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PHILO 2010: Barriers to local food procurement at Western

Brian M. Yu

Western University, byu69@uwo.ca

Anna Cotarla

Western University, acotarla@uwo.ca

Aniket Bhatt

Western University, abhatt65@uwo.ca

Erica Marie Embury

Western University, eembury@uwo.ca

Alexa Nemeth

Western University, alexmnemeth@gmail.com

Martine Koestel

Western University, mkoestel@uwo.ca

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BARRIERS TO LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT AT WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Written by: Aniket Bhatt, Erica Embury, Martine Koestel, Anna Cotarla, Brian Yu, Alexa Nemeth

What's Stopping Us?

The purpose of this project is to investigate barriers to local food procurement in London and Middlesex county, both from the side of the food producer and the distributor. What are existing projects in this area, and how can the Middlesex-London Food Policy Council (MLFPC) support or start new initiatives to support local food?

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Introduction

Food is an undeniably ubiquitous element at Western; we all eat. It is therefore equally important to investigate barriers to local food procurement in London and Middlesex county. Ultimately we should strive to increase access to local food and remove barriers to local food producers.

The primary objective of this report is to identify a top-level cumulative list of barriers constraining the success of the local food movement in Middlesex. We aim to identify key areas of improvements and offer feasible solutions to remove some of these barriers.

However, it is important to note, that due to the interconnectedness of the barriers to local food procurement, it is not in our view ideal or sufficient to fully overcome the barriers by targeting individual issues. It would rather be more feasible for Western to implement the recommendations contained in this report over an incremental and long-term transformation that highlights most if not all of the areas highlighted.

The structure of the report is as follows. First we aim to summarize where we feel Western University has exceeded expectations in terms of efforts and initiatives to alleviate barriers to local food procurement. Subsequently, barriers in terms of sustainable and local foods conducted by the City of London are addressed. We then aim to address areas of potential improvement and a summary of recommendations to address these areas.

Current Practices – Western University

Western University has made a valiant effort at creating a sustainable food system to maintain both ecological, economic, and ecological integrity. Western University has broken down their approach into ecological, cultural, and technological components. We highlight several of these efforts below:

(i) Farmers Market

Western University is host to a Farmers market every Tuesday from 9:00am - 2:00pm. It runs until early November and opens back up in the spring. There has been a 25% growth in vendors each year.

“The Farmers Market sponsored by Hospitality Services, facilitates connections between different community groups. It provides students, staff and faculty with local foods, which reduces emissions and waste from out-of-province transport and individual off-campus shopping. The Farmers Market sees about a 25% growth in vendors each year. Started in 2013 and running September and October only, the market now begins in early June and runs through to November (weather permitting). Some of the things that need to be carefully considered when contemplating expansion include: the wear and tear of Westerns landscape as farmers trucks, tables and tents occupy our green space as well as the availability of season foods.”
- Hospitality Services Spokesperson

(ii) Contracted Local Produce Suppliers

a. Western University, Hospitality Services, sourced and purchased local berries. Arrangements allowed for the purchase of 1400 pounds of seasonal/local strawberries and blueberries. The producer cleaned, packed, and froze the berries which were stored and shipped on a per need basis. This was a drastic and progressive foot forward as previously, berries were sourced and imported from Chile and

Ecuador. The local berries are used in smoothies, parfaits, and waffle bars in all Residence Dining halls.

- b. Additionally, Hospitality Services at Western has made an effort to source seasonal produce (apples, mushrooms, and tomatoes for most of the year) from local growers. Local Ontario fruits and vegetables are incorporated into daily menus. Additionally, local potatoes are sourced directly from farms delivered by the farmers themselves. A similar arrangement for local beef has been made.

(iii) 100 Mile Market

This innovative program aims to provide an exquisite culinary experience using local foods from London and surrounding areas. This program additionally strives to promote local, organic, and seasonal products from a 100 mile radius of the University. All items and produce sourced are energy efficient and environmentally conscientious (fair-trade, biodegradable, and no bottled water). This program has been introduced in both Great Hall Catering and Residence Dining halls.

(iv) Apple Week

Residence Dining halls host Apple Week every October during which bushels of locally sourced apples from orchards are promoted. Efforts to adjust pricing of the apples are made to allow for maximum participation from students and a different apple based dessert is featured each day of the week.

(v) Local Soup Supplier

Hospitality Services has changed their soup supplier to a local company in an effort to introduce home-made soups that are both fresh and local.

(vi) Hospitality Services Suppliers

As of 2017 more than 40% of Hospitality Services suppliers are local including main food distributors. This initiative has led to a reduced environmental footprint and allowed for the forging of partnerships. New

initiatives include an in-house burger concept featuring locally grown beef and a locally bottled cold coffee product sold throughout campus.

“We have been pioneers in sustainability here at Western, by getting as much local produce and food as we can. By placing preference on building relationships with local businesses and fostering transparency in purchasing processes, Hospitality Services can have confidence in the quality of the product and integrity of the practices.”

- Hospitality Services Spokesperson



Current Practices – London

We have identified several barriers to local food procurement which we aim to summarize below:

- (I) Producers
 - a. Unfortunately, there is a striking lack for demand of these locally grown products. This lack of demand restricts opportunities for expansion of operations.
 - b. Additionally, there is quite a bit of fierce competition from global producers. Local producers must compete with global producers to capture a segment of the market.
- (II) Distributors
 - a. As the supply does not meet the demand for certain local foods (example being fruits) during off seasons, distributors have been recorded to opt for internationally grown produce.
 - b. Hazen et al., 2013 found that long term stable income was the main barrier to local food community programs and income sources adversely affect decision making by leadership in local food community programs
- (III) Consumers
 - a. Consumers are less likely/more hesitant to purchase locally grown food due to a slightly higher price point.
 - b. There is also a stark lack of information and knowledge among consumers of what local foods means and entails.
- (IV) Several Other barriers to local food procurement include
 - a. Traffic on campus (primary distributor sourcing reliance as a result).
 - b. Availability of items in the quantities required by Western.

Areas of Improvement

Recommendation / Area	Expansion
Student Incentive to buy local food – Similar to Travel Mug Program	Suggestion: Every 10 local apples you buy, get a reusable bag. Implementation in Residence Dining halls.
Local Farmer Spotlights	Spotlight on local farmers, see the face of the person, their story. Emotional appeal aspect, maybe a UWO YouTube channel/ commercial on TV in London or news story? The farmers can describe their experiences. This may encourage students/people in the community (people who want to help their friend). Awareness important. Our own experiences in philosophy of food have shaped our food choices so we think that conveying this knowledge to other students will have an impact.
Expand and Redefine Local	For London, expand the radius and redefine local. Currently it means only food grown in southwestern Ontario and the province. Possibly expanding it to neighboring states and provinces will increase the efficacy of local food programs and allow each region to grow crops based on their strengths.
Revamp of Get Fresh Eat local Map	Include restaurants in the Get Fresh Eat local map (from the London Middlesex Food Guide)
Responsible Restaurant(s) Spotlights	Implement a program to showcase restaurants that have implemented local ingredients for their foods and a database showing which restaurants have fulfilled this. Like Feast-On. However, marketing needs to be established for the program, in order to provide an economic incentive and so that restaurants and people know about it.
Local Food Database	Create a database outlining where people can get fresh local food and a way to help people find restaurants that serve local food in their area (similar to Foodlands program that provides a way to figure out recipes using only local food ingredients https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/recipes)

Farmers – Good Food Boxes Partnership	<p>Good Food Boxes are volunteer packed with fresh, high-quality, culturally appropriate vegetables and fruits. With the box menu changing weekly, each Good Food Box presents a convenient and affordable way to eat good healthy food. Additionally, seasonal Ontario-grown products are featured whenever possible, supporting local farmers and saving fuel. Each week's box comes with recipes and news in the Good Food Newsletter.</p> <p>Might be more economically feasible for people of lower socioeconomic status (more convenient in terms of time and money spent on travelling to grocery stores).</p> <p>This would be important in addressing issues that come from living in food desert areas.</p>
Revamp of Individualist Culture	<p>Better outlook, more sharing of food, making it more economically sustainable. Change individualistic culture, gravitate towards a more sharing-based culture.</p>
Meals on Wheels Partnership	<p>Partner with Meals on Wheels and extend from just older adults to people of lower socioeconomic status. Include local food in the program.</p>
Local Food Festival(s)	<p>Local food festival or special events showcasing local food. Partnerships with restaurants that already support local producers (like Toboggan and their beer), to implement a special menu with only local ingredients. Implement more events like VEGfest (a vegetarian vegan type deal encouraging local food).</p>
Municipal Funding	<p>More municipal funding from London (or even other sectors of the government) towards community local food programs. (Hazel et al., 2013 found that consistent income was one of the most important factors of propagation of these programs) Policies aimed at improving public health must also recognize the spatial, as well as socioeconomic, inequities with respect to access to healthy and affordable food. (https://ij-healthgeographics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1476-072X-7-16)</p>
Student Grants	<p>Western could offer grants for students to plant their own food/ gardens (sustainable living) Rooftop gardens, as they do not use valuable real-estate is a feasible option.</p>

Increased Advocacy and Awareness	More marketing/informative resources to provide to the student population (both Fanshawe and Western). Once people become more aware, they will be more likely to purchase local foods
Partnerships	Partner with other organizations on campus to cross-promote and increase awareness. Meet with the Western faculty. Partner with the University Student Council (get them to push local food initiatives)
Coupons	Western hands out coupons with every student agenda, we could possibly do the same for local food initiatives
Educational Sessions	Could have a person come and teach students how to preserve local foods "Canning, freezing, and lacto-fermentation (i.e. for sauerkraut, pickles and preserves) can be easy skills to learn
Low Income Areas - Partnerships	Western can introduce a program where they partner with an organization and deliver local food (like local fruits and vegetables) to people in low-income areas who do not have transportation to access fresh/local food markets?
UCC Revamp	A food service in the UCC that serves local food can be established. This would allow for Western to support local food suppliers and also allow students to access better food choices on campus

However - "The consideration of different food concepts on campus are driven primarily by demand. With most concept changes, we poll our customers to get feedback on popular, sought-after food trends. Our experience has been that students are brand loyal and will often select franchises they're most familiar with. We are currently working on 2 exciting new local initiatives. The one will be replacing Harvey's in the UCC. It will be an in-house burger concept featuring locally raised beef. The other interesting local initiative is the addition of a locally bottled cold coffee product developed by Ivey students at Western. It will be featured in a few locations on campus".

- Hospitality Services Spokesperson
