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This event is organized by:

- NS: www.meetyourfarmer.ca/openfarmday
- PE: www.peiagsc.ca/openfarmday/index.php
- NB: www.fermeNBfarm.ca
- NL: www.nlfa.ca



Buy local food... and buy local goods too

What's local?

Buy Local Atlantic has been promoting the “local” message for six years now, and a recent national survey shows that Atlantic Canadians are getting the message. However, many consumers still think only of food when they make a conscious decision to “buy local.”

This year, we're hoping to help improve awareness about the many other opportunities that exist across the Atlantic region to purchase a wealth of locally created arts, crafts, furniture, and household goods. Some of the advertisers featured on our *Buy Local Atlantic* pages make down covers, gourmet soaps, and colorful yarns – all carefully created local goods from companies that also provide local jobs and support local communities and economies. “Buy local” is about food, and about more than just food. “Buy local” is about supporting local businesses of all types to help build strong local businesses, strong local economies, and strong local communities.

Wendell Berry summarized it nicely, back in 1981 at the First Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures series, when he was speaking to that year's theme, “People, Land and Community:”

“It would begin in work and love. People at work in communities three generations old would know that their bodies renewed, time and again, the movement of other bodies – living and dead, known and loved, remembered and loved – in the same shops, houses, and fields. That, of course, is the description of a kind of a community dance. And such a dance is perhaps the best way to describe harmony.”

“Think globally, act locally” embraced by Atlantic Canadians

According to a Business Development Bank of Canada survey in 2013, people who reside in the Atlantic region are far more likely to spend their dollars on local food and goods than most other Canadians. A full 72 percent of Atlantic Cana-

dians say they make it a point to buy locally made products, second only to Quebec residents at 73 percent. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, only 51 percent of residents said they choose local products. When asked why they “buy local,” people responded with common themes, including the two most popular – to “help the local economy,” and to “help a local farmer.”

What is “local” anyway?

“Buy local” has become a common catchphrase in rural economic development circles, but many people are still left scratching their heads upon hearing this phrase.

One person even recently asked, “Does ‘buy local’ mean that I have to buy everything directly from a farm gate?” Of course not. But “buying local” can



Give a Darn Yarn's Gayle Walford hand knits a shawl at the Wolfville, N.S., Farmers' Market. (DvL photo)

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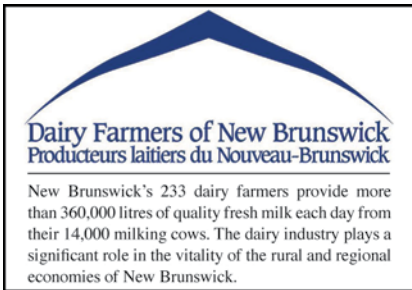


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mean a closer proximity between producers and consumers that in turn will create local relationships, improved local economies, and a decrease in carbon fuel emissions. Local businesses also nurture local sports and cultural activities – and even help to improve local political participation. More than a dozen studies have shown that “buying local” makes overall good business sense for communities – every dollar spent locally increases local incomes, local taxes, and local charitable contributions by two to four times. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has redefined “local” to mean “food produced in the province or territory in which it is sold, or food sold across provincial borders within 50 kilometers of the place where it was sold.”

What is clear from many studies and comments that have been shared over the years is that people who are lucky enough to call the Atlantic provinces home also embrace the mostly rural lifestyle, and hang on to similar values – values that support family, neighbors, and small businesses. *Buy Local Atlantic* encourages the “local” mindset across the region, asking consumers to spend their hard-earned dollars on goods grown or manufactured near home – and beyond that immediate location, within one of the four Atlantic provinces.



The Lunenburg Farmers' Market is open year-round on the South Shore of N.S. From September through May, the Lunenburg Market is located inside the Lunenburg Community Centre at 17 Green St. then moves to the Lunenburg Arena where its vendorship doubles. (Ashley Marilyn photo)



Fredericton, N.B.'s Boyce Farmers' Market is a Saturday morning tradition for both locals and visitors to Fredericton. More than 200 vendors – farmers, artisans, and craftspeople – offer a tempting variety of fresh meat, garden vegetables, home baked goods, maple syrup, flowers, handcrafts, jewelry, and more. (Photo provided by the Boyce Farmers' Market)

Jesse Vergen, executive chef at Saint John Ale House, describes “local” this way: “One of the things we have always looked at was how (local) is not just about a set amount of kilometers, but an overlaying mindset of supporting farmers, fishermen, and artisans within our region.”

Small is the new big

“The small farm, like the single seed, is both bountiful and beautiful. In an age of obsession with everything big, we live under the illusion that bigger is better... But the reality is that “small is big” – ecologically, economically and politically. The future of food security in India and worldwide lies in protecting and promoting small farmers.” Vandana Shiva

Consumers have now come to expect that “local food” will also include more responsible farming practices. While industrial farms continue to produce a small variety of food over vast plots of land in rural areas, local farms selling direct to consumers tend to produce a wider variety of crops on a smaller plot of land closer to the market they serve. Small farms also typically manage their own business and marketing and often create local distribution systems or networks, distributing directly to consumers. 🍏



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Some of us tend to get a bit stressed out about having guests. Life is busy, and housekeeping sometimes goes by the wayside, but when visitors are expected we scurry around tidying up, putting in a whole lot of work to make the place look half-presentable.

So you have to admire people who sign on as hosts for Open Farm Day, which takes place this Sept. 21 in all four Atlantic provinces. Though they are already putting in long hours trying to make a living in agriculture, these people voluntarily throw open the gates and allow hordes of strangers to nose around the farm that is both workplace and family home.

Why the heck do they do it? Open Farm Day has caught on in a big way partly because of farmers who are proud of the agricultural sector generally and their own operations specifically. Moreover, they've recognized that they can tap into public goodwill by being transparent about what they do, and by communicating the joys and the challenges of farming.

On the consumer side, Open Farm Day helps to satisfy the growing appetite among the general public for up-to-date and verifiable information about agriculture. Although we often hear the lament that our society is increasingly alienated from the realities of food production, recently there have been signs that many urban dwellers are actively seeking a stronger connection with agriculture. They want to know where their food comes from – and given the chance, they're keen to learn first-hand.

JoAnn Pineau, Open Farm Day co-ordinator, Prince Edward Island Agriculture Sector Council, says there were almost 15,000 farm visits during last year's event on the Island. That reflects a huge commitment on the part of participating farmers, she points out. "It's hard, because it's really a busy time of year for a lot of them."

In follow-up surveys, the farmers were overwhelmingly positive about the



Open Farm Day in September allows families in all of the Atlantic provinces to get up close and personal with their rural farm neighbors and livestock.

(Photo courtesy of P.E.I. Agriculture Sector Council)

experience in 2013, although they were likely relieved when the day came to an end. "Some of them were surprised how many visitors they got," says Pineau. "There were some that got 300 or 400. It was a little unexpected, but they really enjoyed interacting with people."

The farmers who choose to take part, are really enthusiastic about what they do.

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- 3 Atlantic producers grow and produce the foods (grains, fruits, vegetables, eggs, beef, chicken).
- 4 Co-op Atlantic buys the food products from the producers.
- 5 Co-op Atlantic sells producers' food to Co-op stores.
- 6 Consumers purchase the Atlantic foods from our Co-op stores.
- 7 Consumers enjoy Atlantic-produced foods.
- 8 In the Fall, Co-op Atlantic's specialists work with the producers to help them gain greater results for the year to come.

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This year marks the 13th anniversary of Open Farm Day, Pineau says, and over that time the event has grown and evolved. "We've diversified the farms quite a bit since we started," she observes – even though biosecurity protocols are a limiting factor for certain commodities, such as hogs and potatoes. Demonstrations and hands-on experiences seem to be particularly popular, presenting an opportunity for visitors to connect personally with their host.

"It really gives people a chance to get to know their farmers, so it absolutely ties in with the 'buy local' message," Pineau says. "And I feel that message is really catching on, especially in the last five years or so."

Christa Wright, with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, says she's seeing the same trend. "Everybody wants to know how their food is grown and where it's grown, and they want to support local farmers."

Though her province's agriculture sector is relatively small, and spread over a large geographic area, Wright says about 10 operations participated in Open Farm Day last year, providing a good cross-section of the industry, with activities such as hay wagon rides and corn boils guaranteeing a positive response.

In New Brunswick, last year's Open Farm Day attracted more than 14,000 visitors. "The numbers have been going up, because people know more about it from word of mouth, and especially with Facebook," says Isabelle Kirouac, with the Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick.

"Fredericton's not a big city like Toronto, so people see the farms anyway but I think it's good for them to go onto the farms," says Kirouac. "They drive by and see the cows, but it helps to have it more personal, so they can speak to the farmers and ask questions, and see the animals up close."


Open Farm Day in Nova Scotia chalked up about 18,000 visitors last year. "I think the 'buy local' thing has picked up," says Wanda Hamilton, with the province's Federation of Agriculture. "In 2011 we had about 10,000, so we're seeing almost a doubling in the number of visitors, with basically the same number of farms – and that's due to the interest in knowing who their farmer is."

Last year some farms close to the Halifax area actually received more than 1,000 visitors. Some of these operations may already be involved in agri-tourism, points out Hamilton, and those that do direct sales may find that participating in Open Farm Day helps to develop their customer base. But she observes, "There's not a lot of profitability from it. They're giving their day just for the positive image of agriculture – and we're very grateful for their commitment."

Livestock operations are a big draw for visitors, Hamilton says, although there's also strong interest in many different hands-on activities, from making preserves to sheep shearing to distilling essential oils.

"It's really providing something for everyone,"

she says. "People come out for several different reasons. We also encourage people from the farm community to get out and see what people are doing in different commodities. Just because we're farmers, doesn't mean we know everything." DL

Follow the "Open Farm Day" link at RuralLife.ca to get details for your province. 

"The farmers who choose to take part, are really enthusiastic about what they do"

– JoAnn Pineau



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The cusp of something great

Farmers' markets boost rural economic development

by Keltie Butler

I'm a Cape Bretoner. I believe storytelling is my blood, and the story of farmers' markets is one I like to tell. It is one of farm families, entrepreneurs, new businesses, and communities coming together to celebrate the beauty and bounty of our unique place in the world. All of us, farmers and shoppers, have a role in sharing the stories of our markets and communities. We must write this story together to spread the word.

Founded in 2004, Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia (FMNS) is a member-based and member-funded cooperative now encompassing 25 farmers' markets across the province. We work with markets, new and old, and their vendors to promote sustainable growth through knowledge sharing, business development, research, advocacy, and promotion.

Recently, FMNS gathered information about customer spending from farmers' markets across the province. The survey revealed that each week

more than 55,000 people shop at Nova Scotia farmers' markets, and spend 20 percent of their weekly food budget there, keeping more than 1,500 local producers in business. Stories of success are plentiful: the Lunenburg Farmers' Market, for example, reports more than \$60,000 circulated through the market on the day the survey was conducted there – rural economic development at its best.

What if more Nova Scotians discovered their local farmers' market and did more of their weekly shopping there? Imagine the positive impact that spending could have on our rural communities, our shared economy, and overall food security in our province.

We are on the cusp of something great.

(Keltie Butler is executive director of Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia. FMNS is on the web at www.farmersmarketsnovascotia.com)

Working together, a growing Farm Market trend

New Brunswick's Dieppe Market, located in the Greater Moncton area, offers farmers, growers and entrepreneurs the year-round opportunity to provide customers with fresh produce, as well as other locally grown, raised, or created goods and crafts. The Market is owned and operated by a non-profit, The Really Local Harvest Cooperative LTD. Market manager Ginette Goulet said they hosted a meeting of farmers' markets in New Brunswick in May to establish a new province-wide network.

In P.E.I., Bernie Plourde, manager of the Charlottetown Farmers' Market, said that while there are up to eight markets across the province, only two of them are year-round – Charlottetown and Summerside. "Unfortunately, we do not have a farmers' market association like Nova Scotia," Plourde said.

The St. John's Farmers' Market in Newfoundland and Labrador operates as a cooperative and is currently in its seventh successful season. Hannah Gaultois, vice-chair of the Board of Directors for the Market said there currently is no provincial organization of farmers' markets in NL, however added, "It would be great if there was."



The year-round (Saturdays) Marché de Dieppe Market can be crowded! The market has nearly 100 vendors offering everything from fresh produce to meats, baked goods, cheeses, jewelry, and crafts.

(Marché de Dieppe Market photo)



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FarmWorks Nova Scotia

Investment with a vision

by Linda Best

Shareholders in FarmWorks have a vision: healthy farms and healthy food, and they're investing in FarmWorks to provide new sources of capital for farmers and food producers.

The directors of FarmWorks Investment Co-operative lend that capital to sustainable food-related businesses across the province, and those farmers, food processors, retailers, and restaurants are producing, employing, and profiting—adding value to their businesses and the province as a whole.

People who support local businesses by buying and investing locally realize they hold some of the keys to their future in their hands. Food is one of those keys.

Excellent foods and beverages are produced in Nova Scotia, creating jobs on farms and throughout the food system, providing food grown closer to home, keeping money circulating in the region, bringing people back to rural communities, helping to increase the viability and sustainability of agriculture, and providing economic stimulus for the whole province.

FarmWorks established a Community Economic Development Investment Fund (CEDIF) that enables investors to receive tax credits for investing in

a broad range of food-related businesses in Nova Scotia. The directors strategically provide subordinated debt financing to enterprises that will successfully and sustainably increase production and profitability. Directors and advisors mentor and promote businesses that receive loans.

In just 30 months \$721,000 has been invested in FarmWorks and loans have been made to 28 businesses. Loan repayments are immediately available to lend to other businesses.

A survey of 18 businesses that received loans in the first 18 months indicated that in addition to 21 full-time and 14 part-time positions held by the owners, the businesses created 20 new full-time and six part-time jobs as a result of FarmWorks loans. For startup and young businesses about 25 percent of total capital came from FarmWorks, and for established businesses, loans accounted for 1.5 percent to 100 percent of project capital.

FarmWorks Flavour Trail (<http://farmworks.ca/about/loan-recipients/>) shows where to find these businesses and their excellent products.



(Linda Best is a founder, driving force, and co-chair of FarmWorks in Nova Scotia.)



Investing in local food – the Atlantic experience

In Nova Scotia a CEDIF (Community Economic Development Investment Fund) has been put in place supporting agriculture and local food, the FarmWorks fund described above. It is one of a total of 48 CEDIFs in the province, mobilizing 7,500 investors. Together they have invested more than \$56 million since 1999.

Elsewhere in the Atlantic provinces CEDIFs and other mechanisms designed to help the farm community exist or are in the works. New Brunswick has extended its existing Small Business Investor Tax Credits and created Community Economic Development Investment Funds (CEDIFs) that offer pools of capital from individuals, corporations, and

trusts within a defined community to operate or invest in businesses within that community.

In Prince Edward Island, the Community Economic Development Business (CEDB) program has been created as part of the Prince Edward Island Rural Action Plan, and is intended to support innovative Island businesses and stimulate rural economies.

The Newfoundland and Labrador government announced in its 2014 budget that it will invest \$72 million in continuing tax credits and incentives for businesses, including a small business tax credit and manufacturing and processing profits tax credits.



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