

## **Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan, 2021**

<b>Date:</b>	March 6, 2012
<b>To:</b>	Economic Development Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Economic Development & Culture
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:/2012/Cluster A/EDC/Econ Dev/March/ed1203-008

### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides an overview of the *Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan, 2021* (GHFFAP), a collaborative strategy between the members of the Greater Toronto Agricultural Action Committee (GTA-AAC), the Region of Niagara, the City of Hamilton and other industry and farming stakeholders.

The Action Plan outlines the economic significance of the food and farming value chain to the region. Strategies are proposed for supporting the continued growth of this sector in order to make the Golden Horseshoe a world renowned area for food production, processing, research and training.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council endorse the recommendations in the *Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan, 2021*;
2. City Council support the formation of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) with the Regions of Peel, Durham, Halton, Niagara and York, the City of Hamilton, the Ontario Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC), the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and other partners;

3. City Council authorize and direct appropriate city staff to work with regional, local and industry partners to implement specific actions under the *Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan, 2021*; and
4. City Council request the Mayor to work with the leadership of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) in the development of a joint funding request to OMAFRA and to assist the Alliance in its efforts to secure funding for the implementation of the Action Plan.

## **Financial Impact**

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

The Greater Toronto Area-Agricultural Action Committee (GTA-AAC) was established in 2005 from an action item of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan (GTA-AAP).

[http://www.toronto.ca/invest-in-toronto/pdf/agricultural\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/invest-in-toronto/pdf/agricultural_action_plan.pdf)

At that time, the role of the GTA-AAC was to facilitate and co-ordinate the partnership of GTA municipalities (Regions of Durham, Halton, Peel, and York, and the City of Toronto), AAFC, OMAFRA, MMAH, and the GTA Federations of Agriculture to implement the GTA Agricultural Action Plan (GTA-AAP). OMAFRA provided a \$200,000 grant to each of the four regional governments of the GTA to implement the GTA-AAP activities six years ago. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) was the administrative body for the funds provided to the GTA-AAC and will continue to manage any additional funding received by the new Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance. Councillor Chin Lee is the current City representative on the GTA-AAC. The City of Toronto did not receive funding as a partner in the GTA-AAC as the plan was seen primarily as supporting near urban agriculture.

The GTA-AAP was a reaction to the establishment of the Greenbelt legislation in Ontario that essentially protected valuable farming land around the GTA urban centre but did not address the issues facing the farming and food sectors within the region. As the GTA-AAP developed, the importance of the food value chain within the GTA became recognized as a significant economic driver for the region. Regional co-operation and stronger industry links were identified as ways to enhance the growth of the cluster. Toronto and other urban centres became seen as more than markets for fresh produce grown in the region. These municipalities are now identified as major links to food processing that utilize the ingredients grown locally.

The changing demographics of the urban centres, particularly the increase in multicultural populations, has also meant that local farmers have an opportunity to capitalize on this diversity by learning from and producing food that appeals to these newer communities.

The Action Plan recognizes that both food processing and farming have progressed during the years since the formation of the GTA-AAC.

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

In August 2009, the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, in partnership with the GTA-AAC, the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation and the Region of Niagara, hosted a Summit with stakeholders to address food and farming issues. Through these discussions, it became evident that regional organizations were working on similar projects and initiatives. As a result, the original members of the GTA-AAC (the Region of Niagara, City of Hamilton and Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation) joined forces to develop the *Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan, 2021*. [http://www.toronto.ca/invest-in-toronto/pdf/foodfarming\\_actionplan.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/invest-in-toronto/pdf/foodfarming_actionplan.pdf)

The broader area and expanded partnership of the GHFFAP provides greater opportunities to more efficiently and effectively engage and collaborate on issues focused on economic growth, land use planning, agriculture production as well as public health and nutrition. The new Plan replaces the former GTA-AAP (February 2005).

## COMMENTS

The Golden Horseshoe is home to superb agricultural land, complemented by a moderate climate and access to an abundant supply of fresh water. In 2009, Statistics Canada estimated that “on a clear day, over one third of Canada’s best agricultural land could be seen from the CN Tower”. In 2006, the one million acres of farmland under production within the boundaries of the Golden Horseshoe generated more than \$1.5 billion in gross farm receipts. The production profile for the region includes in excess of 200 different agricultural commodities, a diversity unmatched in other regions of the country and the world.

The Golden Horseshoe has a significant, broadly based research and innovation capacity focused within its boundaries. The Holland Marsh Muck Research Station focuses on specific attributes of the region. The Vineland Research and Innovation Centre Inc. (established in 2007) serves as a new collaborative model, representing industry, government and universities, to drive innovation and commercialization in horticulture. Numerous world class universities and colleges located in the region conduct leading education and research into issues related to health, well being and the culinary arts. The University Health Network, located in the City of Toronto, is a world leader in health research. The Golden Horseshoe is adjacent to and has ready access to the significant Guelph agri–food research cluster.

As one of the pillars of the Golden Horseshoe’s diversified economy, the food and farming cluster has great potential for sustainable growth over the next ten years and beyond. A rich endowment of soil, fresh water resources and good public infrastructure combined with access to an abundant, educated labour force, a large culturally diverse market and outstanding research capabilities are among the advantages that stand to propel the cluster forward.

## **Food and Beverage Sector Strengths**

The food and beverage cluster has long been a major component of Toronto's economy. It is the second largest employment sector in the city. With over 700 food processing businesses in Toronto and 1,500 in the Census Metropolitan Area<sup>1</sup> and nearly 60,000 employees in the CMA it is an important sector.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the economic activity of this food and farming cluster is estimated to be \$12.3 billion, which in turn leverages \$35 billion to the Canadian economy<sup>3</sup>. Toronto's food processing cluster is also one of the largest in Canada or the U.S., rivalling Chicago and Los Angeles as a major continental centre for the industry.

## **Food and Beverage Sector Threats**

- Multiple, disjointed regulations and policies that detract from the ability to do business efficiently;
- Strong international competition in a global trading framework;
- A Canadian dollar at its highest level in a generation;
- Congestion that negatively affects the efficient movement of goods and the cost of transportation;
- High cost of land for development of new business or to expand existing businesses;
- Rising costs of energy, carbon and global climate change;
- Fierce competition for land which drives land prices beyond the reach of farmers and processors in major urban areas;
- Spreading urban based infrastructure that impacts the ability to farm efficiently;
- Lack of integration between different parts of the cluster;
- Gaps in food based infrastructure that frustrate integration

## **Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan, 2021: Five Opportunities**

The GHFFAP outlines a ten-year vision for the Golden Horseshoe. It strives to establish the Golden Horseshoe as a globally renowned “vibrant food and farming cluster, characterized by profitable farming operations, a thriving hub of food processing, food retail and food service businesses, extensive research capacity, innovative technology and a wide range of healthy and safe products.” The Action Plan is divided into five main opportunities, each with a corresponding series of actions and specific tasks to support the success of the opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada (2008a), “December 2008 Establishment Counts by PROV/CD, Industry Groups & Employment Size Ranges”, Statistics Canada. and Statistics Canada (2008b), “December 2008 Establishment Counts by CMA, Industry Groups & Employment Size Ranges”, Statistics Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Toronto (2009), *TORONTO CMA 2009 INDUSTRY PROFILES: City of Toronto Economic Development & Culture based on Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey data*, City of Toronto.

<sup>3</sup> *Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Background Report*. Planscape (Jan 2011)

These are:

- A. **Grow the Cluster:** Grow food production, processing, research and training in the Golden Horseshoe so it becomes the leading food and farming cluster in the world, renowned for healthy and safe products.
- B. **Link Food, Farming and Health:** Educate current and future consumers about the importance of locally-sourced food and farming products for enhancing their health and well-being.
- C. **Foster Innovation:** Encourage and support innovation to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the Golden Horseshoe food and farming cluster.
- D. **Enable the Cluster:** Align policy tools and their application to enable food and farming businesses to be increasingly competitive and profitable.
- E. **Cultivate New Approaches:** Pilot new approaches to support food and farming in the Golden Horseshoe.

The GHFFAP includes activities that relate to or impact on several City of Toronto food sector program areas:

- In 2007 the City of Toronto Economic Development & Culture Division created the Toronto Food Business Incubator (TFBI) as a pilot program and facility to assist with the start up of local food processing businesses. This pilot has proven to be successful but funding to grow the facility and outreach are hampered by budgetary constraints. In the GHFFAP, under the heading 'foster innovation' one of the action items is "Support incubators that provide access to capital, processing line time and expert advice for entrepreneurs in food and farming."
- Another program that will be launched in March 2012 is 'Entry Level to Food Processing Training' developed through a joint partnership with Economic Development & Culture, Toronto Employment and Social Services, Toronto Public Health and the Toronto District School Board. It is supported in the report through the action item "Invest in training and applied research that supports and grows the cluster."
- In May 2010, Toronto Public Health released a report entitled *Cultivating Food Connections: Toward a Healthy and Sustainable Food System for Toronto*. Many of the recommendations in that report - Make Food a Centrepiece of Toronto's New Green Economy; Connect City and Countryside Through Food; Empower Residents with Food Skills and Information and Urge Federal and Provincial Governments to Establish Health-Focused Food Policies; are addressed in the implementation plans for the GHFFAP. It would therefore be advantageous for a number of divisions and agencies in the City of Toronto, including Economic Development & Culture, Toronto Public Health, Planning, etc. to work collaboratively with this new Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance to achieve its goals on a regional basis.
- Finally, the attraction of new food processors to Toronto, like the facility currently under construction by Canadian Dairy Manufacturers, that is investing \$75 million in equipment and infrastructure and employing over 300 people to produce dry infant formula for export to the Asian markets, will be a focus of the GHFFAP.

## CONCLUSION:

The *Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan, 2021*, provides actions that will support and grow the thriving food processing sector in Toronto and ensure the growth of the food and farming cluster in the broader Golden Horseshoe.

City of Toronto Economic Development & Culture staff along with staff designates from the Toronto Food Policy Council have been fully engaged in the development and growth of the GTA-AAC over the past six years. City staff have also worked with their regional economic development and planning colleagues on the new GHFFAP. The GTA-AAC and GHFFAP are excellent examples of benefits of regional collaboration. This initiative builds on the success of other regional sector development models, such as the Toronto Biotechnology Initiative established in 1990, now Life Sciences Ontario, Toronto Financial Services Alliance established in 2001, Green/Renewable Energy Partnerships such as Partners in Project Green and Pearson Eco-Business Zone, International Student Welcome Program involving colleges and universities from across the GTA, Technicity, a GTA-wide forum for the ICT industry and Tourism Toronto, that bring industry and educators together with municipal, provincial and federal governments. EDC staff share their knowledge and experience and bring a City of Toronto perspective to these regional collaborations.

The Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan, 2021 responds to the common challenges and opportunities that the partners in the Golden Horseshoe share with regards to food production and food literacy. A focused, unified, collaborative regional approach to the issues and opportunities raised by this action plan will only serve to elevate the cluster to greater international recognition. The endorsement of this action plan and the subsequent continued involvement of staff in the implementation process will ensure that this vital economic driver for the City of Toronto continues to grow and prosper well into the next decade and beyond.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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