



2025

Greater Sudbury

Food System Assessment

PREPARED BY

Greater Sudbury
Food Policy Council



Conseil sur la
politique alimentaire
du Grand Sudbury

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, we would like to acknowledge the Anishnaabe people (the original people) of these lands.

The City of Greater Sudbury has a rich history that began with the Anishnaabe people. We are grateful to live, work and play on the lands they have cared for since time immemorial, and we are thankful to them for sharing these lands and resources that have supported the prosperity of this city and its residents.

Our municipality is on the traditional lands of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapitae First Nation, signatories to the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850. We are honoured to work with them in partnership and friendship toward a future that is successful for the next seven generations.

We thank them for their contributions to the vibrancy of our communities and to the guardianship of the lands in which we share. We also recognize the contributions of the Metis, Inuit and other Indigenous people in shaping and strengthening our community.

It is our collective responsibility to learn the history on which our city was built and to ensure that the mistakes made by our predecessors are overcome by our willingness to learn and grow. For Greater Sudbury and the Anishnaabe to flourish together, we must recognize and respect each other's sovereign rights and title. With mutual understanding and collaboration, we will continue to grow together in the spirit of reconciliation.

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Executive Summary

Food is an integral part of our lives, shaping not only our health and well-being, but also the resilience of our communities, environment and economy. The quality, diversity and quantity of food we consume are influenced by a variety of factors such as culture, education, accessibility, the environment, socioeconomic status and media. These factors, in turn, impact how food is produced, distributed, consumed, and disposed of.

To support the development of a vibrant, equitable and sustainable food system, it is important to understand the intricate and interconnected forces that shape our access to food and our relationship with it.

The assessment aims to inspire action among residents, community groups, organizations, businesses, policymakers and leaders. It also serves as a tool to track progress and identify setbacks over time. Intended as a living document, it will evolve through continued engagement with the community and local partners. Developed by the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council, the assessment builds on the foundation of the ***Greater Sudbury Food Strategy (2017)***.



Summary of Key Recommendations by Theme

The assessment explores the current conditions that both support and challenge the local food system, while identifying key opportunities for meaningful change across seven core themes.

A summary of the assessment's key recommendations is provided in the following table.

1. Food Access

- Advocate for evidence-based solutions to food insecurity, such as policies that improve the incomes of low-income households.
- Advocate for and invest in resources to develop and implement an Emergency Food Plan for Greater Sudbury.
- Establish a dedicated permanent coordinator role to lead an Emergency Food Plan.

2. Food Literacy

- Expand hands-on food literacy in schools through partnerships with community groups, organizations and businesses.
- Establish a dedicated permanent coordinator role to support and expand hands-on food literacy opportunities.
- Increase the variety and frequency of community food literacy workshops on growing, harvesting, processing and cooking.

3. Urban Agriculture

- Develop bylaws and guidelines to encourage urban agriculture in residential and non-residential zones.
- Launch City-led or supported programs and pilot projects to encourage household food production.
- Establish a permanent coordinator role that will support and develop urban agriculture initiatives.
- Develop guidelines and resources for growing food for sale in urban areas.

4. Forest & Freshwater Foods (FFWF)

- Strengthen and expand initiatives that connect community to FFWF and to the land and waters they come from.
- Establish a dedicated permanent coordinator role to increase FFWF learning opportunities across schools and organizations.
- Continue support and action to protect and restore FFWF ecosystems.
- Increase education and outreach on sustainable harvesting practices of FFWF.
- Encourage certified, sustainable harvesting of FFWF for local use (e.g. restaurants, events, value-added products)

5. Agriculture & Food Processing

- Strengthen strategic partnerships among local and regional producers and processors to grow Greater Sudbury's agribusiness sector.
- Develop resources and support programs for both new and experienced farmers.
- Create and maintain a directory of agricultural job openings and hands-on training opportunities to support students and new workforce entrants.
- Establish a permanent coordinator role that will support collaboration and resource sharing among producers and among processors.
- Expand funding access and implement targeted initiatives to support climate adaptation and mitigation in food production and processing systems.

6. Food Retail, Service & Tourism

- Strengthen local and regional relationships to improve distribution networks, reduce costs and support small-scale producers and processors.
- Develop supply chain coordination and invest in local food infrastructure like processing and storage facilities.
- Increase public access to and awareness of local food outlets, including farmers markets, retail shops, online platforms and CSAs, along with boosting local food sales in grocery and convenience stores.
- Develop local food procurement policies for institutions and events, and support programs to help producers and processors expand market reach.
- Establish a dedicated permanent coordinator role that will support food businesses with resources such as a local entrepreneurial guide, access to commercial kitchens and regulatory guidance.
- Develop funding streams geared towards local food businesses that support local food procurement, art and culture.

7. Food Waste

- Promote food waste diversion programs offered in Greater Sudbury (e.g., Too Good to Go, Flashfood, Second Harvest, Loop).
- Incentivize business participation in food waste diversion.
- Increase low density residential participation in the Green Cart Program.
- Expand organic waste collection to the high density residential and non-residential sectors.
- Invest in a permanent organics processing facility that has the capacity to manage organic waste from all sectors within Greater Sudbury.

Applicable to All Themes

- Establish (a) local food hub(s) or centre(s) to centralize learning, sharing, coordination and distribution of food knowledge and resources.
- Establish (a) dedicated permanent coordinator role(s) to integrate efforts across the food system themes.

Introduction

The Greater Sudbury Food System Assessment aims to provide a snapshot of the current local food system in Greater Sudbury by compiling key indicators of food-related activities and identifying opportunities for growth.

In 2017, the Greater Sudbury Food Strategy was released, outlining five key themes with associated goals and actions to guide the community toward a more equitable, vibrant and sustainable food system.

One year later, a brief progress report highlighted the initial achievements following the strategy's launch.

Now, seven years later, this assessment serves as a new baseline for measuring the current state of Greater Sudbury's food system and to support tracking its progress over time.

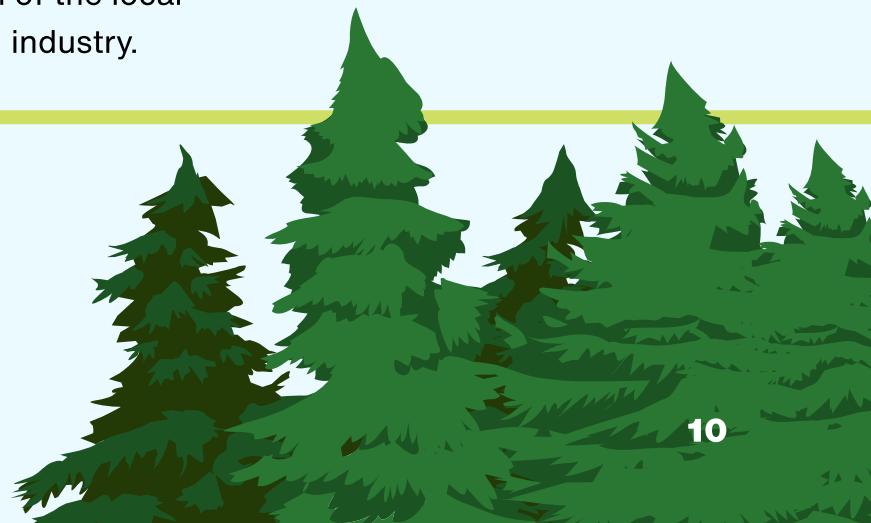


Background

Greater Sudbury spans over 3,100 square kilometres and is home to over 330 lakes, set within thousands of hectares of mixed boreal forest and diverse wetlands. Geographically, it is the largest city in Ontario and the most populous in Northern Ontario with an estimated 179,802 residents as of 2023, according to Statistics Canada. In 2001, Greater Sudbury became a single-tier municipality through the amalgamation of seven former surrounding municipalities. Today, its population remains distributed across these smaller communities, most of which are located within a 30-kilometer radius of the downtown core.

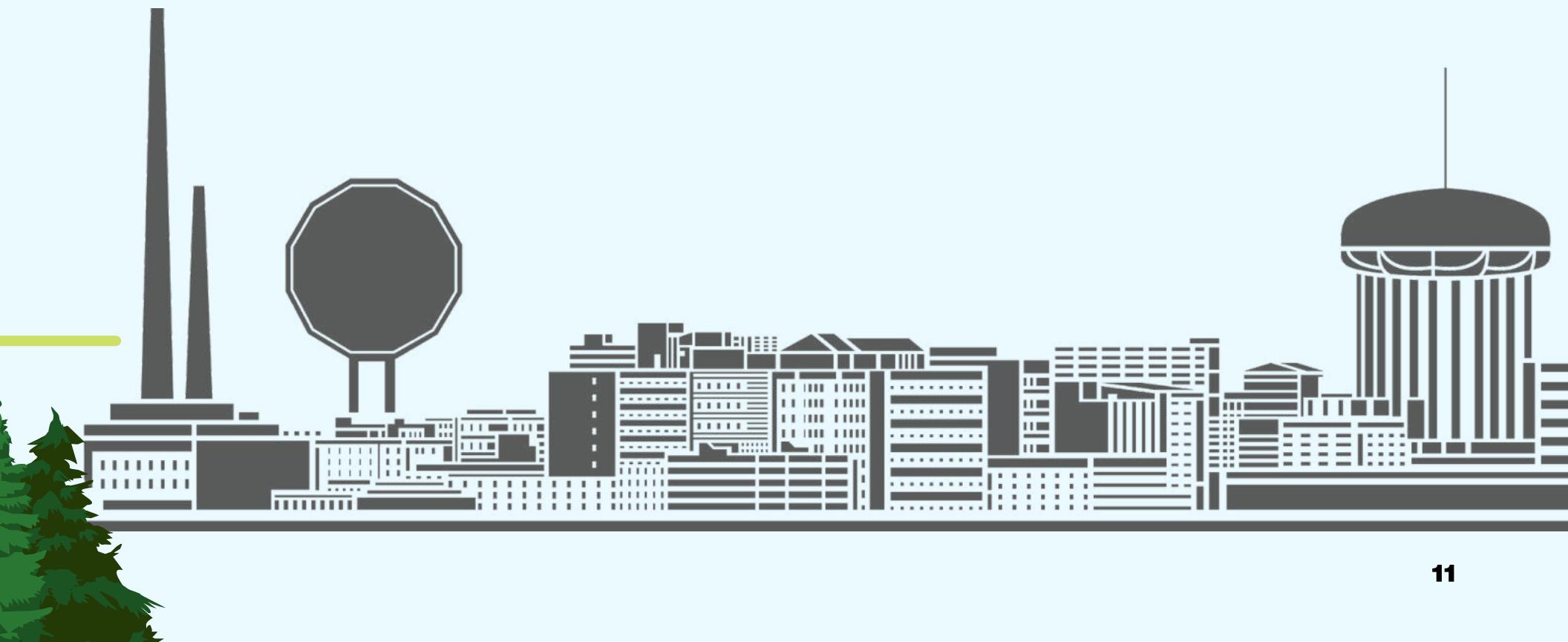
The city is surrounded by, but politically separate from, the Sudbury District. While this nearby district contributes to the broader regional food system and falls under the same public health agency, this assessment focuses primarily on the activities, programs, organizations and businesses operating within the City of Greater Sudbury. This narrower scope will allow for a more detailed and focused examination of the community's unique food system dynamics.

Greater Sudbury's development has been largely driven by the discovery of rich nickel and copper deposits along the perimeter of a two-billion-year-old impact crater known as the Sudbury Basin. In addition to the mineral wealth, the impact structure and the glacial silt and till deposits from the last ice age contributed to the formation of productive soils in an otherwise rocky shallow landscape. Indigenous peoples recognized the area's exceptional fertility for foraging and cultivating food long before settlers arrived in the late 1800s to utilize it for agricultural production. Although the agriculture sector became successful in the area and held promise for growth, its potential was quickly overshadowed and the sector nearly completely collapsed from the rapid growth of the local mining industry.



Early smelting practices involved extracting nickel and copper from sulphide ore deposits by burning it in large open pits known as roasting beds. The high demands for nickel during the First and Second World Wars, combined with these poor extraction practices, released vast amounts of smoke rich in sulphur dioxide. This smoke spread over the surrounding landscape, causing widespread acidification of soils and lakes. As a result, local vegetable and farm crops suffered significant damage and there were long-term consequences for both soil health and water quality.

In 1972, Sudbury's Inco Superstack was built to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions, followed a year later by the creation of VETAC and the City's Regreening Program. Now nationally recognized, the program has helped restore the city's damaged landscape. Today, there is now both an opportunity, and growing need, to apply that same determination to restoring our local food system.

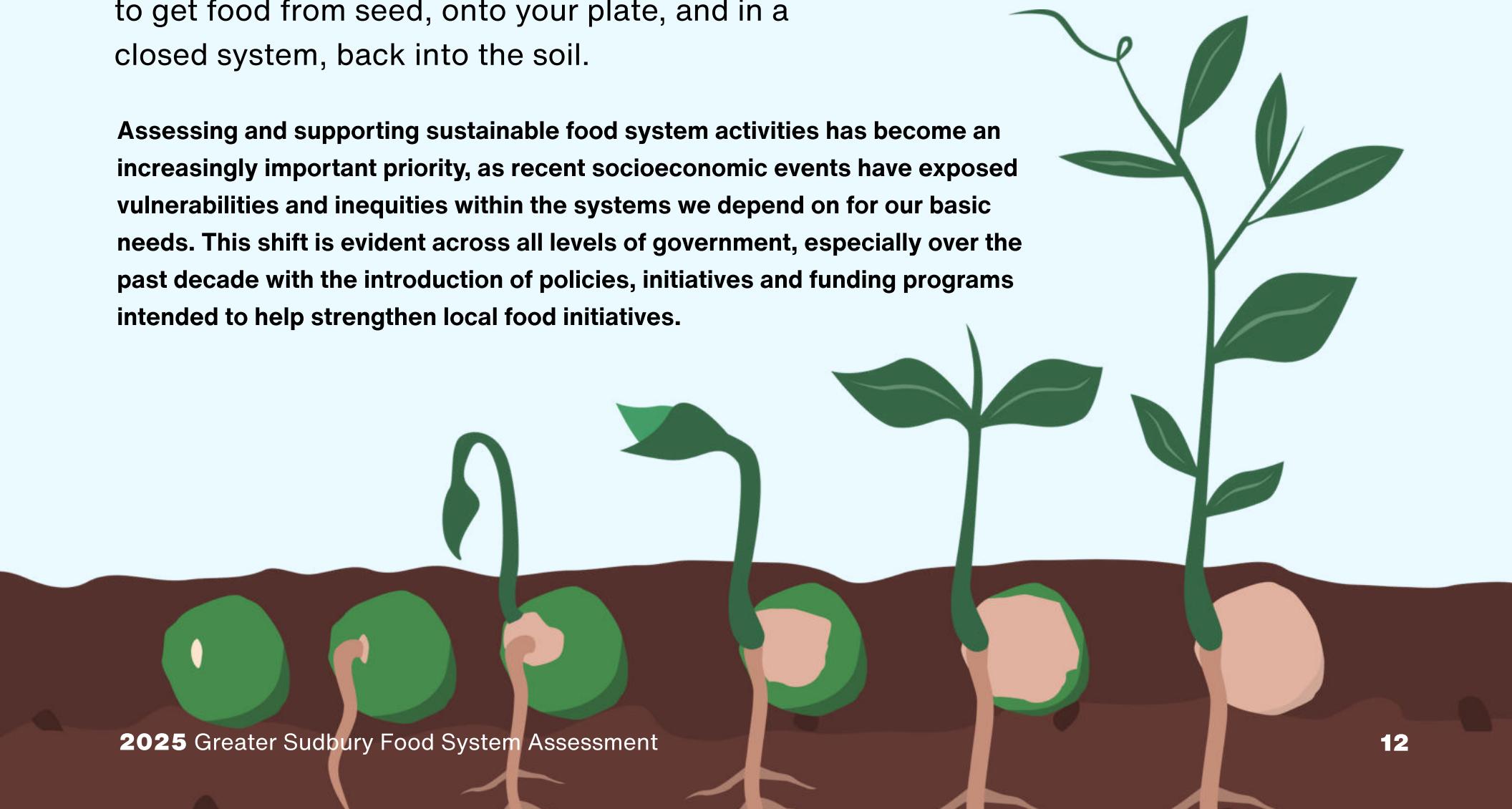




What is a food system?

A food system is a series of activities that occur to get food from seed, onto your plate, and in a closed system, back into the soil.

Assessing and supporting sustainable food system activities has become an increasingly important priority, as recent socioeconomic events have exposed vulnerabilities and inequities within the systems we depend on for our basic needs. This shift is evident across all levels of government, especially over the past decade with the introduction of policies, initiatives and funding programs intended to help strengthen local food initiatives.



Food Secure Canada formally incorporated as a non-profit in 2006 and has been a leading advocate for advancing food security and food sovereignty in Canada. They played a key role in shaping Canada's first-ever Food Policy for Canada in 2019, which led to the establishment of the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council in 2021.

A new national network called **Sustainable Food Systems for Canada (SF4C)** was established in 2025. The network is composed of post-secondary institutions across Canada, along with non-governmental organizations working in collaboration with a variety of other groups to drive innovation in the agri-food sector with the support of federal funding.

In 2024, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) was split into two distinct entities to better focus efforts on supporting and expanding agriculture and food businesses in the province, resulting in the creation of the **Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusinesses (OMAFA)**.

The Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council (GSFPC) was formed in 2013 and continues to bring together stakeholders and community leaders to collaborate on and support local food initiatives. Their advocacy helped secure the inclusion of Local Food System policies in the City's Official Plan,

leading to the development of the Greater Sudbury Food Strategy in 2017.

These developments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels represent valuable and positive steps towards recognizing and supporting food systems work. However, continued efforts are needed to strengthen policies, funding, leadership, coordination and human resources. Only through sustained action can meaningful progress be achieved toward a more sustainable and equitable food system.

To support these efforts, this assessment was developed to provide an initial detailed understanding of the current state of Greater Sudbury's food system, and to establish a foundation for tracking both progress and potential setbacks over time.

The assessment's framework follows that of the Greater Sudbury Food Strategy and is organized according to the strategy's core pillars and goals, with a few updates and additions made, as shown in Table 1. Each pillar includes relevant information and indicators that define the current context of the food system and serve as a basis for measuring change over time. Each section also highlights opportunities for further data collection to deepen our understanding of local food-related efforts and their impacts.

Table 1: Pillars & Goals

Pillars	Goals
Food Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened advocacy to reduce incidence of household food insecurity.
Food Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased food knowledge and skill opportunities within Greater Sudbury
Urban Agriculture Previously known as Growing Food (not for profit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visibility and promotion of urban agriculture in Greater Sudbury Increased household food production within Greater Sudbury Increased visibility and support for community gardens, farms and food forests Increased opportunities for commercial urban food production
Forest and Freshwater Foods (FFWF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of the cultural, health, ecological and economic value of FFWF Protection and restoration of a healthy FFWF ecosystem Increased FFWF commercial opportunities
Agriculture and Food Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of agricultural land for future generations Increased opportunities and appreciation for local food producers Improved infrastructure and efficiencies for local food producers
Food Retail, Service and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business competitiveness and partnerships within our food system Increased innovation and market access within our food system Enhanced food culture and culinary tourism opportunities in Greater Sudbury
Food Waste (new pillar)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased participation in programs and partnerships that reduce and divert food waste from businesses and institutions Enhanced household habits to reduce and divert food waste from landfills

Each pillar in the assessment includes a set of indicators which are specific statements that help to define our current position in achieving the goals outlined under each pillar. Some indicators identify areas where further research is needed, highlighting gaps in available information. Ideally, these indicators will be updated and expanded over time to continue informing the local food system database.

Maintaining and enriching this information will drive ongoing collaboration among a wide range of contributors including organizations, local governments, businesses, service providers, food producers and processors, schools, First Nations and others involved in local food system activities and initiatives. These efforts will help increase recognition of existing assets and continue to uncover new opportunities for developing a more sustainable, equitable and resilient food system.



Food Access



Goal: Strengthened advocacy to reduce incidence of household food insecurity

Having access to nutritious and culturally preferred food is the basis of a healthy and happy life as it fuels our minds, bodies and connects us to our community and the land.

Although we are fortunate to live in a region where nutritious foods are generally available, there are still many residents in Greater Sudbury that cannot or do not regularly have access to it. There are several complex barriers that impact food accessibility, many of which are caused by economic, social, environmental and geographical factors.

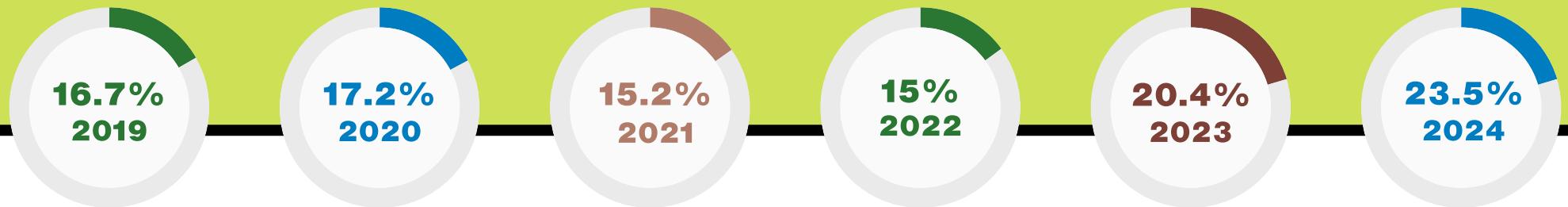
According to PROOF, an interdisciplinary research program at the University of Toronto supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health and Research, food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.¹⁴ It is caused by economic challenges such as

an insufficient or unstable source of income which is compounded by rising costs and availability of housing, transportation and other necessities.

Other contributing factors include colonization, systemic discrimination, environmental degradation and unstable food supply chains.¹ Due to the impacts of historical and ongoing colonization and systemic racism, Black and Indigenous people experience disproportionately high rates of food insecurity.¹⁵

In the Greater Sudbury area, Public Health Sudbury & Districts reports that food insecurity is most common in households that rely on social assistance (such as Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program), that rent rather than own their home and are led by female single parents.¹⁰

Percentage of households experiencing food insecurity in Greater Sudbury 2019-2024 ⁹



6,490

Total number of single female parent families in private households in Greater Sudbury as of 2021 ¹⁷



**Ontario
Works**

3,059

Monthly average caseload of Ontario Works cases in Greater Sudbury CMSM, 2024-2025 ⁸

11.20%

Citizens aged 1-17 years old living with moderate to severe food insecurity in the Sudbury & Districts health region as of 2023 ¹¹

6,606

Monthly average caseload of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) cases in Greater Sudbury CMSM, 2024-2025 ⁸

Statistics Canada data reveals that in 2024, 25.5% of Canadians reported living with some level of food-insecurity, marking a new record high for our country.¹⁵ Similar statistics are also observed in the Public Health Sudbury & Districts service area, where 23.5% of households have reported experiencing food insecurity according to the Public Health Ontario's Household Food Insecurity Snapshot.⁹ These statistics signal a rising public health issue, as food insecurity is linked to a range of adverse health outcomes. Research from PROOF indicates that both adults and youth experiencing food insecurity are at a higher risk of diet-related diseases like diabetes as well as a range of chronic conditions including depression and anxiety, heart disease, chronic pain and other health issues.¹⁴

Emergency Food Programs

Non-profit organizations that provide free or affordable food to individuals



Emergency food programs, which are nonprofit organizations that provide free or affordable food to individuals experiencing food insecurity, are found throughout Greater Sudbury. These include the Sudbury Food Bank, the Student Nutrition Program run by Better Beginnings Better Futures, as well as meal services offered by The Elgin Street Mission, The Blue Door Soup Kitchen and Meals on Wheels. Additional programs are available through other local nonprofit organizations and can be found using the **Greater Sudbury Food Access Map**.

While these programs provide temporary relief, there is no evidence that emergency food programs are a solution to the very serious problem of food insecurity.¹³ Despite the lack of evidence, governments continue to provide indirect support to emergency food programs rather than evidence-based solutions.

Many of these programs have seen a significant increase in clients in recent years.

This trend is observed throughout the country with Canadian food banks recording over 200 million visits in 2024, marking a 6% increase from the year prior and a 90% rise compared to 2019. This growing demand is unsustainable for charitable organizations originally intended to offer short-term emergency assistance. This trend highlights the urgent need to work towards evidence-based solutions that will address the root cause of food insecurity.

There is strong evidence showing that food insecurity can be addressed through policy interventions that improve the incomes of low-income households.

PROOF

In 2024-2025, several municipalities in Ontario, including Toronto, Mississauga and Kingston, declared food insecurity an emergency, urging the provincial government to take action to support a growing vulnerable population.

There is a broad consensus among researchers and organizations that food insecurity can be alleviated through policy changes aimed at improving incomes for low-income households. By increasing minimum wage and social assistance rates, and introducing basic income guarantees, low-income households would have a fairer chance at making ends meet.

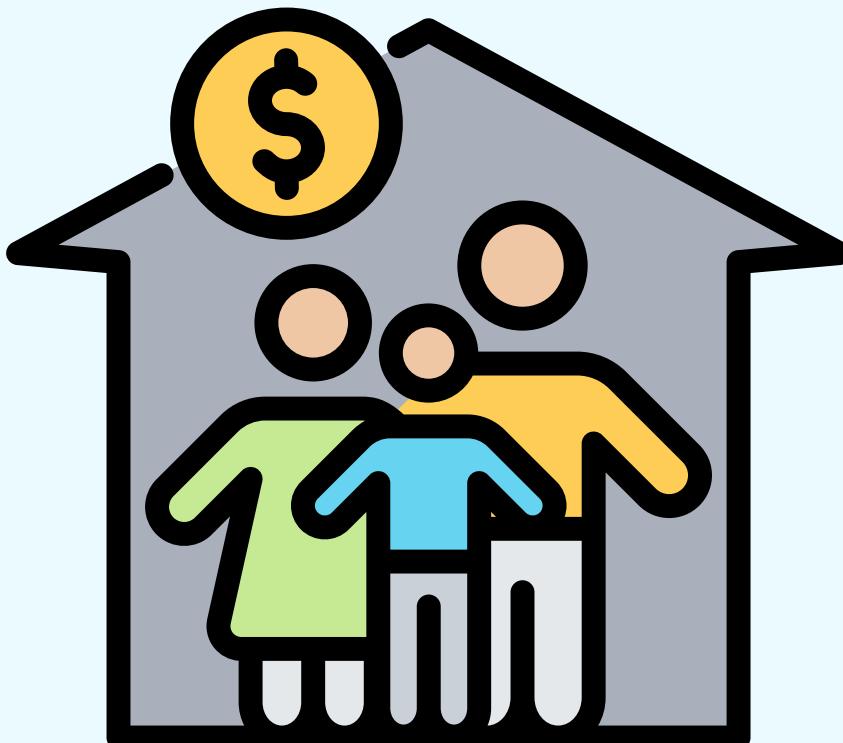
Additionally, there is an urgent need to increase affordable housing across the country. Greater Sudbury, like many other municipalities in Canada, has been struggling with a significant housing crisis for over a decade, resulting in low rental vacancy rates and significant increases in rental costs.² This situation, combined with the increased reliance on emergency food access programs, is raising serious concerns among officials across the country.





What is a living wage?

A living wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their basic expenses and participate in their community.⁵



Minimum wage rates in Ontario ⁶

2022	\$15.50/hr
2023	\$16.55/hr
2024	\$17.20/hr
2025	\$17.60/hr

Living wage rates in Northern Ontario ⁵

2022	\$19.70/hr
2023	\$19.80/hr
2024	\$20.30/hr
2025	\$21.10/hr



42%

Working individuals receiving minimum wage or less accessing Food Banks in Ontario in 2023 ¹⁶

Median after-tax income for low-income census families with or without children in Greater Sudbury ¹⁹

\$27,440 2021

\$27,090 2022

\$25,780 2023

N/A 2024



\$1,356

Average rent a month in Greater Sudbury as of 2024 ⁴



1.1%

Rental vacancy rate in Greater Sudbury as of November 2024 ³



What is a Market Basket Measure (MBM)?

The MBM is Canada's official poverty measure. It sets the disposable income level a family of four needs to afford basic essentials like food, clothing, shelter and transportation to maintain a modest standard of living in a specific area.

Market Basket Measure in Ontario for a population of 100,000 to 499,999¹⁸

\$45,776	2021
\$49,290	2022
\$51,421	2023
\$52,444	2024



Social assistance programs intended to support those most at risk of poverty have fallen behind as they do not align with current financial demands.

The Ontario Nutritious Food Basket (ONFB), an annual survey conducted by Public Health Units across Ontario, calculates the cost of food required to support a healthy lifestyle based on regional market prices and household purchasing patterns. Data from the 2025 ONFB, when combined with local average rental costs, reveals that households relying on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program are often forced to choose between purchasing food and other essential expenses, as demonstrated in Figure 1 with statistics from Public Health Sudbury & Districts.

Despite receiving provincial financial assistance, these households remain well below Ontario's poverty line and often experience severe or chronic food insecurity. According to a Trillium article published in September 2024, data obtained from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services revealed that over 26,500 Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients experienced homelessness in 2024,¹² more than double the number from just two years earlier. This alarming increase highlights the urgent need to align social insurance and minimum wage rates with the rising cost of living in Ontario.

The 2025 results indicate that some households must make the choice between eating and paying for other core living expenses.



Household	Monthly income	Rent (% of income)	Cost of the ONFB (% of income)	What's left?
Family of 4, Ontario Works (2 school age children)	\$3,017	\$1,840 (61%)	\$1,287 (43%)	-\$110
Family of 4, minimum wage (2 school age children)	\$5,116	\$1,840 (36%)	\$1,287 (25%)	\$1,989
Family of 4, refugee claimants, minimum wage (2 school age children)	\$3,358	\$1,840 (55%)	\$1,287 (38%)	\$231
Family of 4, median income (after taxes) (2 school age children)	\$9,865	\$1,840 (19%)	\$1,287 (13%)	\$6,738
Family of 3, Ontario Works (2 school age children)	\$2,783	\$1,840 (66%)	\$959 (34%)	-\$16
Family of 3, Ontario Works (2 preschool age children)	\$2,980	\$1,462 (49%)	\$753 (25%)	\$765
Pregnant person, Ontario Disability Support Program	\$1,589	\$869 (55%)	\$475 (30%)	\$245
Family of 2, Ontario Works (formula-fed infant)	\$2,070	\$1,462 (71%)	\$587 (28%)	\$21
Family of 2, Ontario Works (breast-fed infant)	\$2,110	\$1,462 (69%)	\$455 (22%)	\$193
One-person, Ontario Works	\$907	\$869 (96%)	\$449 (50%)	-\$411

Figure 1. Results from Public Health Sudbury & Districts' 2025 Ontario Nutritious Food Basket (ONFB) survey, which measured the cost of various food items at 10 local grocery stores, are compared to housing costs across various individual and family income scenarios.

Through collective advocacy for policy changes, such as strengthening social support programs and raising the minimum wage to ensure decent incomes, we can effectively address the root causes of food insecurity and reduce its harmful effects on health and well-being.

By focusing on long-term solutions to address food insecurity, we also enable food access programs to better fulfill their intended role: supporting individuals in emergency situations. This, in turn, improves their capacity to respond to large-scale crises, including pandemics, extreme weather events or disruptions in the food supply chain that can suddenly limit food access for many people. As the frequency and severity of such events increase, it is crucial that these essential services are well-prepared and adequately resourced.

Emergency Food Plans (EFPs) are public strategies that complement broader Emergency Plans by addressing food access and its impact on health and well-being during emergency events. These plans are particularly focused on supporting households most vulnerable to emergencies, such as those experiencing chronic food insecurity. Currently, no municipality within Northeastern Ontario has developed an EFP. In Ontario, **Thunder Bay** remains the only community with an established plan.

To build awareness and initiate local dialogue, Public Health Sudbury & Districts organized a networking meeting focused on EFPs. The event brought together organizations directly or indirectly involved in food access, including among others, the City of Greater Sudbury, the United Way, the Sudbury Food Bank, Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Centre, and the Greater Sudbury Public Library.

A highlight of the meeting was a presentation by the Emergency Food Plan Coordinator from Thunder Bay, who shared insights and lessons from their community's experience. The presentation was followed by a group discussion exploring opportunities, challenges, and potential next steps. An EFP for the City of Greater Sudbury would help ensure a coordinated, timely response during emergencies. Such a plan would empower community partners to act quickly and effectively, with clearly defined roles and shared strategies. A dedicated coordinator could lead this work by maintaining a database of resources and contacts, organizing regular planning meetings and activating the plan when needed.

To further support these efforts, establishing a central coordinating body, such as a food hub or community food centre, could strengthen local food infrastructure and serve as a key asset in developing and implementing the EFP.

Key Recommendations under the Food Access Theme



1. Food Access

- Advocate for evidence-based solutions to food insecurity, such as policies that improve the incomes of low-income households.
- Advocate for and invest in resources to develop and implement an Emergency Food Plan for Greater Sudbury.
- Establish a dedicated permanent coordinator role to lead an Emergency Food Plan.
- Establish (a) local food hub(s) or centre(s), to centralize learning, sharing, coordination and the distribution of food knowledge and resources.



Food Literacy



Goal: Increased food knowledge and skill opportunities within Greater Sudbury

As dependence on the modern food system has increased, many individuals now lack the skills and knowledge needed to grow, harvest, process and cook their own food. Not long ago, this information was passed down through generations out of necessity, but its importance has diminished as the agri-food industry has evolved into a highly productive and reliable resource.

As a result, society has become largely disconnected from the processes of food production, leading to reduced control over, and understanding of, decisions that impact human health, community well-being, and the environment.

There are many instances where agri-food industries have prioritized profit over the well-being of people and the environment. Their influence extends throughout the food system, from how food is grown or produced to the food

choices made widely available to consumers. However, by improving individual food knowledge and skills, it is possible to shape food systems that support healthy and fulfilling lifestyles.

“Food sovereignty” is a term that has been used more widely in the past decade; “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”⁵

At its core, food sovereignty is about empowering people to take back their right to food that does not harm others or the environment, that reflects their cultures and beliefs and that values the workers and natural resources involved. The emphasis is also on

localized food systems that give communities the ability to control their food production and builds community resiliency in face of emergencies or instances where outside food sources were to be reduced.

There is growing interest and effort to re-establish food literacy opportunities in schools and community settings throughout Greater Sudbury.



Food Literacy opportunities in schools

According to the Ontario school curriculum, students are expected to learn about nutrition all throughout primary and secondary school.^{2,3} However, these lessons are often best absorbed through hands-on activities, which teachers are not always able to offer due to limitations in space, time or expertise.

Fortunately, students also have opportunities to gain these experiences through community- or organization-led initiatives. When available, these allow them to gain hands-on experience and help build confidence in both kitchen skills and food knowledge, opportunities that many students may not have access to outside of school. Research also shows that youth are more willing to try new foods after participating in such programs.¹

Increasing and facilitating opportunities for community groups, organizations and businesses to share their passion for food education and sustainable practices can play a significant role in inspiring the next generation to make informed, healthy and environmentally responsible choices about food and the environment.

As of 2022, the Life Systems strand of the Science and Technology elementary curriculum also includes connections to food literacy by exploring the various plants and animals used for food, along with their implications for physical, mental and environmental health. These topics help students engage with the complexities and impacts of our modern food system from a young age.

Hands-on workshops and field trips can provide meaningful, lasting experiences with sustainable and ecological methods of growing and producing food.

However, community organizations are also limited in their ability to offer these opportunities to students due to a lack of available staff, time or materials. These are even more limited for French school students as the availability of skilled French speaking program leaders are even fewer.

Increased support for these programs is essential to ensure all students have the opportunity to learn and develop these vital food literacy skills. This support can include establishing a permanent coordinator role to assist with program development and scheduling, acting as a key contact between professionals and schools. The coordinator could also help identify and advocate for funding and resources to expand the availability and accessibility of these programs.

In 2024, Lively District Secondary School proudly unveiled their state-of-the-art Horticultural Room for Grade 11 and 12 Green Industries students. The space supports hands-on learning in plant science, food production and landscape design, helping students develop practical skills for sustainable living and careers in the green sector.



Community organizations such as the **Community Garden Network** and **Sudbury Shared Harvest** offer hands-on gardening programs to students. These programs depend on funding and staff availability, which are often limited.





200

3

Number of organizations
offering in school food literacy
programming ⁴

8

Approximate number of preschool students
engaged annually through Sudbury Shared
Harvest's Little Farmers Program ⁷

Number of grade school classes engaged in
the Cultivate Your Neighborhood Program
through the Community Garden Network in 2025 ⁴

Food literacy opportunities in our community

There is a need to expand food literacy opportunities in our community that cover subjects from growing and harvesting food to processing and cooking, to support healthy lifestyles. Increasing the availability and accessibility of these programs and workshops would not only equip individuals and households with essential food skills but also foster community building and inclusivity.

A survey conducted by the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council on Greater Sudbury residents regarding local food initiatives showed that a little over 90% of the 500 respondents were either very interested or somewhat interested in attending workshops regarding home gardening, foraging and harvesting, with the majority indicating they were very interested. Majority of respondents also showed significant interest in participating in workshops on topics of soil health/composting, plant-based medicines, food preservation, cooking and baking as well as community gardening.

Currently, few opportunities are offered throughout the year for Greater Sudbury residents to learn about these topics. Expanding the variety and frequency of programs offered could help better meet the diverse needs of the community.

In terms of cooking classes, there are a few local businesses that offer courses at a medium to high price point (\$50 - \$100+), often focused on specific cuisines or techniques.

However, affordable options for individuals seeking to build basic cooking skills are limited. Many community-based programs that previously offered low- to no-cost classes were likely paused during the COVID-19 pandemic, and only a few have since resumed, such as Our Children Our Futures' cooking programs and Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre's Traditional Cooking program.





Our Children Our Futures (OCOF) offers four free cooking programs to families with young children throughout the Sudbury District area. These programs provide the opportunity for children, parents and caregivers to learn basic cooking skills, understand the importance of healthy eating, and prepare easy, affordable meals at home.



Shkagamik-Kwe
HEALTH CENTRE

Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre offers a variety of traditional cooking programs to the urban indigenous community, featuring traditional Anishinaabe foods made with seasonally harvested ingredients such as berries, meats and plant medicines. Rooted in traditional values, these programs highlight the understanding that good food is good medicine.



5

Estimated number of businesses offering cooking classes and workshops in Greater Sudbury as of 2025 ⁹

2

Estimated number of organizations offering free or low-cost community-based cooking classes and workshops in Greater Sudbury as of 2025 ⁹

Workshops related to gardening and foraging are offered more sporadically throughout the growing season, primarily by community organizations. Most are low- to medium-cost (\$20-\$50) to cover material expenses, though some higher-end (\$100+) in-depth workshops are offered by professionals and local businesses. These opportunities are typically limited in size and frequency due to the short growing and harvesting season.

When asked if residents faced any challenges in attending food-related workshops, 80% of the 500 respondents indicated they were not aware of their occurrence, 70% cited scheduling conflicts, 51% mentioned cost, and 44% pointed to location as a barrier. The responses from this public survey indicate a significant opportunity to expand the availability of these workshops in Greater Sudbury, however there is a need to promote them more broadly and increase their availability and accessibility.

Establishing local food hubs or community food centres in Greater Sudbury could help enable the opportunities previously mentioned, as well as those identified across other food system themes. These hubs or centres could facilitate a wide range of activities, including food production, processing, preservation, storage, distribution and knowledge sharing for producers and community members.

By centralizing services and resources, they could strengthen existing food initiatives while also creating space for new programs. Ultimately, such hubs or centres could improve access to local food, bolster economic opportunities and support Greater Sudbury's food security.

Successful models across Ontario and Canada offer valuable frameworks to build upon. Right to Food (previously known as Community Food Centres Canada), for example, provides a wealth of resources, training and funding opportunities to regional organizations seeking to implement similar initiatives in their communities. These regional organizations may operate as health centers, teaching farms, anti-poverty groups or other similar initiatives. While their focuses may differ, they are all dedicated to increasing local food access, enhancing food skills, providing education and fostering community engagement.



What are Community Food Centres and Food Hubs?

Community Food Centres are typically nonprofit, or government-run organizations focused on supporting community food access, food literacy or hunger relief programs. They may offer programs such as community kitchens, food banks, meal services, and food or financial education, all aimed at strengthening food security and community well-being.

Food hubs are businesses or organizations that support local food systems by coordinating and/or facilitating the production, processing, storage and distribution of locally or regionally grown foods. They help small-scale producers reach broader markets and may also provide services that promote food literacy and improve community access to nutritious, local food.



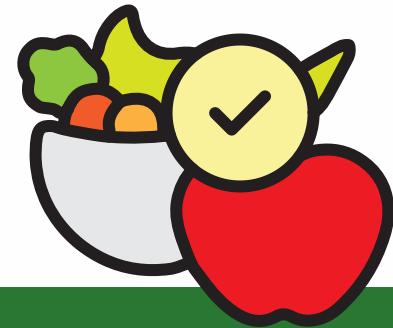
Food Hubs & Centres

Food hubs or centres can vary in organizational structure, including not-for-profits, cooperatives or for-profit organizations. Some organizations may focus exclusively on coordinating services, while others operate through physical locations, such as brick-and-mortar centres. A region may also have multiple community food centers or hubs, each serving different neighborhoods or focusing on different types of services.



National Food Hubs/Centres	Focus
Right to Food (previously known as Community Food Centres Canada)	Supporting other organizations with funding and resources to offer healthy food access, food skills, education and engagement opportunities.
Food Secure Canada	Amplifying diverse voices to transform the food system through dialogue, advocacy, and capacity building.
Regional Food Hubs/Centres	Focus
FoodShare Toronto	Advocates for food justice initiatives in the Toronto region such as urban farms, subsidizing local produce markets and coordinating community kitchens.
Local Food Manitoulin	Strengthening the local food system on Manitoulin Island to support independent and shared access to sustainable foods.
Roots Community Food Centre	Connects people to one another and build belonging and dignity through meaningful food-related programs, initiatives and advocacy.
Just Food	Works on both rural and urban food and farming issues through various initiatives within the Ottawa and the surrounding region.

Key Recommendations under the Food Literacy Theme



2. Food Literacy

- Expand hands-on food literacy in schools through partnerships with community groups, organizations and businesses.
- Establish a dedicated permanent coordinator role to support and expand hands-on food literacy opportunities.
- Increase the variety and frequency of community food literacy workshops on growing, harvesting, processing and cooking.
- Establish (a) local food hub(s) or centre(s) to centralize learning, sharing, coordination and distribution of food knowledge and resources.



Urban Agriculture

The original “Growing Food (not for profit)” theme from the Greater Sudbury Food Strategy is redefined here as “Urban Agriculture” to better reflect emerging opportunities for community- and market-based food production within urban settings.



Goal: Increased visibility and promotion of urban agriculture in Greater Sudbury

Growing food in urban settings creates opportunities for residents to engage in gardening or farming activities that they might not otherwise have access to. Expanding access to local urban food production also offers many benefits, including improved mental and physical health, strengthened community pride and resilience, enhanced environmental stewardship and increased opportunities for local business development.

Urban agriculture activities may be managed by individuals, households, schools, spiritual or community groups, co-ops, social enterprises or commercial businesses. Unlike large-scale agricultural operations, which often involve intensive and disruptive farming practices, such as raising large livestock and using chemical fertilizers and pesticides, urban agriculture focuses on small-scale food production.

This approach typically requires fewer resources, such as water, fertilizers, herbicides and large machinery, and encourages the implementation of permaculture and regenerative gardening practices which is healthier for the land.

Examples of urban agriculture activities

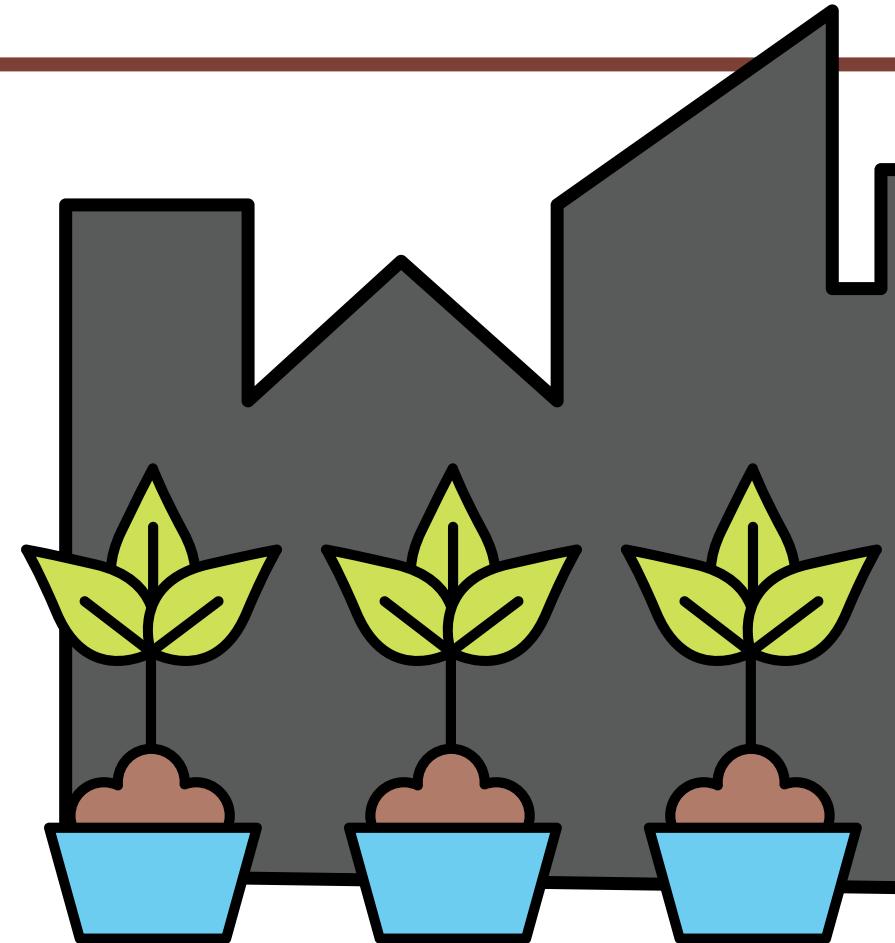
✓ Household gardens	✓ Urban farms
✓ Community gardens	✓ Aquacultures
✓ Institutional gardens	✓ Hydroponics
✓ Food forests	✓ Mushroom farming
✓ Rooftop gardens	✓ Apiaries
✓ Greenhouses	✓ Backyard hens

Permaculture and regenerative gardening practices prioritize environmental and community health by working with nature rather than against it, principles long upheld and practiced by Indigenous peoples. These approaches focus on enhancing plant diversity and soil health, rather than relying heavily on fertilizers and pesticides for growth and production. They encourage careful observation, ongoing evaluation and whole systems thinking.

Municipal policies in Greater Sudbury currently fall short of addressing the growing demand for urban agriculture. While the City's Official Plan, Strategic Plan and Community Climate Change Adaption Plan (CCCAP) recognize its benefits as key objectives, urban agriculture is not yet reflected in municipal by-laws, leading to confusion among residents and municipal staff about what is and isn't permitted.

Other cities, such as Ottawa and Guelph, include clear definitions and regulations in their by-laws to support urban agriculture initiatives.^{2,3} For example, Ottawa recently developed a Residential Boulevard Gardening Bylaw along with a guide which outlines permissions and guidelines for front yard food gardens.³ Implementing a similar bylaw for Greater Sudbury would help reduce uncertainty around planting front yard food gardens, a concern previously raised by residents.

By defining urban agriculture in City by-laws and developing clear guidelines for permitted activities, the City of Greater Sudbury can more directly support these initiatives within the community.



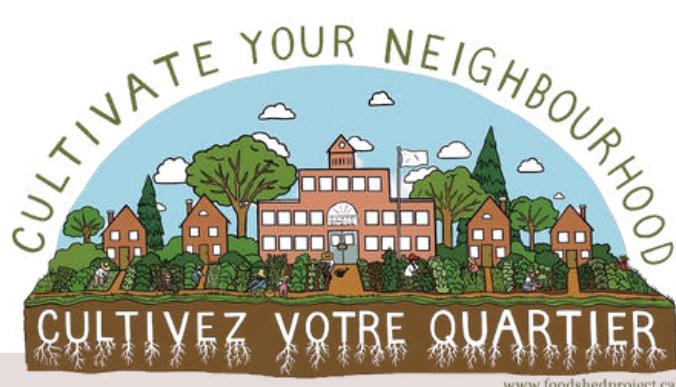
Growing food in urban settings is not a new concept or practice. During times of war and economic hardship, many urban households grew gardens to supplement their food supply and reduce pressure on the food system, these were known as Victory Gardens. Since the early 2000s, a modern form of urban homesteading has also emerged, driven by rising grocery costs, environmental concerns and a desire for self-sufficiency. The COVID-19 pandemic further increased public interest, as more people explored food production activities during lockdowns and periods of unemployment.

A public survey from the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council in December 2024 had 500 responses from Greater Sudbury residents and revealed that 61% of residents were very interested in learning more about home vegetable gardening, 30% responded as somewhat interested, leaving only 9% who noted they were not interested. When asked what barriers residents encountered most when growing food themselves, time was the largest reported barrier, closely followed by physical accessibility, cost and lack of knowledge. Although space was not provided as an option to the question, it was mentioned by a few through the comments section of the survey along with others who expressed frustrations with restrictions regarding keeping backyard hens.

These results show that while residents have a significant interest in growing food at home, they face a variety of barriers that may prevent them from doing so.



While some of these challenges may be difficult to address directly, others can be mitigated through city-led or supported pilot-projects or programs. For example, in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cultivate Your Neighborhood program led by the Sudbury Community Garden Network provided free soil to numerous households through the City of Greater Sudbury's Healthy Community Initiatives (HCI) funding. Projects like this one, combined with improved access to localized resources for busy home growers, can help support those interested in producing their own food at home.



The Cultivate your Neighbourhood program is an initiative that was led by the Sudbury Community Garden Network when capacity allowed. The program supported food security by encouraging the planting of gardens in a variety of settings including community gardens, businesses, schools or residences throughout Greater Sudbury.

There is currently no central coordinating body established to measure or support household food production efforts in Greater Sudbury. Examining these activities can help identify opportunities to develop programs that expand and enhance their benefits. Establishing such coordination could foster knowledge sharing, improve resource allocation and strengthen community engagement to enhance food security and sustainability efforts.



68%

Households in Greater Sudbury that grew fruit, herbs vegetables or flowers for personal use in the past 12 months as of 2023 ⁷

For those who don't have space of their own to grow food or can't afford to build their own garden beds or plots, shared garden spaces provide an opportunity to engage in gardening activities, grow their own food and learn from others. Greater Sudbury is fortunate to have a variety of shared gardens spaces, including a variety of community gardens, farms and food forests.

Community gardens in Greater Sudbury offer personal or shared garden spaces at low or no cost, often organized by volunteers through organizations such as schools, faith-based groups, neighbourhood associations or community groups. There are currently over 40 community gardens throughout Greater Sudbury, with at least one garden in each ward. These spaces are primarily used for growing edible plants for personal use or donation, and they also serve as valuable sites for teaching and developing food-growing skills.



VISIT
sudburycommunitygardens.ca
to find local gardening tips
and a community garden near you.

Food forests are communal gardens primarily consisting of perennial fruit trees and shrubs along with herbaceous and flowering plants that may be edible or planted to support the food forest's ecosystem. These gardens are typically planted in the spring or autumn, and are cared for by the community as it grows throughout the years, ensuring fruit-bearing plants are well-maintained for continuous edible fruit production.

From 2017-2025, Sudbury Shared Harvest, a local charitable organization, has planted ten food forests throughout Greater Sudbury. Local community groups and institutions have also established their own food forests.



VISIT
sudburysharedharvest.ca
for more information on food forests
and to find one near you.



Flour Mill Community Farm



FOLLOW

@flourmillcommunityfarm

to learn more about the urban farm and their youth employment program or visit their [website](#).

Community urban farms offer the opportunity to use larger in-ground plots, while also learning hands-on farming skills. These farms may operate as market gardens, providing produce for the local community, and are often organized by either non-profit organizations and/or volunteers. Currently, the Flournill Community Farm, operated by a local non-profit reThink Green, is the only community urban farm in Greater Sudbury.

The majority of these shared garden spaces depend on annual grant opportunities to continue operating, which are not guaranteed and can lead to competition among groups hoping to receive limited available funding. Many are also led or supported primarily by volunteers. Participation often fluctuates, resulting in imbalances in workload among remaining volunteers. While these shared garden spaces offer meaningful opportunities for residents to grow food, they often lack the financial support and volunteer stability needed for long-term sustainability.

Community urban agriculture initiatives could be more effectively supported and further developed through the leadership of a central coordinating organization specializing in local food initiatives, such as a community food centre or food hub. The organization could consolidate efforts to apply for funding, coordinate volunteers and provide guidance and resources on best practices.

To ensure these demanding but essential tasks are sustained, permanently funded roles should be established, rather than relying on already overextended volunteers.

As Greater Sudbury currently lacks a community food centre and food hub, this coordination could initially be housed within an existing organization, such as the municipality. The role could encompass a range of responsibilities beyond facilitating community gardens, including support for broader agricultural, environmental and public engagement initiatives. For example, the City of Richmond Hill employs a Natural Environment Analyst who oversees a variety of environmental programs, including the City's community garden program. Establishing a permanent coordinator role of this nature would demonstrate the City of Greater Sudbury's commitment to supporting and sustaining these increasingly important community-based initiatives.

40+ Number of community gardens in Greater Sudbury as of 2025¹

2 Number of community gardens with a greenhouse in Greater Sudbury as of 2025⁴

12 Number of food forests in Greater Sudbury as of 2025⁸

? Number of rooftop gardens in Greater Sudbury

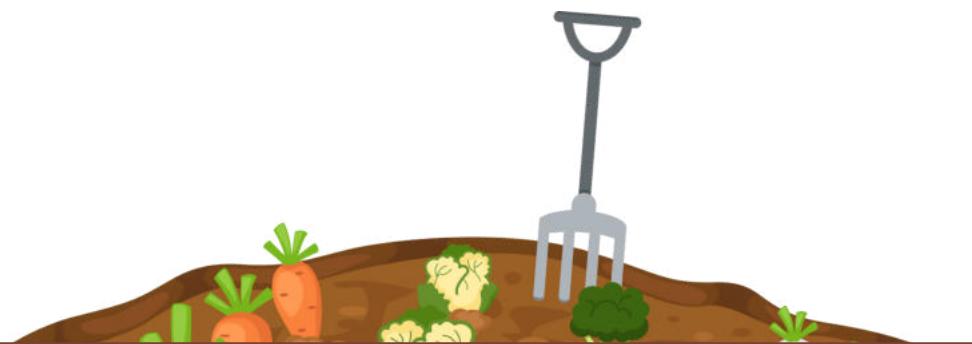
1 Number of not-for-profit urban farms in Greater Sudbury as of 2025⁵

6 Number of organizations engaged in urban agriculture to build community in Greater Sudbury as of 2025⁵

600 Estimated number of attendees at the Seedy Sunday Event in Greater Sudbury in 2025⁶

5+ Number of schools with a food garden in Greater Sudbury as of 2025⁵

? Total yearly funding allocated to urban agriculture initiatives by the City of Greater Sudbury in 2024



While there are currently no commercial urban farms in Greater Sudbury, they have become a common occurrence throughout Canada. Cities like Toronto and Montreal proudly endorse the importance of their urban farms in supporting local food production, creating employment opportunities in agriculture and fostering community connection. Located within a variety of urban settings, such as schoolyards, church grounds, rooftops or vacant commercial buildings, urban farms increase local food access in densely populated areas and provide opportunities for more people to lead or participate in growing food for sale.

Policies and zoning by-laws in Greater Sudbury currently fall short in addressing the opportunities for commercial food production in urban areas. Although there are no direct restrictions, the lack of clear guidelines on what is permitted may discourage individuals and businesses from pursuing opportunities for commercial urban food production.

Encouraging the development of commercial urban farms can help strengthen the local food system in a modern way that has yet to be realized in Greater Sudbury.

There is growing interest among younger generations in starting farms or engaging in sustainable agriculture,

but many lack the financial means to purchase acres of farmland or even a home with space for food production. Additionally, as more people move into dense urban areas to be closer to stores, schools, work and friends, there is increasing demand for nearby access to local food and nourishing green spaces they can support or participate in.

Developing clear guidelines, best practices and resources for growing food for sale in urban areas, such as commercial or medium- to high-density residential neighbourhoods, can empower individuals to pursue food production as a paid occupation. This is especially true for those who may otherwise feel limited by the constraints of conventional farming. It can also increase opportunities for existing community gardens and farms to host markets, providing a sustainable financial model for long-term success. Additionally, it would support homeowners in Greater Sudbury who are interested in growing food for profit, enabling them to do so through personal or shared business models.

Key Recommendations under the Urban Agriculture Theme

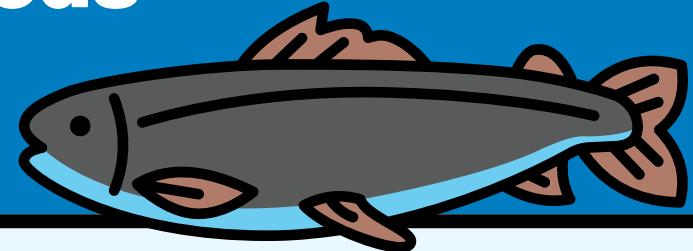


3. Urban Agriculture

- Develop bylaws and guidelines to encourage urban agriculture in residential and non-residential zones.
- Launch City-led or -supported programs and pilot projects to encourage household food production.
- Establish a permanent coordinator role that will support and develop urban agriculture initiatives.
- Develop guidelines and resources for growing food for sale in urban areas.
- Establish (a) local food hub(s) or centre(s) to centralize learning, sharing, coordination and distribution of food knowledge and resources.



Forest and Freshwater Foods (FFWF)



Goal: Increased awareness of the cultural, health, ecological and economic value of FFWF

Forest and freshwater foods (FFWF), such as wild plants, fungi and animals, are gathered through hunting, fishing and foraging. Their abundance relies on the health and protection of natural environments. Today, they remain vital sources of food and medicine, offering nutrient-dense, culturally significant resources while promoting physical activity and a deep connection to nature.

Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island (North and South America) have gathered their sustenance and materials directly from the land. While practices varied between nations and regions, many communities developed sophisticated systems of agriculture, horticulture, hunting, fishing and foraging, adapted to their specific environments. Their livelihoods were further supported by reciprocal relationships among different communities, through which they exchanged tools,

furs, corn and other region-specific goods.¹³

Indigenous communities have long held, and continue to hold, a profound understanding of how to live in reciprocity with the land, drawing on thousands of years of ecological knowledge and practice. These teachings emphasize principles of regeneration, where ecosystems restore, renew and revitalize their own sources of energy and material when given sufficient space and time to do so. This knowledge, rooted in lived experience and observation, is passed down through generations via oral traditions such as storytelling, preserving vital lessons in sustainability that remain deeply relevant today.

With the arrival of European settlers in the late 1800s, colonial traditions and practices were imposed on the land and its peoples, leading to widespread social, cultural and environmental injustices, many of which continue to have lasting negative impacts. In recent years, progress toward reconciliation has been made through initiatives that aim to empower Indigenous food sovereignty, promote environmental stewardship and honor the cultural and sacred significance of food. However, the pervasiveness of colonialism, along with deep-rooted racism, marginalization, and the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples and the land, remains a persistent challenge. These efforts toward reconciliation require sustained collective advocacy and funding to ensure they are not only protected but continuously strengthened for generations to come.

Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives in our region cultivate sacred spaces and opportunities for everyone. People of all ages and backgrounds can gain the knowledge, skills and tools essential for harvesting, hunting, fishing, processing and cooking their own foods and plant medicines in a sustainable and reciprocal way.

The Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre (SKHC), located in downtown Sudbury, offers a variety of traditional programs for the local urban Indigenous community. One example is their Hunt Camps, provided in partnership with the Ministry

of Natural Resources and the Greater Sudbury Police Station, which educate participants on gun safety, sustainable harvesting practices and their cultural significance. SKHC also operates a Wild Food Bank, allowing clients to enjoy wild meat and fish they might not otherwise have access to, while also teaching them how to prepare and cook these foods.

Gaagige Zaagibigaa (GZ), a grassroots organization, supports Indigenous food initiatives across Northern Ontario through events, workshops and their Self-Determined Household Support Program. Their program helps increase a household's ability to grow, hunt, harvest, process and store food through funding and support opportunities.

Manidoo Bineshii Dreams is a collective arts and food sovereignty space based in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, where community is invited to learn and experience sustainable land-based activities like medicine making, gardening and eco-friendly art exploration.

Ongoing efforts to connect community to FFWF, as well as the land and waters they come from, are essential to ensure that these vital resources remain protected and available for generations to come. Expanding knowledge-sharing opportunities through

schools and organizations can foster broader awareness by highlighting the value of FFWF through targeted programs, workshops and storytelling. These efforts could be further strengthened by establishing a permanent coordinator role to manage program scheduling and serve as a key liaison between program leaders, schools and organizations.

List of common Forest and Freshwater Foods (FFWF) in Greater Sudbury

Asparagus *Asparagus officinalis*

Bass (Largemouth and Smallmouth) *Micropterus salmoides*,
Micropterus dolomieu

Black Bear *Ursus americanus*

Bluebead Lily (Clinton Lily) *Clintonia borealis*

Bunchberries *Cornus canadensis*

Burdock *Arctium spp.*

Cattail *Typha spp.*

Cedar *Cedrus*

Chanterelle *Cantharellus cibarius*

Chickweed *Stellaria media*

Chokecherries *Aronia melanocarpa*

Common Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*

Common Evening-Primrose *Oenothera biennis*

Common Mullein *Verbascum Thapsus*

Common Plantain *Plantago major*

Common Red Raspberry *Rubus idaeus*

Common Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus and macrocarpon*

Eastern White Cedar *Thuja occidentalis*

Field Horsetail *Equisetum arvense*

Goldenrod *Solidago spp.*

Grouse *Tetraonini*

Hare *Lepus spp.*

Highbush Blueberry *Vaccinium corymbosum*

Jack Pine *Pinus banksiana*

Lake Trout *Salvelinus namaycush*

Lamb's Quarters (White Goosefoot) *Chenopodium album*

Lobster Mushroom *Hypomyces lactifluorum*

Lowbush Blueberry *Vaccinium angustifolium*

Moose *Alces alces*

Morel *Morchella spp.*

Northern Bush-Honeysuckle *Diervilla lonicera*

Northern Pike *Esox lucius*

Ostrich Fern – *Matteuccia struthiopteris*

Paper Birch - *Betula papyrifera*

Pearly Everlasting *Anaphalis margaritacea*

Prickly Rose *Rosa acicularis*

Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*

Saskatoon Serviceberry *Amelanchier alnifolia*

Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*

Sugar Maple *Acer saccharum*

Walleye *Sander vitreus*

Watercress *Nasturtium officinale*

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*

Wild Mint *Mentha spp.*

Wild Sarsaparilla *Aralia nudicaulis*

Wilk leeks (ramps) *Allium tricoccum*

Willow *Salix spp.*

Woodland Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*

Yellow Perch *Perca flavescens*

FFWF depend on the health and protection of natural environments, which consist of complex, interconnected ecosystems that support the growth of these vital resources. To ensure that these are available for many generations to come, sustained advocacy and action are needed to protect and restore these environments and the essential ecosystem services they provide.

Greater Sudbury's environment has undergone drastic changes since settlers arrived in the area in the late 1800s. It is both a tragic and hopeful story in which early logging activity and a booming mining industry severely degraded and polluted local forests and lakes, leaving behind barren landscapes and lakes stripped of vegetation. This period of intense environmental degradation was followed by the launch of a now world-renowned re-greening program dedicated to rehabilitating the surrounding forest and freshwater ecosystems.

With over more than 50 years of re-greening efforts, much of the barren rocky landscapes of the 1970s have been transformed into mixed coniferous and deciduous forests. Some areas are now dense and ecologically diverse, with a variety of understory trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants that provide habitat and nourishment for many animal species. Local watersheds have also experienced notable

improvements, including reduced acidification and increased availability of nutrients to support aquatic food webs. A report titled **Past, Present and Future of Lake Laurentian and its Watershed** noted an increase in fish species and aquatic communities within the Lake Laurentian watershed, highlighting that the lake now supports a recreational pike fishery.¹⁵

While significant progress has been made through regreening efforts, some areas remain relatively sparse, with fewer established plant species. However, some of these areas also provide valuable habitats for species like lowbush blueberries and other plants and animals that thrive in sunny, open spaces and well-drained soils as illustrated in Figure 1. Since blueberries are among the most frequently enjoyed forest foods in Greater Sudbury by both residents and tourists, efforts are made to conserve their habitats and avoid disturbances whenever possible.

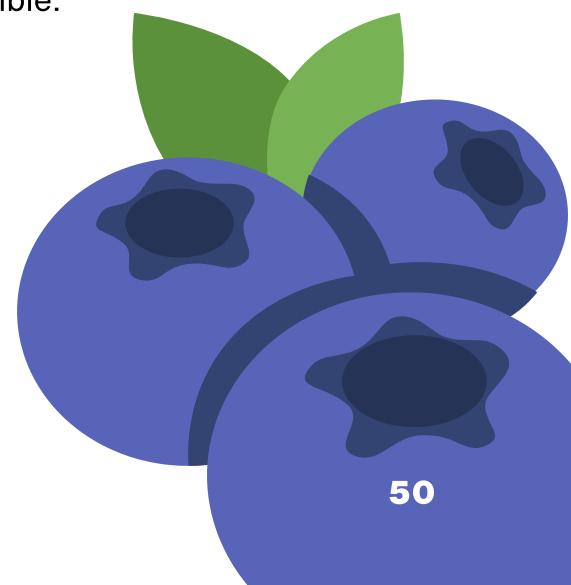




Figure 1. Illustrative poster depicting Rock Barrens of Greater Sudbury.

The interactive habitat poster is available on [Greater Sudbury's website under Biodiversity and Education Materials](#).



Other areas remain mostly barren, where blackened rock surfaces that are unable to filter runoff water still have a significant negative impact on our lakes. Much like paved roads and parking lots, these barren areas also may continue to release metals into our watershed as they erode, contributing to the acidification of lakes and wetlands. These barren areas are much more challenging to rehabilitate but efforts continue through aerial seeding and monitoring.

Additionally, expanding buffer zones adjacent to lakes and rivers helps support healthy aquatic habitats, protecting them from past and ongoing impacts caused by human activity.

Local conservation efforts have also been important in supporting and protecting our forest and freshwater food sources. Greater Sudbury has 25 watersheds, with 330 lakes throughout, all draining into Lake Huron.

The Nickel District Conservation Authority (o/a Conservation Sudbury), the City's Lake Water Quality Program, the Vale Living with Lakes Centre and the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee are just a few of the organizations who participate in efforts to improve and protect our watersheds through monitoring, restoration, education and community engagement.



What's a watershed?

An area of land that channels precipitation into a common body of water.

See the Conservation Sudbury map.



1973 — 2023

**CONSERVATION
SUDBURY**



Other conservation initiatives in Greater Sudbury include efforts that support and protect native species which play important roles in local ecosystems and food systems.

For example, the Chelmsford Wild Fish and Game Association hatch and release thousands of Walleye (also known as Pickerel) to support local lake populations each year. The Junction Creek Stewardship Committee also re-introduced Brook Trout into Junction Creek and works diligently to improve the creek's health to support a variety of wildlife.

These initiatives also include efforts to increase and protect pollinator habitats by promoting the growth of native wildflowers. Local organizations like the Community Garden Network and Coalition for a Liveable Sudbury offer valuable resources and opportunities for community members to participate in these initiatives.

Greater Sudbury is also fortunate to have a local native wildflower seed producer cultivating a wide variety of species adapted to northern climates. Their work supports habitat restoration both locally and across the country through seed distribution and contributions to community-led projects.

Conservation initiatives also include those that work to reduce the presence and impact of invasive species, which can outcompete native plants and animals, leading to biodiversity loss and ecosystem disruption.

A prevalent invasive aquatic species in local freshwater lakes is the Eurasian watermilfoil, which was reportedly present in 18 Greater Sudbury lakes as of 2022.² The City of Greater Sudbury's Lake Water Quality Program aims to mitigate the negative impacts of this aggressive, dense-growing aquatic plant through lake monitoring and mapping, as well as public awareness and educational campaigns to prevent its spread.

These conservation efforts ensure that our local forests and freshwater lakes will continue providing key ecosystem services, like water filtration and food production, for many generations to come.

Greater Sudbury has three conservation areas—the Nickeldale, Maley and Lake Laurentian Conservation Areas—which are all managed by Conservation Sudbury to support flood control and protect flood hazard lands. These areas are also widely utilized for educational and recreational purposes.

Photo courtesy of Northern Wildflowers



7,580km²

Approximate total watershed area managed by Conservation Sudbury as of 2024 ⁵

1,480 hectares

Number of hectares of land conserved and managed by Conservation Sudbury as of 2024 ⁵

43km

Number of kilometers of trails maintained within Conservation Areas as of 2024 ⁵

3

Number of Conservation Areas in Greater Sudbury managed by Conservation Sudbury as of 2024 ⁵

100,000

Approximate number of yearly visitors to Conservation Areas as of 2024 ⁵

27

Number of Lake Stewardship Groups in Greater Sudbury as of April 2025 ⁴

\$5,000

Total yearly funding allocated to the Lake Stewardship Grant program through the City of Greater Sudbury in 2024 ³

Number of trees and shrub/understory trees planted through the Regreening Program in 2024 ¹⁴

101,138

Tree Seedlings



32,824

Shrubs/understory tree seedlings

Number of tree seedlings and shrub/understory trees seedlings planted through the Regreening Program since 1978 ¹⁴

10,323,560

Tree Seedlings



599,990

Shrubs/understory tree seedlings

83

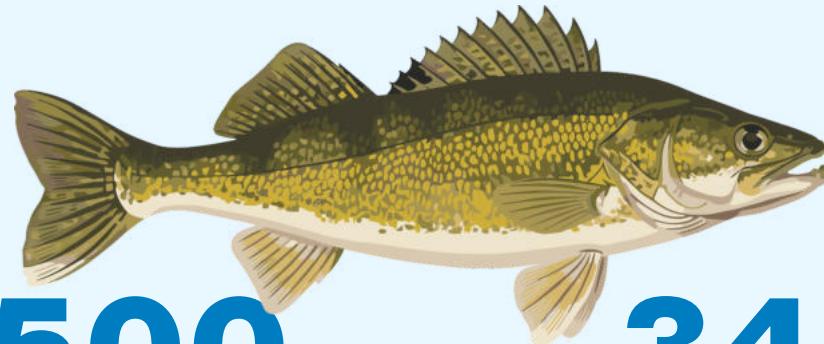
Number of different tree and shrub species planted through the Regreening Program since 1974 ¹⁴

50

Number of school yards regreened since 1974 ¹⁴

\$38,400,825

Total cost of the Regreening Program since 1974 ¹⁴

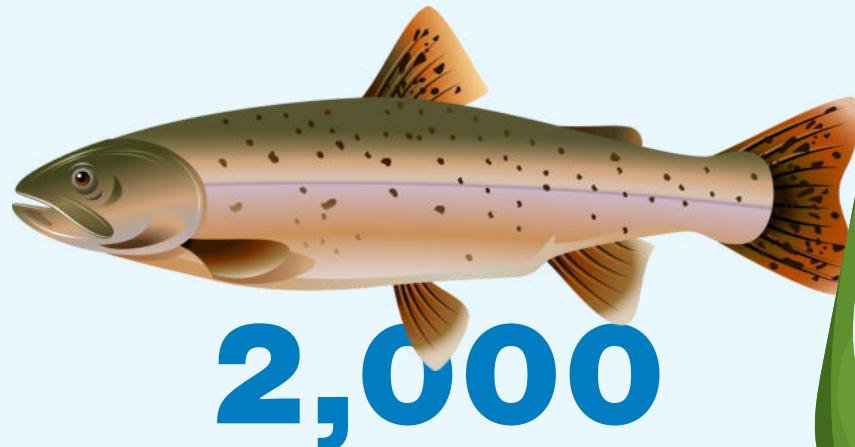


81,500 34,000

Fry

Fingerlings

Approximate number of Walleye released in local lakes through
the Chelmsford Fish and Game Association in 2024 ¹



2,000

Number of Brook Trout re-introduced
into Junction Creek in 2024 ⁸



The success of local FFWF relies on healthy soils and habitats. Negative environmental impacts from past and ongoing mining activities have raised concerns regarding the safety of foods grown in natural and cultivated habitats.

In response to these concerns, a Sudbury Soil Study was conducted and released in 2009 which outlined both human health and ecological risk assessments regarding the impact of metal emissions due to smelting activities in the region. The results showed significant impacts of metals in soils on terrestrial vegetation, highlighting a notable restriction to their growth and vitality.

However, the study also noted that re-greening efforts along with the reduction in smelter emissions have provided significant improvements to the local environment. Although soils and vegetation were heavily impacted, the study predicted little health risks to residents and local wildlife consuming locally grown garden vegetables and berries, wild blueberries or wild game.

Given that nearly 30 years have passed since this study, it may be valuable to assess the current state of Greater Sudbury's soils.



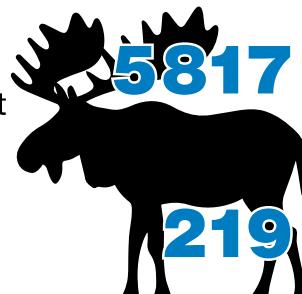
One of Greater Sudbury's greatest attractions for both tourists and residents is its proximity to nature, making it a unique destination with a deep connection to the natural world through science, art, sport and culture. Not only are there a variety of opportunities offered within the city to enjoy nature and outdoor activities throughout the year, but many more just within a few hours' drive away, making it an ideal location for those who enjoy city living but also want to escape for weekend camping trips.

There is potential to further build on this aspect of Greater Sudbury, particularly in the realm of FFWF, to create a true 'taste of place'.

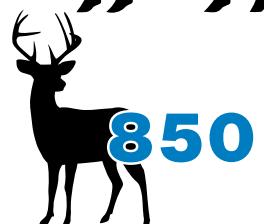
With 330 lakes within city limits providing habitat to a wide variety of wildlife, including various fish species and nearly year-round fishing opportunities, Greater Sudbury is an ideal destination for anglers. Located within the fisheries managements zone 10 (FMZ 10), some of the most popular fish species in the area include Lake Trout, Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Yellow Perch and Walleye.⁶

The city is also home to several hunting and fishing clubs that foster hands-on experience, local knowledge and a strong sense of community. While large game hunting

opportunities are limited within the city itself, they become abundant just beyond the urban area and even more so a few hours up north.



Estimated moose population in the surrounding Greater Sudbury area as of 2024⁹ (WMU 39, 41 & 42)



Estimated number of moose harvested in the surrounding Greater Sudbury area in 2023⁹ (WMU 39, 41 & 42)



Estimated number of deer harvested in the surrounding Greater Sudbury area in 2023⁹ (WMU 39, 41 & 42)

306

Number of ice hut registrations within Greater Sudbury as of April 2025¹¹

3

Number of fishing and hunting clubs/groups in Greater Sudbury as of 2025⁷

35

Number of provincial parks within 200 kilometers of Greater Sudbury as of 2025¹²

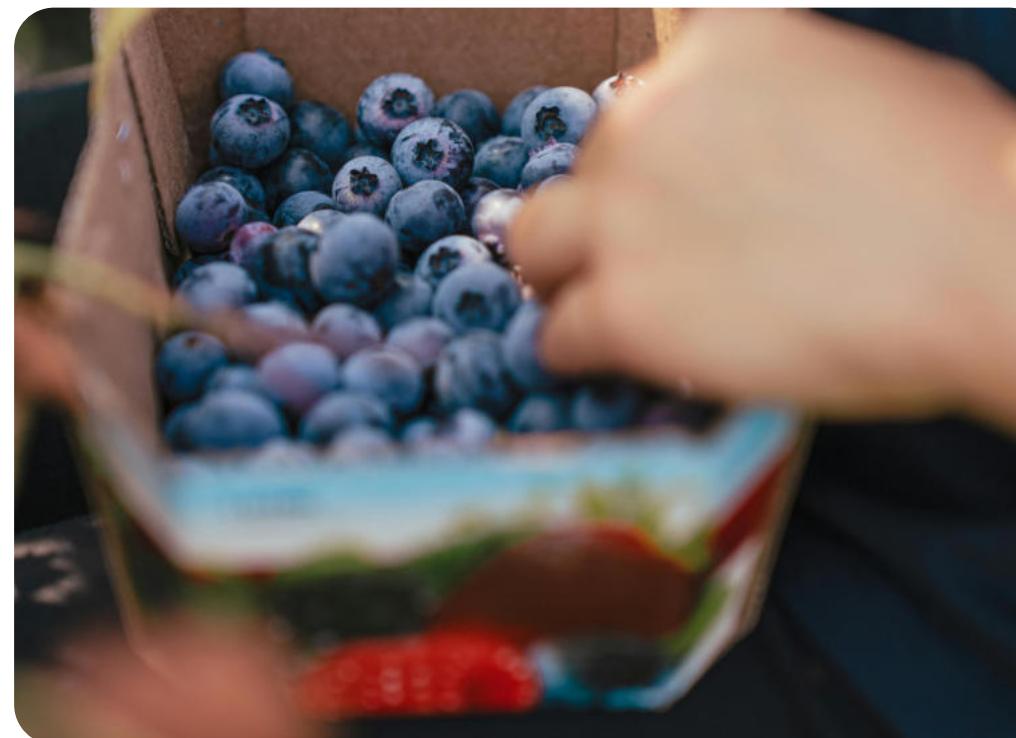
Blueberries are among Greater Sudbury's most well-known foraged forest foods, attracting many foragers who harvest berries for personal use or for small-scale commercial sale. Currently, few regulations govern the harvesting of most forest foods on public (Crown) land in Ontario. While the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry provides general guidance on environmental stewardship, detailed standards for sustainable foraging are limited.¹⁰

As interest in foraging grows, so do potential risks. Overharvesting, along with other human and environmental driven impacts, could reduce the productivity of wild crops like blueberries. This scarcity may push wildlife, such as bears and deer, into urban areas in search of food, increasing the risk of human-wildlife conflict.

Some native plant species could also face local extinction, leading to biodiversity loss and ecosystem disruption. To protect both access and ecological balance, it's essential to improve education and outreach on sustainable harvesting practices.

Developing informational signage for trailheads and commonly harvested areas can support place-based education and promote respectful harvesting practices.

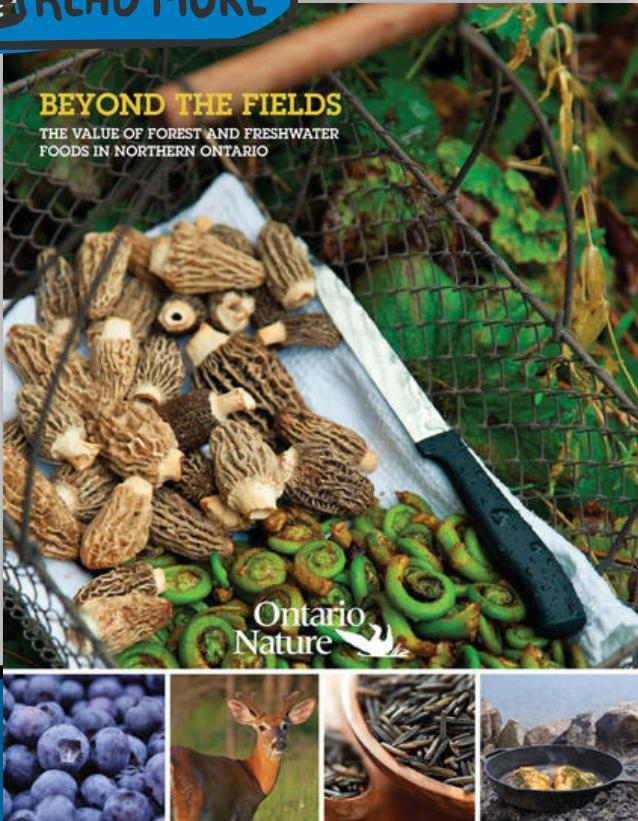
In addition, creating localized educational resources, such as training videos and infographics, can help expand outreach over time and reach a broader audience. These materials should draw from both scientific and Indigenous knowledge, highlighting traditional practices of reciprocity with plant relatives. Establishing a centralized hub for these resources and related learning opportunities, such as courses on sustainable foraging practices, could streamline efforts and foster greater community engagement.





Ontario Nature offers excellent resources on the value of FFWF, as well as best practices for harvesting, handling and packaging edible wild plants.

 **READ MORE**



 **READ MORE**

Expanding the availability and awareness of local FFWF within the culinary sector could offer a unique ‘taste of place’ that remains largely unexplored in Greater Sudbury.

While the sale of wild game meat is illegal in Ontario, businesses with the appropriate licenses and permits can legally sell foraged foods and wild-caught fish. Encouraging the development of such businesses in Greater Sudbury would provide local restaurants and vendors the opportunity to feature dishes and products made from locally foraged or fished ingredients.

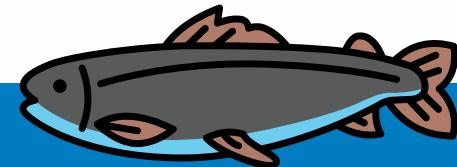
Not only would this enrich our local food industry by offering a wider range of local flavours, but it would also create opportunities for Indigenous peoples to share their traditional foods commercially, should they choose to do so. These efforts would be most successful if led by, or undertaken in partnership with, Indigenous peoples, drawing on traditional knowledge and practices to ensure respectful and sustainable harvesting.

Furthermore, these activities could contribute to land reclamation and conservation efforts by monitoring FFWF ecosystems and assessing their economic and social value, which can help prevent future land development.



A well-known example of a forest foods commercial retailer is Forbes Wild Foods, based in Toronto. They sell sustainably harvested wild foods sourced from the Canadian wilderness. These foods are gathered by trained individuals—including Indigenous people, women, youth, retirees, and foragers—and sold to restaurants, farmers markets, online customers, and more. Forbes Wild Foods also works with northern producers to restore ecosystems by replanting rare wild foods in degraded areas.

Key Recommendations under the Forest and Freshwater Foods theme (FFWF)

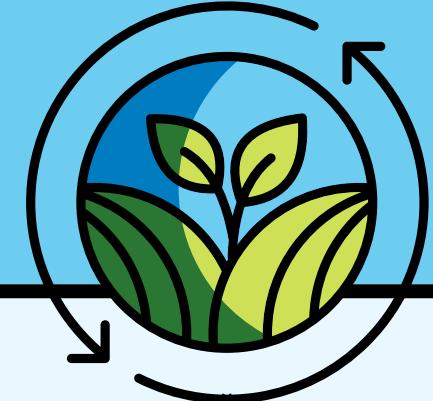


4. Forest & Freshwater Foods (FFWF)

- Strengthen and expand initiatives that connect community to FFWF and to the land and waters they come from.
- Establish a dedicated permanent coordinator role to increase FFWF learning opportunities across schools and organizations.
- Continue support and action to protect and restore FFWF ecosystems.
- Increase education and outreach on sustainable harvesting practices of FFWF.
- Establish (a) local food hub(s) or centre(s) to centralize learning, sharing, coordination and distribution of food knowledge and resources.
- Encourage certified, sustainable harvesting of FFWF for local use (e.g. restaurants, events, value-added products).



Agriculture & Food Processing



Goal: Protection of agricultural land for future generations

Agri-food businesses, including producers, processors, and retailers, are key economic drivers that support local jobs and improve regional food access. While Greater Sudbury once had a thriving agricultural sector, its prominence declined with the rapid growth of the local mining industry. However, growing community interest in local food presents a strong opportunity to strengthen the sector's development and ensure that remaining agricultural land continues to be protected for generations to come.

Early settlers were first drawn to the Greater Sudbury area by its abundant timber resources and potential for agricultural production. Farming took root in what is now known as the Valley area, located within the Sudbury Basin which spans across the Balfour, Rayside, Blezard, Hanmer and Capreol area, where soils are especially well-suited for

agriculture. However, the growth of the agricultural sector was significantly hindered by the rapid expansion of the mining industry, which combined with the impacts of logging, quickly resulted in significant environmental degradation.

With much of the area's land rendered unsuitable for successful plant growth, and little compensation received for their losses, many farmers were forced to sell or abandon their land, often seeking more profitable work in the mines.¹¹ As a result, the amount of farmed land in Greater Sudbury declined drastically. By the 1976 census, only 33% of previously reported farmland remained, and of that, only 61% was actively being farmed.¹¹

Recent trends in the local agriculture sector can be observed through the Census of Agriculture data provided by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFA) through Statistics Canada, which is released every five years. The latest available data from 2021 will largely inform the following section.

As of the 2021 census, Greater Sudbury has a total of 112 farms reporting a total of 14,737 acres of farmland, with 7,971 acres in crop production.⁷

Figure 1 on the following page shows the areas currently designated exclusively for agricultural use in Greater Sudbury, known as Agricultural Reserves. These areas represent where prime agricultural land predominates, identified in the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 as specialty crop areas and/or Canada Land Inventory Classes 1, 2, and 3 – lands with the highest agricultural capability.

Agricultural Reserves were first established in 1978 and initially covered a much larger area. However, they were significantly reduced in 2006 following an Agricultural Background Study conducted for the City's Official Plan (see Table 1). The study helped further distinguish between prime and non-prime agricultural lands, ensuring that prime agricultural land receives stronger protection for years to come.¹¹

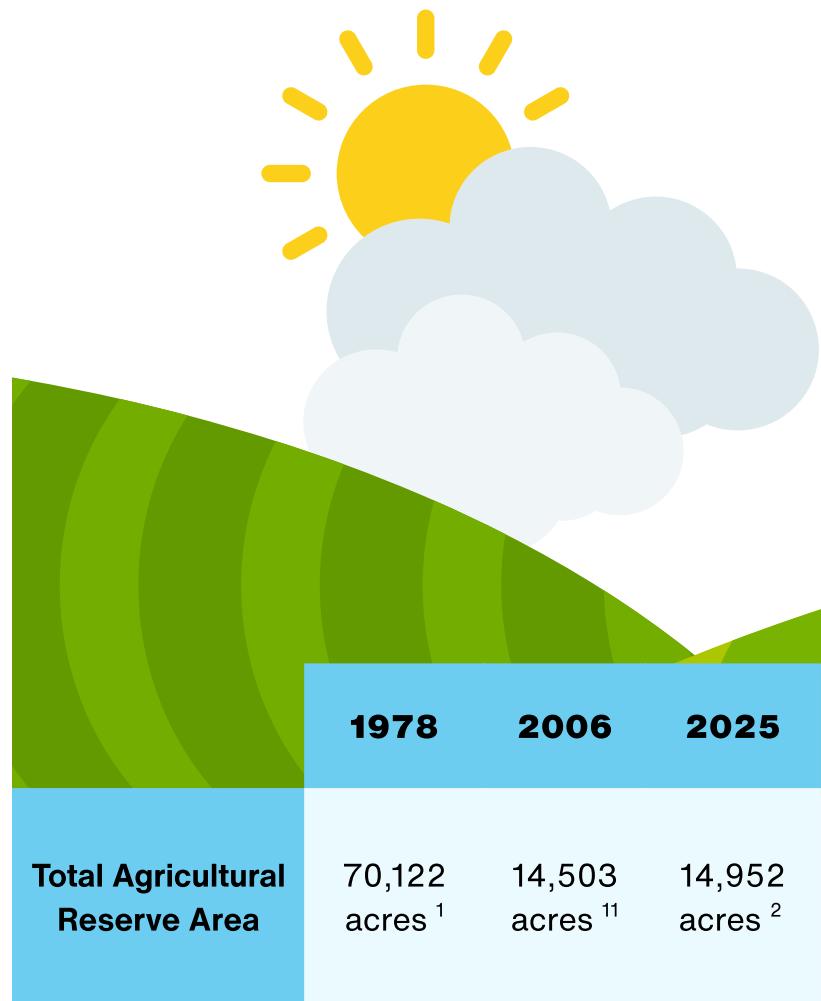


Table 1: Total agricultural reserve area in Greater Sudbury (1978 – 2025)

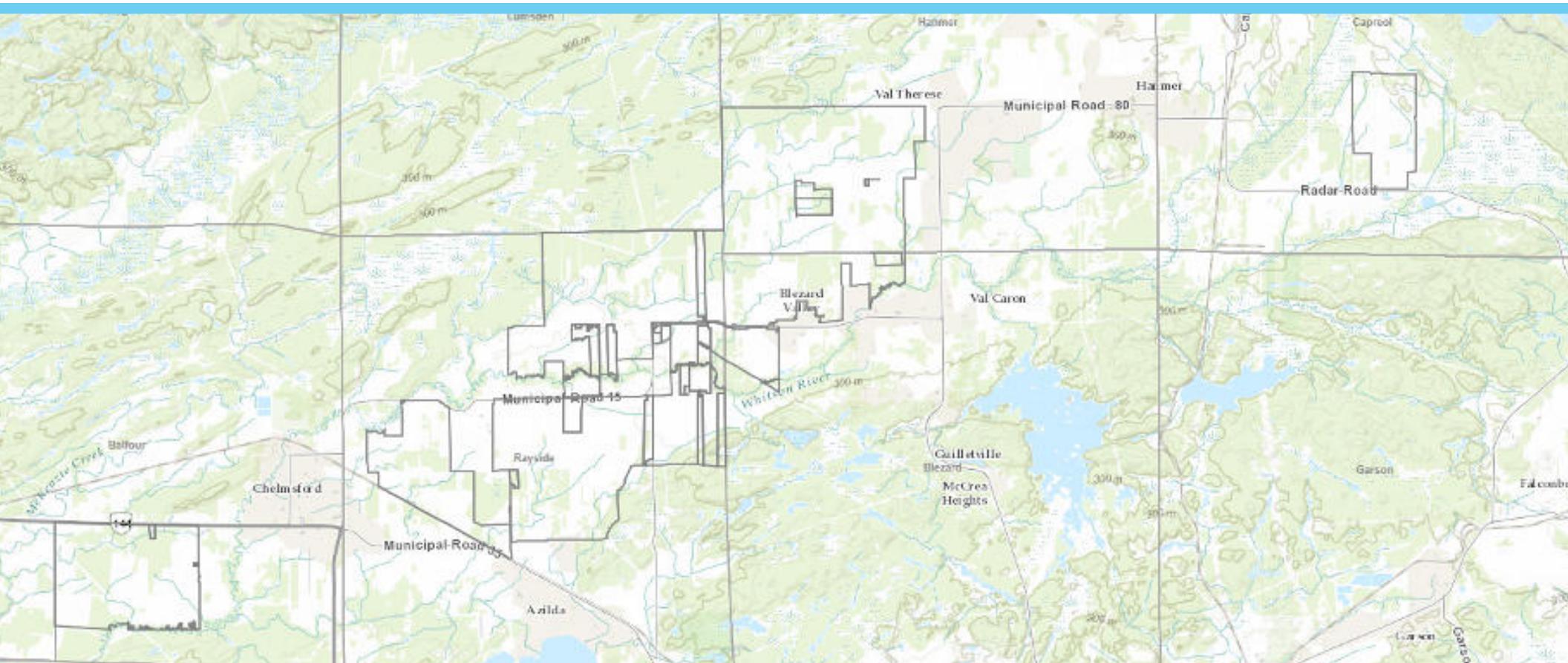


Figure 1. Map indicating all Agricultural Reserve areas in Greater Sudbury as of March 2025.²

Farm Types

Farm types in Greater Sudbury vary widely. Nearly half are livestock farms and the other half are dedicated to crop production as demonstrated in Figure 2 on the following page.

A little over 80% of farms in the area are considered small-scale, earning less than \$100,000 in revenue.¹⁰

According to Ontario Federation of Agriculture's most recent Local Snapshot of Greater Sudbury, the local farming industry earned \$6 million in cash farm receipts in 2023. Potato sales generated the highest cash receipts in the area, followed by fruit sales and floriculture, nursery and sod sales. Census of Agriculture data from 2011 – 2021 in Table 2 show that fruit and vegetable sales are steadily increasing in the area, while potatoes remain the highest-earning agri-food product, except for in 2021.



Number of Farms in Greater Sudbury

by Farm Type (as of 2021 census)

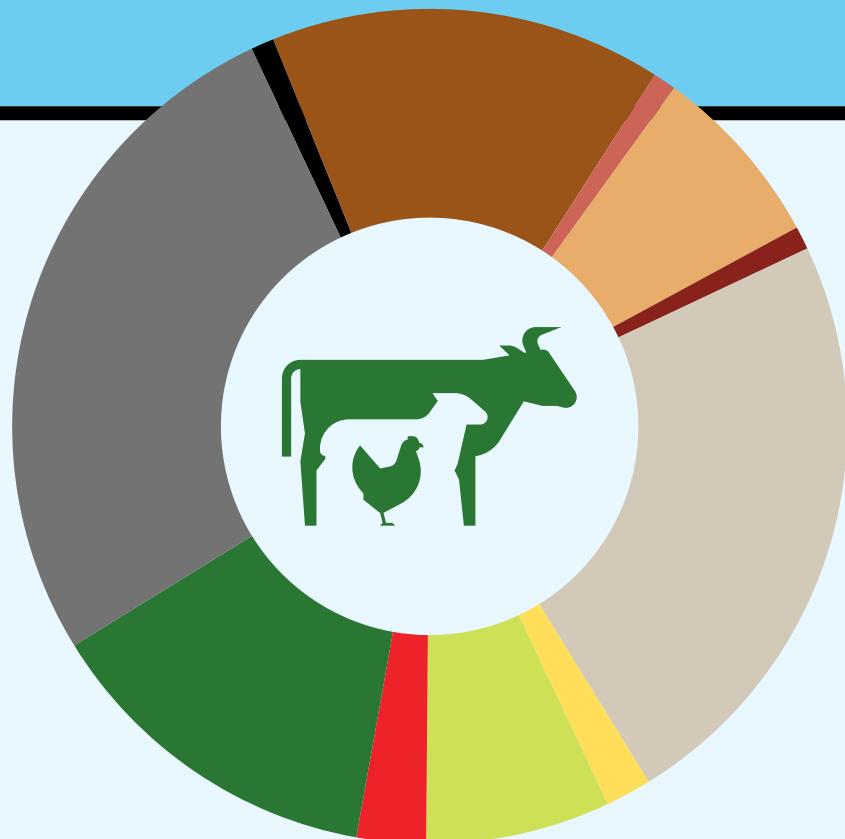


Figure 2. Number of farms in Greater Sudbury by farm type in 2021.⁶

1	Dairy Cattle & Milk Production
17	Beef Cattle Ranching and Farming
1	Hog & Pig Farming
8	Poultry & Egg Production
1	Sheep & Goat Farming
26	Other Animal Production
2	Oilseed & Grain Farming
8	Vegetable & Melon Farming
3	Fruit & Tree Nut Farming
15	Greenhouse, Nursery & Floriculture
30	Other Crop Farming

Table 2: Top three highest earning agricultural products within Greater Sudbury (2011-2021)⁶

2011		2016		2021	
Potatoes	\$2.09 million	Potatoes	\$4.06 million	Oats	\$1.5 million
Floriculture & Nursery	\$2.03 million	Floriculture & Nursery	\$1.28 million	Potatoes	\$1.2 million
Other Crops & Livestock	\$1.13 million	Fruits & Vegetables	\$0.92 million	Fruits & Vegetables	\$1.1 million

Statistics indicate a steady decline in the agriculture sector in Greater Sudbury, specifically the decrease in the total number of farms, farm area and farm operators. This trend mirrors what is seen throughout Northern Ontario, except for the Sudbury District, which has experienced a slight increase in the total number of farms and farm operators (see Table 3 and 5 on the following page).

This success, combined with ongoing food production in other nearby areas, significantly contributes to Greater Sudbury's local food system. By working strategically and collaboratively with producers both within and outside of the city, Greater Sudbury's agribusiness sector can explore growth opportunities across various aspects of the regional food supply chain, including agricultural technology, food processing, transportation and retail.

Number of Farms by Total Gross Farm Receipts 2006-2021

Figure 3. Number of farms by total gross farm receipts (2011-2021)⁷

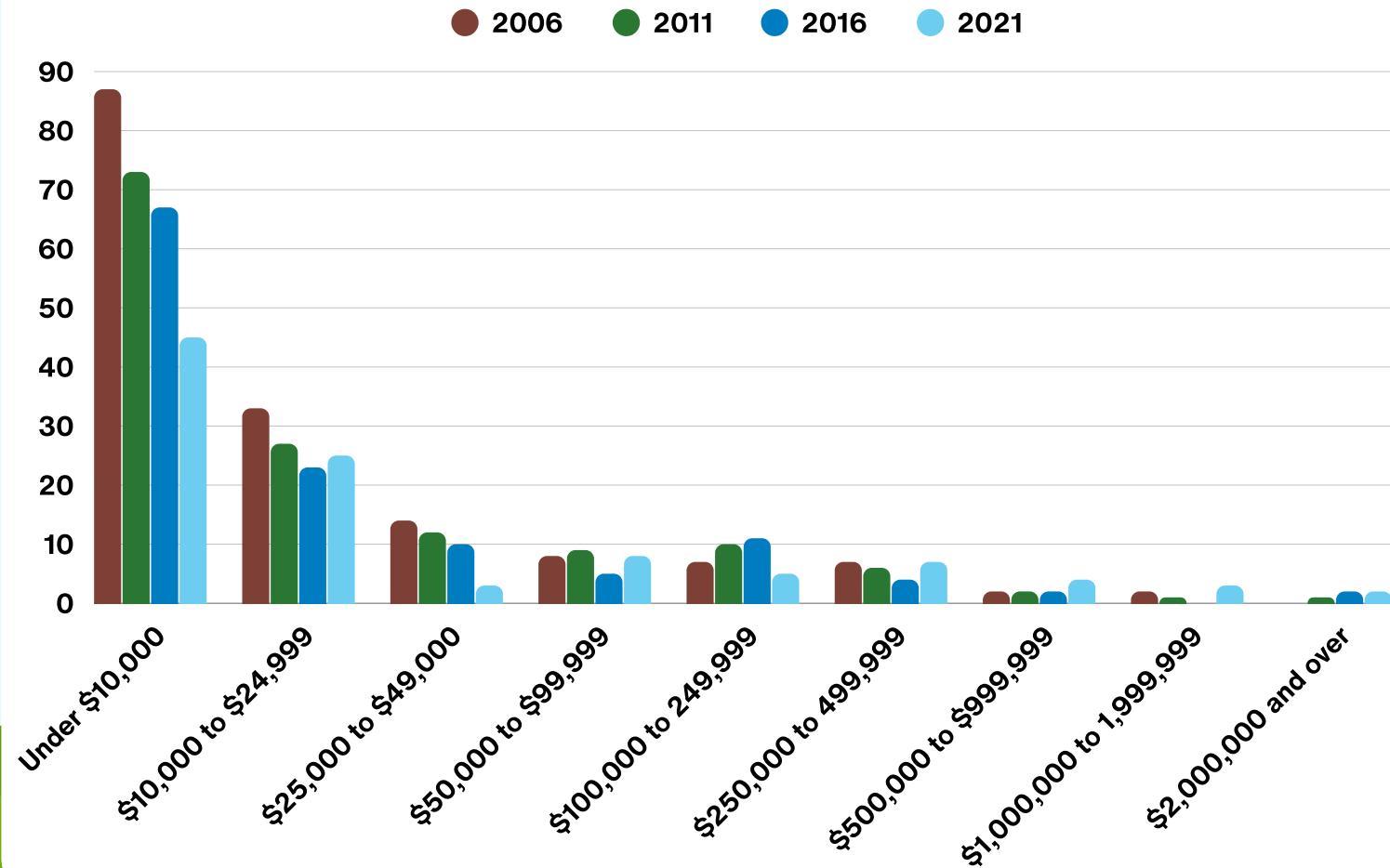


Table 3: Total number of farms in Greater Sudbury steadily decreases, while the number of farms in the Sudbury District remain relatively stable, with a slight recent increase (2006-2021)^{7,8}

	2006	2011	2016	2021
Total number of farms in Greater Sudbury	160	141	124	112
Total number of farms in Sudbury District	143	141	138	148

Table 4: Total farm area in Greater Sudbury steadily declines, while farm area in Sudbury District slightly fluctuates (2006-2021)^{7,8}

	2006	2011	2016	2021
Total farm area in Greater Sudbury	22,892 acres	20,068 acres	17,361 acres	14,737 acres
Total farm area in Sudbury District	50,799 acres	45,982 acres	48,070 acres	44,908 acres

Table 5: Total number of farm operators in Greater Sudbury steadily declines, while the number of farm operators in the Sudbury District have remained stable until a recent slight increase (2006-2021)^{7,8}

	2006	2011	2016	2021
Number of farm operators	245	200	175	155
Number of farm operators in Sudbury District	205	205	205	210

The future of farming in Greater Sudbury will largely depend on the creation of support systems and opportunities that help farmers overcome challenges driven by the changing economic, societal and climatic landscape.

Census of Agriculture data demonstrates a steady decline in agricultural workers in Greater Sudbury, as well as an increase in the average age of farm operators as demonstrated in Table 6. These trends, along with personal interactions with local farm operators, suggest that younger generations of farmers recognize the extensive challenges of farming under modern conditions and are choosing to seek employment elsewhere.

Aspiring first-generation farmers face additional challenges, as they are more likely to encounter steep learning curves that are physically, mentally and financially demanding. These challenges are compounded by substantial upfront costs required to acquire land and equipment. These obstacles, along with the general workload of farming and food production, also often seem to outweigh the benefits.

Together, these factors contribute to considerable uncertainty for the next generation of farmers and for the future of farmland management. This concern is reflected in the large number of farms in Greater Sudbury that currently

lack a written or verbal succession plan, as noted in Table 7 on the following page.

To address this uncertainty, Greater Sudbury needs more targeted opportunities and support for new and experienced farmers.

Table 6: Number of farm operators by age, highlighting the increased average age of operators in Greater Sudbury (2006-2021)⁷

Farm Operators	2006	2011	2016	2021
Under 35 years	15	15	10	5
35 – 54 years	120	65	60	50
55 years and older	105	110	105	100
Average age	53	56	57	58

Table 7: Number of farms reporting a succession plan as of 2021 census day in Greater Sudbury, with the majority lacking a formal written plan⁷

Type of succession plan	Number reporting
Written succession plan	6
• Includes 1 or more family members	6
• Includes 1 or more non-family members	0
Verbal succession plan only	29
No succession plan	77

Today, there are limited opportunities for aspiring farmers to access education in agricultural practices in Greater Sudbury and the surrounding area. Collège Boréal is the only post-secondary institution offering agricultural programs within the city (see Table 8); additionally, these programs are only available in French. Any English speaker interested in studying agriculture in post-secondary would need to leave Northern Ontario to do so.

That said, a variety of other post-secondary programs offered in Greater Sudbury may still benefit those pursuing careers in the agri-food sector, see Table 9. Additionally, to support prospective farmers and food processors in accessing entry-level job opportunities within the agri-food sector, there is a need to develop regional directories of employment and on-farm training opportunities for students and new workforce entrants.



Table 8: Agricultural post-secondary programs offered in Greater Sudbury as of 2025

School	Program
Collège Boréal	Agricultural Techniques (FR)
Collège Boréal	Agricultural Technician (FR)

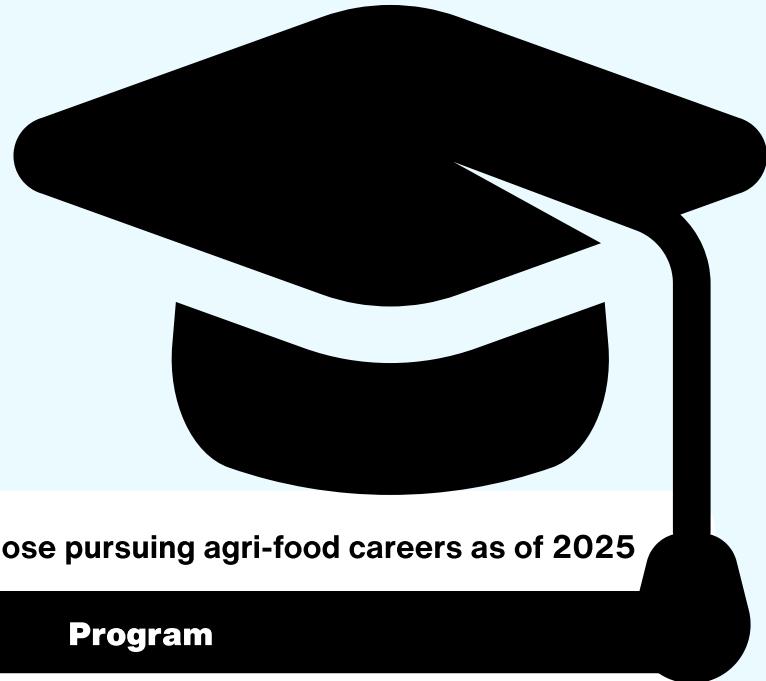


Table 9: Post-secondary programs in Greater Sudbury that may benefit those pursuing agri-food careers as of 2025

School	Program
Cambrian College	Mechanical Engineering Technician (ENG)
Cambrian College	Pre-Trade Technology (ENG)
Collège Boréal	Forestry and Wildlife Technician (FR)
Collège Boréal	General Arts and Science Program (FR)
Laurentian University	Certain branches of Biology (ENG & FR)
Laurentian University	Certain branches of Chemistry - (ENG & FR)
Laurentian University	Interdisciplinary Science (ENG & FR)

Modern food production has become less profitable as the global market has grown increasingly competitive, leaving only those with the largest and most technologically advanced operations able to earn a sufficient income. As 81.3% of farms in Greater Sudbury are small-scale, many local farm operators must rely on off-farm work to support themselves or expand their farm operations, as shown in Table 10.

This reliance on off-farm income can create a range of challenges, including the inability to hire permanent or part-time workers due to financial or time constraints, scheduling conflicts during peak farming season, and burnout, which can have severe negative impacts on mental and physical health. It may also limit their ability to expand their market reach, as they have less time or resources available to invest in networking, forming partnerships with other producers and retailers, attending farmers' markets or pursuing promotional opportunities.

These challenges could be mitigated through the creation of a dedicated coordinator role, which would support collaboration among producers and enable the sharing of resources such as seasonal labor.



Table 10: Hours worked on farm vs. other employment among farm operators in Greater Sudbury (2021)⁷

Farm work and other paid work, on average	Number of Farm Operators in 2021
Farm work – less than 20 hours per week	60
Farm work – 20 to 29 hours work per week	35
Farm work – 30 to 40 hours work per week	25
Farm work – more than 40 hours per week	40
Other paid work – 0 hours per week	65
Other paid work – less than 20 hours per week	15
Other paid work – 20 to 29 hours per week	10
Other paid work – 30 to 40 hours per week	35
Other paid work – more than 40 hours per week	30



Table 11: Number of paid farm employees and reporting farms in Greater Sudbury, by employment type (2016-2021)⁷

	2016		2021	
	Number of farms reporting	Number of employees	Number of farms reporting	Number of employees
Full-time employees (30 or more hours per week)	6	39	8	36
Part-time employees (less than 30 hours per week)	25	35	6	24
Seasonal or temporary employees	40	88	12	81

There are a variety of networking and support opportunities available for farmers and food producers in the Greater Sudbury and surrounding area. Most are provided through provincially led organizations which often facilitate local associations across Ontario, as listed in Table 12, and provide members with knowledge-sharing and funding opportunities.

However, the region could benefit from a dedicated local initiative that brings together farmers, food producers and retailers specifically within Greater Sudbury. Such a program could enhance the economic success of the agriculture sector and provide essential guidance on

finances, health, well-being and social connection for both current and future generations of farmers and food producers. It could also help identify local gaps and challenges that go beyond existing data from the Census of Agriculture and other regional studies. This work could be supported through the creation of a local food hub with the capacity to host networking meetings and offer centralized resource and funding opportunities.



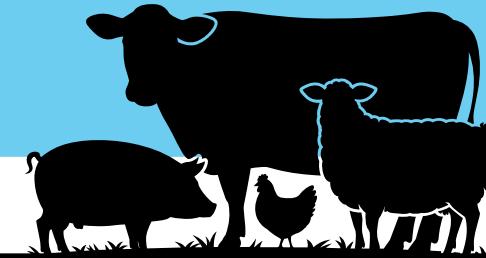


Table 12: List of provincial organizations offering support for farmers and producers

Organizations	Focus
Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) West Nipissing Sudbury East	Local associations throughout Ontario supporting and advocating for a sustainable farming and food sector.
Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) Sudbury	Local associations throughout Ontario interested in the responsible economic management of soil, water, air and crops.
Unions des cultivateurs franco-ontariens (UCFO)	Represents the interests of the Franco-Ontarian agricultural sector.
Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO)	Supporting farmers to build resilient ecological farms and grow a strong knowledge-sharing community.
Ontario Beekeepers' Association (OBA) Sudbury & District	Supporting beekeepers through research, knowledge sharing and advocacy.
Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) Sudbury West Nipissing	Advocates in areas of sustainability, animal health and care, environment, food safety and domestic and export market development.
Ontario Dairy Council (ODC)	Representing the interests and concerns of dairy processors in Ontario.
Haskap Berry Growers Association of Ontario (HBGAO)	Dedicated to the development and promotion of the emerging haskap industry.

Food processors in Greater Sudbury contribute to the local food system and agribusiness sector by transforming raw ingredients into locally tailored, value-added products. However, there is limited data available to track trends in this sector compared to agriculture. According to 2023 census data, there were 18 food manufacturing businesses in Greater Sudbury, half employing staff and the other half operating without employees. This sector has remained relatively stable since 2016 compared to how the number of farms has changed.

Overall, Greater Sudbury has the second most food manufacturing businesses in Northern Ontario, following Thunder Bay. Initiatives mentioned above, such as expanding networking and educational opportunities, resources and funding access, can support this sector's growth and encourage greater collaboration among local and regional processors, farmers, producers and retailers.



Table 13: Total number of food manufacturing businesses and their number of employees in Greater Sudbury (2016-2023)⁹

	2016	2021	2022	2023
Number of Food Manufacturing Businesses	10	15	15	18
Without Employees	3	7	5	9
With Employees	7	8	10	9
1 – 4 Employees	1	0	2	0
5 – 9 Employees	0	2	3	4
10 – 19 Employees	2	2	1	1
20 – 49 Employees	2	3	3	2
50 – 99 Employees	2	0	0	1
100 – 199 Employees	0	1	1	1

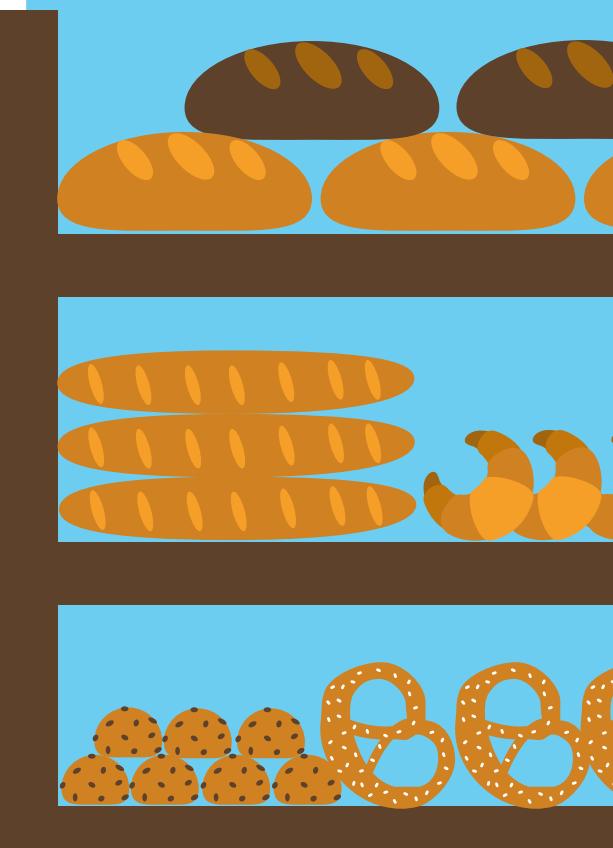


Table 14: Number of different food manufacturing businesses in Greater Sudbury (2016-2023)⁹



	2016	2021	2022	2023
Total Food Manufacturing	10	15	15	18
Animal Food Manufacturing	0	0	0	0
Grain and Oilseed Milling	0	1	1	0
Sugar and Confectionery Product Manufacturing	1	1	1	2
Fruit and Vegetable Preserving and Specialty Food Manufacturing	1	0	0	1
Dairy Product Manufacturing	1	3	2	2
Meat Product Manufacturing	1	1	1	1
Seafood Product Manufacturing	0	0	0	0
Bakeries and Tortilla Manufacturing	3	5	6	8
Other Food Manufacturing	3	4	4	4
Soft Drink and Ice Manufacturing	1	1	1	1
Breweries	2	3	2	2
Wineries	3	2	2	2
Distilleries	0	1	1	1

Greater Sudbury currently lacks the infrastructure and resources necessary to significantly grow the local agricultural sector.

Livestock farmers have limited options for meat processing facilities, with only one abattoir for poultry in the Valley and the nearest red meat processor located in Warren, about an hour's drive away. If these options are unavailable, farmers must drive two to three hours outside the city, adding extra costs and time constraints.

Egg producers are also required to travel at least two hours outside of the city to access one of the two nearest egg grading stations, located in Powassan or Huntsville. Without access to these facilities, they are restricted to selling their eggs from their farm gate only, which significantly limits their market potential.

Local food producers also lack local access to industry professionals who are essential for managing production or processing equipment, health of farm animals, soil quality and more. As a result, many farmers must either transport their own equipment or animals to access these services or in some cases, pay extra to have professionals come to them. This creates an additional obstacle for these farmers to overcome.

0

Number of provincially licensed red meat abattoirs in Greater Sudbury as of 2025 ⁵

1

Number of provincially licensed poultry abattoirs in Greater Sudbury as of 2025 ⁵

1

Number of provincially licensed dairy plants in Greater Sudbury as of 2024 ⁴

0

Number of shell egg grading stations registered for export in Greater Sudbury as of 2025 ¹

5

Farm product merchant wholesalers in Greater Sudbury as of 2023 ⁹

0

Agriculture supplies merchant wholesalers in Greater Sudbury as of 2023 ⁹

It has become increasingly important for farming practices to adapt to the changing climate. Greater Sudbury is located within a 4b plant hardiness zone, which indicates that it typically experiences between 125 and 145 frost-free days per year. The growing season is relatively short and is also further impacted by disrupted seasonal patterns and extreme weather events triggered by climate change. While milder temperatures and warmer summers brought on by climate change may benefit crop growth, it also encourages the spread and growth of pests and diseases, some of which may currently be uncommon in the region.

Supporting climate adaptation and mitigation practices is essential for protecting the future of local food production. Programs and funding opportunities can encourage farmers to utilize regenerative agriculture practices, which enhance soil and plant health to build resilience against drought, pests and diseases. These efforts can also include the integration of landscape features, infrastructure and technologies that maximize the efficient use of natural resources.

Advances in the agri-tech sector will play a critical role in extending and improving the local growing season through the increased use of tools like greenhouse automation, hydroponic systems, and aquaponics.

Additionally, renewable energy systems can help reduce long-term operational costs while also lowering the sector's carbon footprint. Together, these approaches can support the growth, resilience, and long-term sustainability of the local food system in the face of a changing climate.



Regenerative Agriculture Practices Support Sustainable Farming

Regenerative agriculture practices are farming methods designed to enhance natural processes that support plant growth and improve soil health. These practices include maintaining continuous soil cover with cover crops, diversifying crop varieties to boost biodiversity, integrating livestock to promote nutrient cycling and minimizing chemical inputs through more precise application. Local examples of these methods in action can be found in the Sudbury.com article titled “**Regenerative agriculture is the key to sustainable modern farming**,” which highlights farmers in the area who have successfully adopted regenerative practices on their farms.





Table 15: Farms reporting utilizing renewable energy producing systems in Greater Sudbury (2021)⁷

Solar Panels	5
Wind Turbines	10
Anaerobic Biodigester	3
Biodiesel Production System	0
Geothermal Electric Power Generator	0
Hydro Electric Power Generator	0
Other Renewable Energy Producing Systems	1

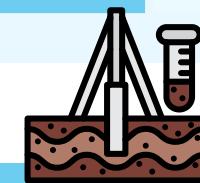


Table 16: Farms reporting utilizing precision agriculture tools in Greater Sudbury (2021)⁷

Variable Rate Input Application	5
Drones	0
Soil Sample Test	20
Slow-release Fertilizer	22

Key Recommendations under the Agriculture & Food Processing Theme

5. Agriculture & Food Processing

- Strengthen strategic partnerships among local and regional producers and processors to grow Greater Sudbury's agribusiness sector.
- Develop resources and support programs for both new and experienced farmers.
- Create and maintain a directory of agricultural job openings and hands-on training opportunities to support students and new workforce entrants.
- Establish a permanent coordinator role that will support collaboration and resource sharing among producers and among processors.
- Establish (a) local food hub(s) or centre(s) to centralize learning, sharing, coordination and distribution of food knowledge and resources.
- Expand funding access and implement targeted initiatives to support climate adaptation and mitigation in food production and processing systems.



Food Retail, Service & Tourism



Goal: Increased business competitiveness and partnerships within our food system

Regional and local food systems have long felt the impact of Canada's reliance on international trades, restricting their ability to compete with low market prices and marketing advantages of international corporations. The competition extends even further, as exploitative work measures in other countries allow for lower operating costs in multiple sectors. Although these products have a lower price tag, they carry a much higher social, economic and environmental cost.

Having more competitive local providers benefits both the environment and our communities. Procuring food and non-food products locally, especially within municipal or regional boundaries, significantly increases the amount of money retained in the community, supporting local employment and enterprise growth.

For every dollar spent at a small business, 66 cents on average stays local compared to only 11 cents of every dollar spent on products from large multinational businesses.²

It also fosters greater accountability and transparency between consumers and producers, encouraging social and environmental best practices. Additionally, local food procurement strengthens food sovereignty by helping ensure that local farmers and food producers can continue operating.

This, in turn, protects farmland, natural resources and regionally adapted seeds that sustain the local food system.



What is local food procurement?

Local food procurement is the process of purchasing food products from within a defined local area, such as a province, region or municipality. While it often refers to large-scale buyers like government agencies, municipalities, schools and other institutions, it can also apply to individuals or households choosing to buy locally produced foods.



Greater Sudbury's current food production sector is not equipped to provide enough locally sourced food to meet the community's needs. Several practical and economic challenges mean that production within the municipality is not positioned to produce all or even most of the food it consumes, as demonstrated in Tables 1 and 2. However, greater collaboration with regional producers offers promising alternatives to support the community's needs.

By enhancing regional partnerships among local collaborators, Greater Sudbury can strengthen its food system. These collaborations can improve distribution networks, reduce transportation costs and support small-scale business owners which will contribute to greater local food resilience and security. Strategic investments in local food infrastructure, such as processing and storage facilities, along with improved supply chain coordination, will significantly enhance local food procurement and consumption in Greater Sudbury. This approach will benefit both the local and regional economy while promoting environmental sustainability.





Estimated volume of food consumed in Greater Sudbury in 2021 that could have been sourced from Ontario ⁵

Table 1: Estimated annual consumption of main food products in Greater Sudbury, the acreage required to meet local demand, the local production and the percent of self-sufficiency based on 2021 census data.⁵

Main Food Products that can be grown in Ontario	Total annual consumption of food products (in kilograms) by the Greater Sudbury population in 2021	Total production base (in acres) required to feed the Greater Sudbury population in 2021	Local production base (in acres) in Greater Sudbury in 2021 and the percent of self-sufficiency
Total Fruit	4,005,274 kg	695 acres	37 acres (5%*)
Total Vegetables	23,390,400 kg	2,677 acres	1,060 acres (40%*)
Total Grains	23,390,400 kg	5,362 acres	891 acres (17%*)

* The percent of self-sufficiency reflects the potential if crop specific local agricultural land were used efficiently to meet the variety of Greater Sudbury's food demand.

Table 2: Annual consumption of main livestock products in Greater Sudbury, the number of livestock required to meet local demand, the local production and the percent of self-sufficiency based on 2021 census data.⁵

Main Livestock that can be grown in Ontario	Total annual consumption of livestock products (in kilograms) by the Greater Sudbury population in 2021	Total production base (in heads) required to feed the Greater Sudbury population in 2021	Local production base (in heads) in Greater Sudbury in 2021 and the percent of self sufficiency
Total Livestock Products	19,893,469 kg	3,428,942 heads	10,780 heads (0%*)

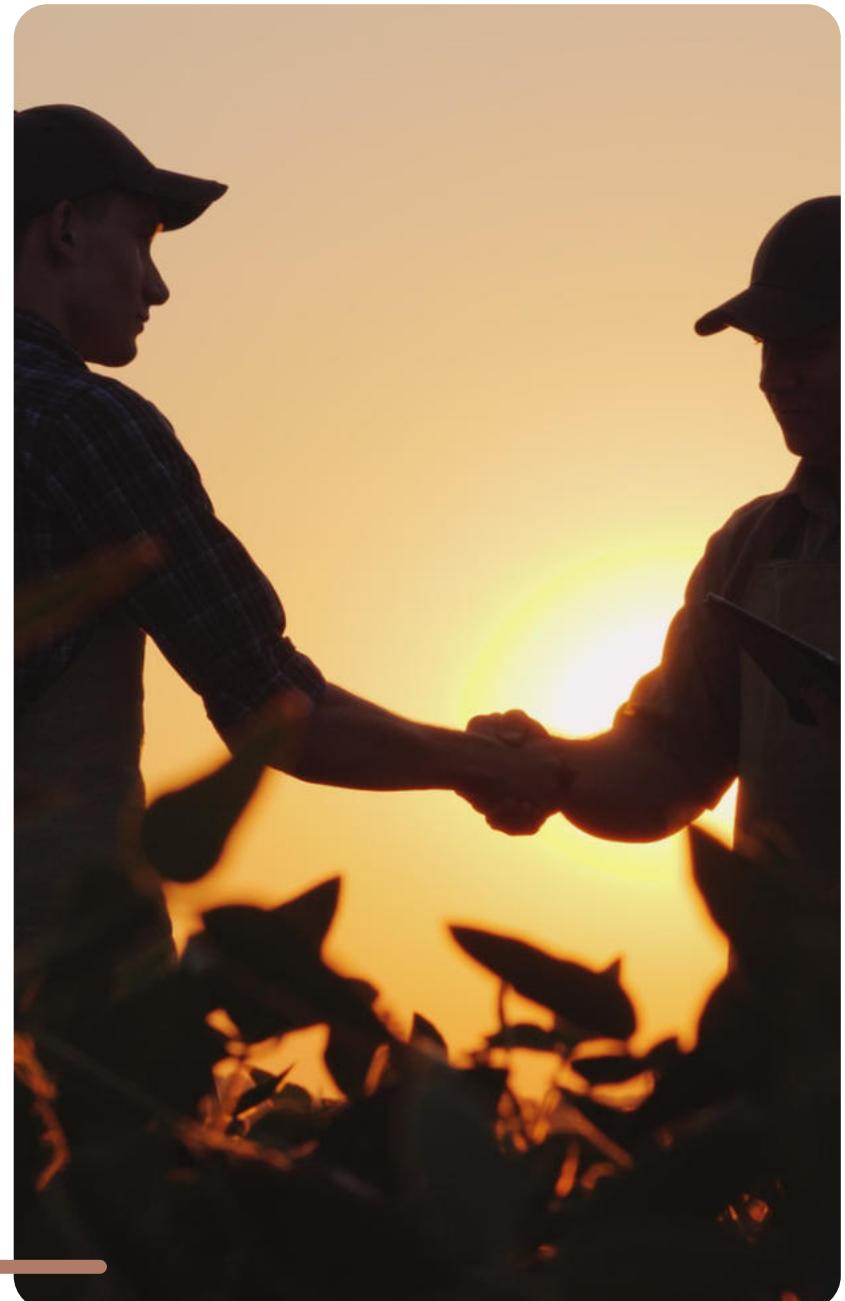
* The percent of self-sufficiency reflects the potential if livestock specific production were spread out efficiently to meet the variety of Greater Sudbury's food demand.

Note that while Table 1 suggests Greater Sudbury could be 40% self-sufficient in local vegetable production, this would only be feasible if all farmland used for vegetable crops in 2021 were efficiently cultivated to meet the region's diverse vegetable demands. In reality, much of this farmland is owned by farmers who primarily, or exclusively, grow potatoes for local and provincial distribution instead of the range of vegetables in local demand.

While full diversification may not be realistic, there is potential to increase crop variety and efficiency among small-scale farmers interested in forming partnerships to meet retail needs. For instance, farmers can collaborate with local retailers and restaurants to determine crop quantities required and coordinate production accordingly among each farm.

Further, networking with other regional farmers would help align efforts and coordinate who can supply which crops or products from outside city boundaries. Efficient networking opportunities would be best supported by a local organization focused on building and maintaining local and regional food system relationships, such as a food hub, relieving individual producers and retailers of the responsibility for coordinating these collaborations themselves.

Partnerships would be essential to a competitive local food system.



Ensuring that local food businesses are well supported and connected is essential for reducing barriers to getting food to consumers and reducing waste. While some networking groups have formed within specific sectors of the food chain, such as SHARE Sudbury, a local group of restaurant owners, and ClickFork, an online local food retail platform connecting regional producers, there is currently no group or organization dedicated to uniting these sectors to facilitate broader collaboration.

An organization serving as a food hub could help bridge this gap by offering networking opportunities as well as storage, processing and transportation coordination services. Innovative centers like these can become vital spaces for both established and emerging food sector participants, providing localized support and services that expand market access to locally produced, nutritious foods.

Improving access to and awareness of local food retail outlets is also needed across the city. Most farmers in Greater Sudbury sell directly to consumers, at their farm, online, through community support agriculture (CSA) programs, or at farmers markets. While these options suit small-scale producers, they can limit market reach because not all consumers know about them or face scheduling, transportation or other access barriers.

Many consumers are accustomed to the convenience of one-stop grocery shopping, which local food retailers may not always be able to offer, especially during winter months when product variety is limited. Increasing the number of local food retail outlets across the city, particularly in existing high-traffic, easily accessible shopping areas, could encourage broader consumer engagement. Boosting public education and awareness about the benefits of supporting these outlets is essential to ensure regular patronage. This can be achieved through marketing tools such as branded merchandise, community billboards and strategic social media campaigns.

Increasing the presence of local food in grocery stores can also help producers reach a broader market. However, establishing and sustaining these partnerships may be challenging due to regulatory barriers and intense product competition. Convenience stores, along with other frequently visited locations like cafes and pharmacies, can also serve as effective alternatives for local food sales.

Developing local food procurement policies and dedicated support programs to help producers access new sales partnerships would help with expanding market access. These policies could also include support for building partnerships with restaurants, catering businesses and institutional food services.



What is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program?

A CSA program lets community members support local farmers and producers by paying upfront for a share of the season's harvest. This direct-to-consumer model gives farmers financial stability early in the season and provides members with regular deliveries of fresh, local produce.



1 Number of year-round farmers' markets in Greater Sudbury as of 2025 ³

5 Estimated number of seasonal farmers' markets in Greater Sudbury as of 2025 ³

4 Average number of farmers selling products at the Sudbury Market year-round as of 2025 ³

46 Number of farms in Greater Sudbury reporting selling agricultural products directly to consumers as of 2021 ⁶

2 Number of farms in Greater Sudbury reporting selling value-added agricultural products direct to consumers as of 2021 ⁶

1 Number of farms in Greater Sudbury reporting selling agricultural products through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs as of 2021 ⁶

36 Number of farms in Greater Sudbury reporting selling agricultural products through farm gate sales, stands, kiosks or U-pick as of 2021 ⁶

2 Number of farms in Greater Sudbury reporting selling agricultural products directly to consumers through other methods as of 2021 ⁶





Find local farmers' markets, local food retail stores and other food access points through EarthCare Sudbury's ***Food Access Map***.

In 2018, following the release of the Greater Sudbury Food Strategy, a Culinary Tourism Strategy for Greater Sudbury was introduced. It highlights various opportunities and recommendations to foster growth within the local culinary sector. Many of the goals and actions outlined in the strategy, which are listed below in Table 3, have already been implemented and continue to make progress. Others may still require initiation or strengthening to address current needs. For instance, actions under Goals 1 and 2 in Table 3 may benefit from the creation of a dedicated and experienced coordinator role to effectively bring partners together and lead initiatives.

 **READ MORE**



Table 3. Goals and Actions highlighted from the Greater Sudbury Culinary Tourism Strategy introduced in 2018.¹

Goals	Actions
1. Reach a critical mass of market-ready businesses.	1.1 Develop a series of market-readiness workshops. 1.2 Develop coaching and mentorship programs.
2. Grow awareness about the food and drink that is grown, raised, harvested, and produced in Greater Sudbury.	2.1 Develop local food inventories 2.2 Establish regular industry networking sessions. 2.3 Create a local food and drink ambassador program.
3. Promote collectively shared elements of taste of place	3.1 Conduct an industry consultation to form consensus around shared taste of place elements in Greater Sudbury.
4. Leverage local history and culture to tell compelling and relevant food and drink stories.	4.1 Develop and share new resources related to food and drink storytelling. 4.2 Create a new web platform (or use an existing platform) to collect and share local food and drink stories and/or vignettes. 4.3 Animate local non-food places and spaces with food and drink.
5. Evolve Greater Sudbury's natural and cultural assets in a creative way	5.1 Form partnerships across the tourism value chain and between different organizations. 5.2 Enhance festivals and events by integrating unique food and drink experiences.

Local and regional groups such as the Sudbury Regional Business Centre, Downtown Sudbury BIA, Sudbury Tourism, Destination Northern Ontario and the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance provide valuable resources and support for business growth and the development of destination attractions.

Many local restaurants and producers have leveraged these resources to grow their business and attract visitors. For example, a local maple syrup farm enhanced its property for tours and events with assistance from the Greater Sudbury Development Corporation's Tourism Development Fund, which also helped improve their website and social media presence. Additionally, a local restaurant recognized by the Feast ON local food certification has built a reputation for fine dining by showcasing high-quality, locally sourced ingredients.

There remain many opportunities for other local businesses to access similar support or networking opportunities to grow and collaborate.

A significant development in Greater Sudbury's culinary tourism sector in recent years has been the emergence of new food events, such as themed gatherings, pop-up markets and festivals. These events are enhanced by a growing number of food trucks and vendors, providing an expanding variety of cuisines and unique summer treats at

and popular recreational spots like parks and beaches. They also present excellent opportunities for start-ups and small businesses to test their products, build a loyal customer base, and potentially pave the way for opening permanent retail spaces and expanding their market reach.

To help small vendors grow into sustainable, year-round operations, start-ups and small businesses could benefit from increased access to shared commercial kitchens to support year-round food production. Although the exact number and suitability of existing facilities are unknown, commercial kitchens are available in several of the City's Community Centre Halls and may also be offered by local businesses, restaurants and other community centres for part-time use. Expanding the availability of these shared kitchens, along with providing resources on how to access them and best practices for use, would further support entrepreneurial growth and innovation within the city's food retail sector beyond the summer season.

Administrative support also plays a key role in enabling food entrepreneurs to thrive. New initiatives, such as the Vendor Insurance Program introduced by the City of Greater Sudbury in spring 2025, are helping to support this sector by simplifying the insurance

application process for vendors. However, further efforts are needed to reduce the redundancy of certifications required to participate in individual events, particularly those managed by different Public Health Units. Each has its own rules and procedures, complicating expansion efforts for food producers and vendors. Strengthening guidance and providing additional resources for growing businesses is essential to fostering culinary tourism opportunities.

Festivals can also be further enhanced by incorporating more locally sourced foods. A great example of this is Poutine Fest, where all fresh potatoes used by vendors are sourced from a local potato farm. Another example is a local popsicle business based in Chelmsford that reaches a broader audience with its food truck and creates unique popsicle flavors using locally sourced fruits and other food products. There are many additional opportunities for collaborations with regional producers, for instance, sourcing pork for Rib Fest and the Sudbury Greek Festival, garlic for the annual Ukrainian Garlic Festival, or bread and kale for on-the-go sandwiches and salads. Local food procurement agreements could help formalize and expand these partnerships, ensuring local producers are prioritized for all festivals hosted in Greater Sudbury.

Smaller, unique and thoughtfully curated dining hubs and events are also gaining momentum in Greater Sudbury,

offering engaging opportunities for both tourists and residents to experience a distinct local taste of place through food, art and culture. Supporting these innovative, community-based culinary ventures through grants, funding, or tax incentives, can help ensure their continued growth and contribution to the local evolving food scene.

Visibility of food-related events, businesses and activities in Greater Sudbury and the surrounding area has grown significantly in recent years, thanks to a range of media platforms. Social media has played a key role, with platforms like Sudbury Tourism's visually curated Instagram and Facebook pages, as well as local content creators whose Instagram reels take you along to a variety of local foodie destinations. These and other media channels provide local businesses with valuable exposure to a wide audience, often at little to no cost. Continued investment in storytelling, digital and traditional marketing, and community-driven content can further strengthen Greater Sudbury's identity as a vibrant culinary destination.

Key Recommendations under the Food Retail, Service and Tourism Theme



6. Food Retail, Service and Tourism

- Strengthen local and regional relationships to improve distribution networks, reduce costs and support small-scale producers and processors.
- Develop supply chain coordination and invest in local food infrastructure like processing and storage facilities.
- Establish (a) local food hub(s) or centre(s) to centralize learning, sharing, coordination and distribution of food knowledge and resources.
- Increase public access to and awareness of local food outlets, including farmers markets, retail shops, online platforms and CSAs, along with boosting local food sales in grocery and convenience stores.
- Develop local food procurement policies for institutions and events, and support programs to help producers and processors expand market reach.
- Establish a dedicated permanent coordinator role that will support food businesses with resources such as a local entrepreneurial guide, access to commercial kitchens and regulatory guidance.
- Develop funding streams geared towards local food businesses that support local food procurement, art and culture.



Food Waste



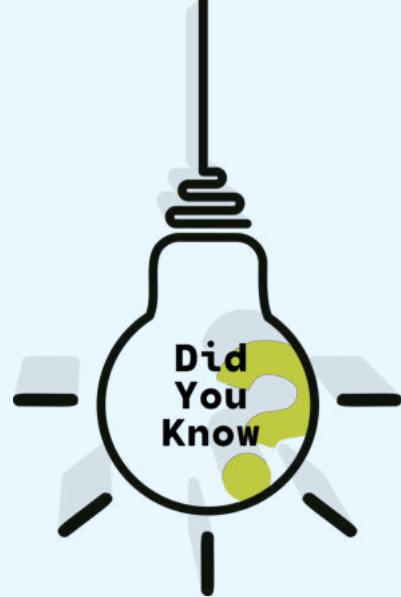
Reducing food waste is a crucial and valuable step towards supporting a sustainable food system in Greater Sudbury.

A significant portion of food waste produced is avoidable, for example, visually imperfect fruits and vegetables that are never sold even though they are perfectly edible. These and other edible foods are often discarded due to high market standards, inefficiencies throughout the food supply chain and barriers to access due to the commodification of food and missed opportunities for redistribution. Reducing food waste also diverts organic waste from landfills which reduces the release of methane gas, a greenhouse gas 28 to 36 times more potent than carbon dioxide in trapping heat in our atmosphere. Reducing food waste can both strengthen food systems and help mitigate climate change.

In 2024, Second Harvest released its second report, **The Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste**, which quantified Canada's food waste. The report revealed that 8.83 million metric tons of avoidable food waste was produced across the country, with an estimated value of more than \$58 billion.

This figure only reflects the cost of the food product itself and does not account for the full range of resources required to bring food from farm to market.⁷ Beyond the financial loss, this waste represents a missed opportunity to help feed a growing population facing food insecurity, as well as the wasted resources used to grow, harvest, process, package and transport food that is ultimately discarded.

In 2018, the province of Ontario passed a **Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement**, which outlines specific waste reduction targets for municipalities based on population density and size. For Greater Sudbury, the targets include diverting 70% of food and organic waste from landfills in low-density residential households by 2023. High density multi-unit residential buildings and the industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) sectors must achieve a 50% diversion rate by 2025. The policy statement also proposed a province-wide ban on organic waste disposal in landfills by 2022. This ban has not yet been officially implemented, though it remains a potential future measure. These initiatives represent an important step toward building more sustainable food systems and align with goals outlined in the City's **Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP)**.



Diverting food waste from landfills means redirecting it into more sustainable pathways, such as composting inedible food waste, or redistribution programs for edible, avoidable food waste.



A variety of programs in Greater Sudbury support partnerships between producers, retailers and consumers to reduce food waste. For example, smartphone apps like **Too Good To Go** and **Flashfood** allow retailers and restaurants to offer discounts on surplus food items or those nearing their “best before” date which might otherwise be discarded. **Second Harvest** also offers a food waste recovery program in Greater Sudbury, providing a platform for food businesses to donate surplus food to local organizations. This food is then redistributed through food banks, school meal programs and other community food access initiatives.

Important partnerships also include those that focus on diverting food waste from landfills back into the food system to support sustainable agriculture. **Loop Resource** connects food businesses with farmers who can use surplus food to feed farm animals or add to their composting systems, at no cost to the farmer. The organization also prioritizes the donation of all edible food to community food access programs before any food is collected for agricultural use.

Programs like these can increase their impact through local awareness and promotion. Offering incentives or promotional opportunities for participating food businesses may also help boost uptake.



51

Estimated number of organizations in Greater Sudbury participating in food waste diversion programs as of 2025^{6,8,9}

Loop
70

Number of farms in Greater Sudbury currently involved in the Loop Resource program as of 2025⁸

The City of Greater Sudbury offers a **special event program** that provides free delivery, pick-up and processing of organics waste for large events and festivals. The City also offers a full cost recovery roadside organic waste collection service for small non-residential organizations that produce no more than three Yellow Carts. In 2024, the **Yellow Cart Organics Program** serviced 14 participants.² Due to limited processing capacity, the large non-residential organics composting program is currently unavailable to most businesses and institutions that produce large volumes of food waste, such as restaurants and grocery stores. However, some institutions have taken independent steps to manage some of their organic waste. For example, Collège Boréal is currently trialing an indoor automated compost digester to process their cafeteria food waste, while working with the City to expand organics collection outside the cafeteria.⁴

An organics composting collection program is also available to all schools in Greater Sudbury, 45 schools actively participate as of July 2024.⁵ Students learn about food waste diversion through presentations and facility tours offered by the City's Environmental Services division and local community groups such as Sudbury Shared Harvest's vermicomposting workshops.

Currently, the City uses a conventional aerobic windrow composting system to process food and organic waste. While this method is cost-effective, it requires a large processing area and has a relatively long processing time, approximately six to eight months, compared to other systems. The organic processing facility is situated on a temporary area within the Sudbury Landfill's waste disposal footprint, which will eventually need to be used for landfill expansion. the City must upgrade and replace its current food and organic waste processing system.



Photo courtesy of Environmental Services, CGS

The Greater Sudbury **Sustainable Waste Strategy** for 2025 to 2035 identifies key policies to improve food and organic waste diversion.

Top priorities include increasing participation in the Green Cart Program in low-density residential areas and expanding organics collection in high-density residential and non-residential sectors, with implementation targets set between 2025 and 2030.

To support these efforts, a long-term, dedicated organic processing facility is necessary to handle the anticipated increase in organic waste and to meet the diversion targets set in both the provincial Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement and the City's **Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP)**.



City of Greater Sudbury's Sustainable Waste Strategy

October 2024



14

Number of Yellow Cart Program participants in Greater Sudbury in 2024 ²

20%

Percentage of all waste types (e.g. Blue Box, leaf & yard, organics, scrap metal, etc.) diverted from the landfill from the non-residential sector in Greater Sudbury in 2023 ³

106

Number of presentations, events, tours and other educational initiatives offered by the City of Greater Sudbury's Environmental Services department in 2024 ²

45

Number of schools in Greater Sudbury participating in the organics composting collection program as of 2024 ⁵

17

Number of vermicomposting workshops and presentations given to schools in Greater Sudbury through Sudbury Shared Harvest as of 2025 ¹⁰



Households create a significant amount of avoidable food waste. According to Second Harvest's report, households accounted for 17% of the total avoidable food waste generated in Canada in 2024, making them the second largest contributor after the processing and manufacturing of food products.⁷

One of the most common causes of avoidable food waste identified in the report, both in the food supply chain and in households, is associated with the misconceptions surrounding “best before” dates on food packaging. Many consumers rely solely on the date stamped on the packaging to determine if the food is still good, leading to the premature disposal of perfectly edible food.

Avoidable household food waste can also result from improper meal planning and food storage. Increasing access to informational resources regarding this can help households better utilize and preserve perishable foods. For example, infographics on food storage and tips on preserving and using leftover ingredients could be a useful reference in the kitchen. Additionally, incorporating food waste prevention education into food literacy school programs can help turn these practices into lifelong habits.

What is the difference between a “best before”, “expiration” and “packaged on” date on a food product?¹

“Best Before” Dates indicate how long a properly stored, unopened food product will maintain its freshness, taste and nutritional value. However, this date does not guarantee the product’s safety. For example, while table salt may have a “best before” date, it remains safe to consume indefinitely, though its quality and flavor may lessen over time due to additives.

“Expiration” Dates indicate the last day which certain foods, such as formulated liquid diets for people using oral or tube feeding methods, or infant formulas, are guaranteed to meet their strict compositional and nutritional specifications. These products should not be purchased, sold or consumed past their expiration date.

“Packaged On” Dates indicate when a food item was first placed in its retail packaging. This date is required on foods with a shelf life of 90 days or less. These products must also be accompanied with durable life information, such as a “best before” date or the number of days the product will retain its freshness.



Introducing household practices, like composting, that redirect food and other organic waste from landfills to be used for other purposes is also crucial in supporting a sustainable food system.

Composting returns the valuable nutrients from food waste to the soil, nourishing microorganisms, invertebrates and plants. This process plays a key role in closing the loop of the food system. Greater Sudbury households can help support a sustainable, circular food system by diverting food and organic waste through the municipal Green Cart Program or at-home composting.

The City of Greater Sudbury's Green Cart Program provides unlimited weekly roadside collection of food and organic waste for households along designated routes. A study conducted by the City from 2024 to 2025 found that 46% of 2,905 households in the city's low-density residential areas participated in the Green Cart Program.² Waste composition studies from 2023 also found that between 30 and 50% of residential garbage sent to landfills could have been diverted through the Green Cart Program.³ That is to say, there is room for participation in the Green Cart program to improve.

46%

Percentage of Green Cart Program participants in low-density residences in Greater Sudbury as of the 2024 study ²

To encourage higher participation, the City could implement best practices that have been proven to increase organics diversion rates in other municipalities. These include a clear garbage bag program and a user pay system for garbage.

The Greater Sudbury Sustainable Waste Strategy for 2025 to 2035 also emphasizes the need to invest in expanding the City's organic waste processing facilities to service apartment buildings, and large non-residential establishments, which currently do not have access to the compost collection program.

Compost, which is made by combining nitrogen-rich materials, such as food scraps and fresh leaf and yard trimmings, with carbon-rich materials, such as paper products or dried leaf and yard trimmings, provide a natural source of nutrients to support plant growth and food production.





Get a **FREE** green cart

Greater Sudbury residents eligible for roadside collection can **receive a FREE Green Cart** through the City's website or mobile app and join the Green Cart Program at any time.

An organization focused on food waste diversion could play a key role in reducing household food waste by running programs that collect surplus food for processing into meals or value-added products. For example, Sudbury Shared Harvest once operated a “Fruit for All” program that harvested excess household-grown fruit, like apples and rhubarb, to supply food access programs or to create products such as fruit bark and apple chips. Although the program ended due to resource constraints, a dedicated organization could revive and expand such efforts, also serving as a hub for community-wide food waste diversion initiatives.

Households can also divert some of their food and organic waste through outdoor or indoor at-home composting. Outdoor composting systems or piles are especially practical for those with access to leaf and yard trimmings, which make excellent carbon-rich materials for compost when dried. Smaller outdoor composting systems can be ideal for households with limited space and fewer outdoor inputs, offering low-maintenance and compact solutions. For those living in apartments or looking to compost during the winter, vermicomposting, a method that uses worms to break down food waste, offers a way to produce nutrient-rich compost indoors year-round. While these at-home methods allow residents to process some of their food waste, items such as meat, fish, bones, dairy products and cooled grease,

fat or oil should still be placed in the Green Cart to be properly processed at the municipal composting facility.

At-home composting can be a rewarding and sustainable practice, but most systems require a solid understanding of the proper inputs and processes to produce usable, finished compost. A survey conducted by the Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council found that 57% of the 500 respondents from Greater Sudbury were very interested in participating in workshops and activities related to composting and soil amendments, which improve the physical properties of soil. This indicates an opportunity to expand educational resources within the community. Ensuring these programs and resources are well-publicized, accessible and offered at a low or no cost could help encourage broad participation and support more effective at-home composting efforts.



Key Recommendations under the Food Waste Theme



7. Food Waste

- Promote food waste diversion programs offered in Greater Sudbury (e.g., Too Good to Go, Flashfood, Second Harvest, Loop).
- Incentivize business participation in food waste diversion.
- Increase low density residential participation in the Green Cart Program.
- Expand organic waste collection to the high density residential and non-residential sectors.
- Invest in a permanent organics processing facility that has the capacity to manage organic waste from all sectors within Greater Sudbury.
- Establish local food hubs or centres to centralize learning, sharing, coordination and distribution of food knowledge and resources.



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Food Access Resources

Blue Door Soup Kitchen - facebook.com/bdsoupkitchen

Elgin Street Mission - themission.ca

Emergency Food Plan for Thunder Bay, Ontario - tbfoodstrategy.com/emergencyfood/

Good Food Market - facebook.com/GoodFoodSudbury/

Greater Sudbury Food Access Map - gatersudbury.ca/live/environment-and-sustainability1/earthcare-sudbury/food-access-map/

Meals on Wheels - facebook.com/MealsOnWheelsSudbury/

Ontario Disability Support Program - ontario.ca/page/ontario-disability-support-program

Ontario Works - ontario.ca/page/ontario-works

PROOF - proof.utoronto.ca

Public Health Ontario's Food Insecurity & Food Affordability in Ontario Report, April 2025

publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/F/25/food-insecurity-food-affordability.pdf?rev=b6a02915d36b4821a37866915335ee9f&sc_lang=en

Public Health Sudbury & District's Food affordability in Sudbury and Districts - phsd.ca/resources/research-statistics/research-evaluation/reports-knowledge-products/food-affordability-in-sudbury-districts/

Public Health Unit's Household Food Insecurity Snapshot - publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Health-Equity/Household-Food-Insecurity

Student Nutrition Program - studentnutritionontario.ca/programs/lead-agencies/sudbury-manitoulin/
Sudbury Food Bank - sudburyfoodbank.ca

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Food Literacy Resources

Food Secure Canada – foodsecurecanada.org

Food Share – foodshare.net

Just Food – justfood.ca

Kakos Kitchen - kakoskitchen.com

KiaSal Catering – kiasal.catering

Kitchen Bits – kitchenbits.com

Local Food Manitoulin – localfoodmanitoulin.com

Our Children Our Futures – ocof.net

Right To Food (previously known as Community Food Centres Canada) – rightoffood.ca

Roots Community Food Centre - rootscfc.org

Seasons Pharmacy and Culinaria – seasonspharmacy.com

Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre – skhc.ca

Sudbury Community Garden Network – sudburycommunitygardens.ca

Sudbury Shared Harvest – sudburysharedharvest.ca

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City of Greater Sudbury's Official Plan - greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/reports-studies-policies-and-plans/official-plan/

City of Greater Sudbury's Strategic Plan - greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/reports-studies-policies-and-plans/report-pdfs/revised-strategic-plan-2023/

City of Ottawa's Residential Boulevard Gardening Guide -

documents.ottawa.ca/sites/default/files/boulevard_gardening_guide_en.pdf

Community Climate Change Adaptation Plan - greatersudbury.ca/live/environment-and-sustainability1/climate-action/community-climate-change-adaptation-plan/

Flour Mill Community Farm – rethinkgreen.ca/flour-mill-community-farm

Greater Sudbury Food Policy Council – sudburyfoodpolicy.com

Right To Food (previously known as Community Food Centres Canada) – righttofood.ca

Sudbury Community Garden Network – sudburycommunitygardens.ca

Sudbury Shared Harvest – sudburysharedharvest.ca

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Coalition for a Liveable Sudbury - liveablesudbury.org

Conservation Sudbury - conservationsudbury.ca

Forbes Wild Foods - wildfoods.ca

Gaagige Zaagibigaa - gaagigezaagibigaa.com

Greater Sudbury Lake Water Quality Program - greatersudbury.ca/live/environment-and-sustainability1/lake-health/lake-water-quality-program/

Guide to Eating Ontario Fish - ontario.ca/page/guide-eating-ontario-fish

Junction Creek Stewardship Committee - junctioncreek.com

Manidoo Bineshii Dreams - instagram.com/manidoobineshii/

Northern Wildflowers - northernwildflowers.ca

Ontario Nature's Beyond the Fields: The Value of Forest and Freshwater Foods in Northern Ontario - catalog.ontarionature.org/beyond-the-fields/page/1

Ontario Nature's Harvesting and Processing Edible Wild Plants, Best Practices Guide - view.publitas.com/on-nature/harvesting-and-processing-edible-wild-plants/page/1

Ontario Nature's Northern Forest Foraging Guide - catalog.ontarionature.org/northern-forest-foraging-guide/page/1

Shkagamik-kwe Health Centre - skhc.ca

Sudbury Community Garden Network - sudburycommunitygardens.ca

Sudbury Soil Study - sudburysoilstudy.com

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Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO), Sudbury West Nipissing - ontariobeef.com

Cambrian College - cambriancollege.ca

Collège Boréal - collegeboreal.ca

Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) - efao.ca

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Laurentian University - laurentian.ca

Ontario Beekeepers' Association (OBA), Sudbury & District - facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551619900921

Ontario Dairy Council (ODC) - ontariodairies.ca

Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), West Nipissing Sudbury East - wnsefa.com

Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), Sudbury - ontariosoilcrop.org

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Food Retail, Service and Tourism Resources

City of Greater Sudbury's Community Centre Hall Rentals - greatersudbury.ca/play/facility-rentals1/

Click Fork - clickfork.ca

Destination Northern Ontario - destinaitonnorthernontario.ca

Discover Sudbury, Festivals in Greater Sudbury - discoversudbury.ca/events/festivals/

Downtown Sudbury BIA - downtownsudbury.com/

Feast On Certification - culinarytourismalliance.com/feast-on

Greater Sudbury Culinary Tourism Strategy - investsudbury.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FoodTourism2018finalWeb.pdf

Greater Sudbury Development Corporation Board - greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/get-involved/volunteerism/join-a-local-board-committee-or-advisory-panel/local-boards-and-corporations/greater-sudbury-development-corporation-board/

Greater Sudbury Economic Development, Incentives and Programs - investsudbury.ca/incentives-and-programs/

Greater Sudbury Food Access Map - greatersudbury.ca/live/environment-and-sustainability1/earthcare-sudbury/food-access-map/

Greater Sudbury Vendor Insurance Program - greatersudbury.ca/play/events/plan-a-special-event/insurance-requirements-for-events-on-city-property/

Let's Eat, Sudbury.com - sudbury.com/lets-eat

Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance - ontarioculinary.com

SHARE Sudbury - sharesudbury.com

Sudbury Regional Business Centre - regionalbusiness.ca

Food Retail, Service and Tourism Resources Continued...

Sudbury Tourism's Social Media - **Instagram** and **Facebook**

Tourism Development Fund - investsudbury.ca/incentives-and-programs/grants-and-incentives/tourism-development-fund/

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Flashfood – flashfood.com

Greater Sudbury's Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) - greatersudbury.ca/live/environment-and-sustainability1/climate-action/net-zero-2050/

Greater Sudbury's Composting and Recycling Special Events Program - greatersudbury.ca/play/events/plan-a-special-event/greener-events1/composting-and-recycling-at-special-events/

Greater Sudbury's Green Cart Program - greatersudbury.ca/live/garbage-and-recycling/composting/green-cart-program/

Greater Sudbury's Sustainable Waste Strategy Executive Summary, 2025-2035 - greatersudbury.ca/live/garbage-and-recycling/reports-and-publications/sustainable-waste-strategy-2025-2035-executive-summary/

Greater Sudbury's Yellow Cart Program - greatersudbury.ca/live/garbage-and-recycling/composting/non-residential-composting-program/

Loop Resource – loopresource.ca

Ontario's Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement - ontario.ca/page/food-and-organic-waste-policy-statement#section-4

Second Harvest – secondharvest.ca

Too Good To Go – toogoodtogo.com/en-ca



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sudburyfoodpolicy.com

