



Draft Local Food Strategy

Encouraging the Production and
Consumption of Yukon-Grown Food
2015-2020



Local Food Strategy: Encouraging the Production and Consumption of Yukon-Grown Food 2015-2020 was compiled in 2014/15 with input from the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee, local food producers, food processors and community groups.

View the draft *Local Food Strategy: Encouraging Production and Consumption of Yukon-Grown Food* and fill out the questionnaire online at www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca. Alternately, hard copies of questionnaires or other written submissions can be mailed to or dropped off at:

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All photographs: Yukon Government

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“Across Canada, people are increasingly taking actions that are transforming our food system from the ground up. They are connecting directly with food producers, they are revitalizing indigenous food systems, and they are establishing food policy councils. But these actions need to be translated into policy.”

Resetting the Table (2011)
Food Secure Canada





WHY A LOCAL FOOD STRATEGY?

Providing fresh, healthy, affordable and local food for all Yukoners, is integral to maintaining healthy communities and individuals. Establishing a strong local food supply and distribution chain is an effective way to increase the availability of local foods and involve Yukon people in growing and marketing Yukon-grown food and products.

The Yukon government is committed to developing a Yukon grown food policy. A motion aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meats and food products was introduced in the Yukon legislature in May 2012, and an additional motion in April 2014 urged the government to “investigate the merits of introducing a Local Food Act, modelled on legislation passed in Ontario in 2013.”

This Strategy is a framework to meet that Yukon government commitment, to respond to those motions and to keep pace with an evolving global movement. The intent of the *Local Food Strategy* is to contribute to food sovereignty for Yukon, to encourage Yukoners to make healthy and local food choices, and to support local food production and distribution.

INTRODUCTION

Yukon is fortunate to be on the receiving end of the national grocery store food distribution system, making diverse foods both plentiful and affordable. However, this food travels from all over the world, and ultimately a long way up the Alaska Highway to Whitehorse and the communities. While many Yukoners are fortunate to enjoy a variety of fresh imported foods year-round, this distribution system is not without risks and disadvantages. The brief closure of the Alaska Highway in June of 2012 resulted in empty shelves in Yukon supermarkets. The territory’s dependency on food from “outside” was on the minds of many. Increasingly, consumers are choosing food that is produced or harvested locally, for the combined benefits of improving the local economy and community, and lowering environmental impacts.

This Food Strategy addresses the following five aspects of our local food system:

Production | Processing | Distribution | Access & Availability | Consumption

The initiatives outlined in this document should support local food producers and strengthen the relationship between Yukoners, Yukon farmers and food. The Yukon Food Strategy should provide a framework for education with respect to the benefits of local food, and should guide the development of food related policies and initiatives for the next five years.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Yukon Food Strategy is to increase the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products. In order to support the development of a sustainable, localized food system, this strategy focuses on the following objectives:

- Create initiatives that enhance competition, resiliency and responsiveness in the agri-food sector;
- Develop a framework which offers local food producers opportunity and profit;
- Promote local food so that it is conspicuous and widely available; and
- Inform consumers about the value of supporting a local food system.

The priorities and initiatives outlined in this document focus on local agriculture production, processing and distribution, and better access, availability and education aimed at increasing consumption of locally produced foods.

In addition to supporting the commercial agriculture sector, this strategy will encourage production of non-commercial gardens, greenhouses and community/urban gardens.

Yukon government acknowledges the value of all of our country foods, including harvested meat, fish and edible plants; wild foods are a vital part of traditional community, culture and wellness and are integral to maintaining local food sovereignty. The Government of Yukon is committed to developing agriculture in a way that protects the health of fish and wildlife, and ensures sustainable harvesting opportunities for future generations. In fact, this Strategy should complement the existing hunting and gathering opportunities we have.

We also strive to see the integration of local food culture into all levels of government, industry and communities. Generating a culture that supports the local economy, healthy eating and food security involves stakeholders from all of these sectors. We are committed to working collaboratively, generating partnerships and integrating this Strategy with existing related strategies and initiatives, whenever possible.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND HOW TO BE INVOLVED

Mindful of our five priorities, the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC) and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR) (Agriculture branch) researched and developed the goal, objectives and initiatives for this draft Strategy. YG also conducted an industry survey with the agriculture community and other non-government organizations involved in food-related activities.

We are now seeking public input on this draft Strategy. We encourage other governments, agencies and individual producers and consumers to contribute knowledge and ideas. We urge anyone with an interest in local food to contribute to the development of this document. If you wish to submit feedback, you are invited to use our Comment Submission Form (page 13); submission instructions are described there and/or online at www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca.

A complete list of participants and contributors to the *Local Food Strategy* will be included in its final version.

We look forward to working with all Yukoners, as we finalize and implement this Strategy.



PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

Food Production

Yukon’s small population, northern location and accessible wilderness enable us to include wild meat and plant harvest as a viable and sustainable component of a local food strategy. These attributes also contribute to the challenges facing local agriculture and import of food. Yukoners can contribute to local food security by harvesting, growing and raising whatever food they can.

This strategy also promotes a number of things that are critical to agricultural food production. It should enhance and protect agriculture lands; it should reduce the burden of administration for producers by providing access to administration expertise; it should encourage and support innovation and best management practices and it should promote farming education and environmental stewardship.

<p>Low Cost Land Lease</p>	<p>A low-cost lease option will enable new entrants with limited capital, access to farm land at reasonable cost and an extended timeline for completing improvements. By reducing the initial land purchase cost, this initiative should result in better access to planned agriculture areas and an increase in local food production.</p>
<p>Increase Access to Grazing Lands</p>	<p>This initiative will increase access to productive and low cost grazing options for livestock producers. Off-farm grazing options can free up farmland for crop production (needed for overwintering feed or for sale) or for food production. (Grazing agreements are subject to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA) to ensure impacts on the environment, treaty rights (including wild harvest) can be mitigated through grazing management plans.)</p>
<p>Promote Use of Non-Productive Agriculture Lands</p>	<p>This initiative will promote reclamation of agriculture land, such that it is available for crop and livestock production. It will ideally lead to increase of land in production and result in increased food production.</p>

Food Production, continued

<p>Regulation and Policy Assistance</p>	<p>This initiative would provide help to producers needing guidance through compliance and administrative processes. Some Agri-food policies and regulations (i.e. environmental regulation, food safe requirements, water license applications) can act as barriers to farmers. By supporting producers through regulatory and permitting processes, this initiative would allow producers to dedicate more resources to growing food.</p>
<p>Innovation</p>	<p>This initiative will assist producers in diversifying production systems and reduce production and processing costs. Cost of production in the north is higher than in southern Canada and innovations in these areas will increase producer resiliency and productivity resulting in more local food at a lower cost.</p>
<p>Food Waste to Compost Program</p>	<p>This initiative will allow compostable materials generated on farms (or greenhouses, community gardens, market gardens) to be exchanged for compost at facilities throughout the territory. Through this initiative, the high cost of soil building and amending will be reduced resulting in higher producer profitability, increased yields, reduced reliance on imported amendments and more locally produced food.</p>
<p>Increase Food Production for Individuals</p>	<p>This initiative will enable community, individuals and groups to produce local food through back yard production incentives and education partnerships with municipal and community programs. It is widely recognized that small scale, backyard production is an important part of food sovereignty and sustainable food production and through this initiative more food will be produced locally.</p>
<p>Training / Mentoring</p>	<p>This initiative will support the development of educational and training programs that teach food production and animal husbandry skills and environmental stewardship. Through this initiative knowledge can be transferred from experienced growers to new entrants translating into increased local food production, increased food security and a healthy environment.</p>



Food Processing

In Yukon, where the growing season is short, most food crops ripen at the same time. The result is an abundance of fresh produce appearing on the market at the end of the growing season, with the remainder of the year being largely devoid of local agricultural products. One way to reduce that 'feast and famine' is by enabling processing and preserving of locally grown crops and meat for year round availability. Expanding food processing capacity in the busy fall season is a way to extend the life of products, and providing inspection service is a way to increase market opportunities. Enhancing food processing capacity by offering infrastructure and expertise will sustain Yukoners and avoid waste.

Community Kitchens	This initiative would provide funding to non-profit community organizations to develop community kitchens in existing community infrastructure. Facilities could be accessed by community gardeners, small producers and harvesters to process garden and livestock products as well as wild foods, in a food-safe setting. This initiative would enable selling of value added products (i.e. at markets and retail outlets), increasing profitability and the duration that local food is available.
Food Processing Infrastructure	This initiative would provide funding and support for harvesters, producers and processors to increase food processing capacity. It would focus primarily on reducing the bottleneck in fall when farmers and hunters require processing services at the same time. Facilities could include local food processing equipment and abattoirs. This initiative would reduce the bottleneck and allow producers to access retail and commercial food markets.
Regulatory Compliance	This initiative would provide funding for producers requiring specialized infrastructure necessary to meet regulatory compliance (e.g., egg grading facilities, meat grading, milking and pasteurization equipment) in order to access retail markets.
Product Branding	A related initiative would be development of Yukon product branding; a Yukon brand could be applied to meat or vegetable products that meet certain 'local' criteria for attributes valued by Yukon consumers.
Agriculture Innovation Centre	This initiative would provide funding for producers to access the services and facilities of an agricultural innovation centre. Agricultural Innovation Centres exist throughout Canada for the specific purpose of supporting food product development (i.e. add value to products). This resource would be mainly aimed at producers or processors who are looking to diversify their food products. This service could be offered either as a local Innovation Centre or by developing relationships with existing Centres and obtaining services and expertise as needed.
Training / Mentoring	This initiative will support the development of educational and training programs that teach food processing and preservation skills. Through this initiative knowledge can be transferred from experienced growers to new entrants translating into increased local food production and increased food security.



Food Distribution

Fresh foods are inherently perishable, so distribution systems need to be reliable and efficient. In the Yukon, local food distribution systems are typically simple and rely on direct marketing and / or relationship-building between producer and consumer. A diversity of distribution modes may be needed to satisfy the needs of individual farmers; however, the “food hub” model has been successful in many agricultural regions throughout North America as it facilitates aggregation of local produce, and makes it available and convenient to consumers and/or retailers.

Food Hub

This initiative would provide support for the development of a food hub/ distribution centre in Whitehorse and the communities. A food hub bridges the gap between producers and retailers, commercial markets and restaurants. Food hubs can aggregate produce from many farms to supply larger markets. Food hubs can also provide storage and packaging services for producers lacking the necessary infrastructure. To accommodate the needs of the communities, the Yukon food hub model could include a centrally located hub in Whitehorse with ‘spokes’ radiating out to the communities. This way food could be aggregated and distributed not only throughout the Whitehorse area, but also to and from the communities. Surplus produce could be marketed through the rest of the communities and Whitehorse regions through this hub and spoke model. This initiative would simplify the storage, distribution and marketing demands placed on producers as well as make it possible for small scale operators to enter larger markets.

Food Access and Availability

Some locally grown food can be more expensive than imported foods, largely due to high production costs and limited market opportunities in the north. Income is known to be a significant determinant of health, and families with higher income (i.e. with more available time and money) tend to have access to healthier foods, than those with lower income. In many communities, neighbourhoods, public buildings and households, acquiring sufficient healthy food is either difficult or impossible. Supporting low income families with simple subsidies, making access to local food easier, could contribute to healthier choices.

<p>Online Market</p>	<p>This initiative would provide support for the creation of online marketplaces where Yukon food and food related products could be purchased. There are many online examples of farmers markets, food coops, and local food delivery services that allow you to select, buy and have delivered to your door a range of local and healthy food options. Online marketing, promotion, and sales will enable a generation of tech-savvy eaters to learn about local food choices. This initiative could also play into improvements in distribution of local food.</p>
<p>Local Food Access Points</p>	<p>This initiative is designed to help local businesses, schools and public buildings purchase equipment to store, display, preserve and sell fresh local produce. Healthy food options need to be available, affordable and convenient in order to be chosen. This initiative will make local products more visible in the marketplace and increase their chances of being selected over less healthy options</p>
<p>Coupon Program</p>	<p>This initiative would provide subsidies to qualifying families to offset the cost of healthy food products at farmers markets and retail locations. Coupon programs are one way to support both low income families and farmers. Low income consumers would be given a weekly redeemable coupon (“grub bucks”) that could be exchanged with participating farmers (markets) or retailers for fresh fruit, vegetables, local eggs, meat and dairy. This program could be run in conjunction with cooking and nutrition education.</p>
<p>Surplus Food Program</p>	<p>This initiative would create an incentive for producers with surplus product to donate that product to food banks or livestock producers. The short growing season in Yukon results in large amounts of fresh produce becoming available all at the same time. In late summer, producers may be unable to find a market. This can result in good quality food going to waste, sometimes before it is even harvested. Adding value to produce by processing for sale later in the year is one option. Another would be to make food of acceptable quality accessible to people in need and excess food (i.e., not fit for humans), available for livestock feed.</p>

ward & Brian
(867) 633-2119





Food Consumption

All of the above factors influence institutional and individual consumption choices. Working with government institutions to source local foods whenever possible will secure a market for producers and promote the value and relationship of local foods and healthy eating. Educating eaters about the opportunities for and benefits of choosing local foods will enhance individual power to produce, choose and consume local, healthy foods.

<p>Increase government purchase and use of local food</p>	<p>This initiative will secure a market for producers, thus allowing them to incrementally increase production based on predictable sales. Public sector institutions can source local foods within the existing procurement policy. Budgets of public sector purchasing departments could also be increased to offset the cost of locally produced food.</p>
<p>Building Awareness</p>	<p>Educating eaters about the benefits of local food and gardening will result in individuals choosing and consuming local foods. This initiative would develop (and support existing) educational and communication material (i.e. curriculum) about the types of food grown in Yukon, ways to access and utilize those foods, the nutritional, social and economic benefits to supporting local producers, and food preparation and preservation.</p>

NEXT STEPS AND IMPLEMENTATION

This draft *Local Food Strategy* identifies our goal, objectives, priorities and initiatives. Consultation will yield feedback on these initiatives and ideas for more, and will inform the final strategy and action plan. The action plan will describe initiatives in detail, including lead agency or YG department, partners, costs and timing for implementation. Anticipated steps following finalization of the Strategy include:

- Use consultation feedback and industry survey results to inform final strategy;
- Use consultation feedback and industry survey results to develop action plan including details on initiatives;
- Develop initiative targets, performance measures and overall evaluation plan.

EVALUATION

To ensure that the Strategy remains relevant, progress and effectiveness of initiatives will be evaluated over time. Anticipated steps following this consultation process include:

- Provide periodic updates on progress by AIAC and Agriculture branch;
- Provide update on progress and effectiveness at an Agriculture Forum;
- Recommend policy and/or regulatory amendments after 5 years of implementation.



GLOSSARY

Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC): The AIAC provides advice to the Minister of EMR on the implementation of national agriculture policy agreements and agriculture programs to be delivered in the Yukon, and to YG on the development and management of the agriculture and agri-food industry in the Yukon.

Agriculture: Is the science and practice of farming. This includes cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool, and other products

Agri-food: Describes the activities related to producing food through agricultural means, this differs from other methods of food production such as: fishing, hunting, gathering, etc.

Country foods: Those that may be produced in an agricultural (not for commercial sale) or backyard setting or harvested through hunting, gathering or fishing activities.

Food security: The state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

Food sovereignty: The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. (La Via Campesina)

Growing Forward 2: This Canada-Yukon agreement is a five year funding program meant to position the agriculture industry to be profitable, sustainable, competitive and innovative by 2020. Programs include Business Risk Management, Business Advisory Services, Food Safety, Environmental Farm Planning, Training, Marketing, Education, Infrastructure and Innovation.

Local food system: The food system can be broken down into three basic components: biological, economic/political, and social/cultural. The biological aspect refers to the organic food production processes; the economic/political aspect refers to institutional moderation of different groups' participation in and control of the system; and the social/cultural aspect refers to the "personal relations, community sports, and cultural relations which affect peoples' interaction with food

Seed library: An institution that lends or shares seed. It is distinguished from a seedbank in that the main purpose is not to store or hold germ plasm or seeds against possible destruction, but to disseminate them to the public which preserves the shared plant varieties through propagation and further sharing of seed.



COMMENT SUBMISSION FORM

The information is being collected by Yukon government. Your individual responses will be for internal use only. Individual respondents will not be identified in any reports, and your responses will be combined with others for reporting purposes. Here are some questions with space for you to provide your responses. Attach additional pages if you need them. If you prefer, you can fill this form out online at www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca. Please submit your comments by **Monday, Oct 5**.

1. **Your role: Are you producing, processing or consuming local food? (Check all that apply)**

- Producing Processing Consuming

2. **The Strategy overall: Do you think our goal is appropriate?** Yes No Don't Know

Do you think our objectives are appropriate? (Page 4) Yes No Don't Know

Do you have any thoughts about the context, goals or objectives of this Strategy?

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3. **In your opinion how important are the actions being considered to enhance local food production? (Pages 5 & 6)**

1 = Very important 2 = Somewhat important 3 = Not important 4 = Don't know

Low Cost Land Lease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase Access to Grazing Lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote Use of Non-Productive Agriculture Lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regulation and Policy Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food Waste to Compost Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase Food Production for Individuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training / Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use the space below to share your ideas or concerns with any of these actions.

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4. In your opinion how important are the actions being considered to enhance local food processing capacity? (Page 7)

1 = Very important 2 = Somewhat important 3 = Not important 4 = Don't know

Community Kitchens	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4
Livestock Processing Infrastructure	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4
Regulatory Compliance, and Product Branding	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4
Vegetable Processing and Storage Infrastructure	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4
Training / Mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4

Please use the space below to share your ideas or concerns with these actions.

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5. In your opinion how important is the Food Hub as an action to enhance food distribution? (Page 8)

Very important Somewhat important Not important Don't know

Please use the space below to share your ideas or concerns with the Food Hub or other ways to enhance food distribution.

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6. In your opinion how important are the actions being considered to improving access and availability of local food? (Page 9)

1 = Very important 2 = Somewhat important 3 = Not important 4 = Don't know

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|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| Online Market | <input type="radio"/> | 1 | <input type="radio"/> | 2 | <input type="radio"/> | 3 | <input type="radio"/> | 4 |
| Local Food Access Points | <input type="radio"/> | 1 | <input type="radio"/> | 2 | <input type="radio"/> | 3 | <input type="radio"/> | 4 |
| Coupon Program | <input type="radio"/> | 1 | <input type="radio"/> | 2 | <input type="radio"/> | 3 | <input type="radio"/> | 4 |
| Surplus Food Program | <input type="radio"/> | 1 | <input type="radio"/> | 2 | <input type="radio"/> | 3 | <input type="radio"/> | 4 |

Please use the space below to share your ideas or concerns with these actions.

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7. How important are the actions being considered to promote and increase local food consumption? (Page 10)

1 = Very important 2 = Somewhat important 3 = Not important 4 = Don't know

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|--|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| Increase government purchase and use of local food | <input type="radio"/> | 1 | <input type="radio"/> | 2 | <input type="radio"/> | 3 | <input type="radio"/> | 4 |
| Building Awareness | <input type="radio"/> | 1 | <input type="radio"/> | 2 | <input type="radio"/> | 3 | <input type="radio"/> | 4 |

Please use the space below to share your ideas or concerns with these actions.

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8. Can you suggest partnerships or collaborations that would make this Strategy stronger?

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9. How could this Strategy be improved in order to enhance your contribution to local food production, processing or consumption?

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10. Do you have any other thoughts on the draft Local Food Strategy or any aspect of local food production and consumption?

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If you would like your name included as a participant in the development of this strategy, please include it here.

Name

If you would like a copy of the summary document from this process, please share the contact info you want us to use.

Mailing address or Email

