



— ONTARIO —

Bring Home the World

Improving Access to Ontario's World Foods

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Message from the Minister



Our government is committed to building a stronger economy and helping expand the availability of foods that reflect Ontario's diversity.

Ontario has the most culturally diverse population in Canada. Throughout history what we have cultivated, prepared and consumed reflects our diverse tastes. Right here in Ontario, our farmers grow and harvest more than 200 products to help meet the demand for fresh, high-quality local food – from bitter melon to bok choy, from cheddar to paneer, and from omega pork to goat meat.

Expanding Ontario's local food market helps grow our agri-food sector and creates jobs in every corner of the province. That is why our government has a Local Food Strategy (www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/localfood.htm) to promote the good things that are grown, harvested and made in Ontario.

We know that local food has evolved to include a greater variety of products that speak to the diversity of Ontarians that call our province home. That is why as part of our Local Food Strategy, our government is putting a greater focus on helping expand consumer access and availability of locally-grown World Foods to make it easier for everyday Ontarians to *Bring Home the World*.

I'm challenging all Ontarians to get involved and tell us how our government can help you *Bring Home the World* by reading our discussion paper and filling out a short online survey by visiting: www.ontario.ca/worldfoods.

Your participation is key to helping expand opportunities for World Foods in Ontario and I'd like to thank you for taking the time to participate in our consultation.

Together, we will continue to grow Ontario's agri-food sector and build Ontario up, creating more jobs and economic prosperity across the province.

The Honourable Jeff Leal

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs



Introduction

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is pleased to engage Ontarians and our agri-food sector partners, whose ideas and expertise will help find ways to improve access to World Foods through our Local Food Strategy.

Improving access to World Foods will help boost convenience and choice for Ontarians and support economic growth and job creation across the province.

This discussion paper will outline the changing demographics in Ontario, highlight some recent government initiatives in support of World Foods, and identify new economic opportunities tied to World Foods.

OMAFRA wants to hear your ideas for promoting local food and the diversity of locally-grown, harvested and processed World Foods in Ontario.

World Foods in Ontario

World Foods are those which can be produced, harvested or processed in Ontario that reflect the diversity of the province's population.

Examples of Ontario world foods may include:

- Fruits and vegetables – fuzzy melon, bok choy, specialty eggplant;
- Proteins – goat meat, shrimp, edamame;

- Dairy – goat or sheep milk, lassi (yogurt-based drink), labneh (cream cheese);
- Grains – quinoa

World Foods can also be part of an internationally inspired recipe using locally-sourced ingredients, or part of a culturally important or religiously required diet, such as Halal processed foods.

Ontario farmers and food manufacturers are already growing and producing World Foods:

- There is already large production of specialty vegetables, such as bok choy, napa cabbage, and Chinese broccoli. In 2015, there were 2,900 acres of these types of vegetables grown in Ontario with a value of \$15.5 million.
- Other World Foods, such as okra or Asian eggplant, are being grown in varying amounts or are being researched to assess their ability to grow under Ontario conditions.
- There is a greater interest in a wider variety of protein and dairy options, such as goat milk and meat.
- Over the past several years, there has been an increase in demand for Halal processed foods and products.

Despite the growing diversity of production in Ontario's agri-food sector, grocery retailers often rely on imports to meet consumer demand. For example, most vegetables are imported from California, Mexico and South America. In 2015, Ontario imported over \$10 million worth of okra and over \$18 million worth of all varieties of eggplants.

Branching out production and processing in the province to meet the needs of Ontario's diversity provides Ontario's agri-food sector with a world of opportunity.

A better understanding of the demand for World Foods by Ontarians could spark a quicker shift to a wider range of agri-food products that provide opportunities for the entire agri-food value chain, including consumers.



Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (VRIC) is a world-class research centre dedicated to horticultural science and innovation. Through the Feeding Diversity: Bringing World Crop to Market strategy, VRIC and its partners are leading research and development of World Foods in the province, such as okra and Asian and Indian eggplant.

A World of Opportunity

Growing numbers of new Canadians in Ontario are creating new market opportunities for locally grown and processed World Foods:

- People of South Asian, Chinese and Afro-Caribbean heritage typically consume more fresh vegetables and spend more of their household income on fresh produce – upwards of 40 per cent – compared to the Canadian average. The top vegetables in demand include okra, eggplant, bitter melon, bok choy, Chinese broccoli and callaloo.
- New Canadians consume 6 to 10 times the amount of goat, veal, lamb, and rabbit compared to the Canadian average.

The shifts in Ontario's population are resulting in a more diverse consumer palate, but are also

contributing to changes in where Ontarians shop, as well as where they like to eat.

For example, more Canadians are likely to increase their demand for meat during cultural holidays and to purchase from a butcher shop versus a supermarket. In some cases these meats are processed or prepared for religious or cultural purposes.

An expanding consumer base is increasing demand for more World Foods options. For example, the majority of Ontario shoppers have reported that they would cook internationally flavoured cuisine more often if the ingredients were readily available at their local grocery store.



Government Actions and Successes

Working with the Government of Ontario, agri-food businesses have taken action to support the growth of Ontario World Foods. This work has largely been carried out by OMAFRA.

Ontario's Local Food Strategy

In 2013, the Ontario government launched the Local Food Strategy to increase the consumption of local food. Since then, the province has launched a tax credit for farmers donating their products to community organizations, developed goals for enhancing local food literacy and access. The Ontario government has invested over \$190 million in initiatives and projects to promote and celebrate local food.

Foodland Ontario

OMAFRA's Foodland Ontario program promotes and markets local food, supports the Ontario government's Local Food Strategy and has helped *Bring Home the World* by promoting Ontario's World Foods.

Foodland Ontario encourages consumers to use locally sourced ingredients through internationally inspired recipes provided online and in print, and works with grocery retailers by offering point-of-sale materials to help promote locally-grown World Foods. In partnership with T&T Supermarkets, Foodland Ontario has created an Asian greens banner in both English and Chinese to promote vegetables grown in Ontario.

In 2017, Foodland Ontario is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Year-over-year, Foodland Ontario has helped increase consumer awareness and consumption of local food while promoting World Foods to reach Ontario's diverse population.

The 2017 Foodland Ontario calendar features globally-inspired recipes from twelve countries including India, Italy and Vietnam promoting the use of local ingredients.



Research & Innovation

OMAFRA helps fund World Foods research through organizations such as the University of Guelph and the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre. Much of the consumer trend information in this document is a result of this research.

Technical Expertise

OMAFRA has technical experts that help develop information to support world crop production and market development. The government also provides tools to assist farmers who are transitioning to the production of new and specialty crops. For information, please visit: www.omafra.gov.on.ca/CropOp/en/.

Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation

Every year, the government celebrates innovative Ontario agri-food businesses through the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation. Each year it's inspiring to find out about leading edge innovation that plays a key role in making Ontario's agri-food sector competitive and sustainable. Recently, we have seen an increase in response to consumer demands with innovators taking steps to grow the World Foods market. Some of the award winning innovations to date have included: growing edamame, callaloo, okra, and making tempeh.

Building Capacity

The Ontario government continues to build capacity in the local food sector, which includes World Foods. Programs such as the Greenbelt Fund's Local Food Investment Fund, Growing Forward 2, and grant requests through the Ontario Trillium Foundation are supporting World Foods projects across the province.

Moving Forward

We have a lot to be proud of here in Ontario. Ontario's agri-food sector generates \$36.4 billion in GDP and employs nearly 800,000 Ontarians in communities across the province. The agri-food sector is crucial to our long-term growth and economic prosperity. As the sector bridges rural and urban communities and provides high-quality food at home, it is no surprise that everyone involved is eager to see the agri-food sector continue to grow and thrive.

We want to hear from you! To provide feedback or complete the World Foods survey, please visit our website at www.ontario.ca/worldfoods; or email us at ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca.

We will collect all the feedback received and use it to help improve access and availability to World Foods so everyday Ontarians can *Bring Home the World*.