

Waterloo Region Food Charter

Vision: A healthy, just, and sustainable food system is one in which all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way, and that supports our rural communities. Such a food system promotes social justice, population health, and profitable farms, reflects and sustains local culture, and supports ecological viability.

To achieve this vision for a healthy food system, there is a need to carry out food system planning, and to establish principles that govern food-related decisions.

The Waterloo Region Food Charter defines a common vision, and provides a foundation for a food system strategy.

Because we believe in fair, environmentally sustainable, livable, and economically profitable rural and urban communities, we support...

1. connecting people to our local food system by:

- enhancing knowledge about, and engagement in, the food in our communities. This includes:
 - Empowering people to participate in the local food system
 - Improving our skills for growing, preserving, and preparing food
 - Educating ourselves and others about the food system
 - Encouraging respect for food and the ecosystems to which it is bound
 - Supporting the expansion of food grown or raised in urban areas

2. community economic development by:

- rebuilding the processing and distribution infrastructure required to make more local foods available to local residents. This includes:
 - Prioritizing local processing, distribution, and retailing opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses
 - Encouraging public institutions to buy local and environmentally sustainable food
- encouraging policies and other initiatives which enable profitable livelihoods for local farmers for generations to come

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3. access to healthy food by:

- protecting farmland from urban development
- supporting policies and other initiatives that ensure that everyone has access to enough nutritious food. This includes:
 - Championing adequate incomes for everyone, so that all residents can afford to buy healthy food
 - Encouraging the local production and processing of foods that contribute to the nutritional health of citizens
 - Ensuring walkable access to venues that sell healthy foods
 - Ensuring the widespread availability of, and access to, locally produced and culturally appropriate food
 - Ensuring the availability of healthy, affordable food choices in workplaces and public institutions

4. ecological health by:

- promoting and supporting food production and processing methods that reduce greenhouse gas emissions; use less fossil-fuel energy; sustain or enhance wildlife habitats, watersheds, biological and seed diversity, and soil health; and that optimize or reduce the use of local natural resources to ensure long-term ecological sustainability
- ensuring access to a safe and sustainable water supply for all residents of Waterloo Region
- encouraging the reduction of food waste and excessive food packaging, and supporting initiatives that strive to reduce or reuse food waste, such as composting

5. integrated food policies at all levels of government by:

- encouraging joined-up policies across local, provincial, and federal levels of government that aim to ensure that healthy, environmentally sustainable food is available to everyone
- recognizing the importance of comprehensive food strategies and policies that promote a profitable, viable and ecologically sustainable food system