



**YORK REGION
FOOD COUNCIL**

YORK REGION FOOD CHARTER

The York Region Food Charter outlines collective values and priorities and is a guiding document for food-related policies and action.

The Food Charter is a vision of thriving urban and rural communities as well as First Nations and Indigenous Communities where residents, organizations, businesses, and governments work together to create a resilient food system that fosters healthy communities.

The Food Charter is centered on food sovereignty¹ and community-determined food and agriculture systems. This document is intended to build connection and responsibility to the land, and healthier food systems.



We seek to meaningfully engage diverse voices that represent York Region's communities and address issues in appropriate and relevant ways. By addressing food related issues, we strive to have a local impact while working towards systemic change in food, community and social justice. This includes reconciliation and supporting the resurgence of knowledge and traditional ways of knowing and doing.

The York Region food system is built on a history of oppression that continues to this day. The impact of this oppression is vast and includes a disconnection from the land and the loss of natural ways of living on the land, such as freely foraging and harvesting food. The ongoing process of colonialism has attempted to undermine the traditional and cultural food traditions of Indigenous, Black and racialized communities. We recognize that these communities continue to be impacted disproportionately by food insecurity, which can only be addressed by self-governance and support, if requested.

OUR VALUES



01. Equity, Social Justice & Food Security¹

We value the right to food and community-determined food and agriculture systems². We believe everyone should have enough income to effectively prevent food insecurity³.

We Support

- Evidence-based income and social policies which have been proven to reduce food insecurity.
- Community engagement, advocacy and action around income-related issues.
- Collaboration with governments and community partners in First Nations, Indigenous, racialized and other marginalized communities to determine priorities for action to address food insecurity and poverty⁴.

02. Health & Well-being

We value the role of food in promoting health, including physical, mental, emotional, cultural, social and spiritual well-being.



We Support

- Equitable and dignified access to safe, nutritious, culturally relevant, and affordable food.
- Food programs, policies and practices to improve, support and promote holistic⁵ well-being.
- The role of food and nutrition in preventing and managing diseases.
- Reducing health inequities⁶ so that everyone has the same opportunities for health regardless of social, economic and spatial⁷ and environmental factors.
- Body liberation⁸ and the importance of creating positive, holistic relationships with food, culture and the land.

03. Local Agri-Food Sector⁹

We value the role of the agri-food sector in cultivating a strong economy and equitable local food system while ensuring environmental sustainability.

We Support

- Indigenous knowledge around hunting, harvesting and gathering.
- Connections between farmers and the broader community.
- Maintaining farmland for agricultural uses.
- The local food sector's growth and development by promoting sustainable technology and innovation in agriculture and food-related industries.
- Growth and production of foods representing York Region's diversity, including traditional world foods, and alternative diets.
- Access to land and training for individuals, communities, and new & small-scale farmers.
- Fair compensation and safe and respectful work environments across the agriculture and agri-food sectors.



04. Environmental Stewardship

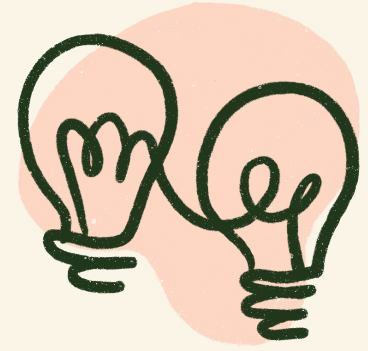
We value a sustainable food system that protects and enhances of the natural environment while working alongside First Nations and Indigenous Communities.

We Support

- Meaningful engagement with and support for First Nations Communities in conserving biological and cultural diversity.
- The conservation and enhancement of land and natural resources, including water, seeds and livestock breeds, and any other species identified by the First Nations and other Indigenous People.
- Indigenous knowledge holders in sharing their knowledge, within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, on ways to preserve and protect the land.
- Policies and practices that increase climate change resilience in food and agriculture.
- Land-use and planning policies that promote natural environments, enhance food security, and secure urban and rural agriculture land as well as other lands in which harvesting may take place, such as wetlands and forests.
- The creation of a circular food economy¹⁰, including reducing food waste, minimizing food packaging, promoting avenues for reuse and regenerating natural systems.

05. Knowledge & Sharing

We value sharing knowledge and supporting food literacy¹¹ so that all community members can confidently choose to grow, cook, compost, or participate in food-related careers, contributing to a more sustainable future for the next seven generations.



We Support

- Creating an understanding of truth and reconciliation across the food system and amplifying First Nations leadership and innovation.
- Promotion of intergenerational and Indigenous learnings and the use of food to share teachings, stories, cultural practices, and ways of knowing.
- Education opportunities that support careers for skilled, knowledgeable workers in entering the agriculture and food sector.
- Learning the components of the food system and the connections between farming, food, the environment and health and well-being.
- Opportunities to learn and share food skills, traditions and knowledge.
- Nutrition and food literacy within schools and the community.



06. Culture & Community

We value food as a link that brings communities together and connects people to people, land, culture and identity.

We Support

- The promotion of public dialogue and initiatives for reconciliation within the food system.
- Celebrating and promoting diversity through culturally and spiritually significant foods and traditions to connect communities and strengthen collaborations.
- Building community and cross-cultural connections through food initiatives such as community food programs and events.
- Information sharing, collaboration and collective action between First Nations Communities, community organizations, and local governments.

1 Food security is "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." (Food and Agriculture Organization, World Food Summit, 1996)

2 "The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" ([La Via Campesina](#)).

3 "Food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints" ([PROOF, 2024](#)).

4 Poverty takes different forms and is not limited to those living below a set income ([Canada Without Poverty, 2015](#)). "Poverty exists where people lack the material and financial resources to thrive" ([The Canadian Poverty Institute, 2024](#)).

5 Holistic is viewing the whole person (physical, emotional, spiritual, etc.) as interconnected to land and in relationship with others (family, community, nations, etc) ([Cull et al., 2018](#)).

6 Health inequities are avoidable and unjust differences in health between groups of people. These differences arise from social, economic, and political factors that shape the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. These factors determine individuals' access to resources, their risk of illness, and their ability to prevent or treat health conditions ([WHO, 2013](#)).

7 Spatial factors refer to the characteristics and organization of physical space, which influence how objects, elements, or organisms are arranged, distributed, or interact within an environment.

8 Body liberation is a movement rooted in the belief that all bodies have a right to exist as they are. Everyone deserves to feel empowered within their own body and embrace their bodies without fear of judgement or prejudice. Body liberation challenges the dominant culture of body shaming and discrimination towards fat, racialized, trans, queer, and disabled individuals. It aims to dismantle systems of oppression including anti-fatness, ableism, healthism and other forms of oppression focused on how bodies exist ([Oxford Review, 2024](#); [Centre for Health and Wellbeing, 2024](#)).

9 The agri-food sector is the actors and activities involved in the production of agricultural products, as well as in storage, post-harvest handling, value-added activities, transportation, processing, distribution, marketing, disposal and consumption of all food and agricultural products ([FAO, 2021](#)).

10 "A circular economy eliminates waste and pollution, and conserves resources. It is a shift from a throw-away to a circular mindset to extend the lifecycle of goods, food and resources through better design and continuous reuse, so nothing goes to waste" ([Regional Municipality of York, 2024](#)). We are promoting human food sustainability practices such as eat locally and seasonally, reduce food waste, use sustainable packaging, conserve water and energy, grow your own food, and educate others.

11 "Food literacy includes food skills and practices that are learned and used across the lifespan to participate within a complex food environment. Food literacy also means considering the social, cultural, economic and physical factors related to food." (Health Canada, [Canada's Food Guide, 2019](#))