



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
SCARBOROUGH

Culinaria Research Centre
1265 Military Trail, Room SW313
Toronto ON M1C 1A4 Canada

Monday, October 23, 2023

Economic and Community Development Committee (ECDC)
City of Toronto
ecdc@toronto.ca

RE: EC7.1 - Strengthening Toronto's Public Markets and Mid-Sized Food Retail Infrastructure

Dear Councillor Alejandra Bravo and Members of the ECDC:

On behalf of the Feeding City Lab at the University of Toronto, I am pleased to support the request brought forward by marketcityTO for the development of the first City of Toronto Public Market Action Plan.

As marketcityTO has shown, there are more than a hundred public food markets across the city of Toronto, connecting urban and rural entrepreneurs with consumers, and yet many public markets exist on the margins of our city's food provisioning systems.

The Feeding City Lab at the University of Toronto conducts research and implements pilot projects to support inclusive, culturally relevant, and ecologically sustainable food infrastructures in Toronto and around the world. Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, our research team has worked with community-based food providers, small food enterprises, and public and farmers' markets in Toronto to help build resilient community networks and communicate and amplify their impacts.

Through our community-engaged research at the Feeding City Lab, we know that public food markets in Toronto bring many benefits but that the potential remains to support them through a city-wide strategy. Public food markets are important anchors of both livelihoods and liveliness within our diverse city: they strengthen short supply chains by providing a platform for new and emerging entrepreneurs to bring their products – a diverse range of locally grown produce and prepared foods – to market; they promote health and well-being, foster trust, and facilitate food access and education by bringing consumers into direct contact with producers; they provide social connections by bringing people together; and they link Toronto's tourism and hospitality infrastructure to the city's neighborhoods, thus benefitting surrounding businesses. And yet, there is a need for increased support to help public markets thrive and ensure their continued resilience, including a clear permitting process, investments in physical infrastructure, and



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increased public education. Moreover, there is a comparable dearth of public food markets in historically under-resourced areas of Toronto, such as Scarborough, where many newcomer residents face barriers to easily accessing fresh, nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate foods. At the Feeding City Lab, we see a need for a cohesive public markets plan – one that develops inclusive economies and improves access to culturally diverse and ecologically sustainable foods in communities across the city.

The City of Toronto has long been a leader in food equity and sustainability. A strengthened public markets infrastructure would support communities and help the City advance its commitments to equitable and resilient food systems, as expressed in commitments such as Toronto’s Food Charter, the Toronto Black Food Sovereignty Plan, the C40 Good Food Cities Declaration and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. Towards this end, the Feeding City Lab supports the request, by marketcityTO and community stakeholders, to develop an action plan that allows city staff, Councillors, market managers, vendors, the private sector, academia and the not-for-profit sector to work together and build the sector for the benefit of the markets, regulators and the city at large.

Sincerely,

Jayeeta Sharma

Dr. Jayeeta (Jo) Sharma

Associate Professor

[Culinaria Research Centre](#)

Director, [Feeding City Lab](#)*

Co-Director, [Sustainable Food & Farming Futures Cluster](#)

University of Toronto Scarborough

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