters Food Summit** presentations can be found at: www.headwaterscommunities.org.

Headwaters 2012 Food Summit Partners



Working Together to Build Our Food Future

These presentations included:

- 101 **The What, Why & How of Local Food:** Lauren Baker, Toronto Food Policy Council - This keynote made a case for championing our region's food system and offered a vision of its possibilities and benefits.
- 101 **Food & Farming as an Economic Driver:** Janet Horner, GTA Agriculture Action Committee - This presentation shared highlights of the GTA AAC's Food & Farming Action Plan and the opportunities it offers Headwaters.
- 101 **The Paradox of Food:** Amanda Montgomery, The STOP Community Food Centre - This presentation documented the journey of The STOP from a food bank to a healthy community food centre and shifted its approach from one of charity to one of food justice for all.
- 101 **Diversified Local Food Opportunities:** Tom Wilson, Spirit Tree Estate Cidery - This presentation highlights the journey of a local producer to earn a decent living - and create employment - through adopting a diversified approach to local food & farming.
- 101 **Repowering the Local Food & Farming System:** Karen Hutchinson, Caledon Countryside Alliance - This presentation highlights the work of the Caledon Countryside Alliance and Eat Local Caledon to offer community programs & education to support the rebuilding of the local food & farm economy.
- 101 **Coordinating Efforts to Build a Sustainable Food System:** Ryan Hayhurst, Guelph Wellington Food Roundtable - This presentation highlights the work of the Guelph Wellington Food Roundtable and its championing of a Regional Food Charter. The Roundtable is a network of committed stakeholders working together to develop a thriving regional food system that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

Other Speakers included:

Graham Corbett of **FiddleFoot Farm** offering perspective on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and the role of small organic farms in a sustainable food system.

Michael Potters, **Chef du Cuisine of Hockley Valley Resort** provided insight into this experience in Prince Edward County's local food renaissance.

The Headwaters Food System: Our Current Reality

There are some areas in which the Headwaters food system is already thriving, and many assets that can be leveraged to build a strong system for the future. An inventory of the various initiatives and programs currently underway in Headwaters that **Food Summit** participants were aware of can be found in Appendix #5.

In small group conversations, participants began to build a shared sense of the current reality of the Headwaters Food system which was graphically recorded in the visual below:



Some of the strengths participants identified for the Headwaters food system include:

- 🍷 We have many ecological farmers
- 🍷 Many of our farmers produce for the local market
- 🍷 We have several farmers' markets
- 🍷 There are several food access and education programs already functioning in our communities
- 🍷 Some area chefs, restaurants, hotels, and catering companies have embraced local food
- 🍷 We have several innovative local food businesses
- 🍷 There are a few agri-tourism initiatives
- 🍷 We have a magazine celebrating food in the region
- 🍷 We have several local food maps

The importance of working collectively, in a coordinated way to leverage our assets was identified by participants and recognized as an important aspect to continue in advancing a **Headwaters Food Strategy**. The Summit's ability to attract such good representation from across the diversity of our region's food system was recognized as one of the event's successes. Locally, the following potential partners were identified as assets to contribute to strengthening a **Headwaters Food Strategy**:

- 🍷 school boards
- 🍷 municipal government
- 🍷 tourism associations
- 🍷 volunteers
- 🍷 existing locations and venues
- 🍷 agricultural groups and associations
- 🍷 fall fairs and existing events
- 🍷 public health
- 🍷 grass-roots collaborations (i.e. Headwaters Communities in Action)

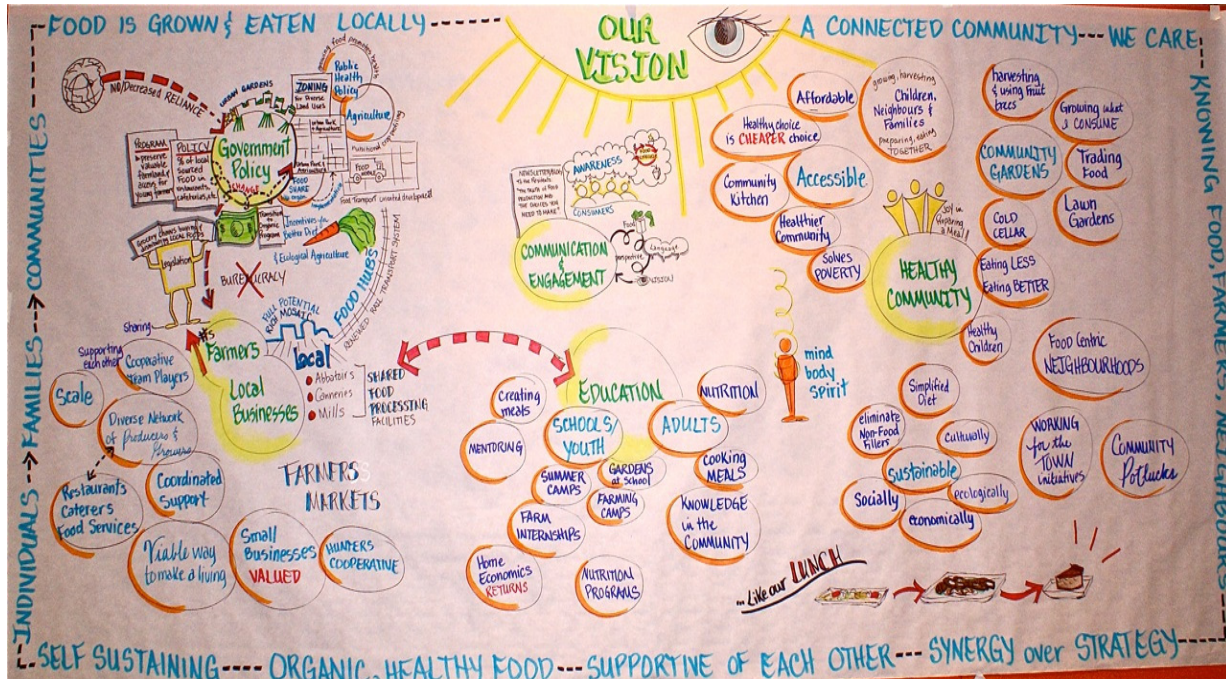
Additionally it was noted that the work in Headwaters Region is part of a groundswell of activity happening far beyond our regional borders. The importance of drawing on and collaborating with networks and opportunities beyond our region was also identified. Groups specifically mentioned to support the development of a strengthened Headwaters Food System included: national and provincial agricultural, health and food associations and networks.

Our Meal: An Experience of Local Food at its Finest

The meal provided at the **Food Summit** offered participants an opportunity to experience the very best of what the region's local food assets had to offer. Generous donations by many local producers attending the **Summit** were incorporated by Hockley Resort's Chef du Cuisine Michael Potters and chefs from various local restaurants to showcase the potential of our region's food assets.



Having a shared vision, values and objectives offers us a “big picture” sense of the end-goal that we are all striving towards, what it looks like and the important principles that guide our work together. Participants discussed and gave feedback on the following [Vision, Values and Objectives](#) at the **2012 Headwaters Food Summit & Local Food Trade Fair**:



What We Envision

We envision a food system** in the Headwaters that is productive, sustainable*, transparent, and fair; supports the health and wellbeing of our residents and food providers; and contributes to a prosperous and equitable economy.

**Our definition of a food system includes wild and cultivated food production and harvesting, food processing, food distribution, food access, food consumption, food education and waste management.

* For us sustainability includes social, cultural, ecological, and economic sustainability.

What We Value

- 1 Healthy ecosystems provide us with healthy food*.
- 2 Healthy food nourishes healthy residents.
- 3 Healthy residents live, work, learn and play in healthy, inclusive communities.
- 4 Healthy communities support food and agriculture businesses that contribute to economic prosperity.

* Our definition of healthy food is not limited to the nutrients that a food contains. Our definition recognizes that healthy food comes from a food system where food is produced, processed, transported, and marketed in ways that are environmentally sound, sustainable and just¹.

¹ Prevention Institute, Setting the Record Straight – Nutrition and Health Professionals Define Healthy Food
<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-58/127.html>

Our Objectives: What We Want to Achieve Together

- 10 All Headwaters residents have access to and can afford to eat safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food.
- 10 All Headwaters residents have the skills and knowledge to support healthy eating and make healthy choices where they live, work, learn and play.
- 10 There is a diverse and sustainable food and farming system in the Headwaters. The foundations of this system, including a skilled workforce and residents and protected land base are maintained.
- 10 Agriculture and food businesses are connected to each other and to the community in order to contribute to a prosperous economy and job creation in Headwaters.
- 10 Headwaters residents, politicians, and leaders are actively engaged in making and implementing decisions about their food system.
- 10 The Headwaters Foodshed and our local food culture are celebrated locally and beyond our borders.

Our Rationale: A Stronger Local Economy & Healthier, More Connected Communities

Underpinning the emerging vision, values and objectives of the **Headwaters Food Summit** is an appreciation that achieving our shared vision and objectives will lead to a stronger local economy and healthier, more connected communities. We also see that there are many steps needed to get there including: education at all levels; improved government policy; greater engagement; and more coordination amongst all of us.

Participants brainstormed a number of specific ideas for both of these core elements of the rationale for strengthening our regional food system. These are listed below:

A Stronger Local Economy

- Shared food processing facilities including
 - Local abattoirs
 - Local canneries
 - Local mills
- Coordinated supply
- More Farmers Markets
 - one open all week
 - indoors/all season
- A diverse network of producers & growers
- Many small businesses
- A hunters' cooperative
- Food hubs
- Restaurants, caterers & food service businesses
- Cooperation among all players
- Profitable farms

Healthy Communities

- The healthy choice is the cheaper choice
- Poverty is solved
- Children, neighbours and families grow, harvest, prepare food and eat together
- Good food is affordable and accessible to everyone
- Community gardens, lawn gardens, home gardens, school gardens
- Food centric neighbourhoods
- Simplified diets
- Community potlucks
- People work in their communities
- Families and communities are more connected and unified
- Our communities are more self-sustaining
- Food is grown in ways that are good for the environment

Creating an Enabling Environment for Positive Change

Participants recognized that changes in government policy and enhanced education regarding the local food system were two primary levers to realizing the Headwaters Food System's potential to strengthen our local economy and enhance the health of our communities. These areas were recognized as important levers for change because they both help to create an "enabling environment" for positive change. Within the realms of government policy and education, participants made a number of specific recommendations which are summarized below:

Changes to Government Policy

- Linked public health and agriculture policy
- Incentives to support better diets and ecological agriculture
- Reduced bureaucracy
- Improved and more flexible zoning
- Public engagement in decision-making
- Public purchasing of local food
- Land preservation for farming

Education

- Educating people of all ages about:
 - Nutrition
 - Cooking
 - Growing food
- Providing children with:
 - Gardens at school
 - Home economics classes
 - Farming summer camps
 - Farm internships
 - Nutrition Programs
 - Mentoring
- Creating consumer awareness about the food system
- Changing Public Consciousness

Priorities for Action

The summit generated more than a dozen potential areas for action to advance the shared vision for Headwaters Food system. For each of these areas, participants identified a number of possible ideas for actions. A complete list of these actions can be found in Appendix # 7. Action items were prioritized to narrow the scope of focus.

Some of other areas that were not selected as top priorities included:

- ❶ Incubating Local Food Businesses
- ❷ Training Food Professionals
- ❸ Growing and Identifying New Markets
- ❹ Clarifying Definitions
- ❺ Making Connections
- ❻ Centralizing Information
- ❼ Offering Community Programs

Headwaters Food Summit Priorities for Action

- 1. Growing Awareness**
- 2. Creating More School-based Food Programs**
- 3. Improving Policy**
- 4. Facilitating Distribution**
- 5. Supporting Culinary Tourism**

Headwaters Food Summit Priorities

Discussion Summaries

Growing Awareness

This was the most highly prioritized area of action identified at the **Headwaters Food Summit**. There was broad agreement that changes to the food system in the Headwaters will come from changing the way that local people interact with the food system, particularly through gaining new understanding and skills. This area of action is closely linked to, but different than the complimentary priority of school-based food programming.

Growing Awareness: Potential Actions	Growing Awareness: What's Already Happening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop food literacy through education for all ages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food skills workshops ▪ Cooking camps for all ages ▪ Integrate food education into pre-natal classes and other places where people congregate ▪ Provide education about food safety ▪ Provide education about various cooking tools ▪ Raise awareness of the importance of “real” slow food ▪ Use the community as experts to deliver workshops – e.g. elderly residents to teach canning, farmers to teach composting • Develop skills in the areas of self-sufficiency and community development • Increase community awareness and engagement around food access and food security • Link agricultural groups and non-agricultural groups • Have a radio show about local food on community radio • Provide weekly information about what’s growing locally in community newspapers • Make local food maps and directories widely available to all, for example, include them in local and regional newspapers • Market local food to more local people through signage, stores, schools, etc. • Conduct a major buy local campaign • Get local food publications (like Food in the Hills) to Toronto and to tourist offices • Make local food more available and obvious in local stores • Have community film screenings with tastings of local food and discussions • Create one local food map for the entire region 	<p>Within Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several local food maps that show where residents can get local food • Eat Local Caledon provides education and programming about eating local for children and adults • The Cuisine Art event promotes local food and art • The Community Food Advisor program teaches healthy eating food preparation skills • The Palgrave Community Kitchen, Mary’s Kitchen, Public Health’s Healthy Babies Healthy Children program and a couple of others teach healthy eating and cooking • The Albion Hills Community Farm, Peace Ranch and 4H teach growing skills <p>Beyond Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foodland Ontario has recipes on its website and sites for children • Transition Guelph runs workshops on food skills

Creating More School-Based Food Programs

Summit participants identified that working on food in schools has tremendous potential to transform the food system in the Headwaters. This includes not only teaching children about food, but also increasing local food sales and improving children's diets directly through school nutrition programs.

School Programs: Potential Actions	School Programs: What's Already Happening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more food education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a relationship between schools and local food producers to have long term and ongoing learning opportunities for learning ▪ Teach children to cook, particularly food grown in this region ▪ Involve parents in food skills education ▪ Integrate food education, food skills and healthy eating into the curriculum ▪ Expand/restore "home economics" classes in mainstream school system(s) ▪ Teach gardening at school • Implement a buy local policy at schools • Create High school volunteer and co-op programs in the food sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include an element of giving back to the community ▪ Partner high school youth with farmers. For example kids can help farmers with social media presence • Build school gardens 	<p>Within Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pine River Institute has a garden and orchard and cooking classes • Eat Local Caledon has school based education programs about local food • Booster Juice has a school fundraiser program <p>Beyond Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peel District Runs the Cooking Up Action Menu Challenge • There are curriculum materials for the healthy school policy, PPM150, produced by public health • Sustain Ontario is starting a Children, Youth and Food Network • Chris Jess runs the Food School in Fergus • FoodShare Toronto has many curriculum linked food resources available on their website

Improving Policy

In the Headwaters, as in many other regions, there are many policies that make creating and sustaining a local food system difficult. These policies exist at the local, provincial, and federal levels and impact on new and small businesses, land availability, and more. Summit attendees identified potential opportunities for advancing the local food system through specific policy changes.

Improving Policy: Potential Actions	Improving Policy: What's Already Happening
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All municipalities and regions should have a food policy• Create municipal policies for local food purchasing in schools, long-term care facilities, etc.• Provide grants and relaxed regulation for small growers• Create policies and programs to improve access to land for farmers<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Change the planning act to protect more farm land▪ Make land use zoning more flexible• Streamline bureaucracy<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create a one-stop-shop for planning processes and business start-up• Integrate food considerations into public policy<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Link food and health policy• Review and update government regulations to bring them into line with current realities<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Change restrictive by-laws around signs to help consumers find farmers▪ Make it easy to have weddings on farms▪ Reduce regulation for retailers selling produce from small farms▪ Review regulations around supply management for the local market• Ease regulation for on-farm processing	<p>Within Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some local governments are supportive and open to working to improve policy <p>Beyond Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waterloo region is an example of where food policy is integrated into the official plan• Sustain Ontario brings together working groups working on supply management, meat processing regulations, and linking municipal food policy groups

Facilitating Distribution

While Headwaters has a wealth of farmers and of customers, the linkages to connect the two are not enough to create the local food system envisioned by the **Food Summit** participants. For this reason, facilitating local food distribution was identified as a priority for action.

Facilitating Distribution: Potential Actions	Facilitating Distribution: What's Happening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create local food depot drop offs, where customers can pre-order and come and get local food • Create a Headwaters Food Terminal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It would provide year-round service to stores and restaurants ▪ Could include a community kitchen ▪ Include food storage ▪ Create several local processing and distribution hubs • Create a Headwaters Food Mobile with pick-up and delivery service (wholesale) from farm to retailer • CSAs with drop-off depots or distribution centres within communities • Create a co-op to centralize products • Have a regional weekly local food auction • Create a wholesale • Create an affordable local food co-op • Create local food clusters • Create an organization like second-harvest • Collaborate with stores and shops in the area to carry more local food • Create a year-round indoor farmers market 	<p>Within Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Headwaters boasts several farmers markets • There are several Community Supported Agriculture operations in the Headwaters <p>Beyond Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wendy's Mobile Market in the Kingston Area is very much like the proposed food mobile • Elmira has a regional weekly food auction • OntarioFresh.ca is a website that connects local producers with wholesale buyers

Culinary Tourism

The Headwaters has tremendous potential for culinary tourism. The region is beautiful, near major urban centres, has great facilities and venues, and a friendly population. Further developing culinary tourism in the region has great potential to build the local economy and strengthen the food system.

Culinary Tourism: Potential Actions	Culinary Tourism: What's Already Happening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote local culinary tourism within the region Use the internet, social media and food maps Establish a gift card or gift certificate that can be used with all local farmers and at local farmers market The local food maps should be reviewed. Are they easy to read? Are they being used as well as they can be? Advertise in Toronto Magazines Find someone to champion culinary tourism in the region Create a taste of the region event Honor heritage by incorporating the area's past into culinary tourism events Combine art, music, wine and food into festivals Promote agriculture through tourism offices Create a food and art trail Get recognized for local potato growing Promote what we already have available (e.g. Summer Feast & Winter Feast) Have more festivals 	<p>Within Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have many great local venues and facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotels resorts, B&Bs Heritage buildings like mills We have many local attractions to draw people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skiing, fall colours, golf, equestrian trails, hiking trails Old Orangeville On-farm markets Restaurants Shops Farmers markets Hills of the Headwaters promotes our local food culture We have many local festivals and fall fairs, including Cuisine Art which highlights local food <p>Beyond Headwaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance has many resources, ideas and connections that can inform and inspire us

Next Steps

The Headwaters is well positioned to create a thriving, local food system and to use that food system to achieve many other goals like better health, a stronger economy, more engaged, inclusive and healthy communities, improved environmental stewardship, and more. As is clear in this report, the region has many assets and resources that can be leveraged to create the food system envisioned for the region.

Realizing all of the ideas contained within this report will be a long-term initiative and will require the energy of hundreds, if not thousands of Headwaters residents. However, we need not do it all at once. Each idea laid out in this report has the potential to change lives, communities and the region. The organizers of the summit and 70 attendees have committed to volunteer themselves to begin to translate the ideas contained here into action. It will be a slow process, but a rewarding one.

As core groups of volunteers move forward to champion and implement actions around the five emerging priorities from the **Headwaters Food Summit** there is also a need to establish a Coordinating Committee whose mandate will be to ensure that the activities of each of the priority groups can be supported, and their work leveraged across the whole; that shared priorities and measures across groups are identified; learnings from within groups are captured and shared. This backbone support function will help to ensure that individual efforts are harnessed to maximize their impact to the overall **Headwaters Food System Strategy**.

If you would like to add your name as a potential volunteer in one or more of the priority areas for action emerging from this summit please do so by emailing: action@headwaterscommunities.ca with your contact information and indicating which of the Food Summit's five priorities you'd be most interested in becoming involved with.

Over the coming years we will see one, then two, then ten, then twenty, and eventually most of the ideas contained within this report become real. Over that time we are looking forward to developing new relationships, new visions, and a healthier, happier, more abundant region together.