



Info Notes

INFORMING OUR COMMUNITY

A follow up to:

The Future of Peterborough Food & Farming: A Call for Reflection & Discussion



Prepared by:

The Peterborough Social Planning Council in partnership with Farms at Work

March, 2012



A United Way Member Agency

Background

In October, 2011, the Peterborough Social Planning Council in partnership with Farms at Work released the paper “**The Future of Peterborough Food & Farming: A Call for Reflection & Discussion**”. The timing of the release intentionally coincided with Peterborough’s hosting of the “**Bring Food Home**” conference at Trent University.

Since its release we have been furthering the conversations with other community partners to address the 12 questions pivotal to the future of our rural communities. The questions are as follows:

1. How will the loss of farm families impact the social fabric of the farm community? What impact will this have on small community service centres and schools?
2. What would we need to do to produce enough food to feed Peterborough County/City? What is Peterborough’s role in providing food to Ontario?
3. What is the role of public education in ensuring food literacy among all age groups and sectors of our community?
4. What role can land use planning take in protecting the future of farming in our County? How are the recommendations in Menu 20/20 reflected in other important documents affecting Peterborough such as the Places to Grow legislation?
5. As a community, how does Peterborough increase awareness of the link between good food and good health?
6. Can encouraging new farmers to establish businesses in Peterborough help support a strong agricultural community for the future and keep farmland in production?
7. Are there areas of production where the County could increase local production to better satisfy local demand?
8. How are we planning to ensure that our local primary processing infrastructure will be sufficient into the future? (Eg. abattoirs, mills, freezing and canning facilities).
9. Are our local regulatory decisions keeping pace with the needs of farm businesses to for example, diversify into small on-farm processing activities, or host farm help on the farm?
10. What is the impact of the increasing price of farmland and the costs of land, machinery, buildings and quota as barriers to new entrants?

11. How will we enable our farm community to recover the value of their environmental contributions/ecological goods and services (eg. protection of water and habitat) from agriculture?

12. What role will urban agriculture play in our future?

Where We have Been:

Specifically the report has been publicized and presented in a variety of ways:

- Circulation of an Infonote on the discussion paper by the PSpC to over 150 organizations and individuals the outcome of which was to raise awareness of the agricultural issues in relation to access to food, rural community sustainability and the role of food production as an economic driver for social well being

- County Council, the outcome of which was hear feedback which included:
 - The need to share the information with partners such as the GPAEDC
 - Promote the education of youth re importance of cooking and use of local food

- Sustain Peterborough, the outcome of which was to have the issues around agriculture figure more prominently in their final document

- Trent University Business Administration course, the outcome of which will be a series of papers developed on business plans for each of the county’s townships

- Select members of the Women’s Institute, the outcome of which was to make connections with this broad network of community advocates

- City of Peterborough re Official Plan Review, the outcome of which is to have the findings of our report included in the consultation thus developing a more well-rounded vision for the city

- Community Food Network, the outcome of which was to discuss how the network can further some of the issues raised in our report:
 - how do we address need for increased income to buy food?
 - how can we ensure that locally produced food is distributed for purchase?
 - how can local farmers/producers compete with big-box stores?
 - How can we work together re ‘ensuring critical food literacy’ to thus empower people to make wise choices around food
 - Recognition that this report supports the recommendations of “Plant It”
 - support concept of community food hub to create infrastructure that will advance the issues in the discussion paper
 - agreement that Community Food Network should endorse the discussion paper
 - collectively promote “Farms to Schools” – get kids educated around food literacy and understand where food comes from – health unit would endorse this – send the paper to the health unit with request to support Farms to Schools

- Examine the urban agriculture policies and how can they support this paper
- Further, how can the discussion paper further the need for urban agriculture policies?
- Community Food Network should link with PSPC website so people can access the discussion paper
- Agreement that a representative from the Community Food Network will attend further discussion sessions hosted by the PSPC and Farms at Work

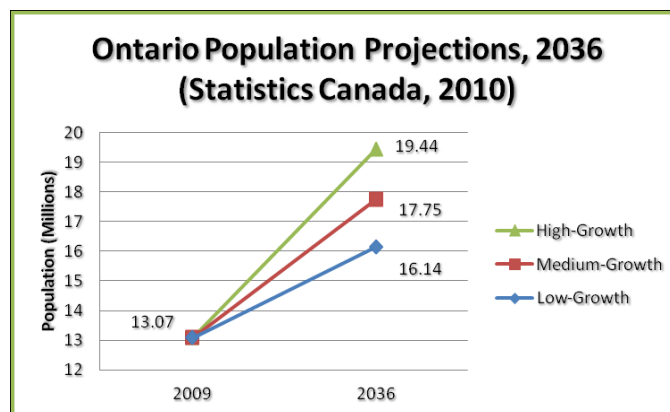
How are our local issues going forward in other communities?

The issues that we have raised in Peterborough are not unique. In February, 2012, the Farmland Trust held its annual forum “**Farmland Preservation Forum: Balancing Agriculture and Resource Demands in Rural Ontario.**” Pat Learmonth, Director of Farms At Work was a presenter at this forum.

The Farmland Trust's 2012 forum brought together 150 farmers, municipal elected officials, planners, provincial policy-makers and land conservation advocates from across the province to discuss intensifying land use demands in rural Ontario, share concerns and experiences, and brainstorm new ways to support both rural economic development and protection of Ontario's best farmlands.

Policies that guide urban growth, mineral aggregate extraction, infrastructure developments, green energy projects and protection of endangered species all have significant impacts on agricultural operations and the well-being of rural communities. The forum recognized that the result is often frustration among residents and rural municipal leaders, and particularly farmers whose businesses can be negatively affected by excessive regulation and permanent loss of the agricultural land they depend on.

This year's Farmland Preservation Forum acknowledged these concerns and focused on innovations in policy and planning for agriculture within Ontario’s diverse countryside economy, recognizing the need to work collectively to shape new policy directions that understand the unique needs of farmers and rural communities, and attract appropriate development to rural Ontario.



At the forum, the Farmland Trust reviewed the results of its 2011 study “**How Much Land is Enough? Calculating Potential Food Self-Sufficiency in Ontario**” which calculated potential food self-sufficiency in Ontario. The study sought to quantify the amount of farmland required to feed Ontario’s population today and for the next 25 years. University of Guelph geographer, Dr. Charlotte McCallum, developed a

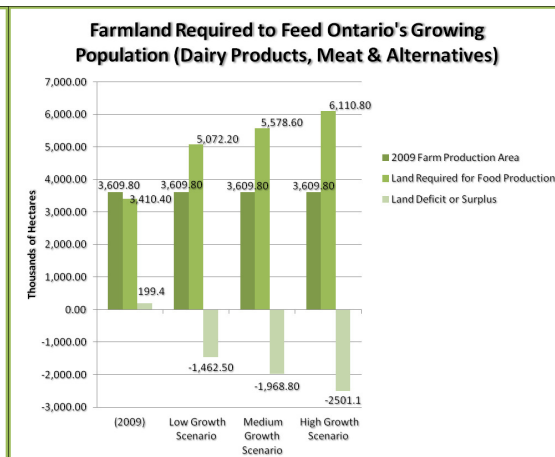
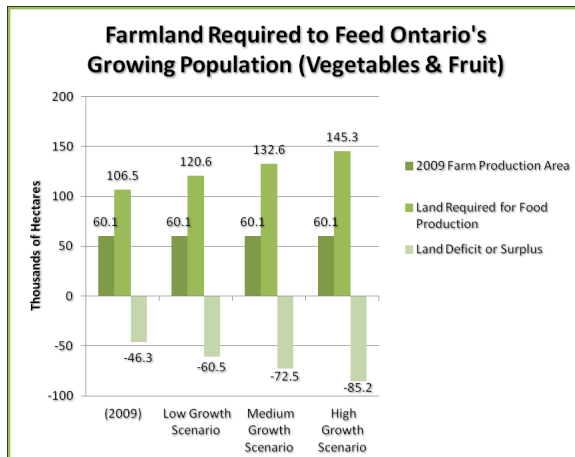
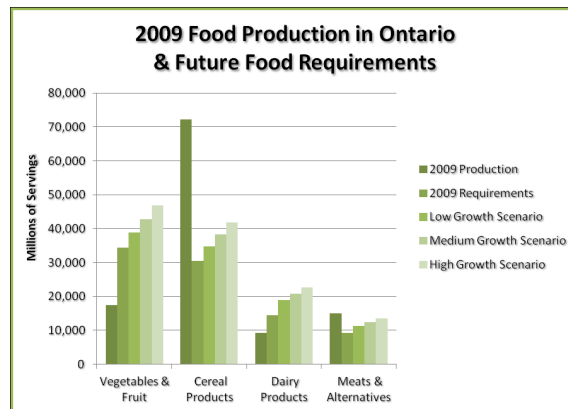
methodology to determine *Farmland Requirements for Ontario’s Growing Population to 2036*, comparing existing agricultural production with food needs and projected population growth trends.

To create an effective empirical model, several assumptions had to be made, including:

- all Ontario residents prescribing to an ideal diet based on Canada’s Food Guide,
- no change in the amount of land available for food production,
- no change in farm productivity, no food wastage,
- no imports of food products or commodities,
- no affect of climate change, etc.

With all of these things being held constant in the model, population change over time could become a focus, examining change in potential food self-sufficiency associated with different population growth scenarios. Statistics Canada offers low, medium and high growth scenarios, with Ontario’s population rising by 3.1, 4.68 and 6.8 million, respectively, by the year 2036.

The study indicates that a comparison of food production and consumption in Ontario in 2009, and in all population growth scenarios, demonstrates a shortage of vegetable, fruit and dairy production, with excess production of cereal products and meat.



Taking a closer look at the farmland required to sustain production of food for Ontario’s population, 2009 shows a slight surplus of 494,800 hectares. There is a growing deficit in land in the low, medium and high growth scenarios, however, given growing food needs. In the highest growth scenario, the farmland deficit may be as high as 2.3 million hectares. The 2009 farm production area includes all crops grown in Ontario, including land in hay and fodder.

The Farmland Requirements study indicates that Ontario may lose its ability to be self sufficient in food production within the next 25 years – one generation from now. This raises questions about:

- How much do we value home-grown food and Ontario’s limited farmland resources?
- Is food self-sufficiency important to us?
- Are there new opportunities to draw Ontario farm production and food consumption together more closely?
- Are we doing enough to support agriculture and farmland protection in our communities?

Participants at the forum discussed:

- Communities all across *Ontario are faced with the challenge* of protecting farmland and sustaining and enhancing agriculture in the face of other land use and resource demands, both in near-urban and rural areas.
- Planning for agriculture is complex, but municipalities have a strong and growing interest in effectively navigating and interpreting provincial policy, and creating local policies, that reflect the unique needs of the local agricultural sector and support long-term farm viability.
- Leadership, education, engagement and collaboration are needed to save our food-producing lands. Success depends on engagement of farmers, planners and other residents and municipal staff interested in local food, health, economic development and land conservation.
- Setting a community vision for food and agriculture, and developing local policies that support agriculture becomes the foundation from which to inform and help shape larger provincial policy.
- Education was also seen as critical to moving policy forward and building awareness of the unique needs of the agricultural sector and the realities that rural communities face and the importance of making stronger connections between food, health and the land.

The outcome of discussions at that forum was a strong desire to align with common policy and planning goals for agriculture and the sustainability of rural communities, including an understanding that policy should:

- Prioritize the protection of farmland as a finite and highly valuable resource of local, provincial and national significance;
- Create circumstances that enhance farm profitability for all sizes, types and intensities of production;
- Preserve the integrity of agricultural areas by reducing uncertainty and preventing land use conflicts;
- Recognize that it is in the best public interest to preserve the ability to be self sufficient in food production; and
- Seek to achieve long-term social, environmental and economic sustainability, acknowledging that the countryside and rural-agricultural communities provide the foundation for Ontario’s prosperity.

“Ontario may lose its ability to be self-sufficient in food production within the next 25 years...” *Matt Setzkorn, Policy Coordinator, Ontario Farmland Trust*

Another other recent Ontario development that bears on our discussions in Peterborough County is the release of the “Greater Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan” in January 2012. This Study has identified four concrete actions required to support food and farming, and has the potential to draw our County into a broader discussion on implementing them. They are:

1. Design, pilot and implement a system to acknowledge and reward businesses within the food and farming sector for providing ecological goods and services
2. Develop and implement realistic local food, beverage, bio-product and ornamental procurement policies for public and broader sector procurement policies
3. Conduct research and pilot projects specifically designed for urban and near-urban areas of the Golden Horseshoe, and
4. Actively participate in review of the Greenbelt in 2015.

The project also has resulted in the creation of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA), including representatives of the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee, the City of Hamilton, The Greenbelt Foundation and the Region of Niagara. Farmers, industry, land use planners, economic development officers, politicians and agency representatives will be included. This is a model that may be replicable and appropriate to our region as well.

The text of the Golden Horseshoe reports may be obtained at www.gtaaac.ca.

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