The Role of Local Food in Rural Economic Development

A Case Study of Frontenac County

Research Motivation and Goals

- ❑ In 2012, a regional local food business retention & expansion (BR+E) study identified Frontenac County's needs with respect to growing its local food economy. In 2015, local food was then designated as one of three pillars of economic development for the County. More recently, there has been a visible growth in the emergence of small scale, local food producers and processors in Frontenac.
- ❑ Given this progression, this research attempts to understand the motivations, opportunities and challenges faced by those involved in Frontenac's local food economy and to make recommendations to further support the growth of local food in the County.

Methods:

- I. Extensive literature review.
- II. Through a collaborative effort with the Frontenac Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC), a survey of local food producers and processors was conducted to determine the gaps in local food infrastructure and services.
- III. Key informant interviews with Frontenac local food stakeholders
- IV. Frontenac CFDC *Food in Frontenac* workshop & networking event

Frontenac County 2016 Census Stats

Population: 26,677

Total land area: 3,336.62 km²

Total land in crops: 286.57 km² (70, 814 acres)

Greenhouse area: 82,621 sqft

Total number of farms: 538

**Between 2006 to 2016 there has been growth in oilseed & grain, soybean, vegetable, poultry & egg production.*

Map of Frontenac County¹

Frontenac County Farm Cash Receipts, 2016²

Excerpts from Frontenac Key Informant Interviews

What needs to be done to support and further develop the local food economy of Frontenac?

"We need more activity within the farming community...So we can work together to market ourselves."
-Frontenac Producer

"We need more city people to come out to the country. A large percentage are likely unaware of what's available."
- Frontenac Producer

"Without increased consumer education and awareness, a food hub located in Frontenac would fail."
-Frontenac Producer

"When it comes to local food in Frontenac County- we are walking before we are running."
-Frontenac Producer

"You need to stay on top of it. You need to continually promote local food"
-Frontenac Retailer

"I feel like everyone is working individually. I wish there was a collective that discussed food issues amongst themselves... which could create opportunities for distribution and awareness through campaigns."
-Frontenac Restaurateur

"We don't need a food hub. We need commercial rental spaces for food producers."
- Frontenac Processor

"If local food is going to grow, you need access to markets."
- Frontenac Producer

On February 2nd 2018, The Frontenac CFDC hosted a networking event for Frontenac local food stakeholders to discuss the challenges to expanding local food in Frontenac County and to generate actions that can be taken to overcome these challenges.

Processor Results

- ❑ The graphs and images below demonstrate some key findings from the Frontenac CFDC's processor survey.

Gaps in Infrastructure

Services Required

Producer Results

- ❑ The graphs and images below demonstrate some key findings from the Frontenac CFDC's producer survey.

Services Required

Gaps in Infrastructure

Summary of Research Objectives and Anticipated Outcomes

- ❑ This research is attempting to recognize the circumstances that lead to a successful local food economy while also understanding the challenges and opportunities for lower-tier governments to support this sector.
- ❑ The information collected through this study will inform municipal economic development staff of the County of Frontenac and other similar municipalities in the province through a set of best practices that details how to further support local food as a way of reinvigorating their rural economies.

Figures

¹ Frontenac County (2014). *Frontenac County Location and Climate*. Accessed from: <http://www.frontenac.ca/>

² Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (2018). *County Profiles: Agriculture, Food and Business*. Accessed from: http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/pubs/county_profiles.htm

To Learn More, Please Contact:

Katherine Howes khowses@uoguelph.ca

Special thanks to:

All of the Frontenac local food producers, processors, retailers, restaurateurs and stakeholders who have participated in this research to date.