

Local Food Isn't Expensive... It's Priceless!*

Report of the

**Local Foods for Local Tables
Growing Food Security for Southwestern Ontario**

Conference

**November 26, 2008
Brescia University College
affiliated with
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario Canada**

* Peter Katona, Executive Director, Foodlink Waterloo

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Acknowledgments

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Glossary

CSA	Community Supported (or Shared) Agriculture is an arrangement between a farmer and a number of 'eaters' to provide foods for a specific period of time for a specified price.
Eaters	preferred to 'consumer' which indicates that food is the same as any other product on the market.
Local foods	definitions range from foods produced within the nearby community to those produced within Ontario to those produced in Canada; may or may not be organic.
Locavore	new term recognized by the Oxford Dictionary as the 2007 Word of the Year; according to dictionary.com, a locavore is a person who attempts to eat only food grown locally.
Organic foods	foods produced without chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, etc; may or may not be locally grown.

Conference Program

9:00 Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Linda Davies, Executive Director, London Community Resource Centre
- Dr. Colleen Hanycz, Principal, Brescia University College
- Ross Fair, General Manager, Community Services, City of London

9:15 Setting the Stage

- The Global Food Economy Dr. Tony Weis, Dept. of Geography, UWO
- Trends and Current Research Elbert van Donkersgoed, GTA – AAC

10:45 Making it Happen - Success Stories

- Institution Frank Miller, Director of Hospitality Services, UWO
- Farmgate Cathy McGregor-Smith, McSmith's Organic Farm, St. Thomas
- Urban Agriculture Professor Adriana Premat, Dept. of Anthropology, UWO
- Foodland Ontario Shana Barker, Officer - Client Services
- Restaurant Wade Fitzgerald, Executive Chef, Garlic's of London

1:30 Innovations

- Ontario Corn Fed Beef Jim Clark, E.D. Ontario Cattle Feeders Association
- Community Shared Agriculture Ken Laing, Orchard Hill Farm, St. Thomas
- Local Food Plus Don Mills, Director of Certification,
- Foodlink Waterloo Peter Katona, Executive Director

3:15 Roundtable Discussions

Executive Summary

The conference, *Local Foods for Local Tables: Growing Food Security for Southwestern Ontario* addressed an increasing concern about food insecurity and the importance of local agriculture. The presentations ranged from a global overview to specific information on local food production and use of locally grown food in institutions and restaurants.

In **Setting the Stage**, Dr. Tony Weis reviewed the global economy in which food is controlled by a few multi-national corporations; producers themselves have very little influence. This system has led to pseudo-diversity, that is a great variety of foods, which are based on only a very few agricultural products, mainly wheat, soy, rice and corn. Food insecurity, indeed actual shortages, is increasing around the world. The ecological footprint of big-business farming is also increasing.

Elbert van Donkersgoed provided a more local overview, indicating that the 'locavore' is no longer a niche market. Buyers are aware of and seeking local food; most are willing to pay more for it, but are still concerned about convenience. He also emphasized that Ontario is not food sufficient, that is, food imports are greater than food exports.

Current Successes in increasing the use of local foods were illustrated. Frank Miller reported that The University of Western Ontario, as well as other Canadian universities, have committed to buying local food as much as possible. Cathy McGregor-Smith described their farm operation that provides a variety of products to local eaters. Adriana Premat explained how Cuba, after a disastrous experiment with energy-intensive big agriculture, has encouraged local production even within small spaces in urban areas. Shana Barker reported on some of the activities of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, including the FoodLand Ontario campaign to promote fresh, high quality foods to consumers, to leverage greater buy-in from eaters and industry and to create a lasting impression. Surveys in 2007 and 2008 indicate that knowledge of and interest in locally-produced foods is increasing. Finally, Wade Fitzgerald explained how chefs can incorporate local foods into their menus and the need for more education of chefs on how to do this.

Jim Clark began the **Innovations** session with a discussion of corn-fed beef, a branded product of the Ontario Cattle Feeders Association (OCFA). Although the number of cattle in Ontario is decreasing, the OCFA is working on marketing and on producing 'value-added' beef products. Ken Laing outlined the benefits of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) to both the producer and the eaters, which for eaters includes a greater awareness of how foods are produced. Don Mills explained the operation of Local Food Plus, which seeks to provide a sustainable source of food to the Toronto area. He believes that people are developing an appetite for quality food products. Foodlink, according to Peter Katona, is a non-profit grassroots champion of local foods with a mandate to increase access to local food, to support farms, markets and eaters and to engage eaters in the local food system policy and issues. Foodlink's wants to put local foods back on people's plates for good.

Roundtable discussions among all participants addressed questions about current problems, opportunities, and suggestions for further actions to increase local food production and its use by local eaters.

Summary of Presentations¹

Setting the Stage

The Global Economy Dr. Tony Weis

There is a need to understand the current food system, which is controlled by multi-lateral agreements. However, these agreements are in question. Food prices are rising even in developed countries. There have been food riots in 30 countries. This is not a blip in food economics, but the end of cheap food.

Supermarkets have over 10,000 foods on the shelves - but from a very limited plant genetic base. Only 30 crops provide 95% of the total plant-based food; 10 crops provide 75%. Maize, rice and wheat provide over 50%, although soy production is increasing.

Over 88% of all maize and soy go into feeds for beef, pork and poultry. Animals represent two-fifth of all agricultural production. From 1950 to 2004, there has been more than two-fold increase in poultry production; 50 billion chickens are killed each year. Total farm animal population (currently 60 billion) is growing twice as fast as the human population. The consumption of meat has increased over two times in the past 50 years, leading to what is called the 'meatification' of global diets.

These changes are happening fastest in Canada, the U.S., Brazil and now China (with one-fifth of the world's population and one-half of the world's pigs). Part of China's official policy is to catch up with the meat consumption of the rest of the world. All world fisheries are past their production peak, but harvest is still increasing exponentially.

Around the world, there has been a move to simplify and standardize production for mechanization, but agriculture itself has not been a player. Fertilizers come from synthetic sources (nitrates and phosphates). The increase in monoculture² leads to disease susceptibility with further use of chemicals for both plants and animals. Today, foods travel far, because they are more durable than in the past.

There is increased corporate integration into agriculture, both upstream and downstream. Ten corporations control 50% of seeds, 55% of animal pharmaceuticals and 84% of agricultural chemicals. Only a few companies control processing and packaging (both of which leads to pseudo-diversity) as well as distribution. Ten top companies control 53% of all sales in developed countries and are increasing their markets in developing countries.

Farmers are caught in a cost/price squeeze. The only apparent solution is 'get big or get out'. In the US, 8% of farms control 67% of farm land. From 1986 to 2000, the number of farms decreased by 22%; the size of the farms increased 28%. U.S. subsidies reward big farms; two-thirds of the funds go to the 10% largest farms.

Poor countries are food import dependent. However, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) projects that the per capita consumption of meat will continue to grow. Livestock production accounts for 18% of green house emissions, which is more than what is produced by all of transportation. The overall ecological footprint of agriculture is increasing.

¹ prepared from notes and PowerPoint materials

² intensive production of a single crop

Trends and Current Research Elbert van Donkersgoed

Is interest in being a 'locavore' just a flurry or a trend?

Locavores are not a niche market. According to one study, half of consumers reported that they always or usually buy local foods, when available. Over 50% buy local foods at least once a week; 79% buy local meat; 66% are willing to pay more for local foods; and 54% check or always check labels for origin of the food, using 'locally grown' to decide on purchases. They also want retailers to do more for local foods and ethnic foods from local farms.

The distance a food travels is of concern to 90% of those surveyed; 78% report changing diet seasonally and 63% report that source is more important than price. Ninety-nine percent wanted a dedicated section of local food at the supermarkets, where most people shop. However, 'local' doesn't trump convenience.

Ontario is not [food] self-sufficient. Imports are increasing and exceed exports.

What must one do to be a locavore? Realize that food is seasonal and relearn how to store foods.

What must be done to meet the needs of the locavore? Increased organizations/enterprises to get local food to people. This includes near-urban agriculture that would shorten the distribution routes to large populations. However, this type of agriculture has its own problems including the lack of affordable land, loss of infrastructure, taxes and the complaints of the neighboring non-farmers.

Other activities include direct sales through farm shops, and agricultural tourism. The farms that will meet this need will likely be smaller, have a greater diversity of crops and higher production per acre than the average farm.

Some examples of actions include: Savour Ontario Trade, local food procurement policy (Markham, Greater Toronto Area), more local food processing, Alliance for Health, Food and Farm, Toronto, Speed dating at Royal Ex (Ottawa - meeting of farmers and chefs), Homegrown Ontario, brand Ontario meat, GTA Agriculture Action Coalition. The demand for farmers' markets by Torontonians is not being met.

There must be a realization that the country is different than city. Every county road has become a commuter road. Some local and international examples illustrated marketing to locavores: stores supplied by local farms (on conservation property) where eaters can meet some farmers on a rotating basis or running a municipal bus to farms periodically.

Locavore - builds bridges between farmers and consumers. The benefits of eating local foods include helping the local economy, and supporting farmers.

Making it Happen - Success Stories

The UWO Story Frank Miller

Hospitality Services of The UWO operates 30 food outlets with \$25 million in sales a year. It, as well as other university food service operations, is interested in sustainability for the future. Two years ago, 23 university Food Service Directors made a commitment to become leaders in sustainability. The University of British Columbia is ahead of the rest but others, e.g. Queens University, is also buying locally.

How to get local food to UWO? It's not simple. Some of the concerns include production waste, decomposition of foods, food miles vs. speed of delivery (the average UWO meal logs 1500 food miles). Another problem is having to deal with a variety of suppliers. It would be easier to have a central supplier of local foods.

The UWO food system has changed from plastic bags to paper, and has a 'Sustainability Statement', which includes challenging people to think locally and requiring that 50% of the food come from Ontario.

Farm Gate Cathy McGregor-Smith

McSmith's farm has been in operation for 25 years. Their name stands behind their products. They have increased the diversity of products to include beef, eggs, chicken, turkeys, garden vegetables and even flowers (for the pure pleasure of it) with the animal fertilizers being used on the gardens - essentially a closed eco-system.

McSmith's include customers in the farm activities. They sell directly to eaters and distribute to many restaurants in London. Greenhouses and good cold storage increase the growing and selling season. Even an eco-friendly straw bales/timber frame house with an alternate energy system has been built. Marketing is through a website created in 1996, annual mailings of coupons, discount information, etc.

The McSmith's operation is optimistic about the future because this is a prime time to get into direct farm marketing to supply cities with specialty products including garlic and herbs. One problem is the lack of standards and inspection to certify organic foods.

Urban Agriculture: The Cuban Case Adriana Premat

The 1959 Cuban Revolution brought a modernist development dream of agriculture including increased reliance on chemical imports, mechanization, compartmentalization and more formal training for modern technology. This was based on a particular view of the relationship of humans to nature: that is, human need is primary and therefore should dominate nature.

The 1966 National Campaign (manbu) used 2500 soldiers to clear fields including use of massive amounts of herbicides in a 'war against weeds' or a war to master nature. This was extended to the animal production with the Unbre Blanca, a cow produced by genetic manipulation and said to be able to produce enough milk for 100 children each day.

However, with the breakdown of the USSR, Cuba lost two-thirds of food imported from USSR as well as agricultural inputs, e.g., fertilizers, pesticides and petroleum. The result was food insecurity.

In 1989, a New Agriculture Development was introduced. This includes small-scale agriculture in a variety of settings, e.g., vacant lots, rooftops, etc within cities in addition to rural agriculture. Local services were provided for producers and eaters such as vegetable stands within walking distance. The program represented a shift in thinking, from synthetic first to biology first, from domination of nature to balance with nature, from focus only on output to emphasis on waste recycling and local knowledge and creativity. The program had government sanctions and nation-wide support. The central concern is the ethics of sustainable agriculture.

FoodLand Ontario Shana Barker

Ontario Fresh is a branded market strategy for Ontario food that the provincial government supports. The 2007 objectives were to promote fresh high quality foods to producers and eaters, to leverage greater buy-in from eaters and the food industry, and to create a lasting impression.

Internet surveys were conducted in 2007 and 2008 to learn about Ontario buying habits and concerns. Freshness was important to 93% and 91% of the respondents (in 2007 and 2008, respectively). The importance of price declined from 77% to 71%, while concern about fat increased from 50% to 53%. The biggest change was in the number of people stating that it was very important or important to buy local foods (up from 63% to 73%).

Nearly three-quarters of primary grocery shoppers look at where food is produced. There is an increased awareness and identification of foods grown locally. However, local foods were not as identifiable at the local supermarket as people would have liked.

Recognition of the Foodland logo was good and 89% could remember the jingle, *Good Things Grow in Ontario*. A great majority (96%) believes that the government should invest in promoting local foods.

Savour Ontario is a program in which 75 restaurants feature Ontario food. Ontario Marketing Investment (OMIT0) has committed \$12 million to this project over four years.

Restaurant Wade Fitzgerald

Since he started at Garlic's, the restaurant had made a gradual transition to local and organic. Menus are planned monthly based on seasonal crops or some surpluses. Now 95% of their ingredients are from Canada. However, there is a need for education of chefs to use local foods.

Innovations

Ontario Corn Fed Beef Jim Clark

The core agriculture value is solidarity in life and business and in doing what is right.

Ontario corn fed beef is a brand produced only in Ontario through the Ontario Cattle Feeders Association (OCFA). The OCFA includes 110 independent farms (ranging from 150 to 5000 head of cattle per farm). Often these are second or third generation farmers.

The objective of the Corn Fed Beef program is to produce food, take care of the land, and sustain a future in agriculture for the daughters and sons of current farmers; the latter is difficult to do. The number of cattle in Ontario decreased by 100,000 head last year and is expected to continue to decrease. However, the objective is a top quality beef product that can be produced on a sustainable basis. Another objective is to raise the quality of all beef products.

Corn Fed Beef is subject to provincial and federal inspection. The farms are also required to participate in a Quality Assurance program, which certifies safety and record keeping, environmental farm plan and animal welfare policy. Corn Fed Beef is available through Loblaw and 75 independent branches. Additional processed beef products are being developed and tested, e.g., beef 'pea meal' bacon.

Community Supported Agriculture Ken Laing

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) recognizes agriculture as a culture rather than agribusiness. CSA's were begun in the 1980's. Although individual ones vary there are some common benefits for both the farms and the eaters.

For the farmer, there is no need to establish a market. As eaters share risk and make payments up front there is less need to borrow money. The farmers are in close touch with the eaters; some eaters do some of the work on the farm. The eaters have a supply of fresh food as well as sharing the beauty of the garden. They develop a close relationship with the farm and get a sense of participating in food production.

Orchard Hill Farm, an 80 acre property with five acres in vegetable and small fruit, supplied 164 families in 2008, one-third of whom were from London. The farm provides a large variety of vegetable and animal products and is open from mid-May to Thanksgiving on Tuesday and Saturday, 11 am to 7 pm. The seasonal cost for food for two people is \$500 or \$465 plus five hours of labor.

Young people, usually urban university students, work at the farm in the summer. Horses are used for the farm work, which is therefore very labor intensive.

Local Food Plus Don Mills

Every survey done in Ontario indicates that consumers support local farmers.

Local Food Plus (LFP) strives for a local, sustainable source of food with a "Plus". LFP farms must be in Ontario and are certified using standards around biodiversity, energy/environmental farm plans, crop/livestock specific standards and labor laws.

Market development is the hard part. The University of Toronto now requires that 20% of the food they used must be LFP certified. Restaurant partnerships have been developed. A Farmers Meet and Greet was held in one grocery store in Toronto.

People are developing an appetite for quality food products and now recognize the illusion of choice in the supermarket.

Foodlink Waterloo Peter Katona

There is a growing interest in local foods with a great number of people involved, including customers.

Farmers need results. Times are still tough with increasing costs of production and low prices for their products, often leading to a high debt load. On the other hand, Canadians are addicted to cheap food.

Food localism has many benefits. Professional farms and jobs on them contribute to the strength of the local economy. Sustaining rural heritage and developing rural-urban connections will contribute to social security. Local foods lead to healthier eating. The environment is helped due to the decreased distance for transporting food and increasing diversification on the farms.

Local consumers benefit through the quality, safety, freshness and taste of locally produced foods. The farmers guarantee freshness and know their products. They also have an interest in protecting their livelihood and rural heritage.

The mandate of Foodlink, non-profit organization, is to be the grass roots champion of local foods, to increase access to local food, to support farms, markets and eaters, and engage them in the local food system policy and issues.

Some of the projects are local food maps (produced for seven years), Local Harvest Newsletter (online) and a culinary tourism strategy to make contact between farmers and chefs. Work is also needed beyond the farm direct sales. The Elmira Food Collective is a means of moving local foods to convenient wholesale markets. Added-values products, such as jams and frozen foods, are also being developed. Local branding is being studied.

Local food is not just about price. Local food isn't cheap... it's priceless! Foodlink wants to put local food back on people's plates for good.

Recommendations for Future Action

Participants were asked to discuss one or more of the following topics:

1. *Based on what you know, and what you have heard today, what are the*
 - a) *opportunities that we need to consider, and*
 - b) *issues that we need to consider?*

2.
 - a) *What are the three “next actions” needed to take advantage of the opportunities to supply Ontario grown produce and products to a variety of markets?*

 - b) *What is the most critical step to be acted on immediately and who or which group/organization should take responsibility for the action?*

Many issues and concerns were raised and often overlapped among the questions. The following is a summary of prominent themes although these were not mutually exclusive, e.g., education covered labeling, sources of local foods, etc.

WHAT WE HAVE -

Southwestern Ontario is blessed with the most productive agricultural land in Canada, providing a great variety of foods. However, farming is threatened by urban sprawl and the increasing gap between production costs and the return for the products.

A variety of organizations are actively working to support producers and to further develop the link between producers and eaters. These include Foodland Ontario, Foodlink, Community Shared Agriculture farms, etc.

WHAT WE NEED and WANT - Market affordable, available and easily accessible to all

One, if not the major factor affecting purchasing decisions is **convenience**. This was identified repeatedly by participants, e.g., *“People who shop at large grocers are indiscriminate and in a hurry”*.

The second most identified issue was **labeling**: *“people don’t know what labels mean”*. There is a need for accurate, complete, visible, compulsory, and regulated labeling of local Ontario products, which will increase people's trust in a food product. The current perception is that there are so many loopholes that the current labels mean nothing. The difference between labels, logos and branding is also not clear.

Price of food was also a concern. *“Economic depression causes us to re-think how we eat.” ... “perhaps fresh produce is too expensive”*.

People also want **safe** food. Food is only as safe as the policies set to track it and how they are followed or not followed by producers and processors.

Health issues ranged from nutritional quality of the food, pesticide use and sources of protein.

Concern for **quality** ranged from ensuring that ‘organic’ food was truly organic to getting people to understand that food does not have to appear to be perfect to still be edible.

Some **environmental** concerns were also raised, including sustainability, environmental damage and need for biodiversity.

WHAT CAN BE DONE -

Many consumers (eaters) are currently interested in eating locally produced foods.

It is essential to take advantage of this 'fad' and turn it into a trend, then into a way of life.

Education was the one thing most often mentioned - education about where and how food is grown, where it can be obtained and the actual costs of production and how to buy (read labels), store, prepare, preserve and even grow some of their own food. Education should be widespread from the elementary schools through public media.

Some key points about education:

Farmers need to participate in educating consumers.

Language is important; change from consumer to eater; this is so important for people to understand.

Some suggested means of education: Websites - technology of the future, media, newsletters, etc., and a larger conference.

Hopefully, coming from this education would be a greater **support for local agriculture**. *"If we don't get food, we would die; it's important..." "London should be told that they only have a one week supply of food; it could really scare people into seeing farming as important."*

Also there was a call to lobby government to provide better supports and assistance to farmers. In addition, local **processing, distribution** and **marketing** need to be developed.

Some other suggestions and comments:

1. Promote 'locovorism'. Time is right now - use the fad as an opportunity.
2. Try what's already been tested: chef's market, local retail market; make use of what's already out there.
3. Use one identifiable logo e.g. Foodland Ontario and Provincial label, which indicates that specific requirements were met to give consumers confidence in the food supply.
4. Promote local farmers' markets. Involve Farmer's Markets Ontario.
5. Educate consumers re local producers. Use the media.
6. Apply political pressure to keep Ontario farmers in business.
7. Lobby for local foods and boycott imports.
8. Lobby for government policies re local produce.
9. Tell supermarket produce and meat managers we want local.
10. Develop policy for institutions that ensures food purchases include local food.
11. Create a new group to liaise with farmers, grocers, and eaters.
12. Create businesses to get food around; local farmers don't want just direct sales; need distribution. Develop co-op markets where farmers can disperse product from there to restaurant, schools, e.g., follow the Elmira Live Produce Auction model.

Appendix A

Short Biographies of Speakers (in order of presentations; see program on page iv)

Tony Weis

Tony was born and raised in Waterloo, and now lives in London, where he has been an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at UWO since 2004.

His research is principally in the field of what is commonly referred to as 'international development', focusing on the political economy of agriculture and the problems facing small farmers in the Global South.

In 2007, he published *The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming* (London: Zed Books; Halifax: Fernwood). This book examines the imbalances, social tensions, and ecological instabilities in the global system of agricultural production and trade, and explains the major dynamics of this system, how it came to be, and how it is being institutionally entrenched. It ultimately points towards answers to the central question of how we can build more socially just, sustainable, and humane systems of food production and distribution.

The presentation covered some of these 'big picture' contours and contradictions, and through this, some key seams for making change.

Elbert van Donkersgoed

Elbert is a Professional Agrologist and, until recently, was the Executive Director for the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee. The Agricultural Action Committee has been developed by a multi-stakeholder umbrella organization involving the four GTA Federations of Agriculture and Regional Municipalities (Halton, Peel, York and Durham), with the support of the City of Toronto, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Toronto Food Policy Council and the food sector. Until Elbert assumed this position in 2006, he was for 35 years, one of the guiding forces behind the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.

Frank Miller

Frank Miller joined the University of Western Ontario in 1992 as Director - Hospitality Services. Prior to Western, he held senior executive positions in other large food service and retail organizations. He has a strong understanding of the full value of operational space and the achievement of profitable sales per square feet in spaces that work. Frank has strong connections to all the national franchisers, suppliers and manufacturers in both the food and retail industries. As Director, Frank guides an award-winning team that continues to be at the forefront of the industry in concept development, franchise partnerships, sports facilities and new methods of service delivery. Under his direction, Hospitality Services has achieved 20 Loyal E. Horton Dining Awards with the National Association of College & University Food Services Association (NACUFS), a national organization with a membership of over 1,000 colleges and universities. Frank also has strong affiliations to the London community. He has represented The University of Western Ontario as the United Way Co-Chair since 1998 and in 2000, he was honoured with the United Way Award for achieving record donations. Frank also sits on the Board of Directors for Tourism London; is involved with the Better Business Bureau and Chamber of Commerce; he also sits on the Students' Advisory Council; and is an executive member for various boards on campus.

Cathy McGregor-Smith

Cathy and her husband Gary have been farming organically since 1984. Their farm is located in southern Ontario near St Thomas/ London.

Gary Smith and Cathy McGregor-Smith are living their "calling" by being full-time organic farmers. They embrace diversification, which was common on farms until recently when monoculture was promoted. Cathy and Gary operate an "on-farm market " during the growing season. They grow most organic vegetables both outside and in their 6 versions of hoopouses and greenhouses. Their large acreage and equipment allow them to grow organic soybeans, spring grains etc for their livestock and poultry. They have 1000 certified organic laying hens and sell eggs to OntarBio Farmer's Co-op. Their customers rave about their pastured beef and their pork.

Adriana Premat

Adriana is a social anthropologist in the UWO Department of Anthropology. Her research focuses on the environment, agriculture, and food consumption as these intersect with issues related to poverty and sustainability in urban Latin America and urban Canada. She has conducted ethnographic research on the practice of urban agriculture by marginal populations in Cuba (1997-2006) and Argentina (2005-2007), paying particular attention to how different forms of macro-economic and political organization influence the manner in which urban agriculture is practised and "imagined" in these countries. Adriana is currently engaged in a pilot research project in the city of Toronto.

Shana Barker

Shana Barker is the Officer, Client Services for Foodland Ontario and the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The Officer, Client Services is the one-point of contact for resources to assist Ontario stakeholder groups (produce, meats, dairy, eggs and baked goods) with their marketing and promotional plans with a focus on increasing consumer awareness of these commodities. Shana has been with OMAFRA for a number of years, where she has also been involved in policy development in the Strategic Policy Branch. Prior to her work at OMAFRA Shana spent a year and half with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment working on municipal hazardous waste regulations. Shana also has industry experience from her time as the Environmental Compliance Manager for Wal-Mart Canada Corp. Shana holds a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from the University of Guelph and a Masters Degree from the Ontario Agriculture College at the University of Guelph.

Wade Fitzgerald

Wade is the Executive Chef at Garlic's of London. He is a native of Baddeck, the picturesque little town at the base of the Cabot Trail in Cape Breton. He took a two-year chef's course in Prince Edward Island and started working across Canada in fine dining establishments in Halifax and Ottawa before landing at the Chateau Lake Louise in Banff.

Wade came to London almost two years ago because his fiancé, whom he met in Banff, is a native of St. Thomas. He worked at the London Hunt Club before moving on to Garlic's last fall.

Wade has found London to be friendly and welcoming. But after years of preparing exotic dishes, he has found the food tastes of Londoners are a bit more conservative.

Wade is impressed by the variety of foods grown on farms in the London area. He has made numerous visits to local farms to make contacts and get a feel for what is available from local producers.

Jim Clark

Jim is the Executive Director of the Ontario Cattle Feeders' Association, providing specialized services to Canadian livestock producers. Jim developed the Ontario Corn Fed Beef Program and also developed producer risk management strategies to enhance the livestock sector of agriculture. Presently a member of the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission, Jim was a senior policy advisor/stakeholder relation for the office of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs from 2003 to 2005. In his other life between 1995 and 2005, Jim was an Auxiliary Staff Sergeant with the Ontario Provincial Police.

Ken Laing

Both Ken and his wife Martha grew up with connections to farming. Ken grew up on a farm near the town of St. Mary's, while Martha spent the summers of her childhood on the family farm. While they studied at the University of Guelph, Ken's passion for agriculture led him to earn a degree in horticulture. After completing their studies they moved to Martha's family farm, part of which is now Orchard Hill Farm, and began cultivating fruit crops. Following many evolutions the farm's primary enterprise is now the CSA garden powered by Suffolks.

Don Mills

Don is the Director of Certification for Local Food Plus. He grew up on a dairy farm in southwestern Ontario and continues to farm with his family. His agriculture experience includes raising beef and pork, dairy farming, and specialty harvesting. Don serves on the Provincial Council and National Executive Council of the National Farmers Union (NFU) and was a member of the Ontario Minister of Agriculture's Strategic Advisory Committee. He holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Anthropology from the University of Victoria.

Peter Katona

Peter is Executive Director for Foodlink Waterloo Region, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting local food and providing marketing support to farms and the broader food industry. Under his leadership, Foodlink has become recognized as a pioneer in the "Buy Local" food movement across Ontario, and has extended its branding programs and services to eight other provincial counties. A graduate of the International Development program of the University of Guelph, Peter has 15 years experience working in agricultural, food security, and rural economic development programs in Canada, South Asia, Central America and the Caribbean with a variety of NGOs and consulting firms.