

Examiner Column from Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health Peterborough County-City Health Unit

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Giving thanks for the Family Farm

It's hard NOT to think of food and farming in October! We just celebrated Ontario Agriculture Week, an annual event that celebrates the agriculture and agri-food industry. Thanksgiving, a truly North American feast, also commemorates the bounty of the harvest. It also reminds us of the ways in which indigenous peoples welcomed and supported the first European migrants. The bounty of local food is something to celebrate with our two First Nations, Hiawatha and Curve Lake. We're perfectly situated to honour and thank our farmers, past and present, in this special part of the province.

World Food Day on October 16th provides another opportunity to give thanks for farmers and for the harvest that fills our dinner plates. The UN General Assembly has designated 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming. It chose the theme, *Family Farming: Feeding the world, caring for the earth* to help raise the profile of family farming.

Family farms are an important part of the make-up of our community. A drive or cycle through our rural area showcases rolling farmland, dairy, beef and poultry farms along with a growing number of farm gate markets selling locally grown produce during the summer and fall. Agriculture and family farms are major economic drivers in our community. You may have seen the bumper sticker "Farmers Feed Cities!" on one of your recent ventures. In Ontario, we now estimate that the agri-food industry has surpassed the auto industry as the largest contributor to our economy. Premier Wynne's Agri-Food Challenge, released in 2013, focused on doubling its growth rate and creating 120,000 agricultural jobs by 2020.

By choosing the Family Farm theme "Feeding the world, caring for the earth", the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) highlights the significant role of family farming in eradicating hunger and poverty worldwide. Family farms provide food security and nutrition, improve livelihoods, manage natural resources, protect the environment, and achieve sustainable development in particular in rural areas.

Focusing on income and housing is how we will build food security in Peterborough. Research shows that over 11% of people living in our community are food insecure, meaning that they worry about not having enough to eat, compromise the quality of food eaten, do not have a variety of food or do not eat because of a lack of income. Preliminary analysis of research shows that one in seven children and youth (under 18 years of age) in Peterborough are living in food insecure households. Working together on food system change and government policy that will allow everyone access to nutritious food is key. Supporting farmers and strengthening links between local farmers and consumers are part of that work.

Local agriculture and our family farms are a critical part of the solution to food insecurity. As stated in *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014*, "Investing in sustainable family farming is crucial: family farmers produce a high proportion of the food we eat and are, by far, the biggest source of employment in the world. They are the custodians of the world. They are also the custodians of the world's agricultural biodiversity and other natural resources."

Locally, many farmers donate locally grown produce and support community food programs such as Peterborough Gleans (bringing lower-income people to farms to harvest produce that would otherwise be wasted), school breakfast programs, community meals, Kawartha Food Share and local food banks. The newly announced provincial Food Donation Tax Credit for Farmers, the only one of its kind in Canada, recognizes this generosity and will now give farmers a tax credit valued at 25% of the fair market value of agricultural products that they donate to community food programs.

Take the time this month to do as the saying suggests - "If you ate today, thank a farmer".

633 words

New Tax Credit for Farm Donations to Community Food Organizations

Ontario Helps Expand Access to Local Food

New Tax Credit helps farmers donate more fresh, local food. Farmers can receive a tax credit for 25% of the fair market value of the agricultural products donated.



Eligible products include:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Eggs and dairy
- Meat and fish
- Grains and pulses
- Herbs
- Honey and maple syrup
- Mushrooms
- Nuts



Farmers: Keep your receipts and claim the credit on your income tax return for donations made on or after January 1, 2014.

Did you know?

Food banks and other community food organizations provide mostly **non-perishable** food to approximately **375,000** Ontarians every month.



From farm to table, we all benefit. The new tax credit will help bring more fresh, Ontario grown food to tables across the province.



For more information, visit
ontario.ca/FoodDonation