



Food Systems Transformation and Toronto Food Strategy: 2019 Update

Date: October 10, 2019

To: Board of Health

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The World Health Organization and The Lancet have called climate change the greatest threat and opportunity for global health in the 21st century. The dynamic relationship between food and climate change and the resulting impact on human health, is a key dimension of this work, and global and local calls to action.

There is growing evidence that food systems must change to combat the current climate crisis and promote food security. Cities can make impactful changes by changing how they procure food and by influencing the public's dietary behaviour. They can also take steps to reduce food loss and waste from the food they procure and prepare and set an example for the food service and hospitality industry. This staff report outlines strategic opportunities and recommended areas of action for Toronto Public Health and the City of Toronto to support both food systems transformation and climate change action to improve the health of our communities, as outlined in the attached *Food Systems Transformation and Toronto Food Strategy 2019 Update* report. The recommendations below reflect the intent and commitments outlined in the C40 Good Food Cities Declaration signed by the Mayor of Toronto and released at the C40 Mayoral Summit in Copenhagen in October 2019 and are supported by the scientific evidence regarding the need for food systems transformation to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health request the Medical Officer of Health, in consultation with appropriate City Divisions, residents, the private sector, and community and institutional partners, to implement the following actions as a signatory city to the C40 Good Food Cities Declaration:

- a. Procurement - Align food procurement in the City of Toronto to the Planetary Health Diet and the new Canada Food Guide, which includes healthier, plant-based, and sustainable food options;

- b. Consumption - Support an overall increase in the consumption of healthy, plant-based foods by shifting away from unsustainable, unhealthy diets; and
- c. Food Loss and Waste - Reduce food loss and waste and creating a circular economy for food.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on July 16, 2018, the Board of Health requested the Medical Officer of Health to report back to the Board of Health in 2019 on developing measurement tools to help assess progress and evaluate areas requiring strategic community and City of Toronto supports related to sustainable food systems.

[HL28.4 Toronto Food Strategy: 2018 Update Report](#)

COMMENTS

The Need for Food Systems Transformation

The World Health Organization and The Lancet have called climate change the greatest threat and opportunity for global health in the 21st century. The dynamic relationship between food systems and climate change, and the resulting impact on human health, is a key dimension of this challenge. Climate change has the potential to impact global and local food systems and poses significant risks to human health by diminishing food security and challenging food access in affected areas.

Food systems transformation is essential to combat the current climate crisis, and to promote food security and resilience. Promoting sustainable food systems involves working on a set of interrelated activities throughout the food cycle from “grow it to throw it”, including production, processing, packaging, distribution, buying & selling, eating and waste reduction and recovery. Transformations to food systems can conserve biodiversity, mitigate the impacts of climate change and minimize waste. Food systems change also offers opportunities for health benefits in multiple areas mandated under the Ontario Public Health Standards including: reducing chronic diseases by promoting good nutrition, reducing health inequities by creating healthy food environments and promoting access to good food, and addressing climate change by mitigating impacts of food production, distribution, processing, consumption and waste.

Cities can play a leadership role in food systems transformation by changing how they procure food and by influencing the public's dietary behaviour. They can also take concrete steps to reduce food loss and waste from the food they prepare. They can also

set an example for the food service and hospitality industry. This requires strategic leadership and closer alignment of climate and food issues work, in order to build resource and content synergies, strengthen existing networks as well as collaborative partnerships, and facilitate new connections across all sectors.

This staff report outlines strategic opportunities and recommended areas of action for Toronto Public Health (TPH) and the City of Toronto to support both food systems transformation and climate change action to improve the health of our communities, as outlined in the attached *Food Systems Transformation and Food Strategy: 2019 Update* report.

Emerging Scientific Consensus

Since the release of the *Toronto Food Strategy 2018* report, a number of scientific reports have been released pointing to the critical importance of food systems transformation in promoting health, fighting climate change, and protecting the planet. Of these reports, three landmark studies encapsulate the findings best:

1. The [EAT–Lancet Commission](#), declared that food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth. Their *Food, Planet, Health* report states that a "radical transformation of the global food system is urgently needed." The Commission introduces the concept of a "planetary health diet" and sets targets for sustainable food production and align with the new Canada Food Guide. The goal of these universal scientific targets is to maintain a safe operating space for food systems within both planetary and human health boundaries.

2. The C40 report, *The Future of Urban Consumption in a 1.5C World*, outlines the important role of cities and their mayors in curbing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulting from urban consumption. Cities have generally monitored their production-based emissions to lower GHG's. C40 now urges cities to widen their scope of interventions to include consumption-based emissions. C40 reports that adopting dietary change is the consumption intervention with the greatest potential for emissions reductions by adopting a diet with lower meat and dairy intake, and avoiding household and supply chain food waste to reduce food-related emissions.

3. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report, *Climate Change and Land*, highlights how climate change is affecting all four pillars of world food security: availability (yield and production), access (prices and ability to obtain food), utilization (nutrition and cooking), and stability (disruptions to availability). The IPCC suggests that coordinated actions and policies across food systems are necessary to improve climate change adaptation and mitigation, reduce poverty, and improve public and population health.

In addition, a 2019 study¹ found that 58 percent of all the food produced in Canada is lost or wasted (approximately 35.5 million metric tons). Of that amount, 32 percent could be rescued and redistributed for consumption.

C40 Good Food Cities Declaration

At the C40 world Mayors Summit on October 9-12, 2019, in Copenhagen, Denmark, the Mayor of Toronto signed the Good Food Cities Declaration, along with a number of mayors from cities across the world. The declaration is a commitment by cities to achieve a "Planetary Health Diet" for all citizens by 2030 by: a) Shifting Food Procurement; b) Increasing healthy plant-based food Consumption; and c) Reducing Food Loss and Waste.

Areas for Immediate Action for Toronto

The *Food Transformation and Toronto Food Strategy 2019 Update* report proposes specific and measurable actions to meet each of the targets in the C40 Good Food Cities declaration. The actions aim to address climate change mitigation strategies as it pertains to food and GHG emissions reduction. Each of the proposed actions below includes indicators to measure progress and signals where baseline data is needed (See Attachment 1).

Implementation of the actions will be led by TPH, in collaboration with several other City divisions, including Environment and Energy (EED), Solid Waste Management Services (SWMS), and Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA).

It is recommended that the Board of Health ask City Council to endorse the following areas of immediate action in accordance with the C40 Good Food Cities declaration.

1. Procurement: Aligning food procurement in the City of Toronto to the Planetary Health Diet, which includes healthier, plant-based and sustainable food options

a) Toronto Public Health to work with City of Toronto Divisions to align their food procurement as much as possible to the Planetary Health Diet, which includes healthier, plant-based, and sustainable food options.

b) The City of Toronto sign the World Resources Institute (WRI) Cool Food Pledge and conduct Greenhouse Gas calculations to inform Environment and Energy Division's TransformTO food-related consumption-based emissions reduction efforts.

2. Consumption: Supporting an overall increase in the consumption of healthy plant-based foods by shifting away from unsustainable, unhealthy diets

a) Toronto Public Health to support an overall increase in the consumption of healthy plant-based foods in the City of Toronto by shifting away from unsustainable, unhealthy diets.

3. Food Loss and Waste: Reducing food loss and waste and creating a circular economy for food

a) Toronto Public Health to work with Solid Waste Management Services to reduce food loss and waste and develop a plan for the Ellen MacArthur Foundation Circular Economy for Food Initiative.

Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation

In addition, Toronto Public Health will work with city staff for the Resilience Strategy on Action A2.1 in [Toronto's Resilience Strategy](#), which states:

"Action 2.1 Priority Action: Neighbourhood Resilience. Enhance the capacity of neighbourhoods to prepare for and recover from shocks through grassroots action and network building...Through the Neighbourhood Resilience Initiative, the City will support organizations and grassroots leaders to help neighbourhoods prepare for, respond to, and recover from small to large-scale shocks."

Next Steps

Toronto Public Health will continue to provide strategic leadership and facilitate closer alignment of climate and food systems issues work. This will build resource and content synergies, strengthen existing networks and collaborative partnerships to facilitate new connections across all sectors. The Toronto Food Strategy plays a key role in strengthening food systems advocacy, monitoring and governance all of which are critical to achieving these objectives.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Dr. Eileen de Villa
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Food Systems Transformation and Toronto Food Strategy 2019 Update

REFERENCES

1 Nikkel, L., Maguire, M., Gooch, M., Bucknell, D., LaPlain, D., Dent, B., Whitehead, P., Felfel, A. (2019). The Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste: The Roadmap: www.secondharvest.ca/research