



Durham Food Policy Council

Building a Cross-Durham Region  
Food System Report Card:  
*A Public Consultation Guide*

2021

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## Welcome

### How to use this document

This document will help you to understand the framework that will be used in a finalized Food System Report Card as developed by the Durham Food Policy Council and in partnership with the Nourish and Develop Foundation.

In reviewing this document, we ask that you examine each pillar of the framework and consider if there are any existing reports, research or data that could help to inform, build out, or support each pillar for the future report card.

# Building a Cross-Durham Region Food System Report Card: *A Public Consultation Guide*

## 01 Introduction

The objective of a Food System Report Card is to compile existing local food system research resources, policy documents, and related materials to develop an accessible overview of the region's food system. It is a tool that helps stakeholders to understand our food system as it exists today, and aims to give direction and build momentum in realizing a more just and sustainable food system for Durham Region.

Through this community consultation opportunity, the Durham Food Policy Council aims to create space for you, food system stakeholders, to share the knowledge you have acquired in your work with Durham's food system. This approach will help us to develop strategic direction around the type of policy change that is needed for a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable food system.

When reviewing the Report Card framework and supporting pillars, we ask that you consider the following **Inclusion Criteria** regarding the type of information that could be included in the finalized version of the Report Card:

- 1) data that represents Durham and its municipalities
- 2) data that is from existing research or reports
- 3) data that is free and available to the public
- 4) data that has been collected using sound research methods
- 5) data that is easy to understand

## 02 A food sovereignty framework & supporting pillars

A food sovereignty framework will be used to guide the upcoming Food System Report Card. This framework helps us to consider not only the long-term stability of the localized supply chain, but also the environmental and socio-economic factors that are interconnected within food as a system. Food sovereignty is defined as “the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems”.<sup>3</sup> Food sovereignty pushes us to look at food as more than a commodity for economic growth and provides a basis and a means for collective action and social change.<sup>1,2</sup> The framework also supports the mission of the Durham Food Charter, which is to “create an environment that supports community food security through food sovereignty and a sustainable local food system in the Region of Durham”.<sup>3</sup> Drawing from the pillars of food sovereignty<sup>2</sup>, the principals used in this guiding document and future Report Card are:



Food is sacred



Works with nature



Food for people



Localizes food systems & Puts control locally



Values food providers



Builds knowledge and skill

Table 1 on page 3 provides a summary of the food sovereignty pillars, definitions and sample indicators.

**Table 1: Summary of pillars and Sample indicators**

Pillar	Defined by:	Examples of indicators
Food is sacred	Sees food as an asset to life that should not be squandered; food nourishes but is the foundation of human connection, culture, tradition, spirituality, and relations to place.	Perspectives that speak to the value of food to cultural practice, spirituality, diaspora, and the importance of strengthening human and environmental connections.
Food for people	Places people's need for food at the centre of policies; insists that food should be seen as more than a commodity.	Average family income; average individual income; consumption rates of fruits and vegetables; annual household spending on food; annual family income; rates of food insecurity for Indigenous populations.
Values food providers	Respects the work of all food providers and the ways in which sustainable livelihoods are supported across the food system.	# of new farmers; # of vertical farms; storage capacity available in the region; # of foreign workers in agriculture in the region; # of commercial kitchens available for food processing; # of incubator kitchens available to support small food businesses; and enabling policies for street food vendors/food trucks.
Works with nature	Recognizes efforts made to improve ecosystem resilience and optimizes what ecosystems have to offer.	# of farms using sustainable practices; measures of water quality around farmland; amount of food composted annually; # of circular economy businesses; # of food gleaning projects; regional incentives for farmers to engage in sustainable practices.
Localizes food systems & Puts control locally	Minimizes the distance between food providers and consumers; resists dependency on corporate actors; challenges practices that inhibit localized food systems; places control with local food providers; rejects the privatization of natural resources.	# of urban farms; # of seed banks or libraries; # of local food delivery programs; # of local food distributors; # of institutions that procure locally; # of local producers that have institutional contracts; # number of actors involved in municipal food policy tables or councils, and % of women initiating and maintaining breastfeed practices.
Builds knowledge and skill	Promotes food skill building, food education, traditional knowledge, and using research to support knowledge for future generations; rejects the use of technologies that transform, undermine or contaminate local food systems and food environments.	# of people accessing education in agriculture; # of community kitchens; # of community gardens (with education as a goal); # of organizations that host food literacy programs (and types); # of schools that support food education; municipalities that provide nutritional guidance and programs (all ages).

### FOOD IS SACRED

The 'Food is sacred' pillar of food sovereignty was established through the People's Food Policy (PFP) discussions that took place from 2008 to 2011. The PFP project mobilized approximately 3,500 people across Canada in a grassroots process to develop a food sovereignty policy for Canada.<sup>2</sup> As part of this project, members of an Indigenous Circle called for a specific pillar to highlight that food is intrinsic to who we are as persons and as peoples. The pillar reminds us that food is the bond between human beings and the natural elements, including all the other creatures.<sup>2</sup>

By placing 'Food is sacred' in the forefront of the Report Card, we aim to emphasize that food is an asset to life that should not be squandered.<sup>2</sup> 'Food is sacred' reminds us that food not only nourishes us nutritionally, but is the foundation of human connection, culture, tradition, spirituality, and relations to place. For this reason, we hope that as stakeholders involved in this process of assessing the food system in Durham region, you will keep 'Food is sacred' in the forefront of your mind. The lens that 'Food is sacred' provides is one that emphasises that food providers must be seen as central to the food system; food must be shared with everyone, and that food cannot be seen solely as a commodity.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Food is sacred indicators**

We understand that there may not yet be sufficient and publicly available data in Durham region that speaks to the intrinsic value of food as detailed above. We propose that, in moving the Report Card forward, this project engages in interviews with stakeholders who can speak to the value of food to cultural practice, spirituality, diaspora, and that strengthens human and environmental connections in Durham region. The aim would be to gather qualitative data to emphasize the perspectives and experiences of communities or groups that may be traditionally underrepresented. In doing so, we also aim to bring these perspectives to the forefront of all pillars in the future Cross-Durham Food System Report Card.

## FOOD FOR PEOPLE

The ‘Food for people’ pillar places people’s need for food at the centre of policies and insists that food should be seen as more than a commodity.<sup>1</sup> In 1999, The Canadian federal government affirmed that food is a human right at the FAO’s World Food Summit.<sup>4</sup> The ‘right to food’ is realized when every person “alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.”<sup>5</sup> Food as a human right and as a priority for federal level actors has been in decline, while regions and municipalities are confronted with an increasing need to address emerging food security issues.<sup>9</sup>

Food security is defined in the Region of Durham’s 2020 Official Plan Consolidation as “a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice, and the ability of the agricultural community to support this system.”<sup>6</sup> This intersects and is connected with other social determinants of health, such as social capital (i.e. social connections, social networks) and neighbourhood factors (i.e. proximity to supermarkets and other food assets).<sup>7</sup>

### ‘Food for people’ indicators

Below are some examples of data that could be included in the ‘Focuses on food for people’ pillar. Though some of these examples speak to economic challenges that may inhibit food access, your input will help to build out other aspects of food security within this section.

**Table 2: Sample ‘Food for people’ indicators**

Indicator	Source
Rate of food insecurity: 14% of the population or 66,100 people	The Price of Eating Well, 2019 from 2016 census <sup>8</sup>
Nutritional Food Basket: \$199/week; \$861/month	The Price of Eating Well, 2019 from 2016 census <sup>8</sup>
Households spending more than 30% on housing: 25.5%	Durham Region Profile Demographics & Socio-economic Data, 2020 from 2015 data <sup>9</sup>
Black households spending more than 50% on housing: 41% (in core housing need)	CDCD Community Lens Report, 2021 from 2016 census <sup>10</sup>

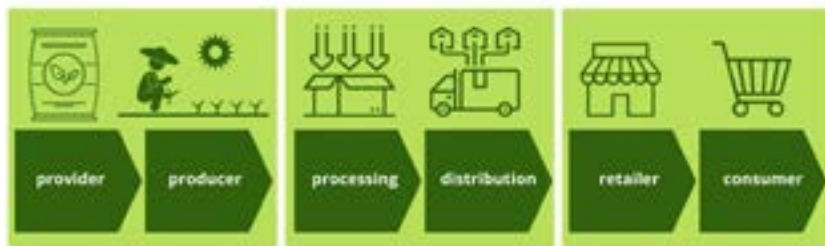
Sample indicators that could speak to ‘Food for people’:

- the average distance to food sources
- the demographics of food bank users in the region
- the number of food access points in the region
- annual household spending on food
- rates of food insecurity for Indigenous populations

## VALUES FOOD PROVIDERS

A food supply chain is an important part of the food system, and in our contemporary world is foundational for most communities' food supply. The food supply chain “is a system of organizations, people, technology, activities, information and resources involved in moving food products or services from supplier to customer”.<sup>11</sup> Put simply, a food supply chain is built upon activities and actors that systematically grow, harvest, transport, process, package, sell and distribute food. The ‘Values food providers’ pillar respects the work of all food providers and the ways in which sustainable livelihoods are supported across the food system.<sup>1</sup>

**Image 1: Simplified food supply chain<sup>12</sup>**



### ‘Values food providers’ indicators

Below are some examples of data that could speak to the ‘Values food providers’ pillar. Though these examples speak specifically to farming, your input will help to build out other aspects of ‘food providers’ data within this section.

**Table 3: Sample ‘Values food providers’ indicators**

Indicator	Source
Number of farms: 1,323	Census, 2016 <sup>13</sup>
Total farmland area (acres): 292,815	Census, 2016 <sup>13</sup>
Farm area owned (acres): 182,047	Census, 2016 <sup>13</sup>
Farm area leased (acres): 115,957	Census, 2016 <sup>13</sup>

Sample indicators that could speak to ‘Values food providers’:

- number of new farmers
- number of vertical farms
- number of commercial kitchens available for food processing
- number of incubator kitchens available to support small food business

## WORKS WITH NATURE

The ‘Works with nature’ pillar speaks to efforts made to improve ecosystem resilience and optimizing what ecosystems have to offer.<sup>1</sup> When considering possible ‘Works with nature’ indicators, we may look to data that illustrates both environmental issues as well as the efforts made to support healthier and more sustainable food and ecosystems.

### ‘Works with nature’ indicators

Below are some examples of data that could speak to the ‘Works with nature’ pillar. Though these examples speak specifically to surplus food and food waste, your input will help to build out other aspects of food system ecological resilience within this section.

**Table 4: Sample ‘Works with nature’ indicators**

Indicator	Source
Amount of food waste generated annually (tonnes): 1144.8	The Environmental Impacts of Regional Agriculture and Food Systems in Southern Ontario Report, 2014 <sup>11</sup>
Number of businesses enrolled in food rescue initiatives: 70	FoodRescue.ca, 2021 <sup>14</sup>

Sample indicators that could speak to the ‘Works with nature’:

- measures of water quality around farmland
- measures of soil quality across the region
- the amount of food that is composted in the region annually
- number of circular economy businesses
- number of food gleaning projects
- regional incentives for farmers to engage in sustainable practices
- amount of inputs used in agriculture
- water conservation practices
- measures of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions



## LOCALIZES FOOD SYSTEMS & PUTS CONTROL LOCALLY

This pillar is an amalgamation of two separate pillars of food sovereignty, placed together due to their overlapping intentions. The ‘Localizes food systems’ aspect of the pillar speaks to the importance of reducing the distance between food providers and consumers<sup>4</sup> It also emphasizes the need to resist total dependency on corporate actors, and challenges practices that inhibit the ability of a localized food system to thrive.<sup>1</sup> The ‘Puts control locally’ aspect emphasizes the need to place control in the hands of local food providers and rejects the privatization of natural resources.<sup>1</sup>

Though we should be critical of viewing this pillar solely through an economic lens, the ‘multiplier effect’ highlights one example of why supporting local food systems is important. Essentially, the multiplier effect informs us that the more a dollar circulates in a defined region, and the faster it circulates, the more income, wealth and jobs it creates in a given region.<sup>15</sup> When local food is produced and sold in the region, it can have a multiplier effect of 1.4-2.6 throughout the wider local economy.<sup>16</sup> It is estimated that if “every household in Ontario spent \$10 a week on local food, we would have an additional \$2.4 billion in our local economy at the end of the year” and the creation of 10,000 new jobs.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond economic reasoning, local food production, procurement, distribution and retail can have significant

advantages environmentally and socially. When communities invest in opportunities to support local food, they are also investing in food system education, increasing the awareness of locally available foods and seasonality, which also helps us work toward a fundamental shift in our thinking about food.<sup>16</sup>

### ‘Localizes food systems & Puts control locally’ indicators

Below are some examples of data that could speak to the ‘Localizes food systems & Puts control locally’ pillar. With your support, this section of the Report Card will be built out to include data on initiatives, projects and policies that support local food in Durham.

**Table 5: Sample ‘Localizes food systems & Puts control locally’ indicators**

Indicator	Source
# of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs: 11	Invest Durham, Farm Fresh, 2021 <sup>16</sup>
# of Farmers Markets: 9	Invest Durham, Farm Fresh, 2021 <sup>16</sup>
Municipalities with policies that support the use of greenhouses for food growing: Ajax	Durham Integrated Growers, 2016 <sup>17</sup>

Sample indicators that could speak to ‘Localizes food systems & Puts control locally’:

- number of urban farms
- number of seed banks or libraries
- number of local food delivery programs

**BUILDS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL**

A transformation of the food environment in Canada has taken place over the last few decades-- one that has impacted and altered our patterns of eating.<sup>18</sup> A range of factors have led to a reliance on highly processed products, including changes in employment and in family life.<sup>18</sup> The increased use of prepared and processed food products has decreased the transfer of food knowledge from parents, caregivers, and extended family to children and adolescents-- paths that have traditionally supported life skill development.<sup>18</sup>

The ‘Builds knowledge and skill’ pillar highlights the importance of building on food literacy, skills and education, and the importance of traditional knowledge.<sup>1</sup> It also underscores the need to use research to support and pass knowledge to future generations, while also rejecting the use of technologies that transform, undermine or contaminate local food systems and food environments.<sup>5</sup>



**‘Builds knowledge and skill’ indicators**

Below are some examples of data that could speak to the ‘Builds knowledge and skill’ pillar. Though these indicators speak more to farm training, with your support, this section of the Report Card will be built out to include data on initiatives, projects and policies that support skill building and knowledge transfer in Durham.

**Table 6: Sample ‘Builds knowledge and skill’ indicators**

Indicator	Source
Percentage of farms that offer on-the-job training for their employees: 32.79%	Durham Region Agriculture Labour Market Survey, 2007 <sup>19</sup>
Percentage of farmers challenged with training and education access: 28.85%	Durham Region Agriculture Labour Market Survey, 2007 <sup>19</sup>

Sample indicators that could speak to “Builds knowledge and skill”:

- number of people accessing education in agriculture
- number of community gardens (with education as a goal)
- number of organizations that host food literacy programs
- number of schools that support food education
- municipalities that provide nutritional guidance and programs (all ages).

## 04 Next steps

Once you have reviewed this Public Consultation Guide, please review once again the data **Inclusion Criteria** on page 2 and bring your recommendations to the Food System Report Card Roundtable Event, or submit your recommendations via the [Public Consultation Submission Form](#). If using the Public Consultation Submission Form, please make your contributions by October 1, 2021.

Through these avenues, you may offer insights on existing data or suggestions for areas of research that deserve further exploration. This open-source method aims to ensure ongoing data collection, and an opportunity for a diverse range of stakeholders to make contributions. Data made available by actors across all municipalities within Durham region will help us to paint a more complete picture of what food security looks like across the region.



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