FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Path Forward for Cape Breton's Food Sector

December 2018

Cape Breton Food Hub

Cape Breton Partnership

Strategy Developed in Consultation With:

Food Hub Producers/Food Business Owners

Sector Stakeholders & Partners

Food Hub Consumers

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this strategy is to outline the challenges and obstacles facing local food businesses and the entire sector, and to identify the opportunities and potential solutions that will allow them to grow.

In a world of rapidly-evolving food technologies and trends, Cape Breton food businesses must keep pace in order to stay relevant and in an effort to ensure their businesses are viable over the long-term.

The local food sector is diverse and has plenty of room for growth, both in terms of export potential, and import replacement through increased consumption of local food by Cape Breton consumers, restaurants, institutions and retailers. Working in conjunction with partners and food industry stakeholders, the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op represents food businesses of all kinds across the island. In operation for four years, the Food Hub has grown each year and is representative of the potential of the industry on the island when partners work together.

There are significant challenges and obstacles facing the food sector and food business entrepreneurs on the island including the relatively short growing season, the demographics of the Cape Breton population, a decreasing number of farms on the island, regulations and policies that limit small producers from selling to medium and large-size institutions, a lack of infrastructure to support key areas of potential growth, a need for more education, awareness and industry support, and competition (online, retail, and direct-to-consumer delivery). Online competition in the form of meal kits delivered fresh to consumers and traditional grocery stores branching out into direct delivery to shoppers is changing the face of food shopping across the country. Cape Breton consumers continue to rely largely on food imported from around the globe.

With the proper support and the right infrastructure, the local food sector can face these challenges and be an important player in the food industry on a local and global scale. There are opportunities to increase exports/import replacement, develop a local food culture in Cape Breton, increase product offerings, and reverse the decline of farms/food businesses on the island.

Based on consultations with producers and industry stakeholders and on the results of the Food Hub's consumer survey, this strategy concludes with four key recommendations to grow the local food sector moving forward.

The first recommendation is to address the infrastructure gaps by developing and studying the business cases for several key infrastructure needs that have been identified – a shared-use food processing facility, storage facilities, a seedling program, and more access points for local food purchases. Once examined in-depth, the sector and industry stakeholders can make informed infrastructure decisions for the future.

The second recommendation is to improve education programming and resources available to food business entrepreneurs on everything from business planning to mentorship, and to consumers on the benefits and importance of purchasing local food.

The third recommendation is to explore new partnerships and put more research into issues that need to be addressed but cannot be solved by the Food Hub alone, or by any one organization on their own. Issues like access to agricultural land, the need for an abattoir, employee recruitment and retention, and increasing production across the board are significant ones that will take research and a concerted effort by a partnership of organizations and stakeholders to solve.

The fourth recommendation is for the Food Hub to work with partners and organizations to begin to develop new market opportunities both locally with larger institutions, and in exports. Significant energy needs to be put into identifying new markets and building relationships with these buyers.

Each recommendation is accompanied by a roadmap to achieving results, in an effort to clearly lay out the path forward.

2. INTRODUCTION

In outlining the challenges facing local food producers and businesses and identifying potential solutions that will allow them to grow, this strategy looks at the way forward for the local food sector in Cape Breton.

The strategy will be used by the Food Hub and industry stakeholders and partners to help chart the course for the future of the island's food sector.

In an effort to paint an accurate picture of the food industry now and the vision for moving forward, a number of consultations took place with food businesses and food industry stakeholders. In addition to extensive consultations that took place when the Food Hub was established in 2015, staff of the organization are in regular communication with producers throughout the year during site/farm visits, Food Hub events, and membership and board meetings. They continuously listen to concerns and issues, gather feedback, and plan for the future.

As this report was developed, over 45 food businesses representing all sectors of the industry – including dairy, fisheries, vegetable, meat, value-add product, etc. – had the opportunity to provide direct input both at an in-person consultation session and through an online survey.

Data from the Food Hub's annual consumer survey was incorporated in order to ensure the voice of the consumer was represented and reflected.

Representatives from a wide range of organizations, associations, departments, and industry stakeholders were also consulted directly.

The stakeholder entities consulted include:

- Inverness/Victoria Federation of Agriculture
- Cape Breton/ Richmond Federation of Agriculture
- Verschuren Centre (CBU)
- Food 4 Children Society
- Town Farm Co-op
- Agricultural land use committee (Eastern District Planning)
- Island Food Network
- Ecology Action Centre
- Cape Breton Fish Harvesters Association
- Mabou Community Pasture
- Value Chain Development (Dept. of Agriculture)
- Extension and Outreach (Dept. of Agriculture)
- New Dawn Enterprises
- Fishing consultant (We'koqma'q First Nation)
- Centre for Local Prosperity
- Cape Breton Farmer's Market
- Farm Works Investment Cooperative
- NSCC Culinary and Tourism program
- Wolfville Farmers Market 2 Go
- Food Safety Specialist (Dept. of Enivironment)

In addition to the consultations undertaken in the development of this strategy, a substantial amount of research was conducted into various industry and government reports, government databases, media articles, data from Statistics Canada, sector-related websites, and information on food industry best practices across the country and beyond.

A full list of referenced material and sources is included at the end of this document. The strategy is divided into the following sections:

- Local Food Sector - An Overview
- Opportunities
- Current Challenges
- Other Obstacles
- Options to Explore
- Key Recommendations
- The End Game

3. LOCAL FOOD SECTOR – AN OVERVIEW

The following sections provide an overview of Cape Breton, profiles of the agricultural, fishing and value-added industries on the island, the local food sector, the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op, and the food industry in Nova Scotia and Canada.

3.1 - Cape Breton

3.1.1 – Cape Breton

Located on the northeastern tip of Nova Scotia, Cape Breton Island is joined to the mainland by the Canso Causeway. It consists of four municipalities – the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), the Municipality of Victoria County, the Municipality of Inverness County, and the Municipality of Richmond County – as well as the Town of Port Hawkesbury. The island is home to five First Nations communities – Membertou, Eskasoni, Wagmatcook, We'koqma'q, and Potlotek.

The population of the island is 132,010 and it is approximately 10,000 square kilometres in size.

Demographic Analysis

All demographic information in this section is sourced from Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2016 Census, Cape Breton (economic region), Nova Scotia, using 2015 Census Data.

The median age in Cape Breton is 49.6. The number of adults over the age of 20 is 106,390, and there are over 25,000 children in Cape Breton.

The island has an aging population with 29 per cent of all adults being over the age of 65.

In Cape Breton there are 57,515 private households (families or single persons) according to Statistics Canada. The median household income in 2015 in Cape Breton was $53,886.

Age Range	Total	% of Total
20 to 24 years	7,145	7%
25 to 29 years	6,190	6%
30 to 34 years	5,945	6%
35 to 39 years	6,385	6%
40 to 44 years	7,295	7%
45 to 49 years	8,210	8%
50 to 54 years	10,570	10%
55 to 59 years	11,780	11%
60 to 64 years	11,675	11%
65 years +	31,195	29%
Total over 20	**106,390**	

Median Incomes for Households in Cape Breton	
All households	$53,862
One-person households	$25,574
Two-or-more person households	$70,731

*based on before-tax income

Cape Breton also has a high number of low-income families. Using the Low-Income Measurement after taxes (LIM-AT), Statistics Canada 2015 data indicates that 18.9 per cent of Cape Breton residents are low income, while of those under the age of 18, the percentage increases to 27 per cent.

3.2 – Agricultural, Fishery, and Value-Add Profiles

This section describes Cape Breton's food businesses, which fall into three key categories - agricultural, the fisheries, and value-added products.

3.2.1 Agricultural Profile

In Cape Breton, there are both registered farms and a number of smaller unregistered farms.

According to the 2016 Census, there are a total of 235 registered farms in Cape Breton, down from 286 in 2011. Close to half of the farms in Cape Breton are in Inverness County which has 110, while there are 75 in Cape Breton County, 33 in Victoria County, and 17 in Richmond County. Each county saw a decrease in the number of farms from 2011 to 2016. The average age of farm operators in Cape Breton is 58. The gross farm receipts for Cape Breton farms in 2016 was approximately $23 million.

County	Number of Farms 2011	2016	No. of Operators (2016)	Gross Farm Receipts ($) (2016)	Average receipt/farm ($) (2016)	Average expenses to receipts (2016)	Average Operator Age
Cape Breton Co.	90	75	100	10,440,000	139,141	0.67	59.4
Victoria	40	33	45	421,754	12,780	1.26	59.9
Inverness	138	110	175	11,910,000	108,323	0.89	56.3
Richmond	18	17	20	608,233	25,091	1.24	56.7
Total Cape Breton	**286**	**235**	**340**	**23,379,987**	**71,334**	**1.015**	**58.08**

The data is broken down by county, as provided by Nova Scotia's Department of Agriculture.

In Cape Breton County, the land most suitable for agricultural production covers slightly less than one-third of the region and there are approximately 13,477 acres in agricultural production. About 5 percent of suitable agricultural land is used for agricultural production in Cape Breton County, compared with 13 percent provincially. [1]

BY THE NUMBERS: CAPE BRETON COUNTY FARMS

CAPE BRETON COUNTY	**2011**	**2016**	**% Change**
Number of farms	90	75	-17
Total farm area (Acres)	13338	13477.5	+1%
Average farm size (Acres)	148.2	179.7	+21%
Gross farm receipts	$11.79 M	$10.44 M	-11%
Average per farm	130,986	139,141	+6%
Operating expenses	8,864,767	9,384,868	+6%
Average per farm	$77,085	$93,849	+22%
Average expense to receipt ratio	0.59	0.67	+0.08

*2011 data partially contributed to 2016 total farm area data & size.

CAPE BRETON COUNTY OPERATOR STATS

2016 Operator Characteristics	2016	Change from 2011
Total number of operators	100	-13%
Total male operators	80	-16%
Total female operators	20	-20%
Average age of principle operator	59.4	+6%

In Inverness County, approximately 30 per cent of the land is suitable for agricultural production. Inverness has approximately 32,000 acres in agricultural production, meaning about nine percent of suitable agricultural land is used for agricultural production. [2]

BY THE NUMBERS: INVERNESS COUNTY FARMS

INVERNESS COUNTY	2011	2016	% Change
Number of farms	138	110	-20%
Total farm area (acres)	X	X	X
Average farm size (acres)	X	X	X
Gross farm receipts	$10.13 M	$11.91 M	+18%
Average per farm	$73,439	$108,323	+47%
Operating expenses	$8.62 M	$10.56 M	+22%
Average per farm	$62,513	$96,030	+54%
Average expense to receipt ratio	0.85	0.89	+0.04

X: Data suppressed to meet confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

INVERNESS OPERATOR STATS

2016 Operator Characteristics	2016	Change from 2011
Total number of operators	175	-20%
Total male operators	110	-19%
Total female operators	35	0%
Average age of principle operator	56.3	+3%

Land most suitable for agricultural production in *Richmond County* covers slightly more than one-third of the region. Richmond has approximately 3,000 acres in agricultural production, representing about two percent of suitable agricultural land. [3]

BY THE NUMBERS: RICHMOND COUNTY FARMS

RICHMOND COUNTY	2011	2016	% Change
Number of farms	18	17	-6%
Total farm area (Acres)	2949	X	X
Average farm size (Acres)	164	X	X
Gross Farm Receipts	$608,233	$343,104	-44%
Average per farm	$33,791	$20,183	-40.3%
Operating expenses	$474,044	$426,541	-10%
Average per farm	$26,336	$25,091	-4.7%
Average expense to receipt ratio	0.78	1.24	+60%

X: The majority of farm area data for 2016 is suppressed to meet Statistics Canada confidentiality requirements

RICHMOND OPERATOR STATS

2016 Operator Characteristics	2016	Change from 2011
Total number of operators	20	-20%
Total male operators	15	-25%
Total female operators	5	-50%
Average age of principle operator	56.7	+4%

Twelve per cent of Victoria County's land is most suitable for agricultural production. There are approximately 7,000 acres in agricultural production, about six percent of the total suitable agricultural land in Victoria. [4]

BY THE NUMBERS: VICTORIA COUNTY FARMS

VICTORIA COUNTY	2011	2016	% Change
Number of farms	40	33	-18%
Total farm area (acres)	X	X	X
Average farm size (acres)	X	X	X
Gross farm receipts	$1,380,365	$421,754	-69%
Average per farm	$34,509	$12,780	-63%
Operating expenses	$126,7384	$53,3986	-58%
Average per farm	$31,685	$16,181	-49%
Average expense to receipt ratio	0.92	1.26	+38%

X - Suppressed to meet confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

VICTORIA OPERATOR STATS

2016 Operator Characteristics	2016	Change from 2011
Total number of operators	45	0%
Total male operators	30	-14%
Total female operators	15	+50%
Average age of principle operator	59.9	+8%

DID YOU KNOW?

On average, only about 5.5 per cent of suitable agricultural land in Cape Breton is used for agricultural production on the island.

3.2.2 – Fisheries Profile

The fisheries industry in Cape Breton is one of the most important on the island, employing one in every 13 people, according to a recent economic impact report from Gardner Pinfold Consultants for the Cape Breton Partnership. [5] Seafood products in Cape Breton are predominantly processed and sold to export markets with a value of $342 million, representing 6.2 per cent of total exports from Nova Scotia, according to this report. The industry as a whole continues to grow significantly, increasing in value each year.

FAST FACT

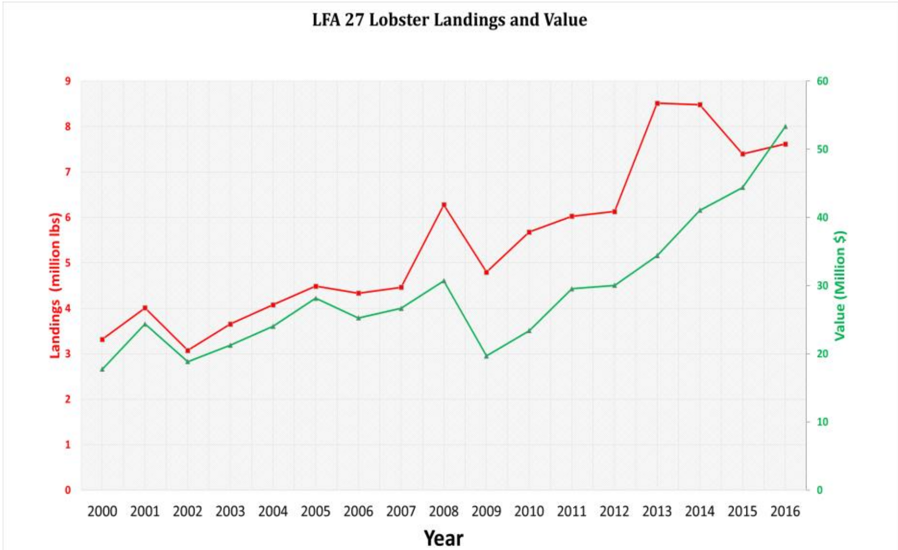
Approximately 23% of the working population in Victoria County is employed in the fishing industry, according to the Cape Breton Fish Harvesters Association.

Of the 63 species that are harvested in the Cape Breton seafood industry, the top three products are lobster, snow crab, and shrimp.

These species represent 95 per cent of the landed value of the fishery and 83 per cent of the landed volume of product. There are also 120 aquaculture sites in Cape Breton – 110 shellfish operations, three hatcheries, two land-based finfish operations and five marine-based finfish operations.

First Nations communities in Cape Breton play a significant role in the fishing industry. One example is the We'koqma'q First Nation, which has developed a successful aquaculture operation that produces steelhead trout, and processes them at a nearby processing facility for the export market. The community is exploring the potential of selling in the local market.

Lobster is arguably Cape Breton's quintessential seafood product. Across the island, restaurants cater to the local demand, and demand from the tourism sector. However, the majority of this product is sold in the export markets. Lobster harvesters often cope with volatile price points and the inability to have agency over these prices.



Source: Cape Breton Fish Harvester's Association

Since the year 2000, the price of lobster in Lobster Fishing Area (LFA) 27 (Cape Breton County and Victoria County) has ranged from a low of $4.10 in 2009 to a high of $7.00 in 2017.

3.2.3 – Value-added Products Profile

Value-added products refer to products that are created by taking primary products and processing them into a product with a higher sale value. For example, a producer could take whole field berries and process them into jam, thereby increasing the value of revenues generated by the sale of that berry crop. The Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture's business plan for 2018-19 identifies the need to invest in increasing the amount of value-adding in agricultural products including blueberries. [6]

In Cape Breton, there are many examples of companies participating in the value-added sector, including bakeries, craft breweries, ferments, jams and jellies, and those making ready-to-eat meals.

A great example of the potential of this industry can be found with the Galloping Cows Fine Foods company in Port Hood. This small-batch processing company uses local fruits and vegetables to create pepper jellies, spreads, salsas and beverage mixes, and they are sold in specialty and grocery stores across the region.

Many of the businesses in this sector are currently processing their products in home kitchens because of the difficulty in finding adequate, accessible, and affordable commercial and provincially-inspected kitchens. Processing products at home rather than at an inspected kitchen disqualifies them from selling in retail, restaurants, or the grocery sector, due to food safety regulations. Some of these products can only be sold directly or at farmers' markets, while others like cut-up vegetables, are not legal for sale unless processed in a licensed facility.

3.3 – Retail and food purchasing in Cape Breton

Like the island itself, the retail food sector in Cape Breton is diverse in terms of the size and scope of its operations.

There are large chain grocery stores, smaller community stores, farmer's markets, as well as hundreds of restaurants (seasonal and year-round). Institutions are also significant players in the food purchasing industry, including the island's nine hospitals, Cape Breton University, two Nova Scotia Community Colleges campuses, several other private colleges, and dozens of elementary, middle and high schools.

There are approximately 45 grocery stores in Cape Breton, ranging from large retail chains like Walmart, Sobeys, and the Atlantic Superstore, to smaller, membership-based operations like Co-op stores and independent grocers. Some have local food programs that promote selections of Atlantic Canadian made food and ingredients available at their stores.

There are 900 locations on the island that have food permits, including hundreds of restaurants in Cape Breton (both seasonal and year-round), convenience stores, food trucks, and community halls. The busiest part of the year for food service is the traditional tourism season of May to October, where many restaurants and community events highlight local foods and dishes – from world-class shellfish to fresh produce. Culinary tourism is a key focus of Destination Cape Breton, the island's lead tourism agency, which has been promoting the region as a top culinary destination in recent years.

There are more than a dozen farmer's markets in Cape Breton, including the largest, the Cape Breton Farmers' Market in Sydney, which is a year-round operation. Other communities including Baddeck, Cheticamp, Cape North, Mabou, Inverness, Iona, Arichat, Ross Ferry, and Port Hawkesbury, have seasonal farmer's markets, operating from June to October. And a number of other communities on the island host small farmer's markets events at various times of the year.

Many of the island's farms, fish harvesters and processers, and value-added businesses, also sell direct to consumer from their own locations.

Forty-seven island producers are now members of the Pan Cape Breton Food Co-op.

3.4 – The Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op

The following sections provide an overview of the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op, its history, structure, partners and member producers.

3.4.1 – Overview

The Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op is a multi-stakeholder, non-profit co-op that distributes local foods across the island and engages in consumer awareness and educational activities related to the local food sector. Through an online market and its own distribution chain, the Food Hub connects consumers with businesses that produce food products in the region. The purpose of the Food Hub is to make it easy to get local products into the hands of consumers.

Each week, Food Hub producers list their products and consumers order online between Friday and Monday. Then, each Thursday, consumers pick up their fresh items from one of several centrally located hubs, while restaurants receive their products by direct delivery. Products include vegetables, meat, seafood, baked goods, and value-added products from across Cape Breton. The software system used by the Food Hub allows for complete product traceability.

3.4.2 - History

The Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op was established in 2015 as part of a two-year pilot project to test and develop a local food distribution model in Nova Scotia. This pilot project was the result of years of discussions with multiple stakeholders in health, education, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, business development, and all levels of government. In 2017, the Food Hub moved beyond the pilot project phase, beginning a five-year plan to scale up and become self-reliant.

3.4.3 – Structure

The Food Hub is incorporated under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia as a non-profit co-op and is overseen by a ten-person board of directors - consisting of producers, consumers, and representatives from municipal government, the restaurant sector, retail sector and the tech sector. Alicia Lake, manager of the Food Hub, holds an MBA and has a background in building the local food economy and co-op development.

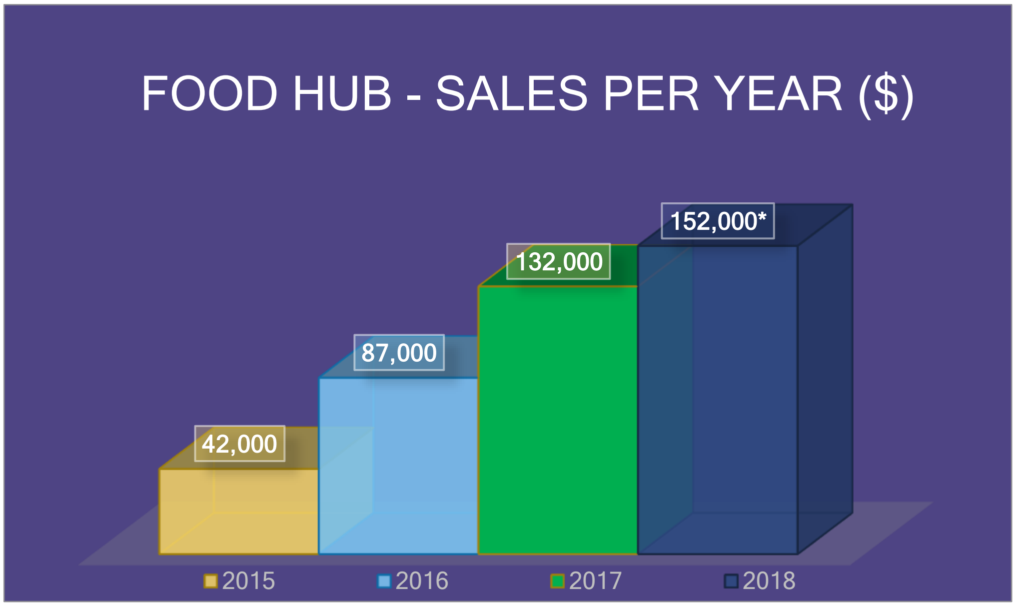
Producers who sell through the Food Hub and consumers who purchase through the hub are all members of the organization. The membership votes for its board of directors and on other significant issues.

3.4.4 – Partners

The Food Hub operates in partnership with municipalities, community organizations, and businesses across Cape Breton. These partners provide spaces for food deliveries and distribution, as well as office space and other resources. The most integral partnership of the Food Hub is with a trucking company that does all of the transport and cold-chain assurance for the Hub. Bookkeeping and financial controls are provided to the Food Hub pro-bono by the Grant-Thornton accounting firm.

3.4.5 – By the Numbers

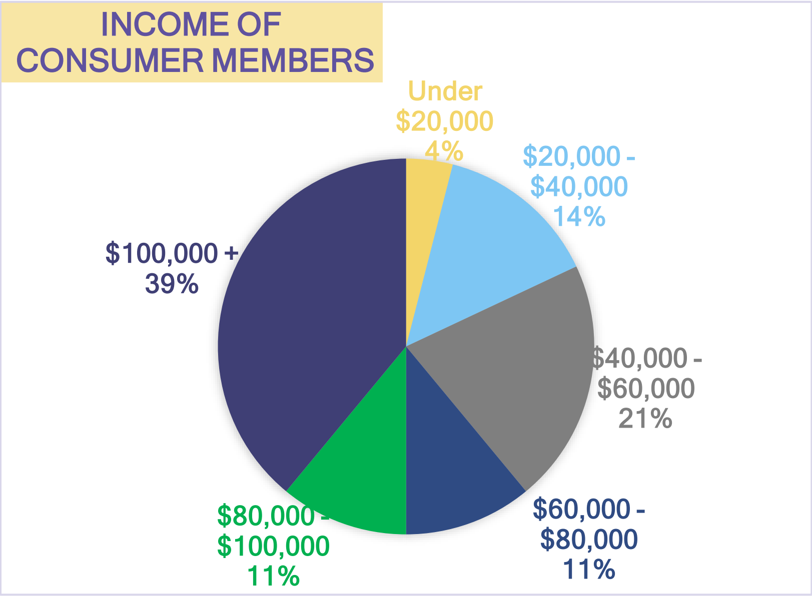
The Food Hub grew its sales significantly in its first four years of operation, and has a growing number of producers and consumers.



* final year-end figures for 2018 may change slightly

3.4.6 Food Hub Consumer Demographics

Each year the Food Hub sends out a survey to consumer members of the Food Hub. From these consumer surveys, we know that the respondents have a well-defined profile.



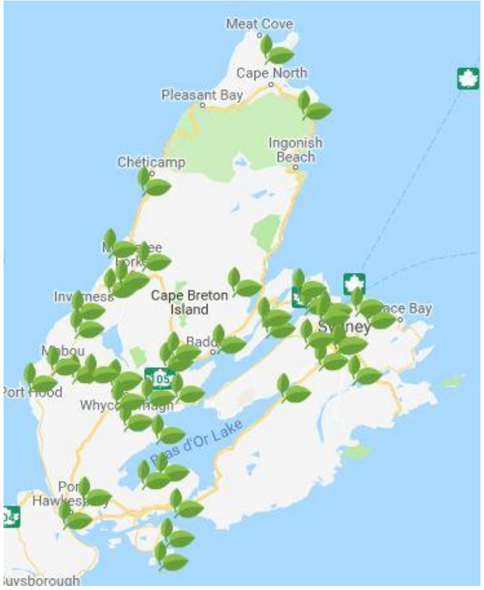
Age:	% of Membership
Under 25	2%
25-35	42%
35-45	15%
45-55	18%
55-65	12%
65-75	11%
Over 75	0%

Family Type	% of Membership
Couples	50%
Couples with children	24%
Single people	18%

Seventy-four per cent of the Food Hub membership is either couples or couples with children, 60 per cent have incomes in excess of $60,000, and 57 per cent are between the ages of 25-45. According to the Food Hub's consumer survey, the top four improvements local consumers would like to see are better product selection, lower prices (specifically on meat), more pre-made meals, and home delivery.

3.4.7 – Food Hub Member Producers

The producer base of the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub is diverse and growing. As illustrated below, the number of producers associated with the organization stands at 47 as of October 2018.



Breakdown of Food Hub Membership by Business Type

Value-added	Primary Production	Seafood
12	32	3

Primary producers include vegetables, meat, berries, honey and maple syrup. Seafood includes oysters, lobster, crab and fish. Value-added includes bakeries, preserves, beverages, locally roasted coffee, ferments and pre-made meals.

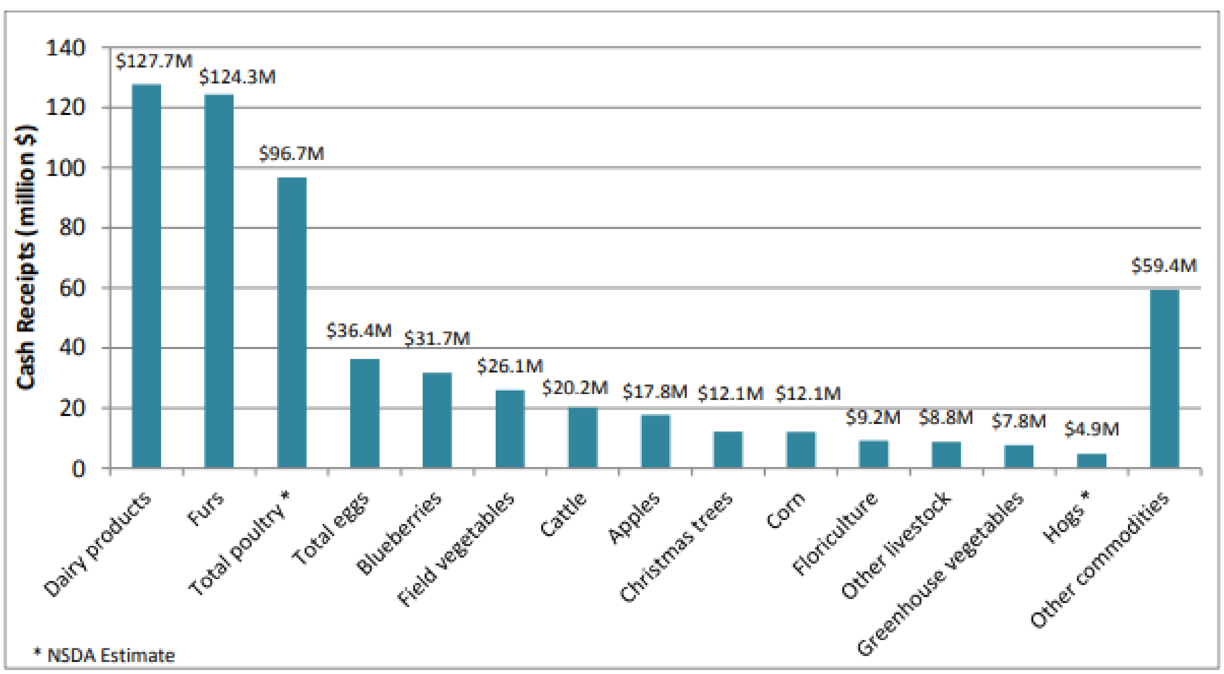
3.5 – The Food Sector in Nova Scotia

The food sector is an important aspect of the economic and social fabric of Nova Scotia. Both the land resources that produce food and the abundant fishery have played a major role in the settlement of the region, first by First Nations peoples, and later by various waves of European immigrants. Today the province is heavily dependent on the fishing sector and to a lesser extent agriculture, which is still a primary economic driver in certain jurisdictions in the province, especially in the Annapolis Valley.

> ***Did you know?***
>
> - Nova Scotian maple syrup producers make more than 150,000 litres of pure maple syrup every year, by tapping more than 450,000 trees across the province.
> - There is a total of 400 registered beekeepers in Nova Scotia who produce more than 185,000 kg of honey each year.

In terms of agriculture, there were approximately 3,900 registered farms in Nova Scotia in 2013, with farm sales totaling almost $600 million. Approximately 10,000 people were employed in the sector, including about 5,400 on-farm jobs, as well as those working in food and beverage manufacturing. Dairy continues to be the top revenue-generating commodity, while fur and blueberries are the highest export commodities in the province. [7]

Nova Scotia Farm Cash Receipts by Commodity, 2013



The fishing sector of Nova Scotia is growing at a remarkable rate. Seafood exports in Nova Scotia increased by 33 per cent between 2014 and 2015 hitting a value of $1.68 billion annually. [8] The most valuable seafood export products in Nova Scotia are lobster at $891 million, crab at $180 million, scallops at $169 million and shrimp at $131 million.

With over 7,500 km of shoreline, Nova Scotia is surrounded by water and each county in the province is connected to the ocean.

In the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act of Nova Scotia [9], a goal was set to increase the total amount Nova Scotians spend on local food to 20 per cent of their food budget by 2020. The Department of Agriculture's efforts in achieving this goal include the Select Nova Scotia Buy Local Program, which is the official marketing organization promoting local food in the province. It is estimated that as of 2010 only about 13 per cent of food purchases in Nova Scotia were being sourced locally. The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture reports that only 8.4 per cent of our diet is produced on Nova Scotia farms and the remaining amount represents seafood and other value-added products. [10]

3.6 – The Food Sector in Canada

According to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the agriculture and agri-food industry employs 2.3 million Canadians. [11] Canada is the fifth largest agricultural exporter in the world and the agriculture and agri-food industry contributes over $110 billion annually to Canada's gross domestic product (GDP). Manufacturing is a critical piece of the agricultural economy, as consumers rely on manufacturing to prepare products for home use. The food/beverage processing industry is the largest manufacturing industry in Canada, accounting for 16 per cent of total manufacturing shipments and about two per cent of the national GDP. It is also the largest manufacturing employer and provides jobs to 285,100 Canadians.

The potential for growth in the agriculture and food industry is substantial. According to Unleashing the Growth Potential of Key Sectors report – the second report from the Advisory Council on Economic Growth, also known as the Barton Report - released in 2017, agriculture and food is one of eight sectors primed for growth. It notes that the "agfood sector represents a distinctive opportunity for Canada to boost inclusive economic growth based on a rich natural endowment that should be combined with an integrated approach to innovation, competitive markets and trade, talent and labour, and infrastructure and capital investment." [12]

4. OPPORTUNITIES

In consultation with food business operators and industry stakeholders, a number of opportunities for growth and expansion were identified. To highlight the many ideas and concepts put forward, the various areas of potential growth have been organized by category below:

5. CURRENT CHALLENGES

The following sections outline the key challenges facing local food businesses, as identified by them directly, as well as in consultation with sector stakeholders.

5.1 – Infrastructure Gaps

In consultations with producers and industry stakeholders this year and over the past decade, a number of infrastructure needs have come to the forefront. There is consensus that new infrastructure is required to meet consumer demand and move the industry forward on the island. A range of equipment and capability requirements have been identified. They include:

Packaging	Freezing	Dehydrating	Processing	Cold storage
Commercial kitchen	Washing	Labeling	Seedling production	Distribution

"Dried tomatoes would be something I could produce if there was a facility available to members of the Food Hub. My garden produces an abundance of tomatoes every year, and I dry them as part of my annual harvest, using my own dryers. Having a certified kitchen would be an asset not only to myself but others in the organization. It is my hope that we can have a kitchen available soon." – Food Hub Producer

"I recently moved to Cape Breton with the idea that I would start a business making and selling a line of granola. My plan was to rent a commercial kitchen as I am not in a financial position to set up my own facility. Being able to rent a kitchen is low risk as it allows me to test my business idea before I invest heavily in it. Unfortunately, there aren't many kitchens available for rent and the ones that are available did not score well on food safety inspections, or are part of a community hall, making rental too high." – Aspiring Food Hub Producer

Cape Breton producers are also feeling the impact of the recent closure of the only licensed red meat abattoir on the island. [13]


Local The National Opinion World Canada Politics Indigenous

Nova Scotia

Cape Breton loses its only licensed red meat abattoir

Point Aconi, N.S., slaughterhouse owner says he's losing business to unlicensed 'backyard butchers'

CBC News · Posted: Sep 24, 2018 6:34 PM AT | Last Updated: September 25

> *"I had 23 lamb this year to process, which I considered sending to a licensed abattoir off-island, so that I could sell them to restaurants and through the Food Hub. However, the inconvenience and pricing of getting the animals trucked and slaughtered in an inspected facility, plus the risk of sitting on it for a while if it didn't sell at the higher price made me reconsider. In the end I processed them all on-site for farm gate sales."* – Food Hub Producer

In Cape Breton, the processing gap impacts the ability for producers to create consumer-ready products that comply with food safety regulations.

According to a food strategy developed in 2014 for the Thunder Bay area in Ontario [14], food infrastructure is the foundation required for the production, processing, storage, distribution, retailing, consumption and waste management of food within the local food system. It noted that developing a sustainable food system depends on a strong and supportive infrastructure in both the public and private realms, including everything from storage buildings and processing plants, to roads and shipping facilities.

5.2 Education/Resource Gaps

Consultations have also identified a number of gaps in education and resource/support, both among food business operators and consumers.

5.2.1 For Food Business Operators

Food business operators have identified a number of areas where their knowledge of, or access to, information is lacking.

As examples, they see a need for more information about available capital, grants, and other financial support programs; more support in business planning and succession planning, and more education around existing food industry regulations, land inventory, and tax sales.

Mentorship opportunities in all areas of food production were also identified as a need by producers and other stakeholders in order for the industry to grow and bring in new entrepreneurs.

While government was identified as an important resource to the industry, there are issues in the relationship between the two. At times, some in the industry feel government is slow to work with, could be doing more to support small producers rather than promoting larger corporations, and could be providing more programming and consultation services to support new and existing food business entrepreneurs.

5.2.2 For Consumers

A common theme during consultations was the need for more consumer education about the benefits and importance of purchasing local, and about where they can easily access and buy local products. Over time, with more marketing and education, purchasing local could become habit for Cape Breton consumers.

More readily available consumer training on how to cook, process, and store the types of foods that are available locally was also identified as a need. With that type of education, consumers would be more knowledgeable about how local foods can be integrated into their everyday lives.

Restaurants, chefs and culinary students could also benefit from more education about what local foods and products are available and during which seasons.

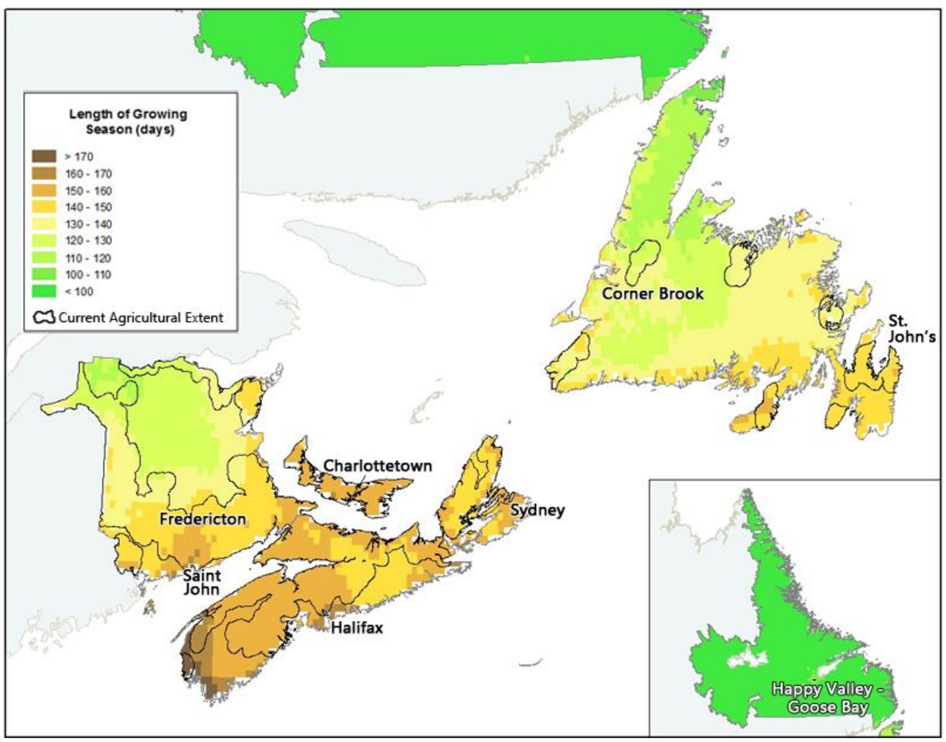
6. OTHER OBSTACLES

In addition to the challenges food businesses identified in Chapter 5, there are a number of other obstacles that face the industry as a whole including its seasonality, competition, restrictive regulations and policies that limit sales of local food to medium and large-size institutions, the overall decline in the number of farms in Cape Breton, and demographics on the island.

6.1 – Seasonality and Climate Change

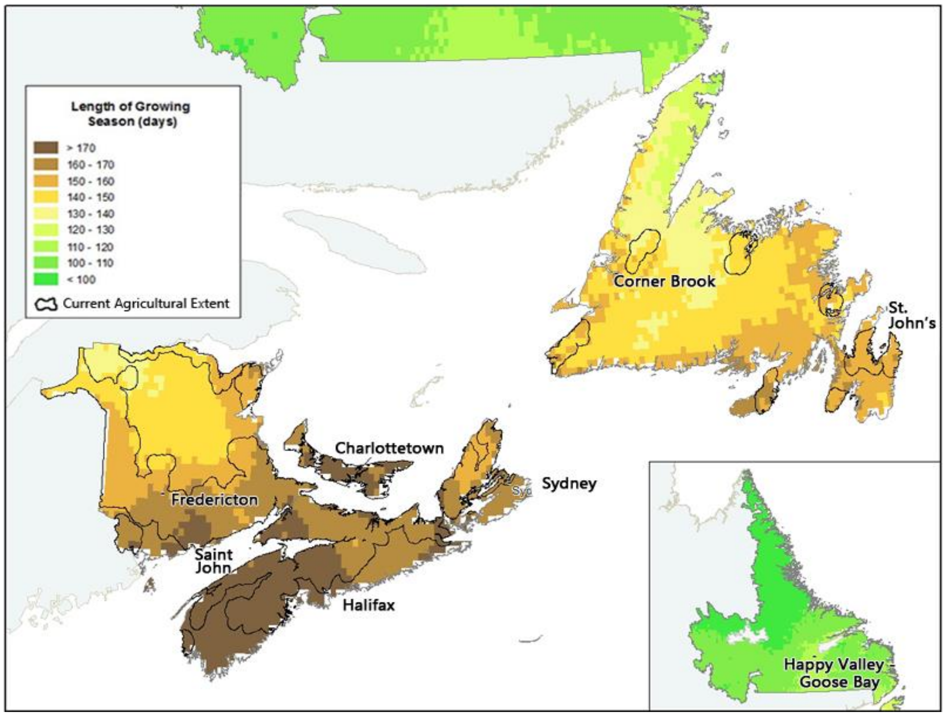
The growing season in Cape Breton represents less than half the year, creating challenges for producers in terms of year-round viability. While the length of the growing season is gradually increasing due to climate change, the number of growing days per season is still estimated to be less than six months per year (between 150-170 days/year) through 2039. [15]

Growing season for the Atlantic region (1971-2000)



Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Growing season (2010-2039) for the Atlantic region



Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

According to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, climate change adaptation presents the Canadian agriculture and agri-food industry with a number of risks as well as opportunities. While the growing season in Canada is expected to become longer and warmer over time, many areas are likely to be affected by increasingly frequent and severe droughts and floods. [16]

In 2018, the season was shorter, colder and wetter than normal, greatly impacting primary production in Cape Breton.

6.2 – Competition

Competition is nothing new for local producers and there are both traditional and emerging food trends competing for consumer dollars. Retail grocery and fresh meal kits are two of the main competitors for local producers.

6.2.1 – Meal kits/Pre-made Meals

Prepackaged, fresh meal kits are fast becoming a fixture in the lives of many Canadians, including Cape Bretoners. In fact, Food Hub consumers have identified pre-made meals as one of the top four things they would like the Food Hub to offer. Meal kits and pre-made meals are increasingly popular among all types of consumers including busy families, single professionals, and retirees. And the media and industry experts are taking note. [17] [18] [19]

Meal kit trend a booming business in Canada, now worth $120M a year

Maija Kappler · The Canadian Press · Posted: Dec 13, 2017 10:23 AM ET | Last Updated: December 13, 2017

Meal kit trend an opportunity for produce growers, entrepreneurs

AMANDA STEPHENSON, CALGARY HERALD Updated: August 20, 2018

COLUMN: Pre-portioned meal kits one of the hottest trends in food - Wendy Elliott, Hants Journal / **Published:** Sep 21,2018.

According to *Chatelaine* magazine [20], meal kits are one of the biggest food trends in Canada in 2018, and new meal kit companies are popping up all the time across Canada. “Each one is a little different, but the concept is the same: they deliver pre-portioned fresh ingredients for chef-inspired meals directly to your door. All you have to do is assemble (and maybe a bit of cooking). These kits – by companies like Good Food, Chef’s Plate, HelloFresh – serve busy families and individuals and aim to be a step up from takeout,” the article notes.

6.2.2 – Retail Grocery

Cape Breton consumers are accustomed to shopping for their food predominantly at grocery stores like Sobeys, Atlantic Superstore and Walmart, because they represent convenient, one-stop shopping for most food and household items. And those retail grocery chains are making strides to become even more convenient for Cape Bretoners, with the Atlantic Superstore launching an online shopping and delivery at all of its locations on the island, while Sobeys plans to do so by 2020. [21]

6.3 – Food Safety Regulations and Policies

Many Cape Breton producers are left out of doing business with medium and large-size institutions and retailers because they cannot deliver consumer-ready products that meet food safety regulations and the stringent food policies that these institutions have in place.

FoodARC's in-depth Making Food Matter research report [22], which was supported by the Government of Canada through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, identified food regulations and institutional procurement as two of five key opportunities for change in Nova Scotia.

On food regulations, it noted that "regulations on licensing, quality assurance, labelling, food safety and handling, and distribution impact anyone wanting to grow, catch, harvest, produce, process, distribute, and sell or share food with others. Many current regulations are designed to address large-scale production, processing, and distribution. These same regulations, however, impede small-scale operations and informal activities and their capacity to concretely and positively impact community food security." The report suggested testing the creation of a spectrum of regulations for different scales of activity.

On institutional procurement, it noted that "medium and large sized institutions currently rely on established, just-in-time food distribution systems that favour large-scale suppliers and distributors. If these same institutions were able to purchase from local, small-scale suppliers (e.g., fishers and farmers), then they could contribute to creating market predictability (e.g., relatively stable prices and quantities)." The report suggested that alternative distribution systems were needed to address the infrastructure, supply management and distribution challenges experienced by many small-scale suppliers and the corresponding challenges of institutions in sourcing from multiple suppliers.

The report, Strategies for Activating Change Together: A participatory research report on community food security in Nova Scotia, was released in 2014 and updated in 2015.

6.4 Overall Decline in Number of Farms in Cape Breton

The decline in the number of farms, and in the overall gross farm receipts in Cape Breton are a cause of significant concern. The industry cannot grow without new people starting food businesses or taking over existing businesses.

The numbers, as outlined below, detail a troubling trend. There are 51 less farms in Cape Breton now than five years ago.

County	# of Farms (2011)	# of Farms (2016)	Change
Cape Breton	90	75	-15
Victoria	40	33	-7
Richmond	18	17	-1
Inverness	138	110	-28
TOTAL	286	235	-51

6.5 Demographics

The current customer base of the Food Hub provides a good snapshot of the demographic of people in Cape Breton who are potentially interested in local food, and local food experiences, commonly known as foodies.

Based on the information collected from Food Hub surveys and the demographic profile of Cape Breton presented in Statistics Canada data, a picture of the size of the potential household target market in Cape Breton emerges. Cross-tabulation data is currently unavailable so the number of people who fit into the profile based on all factors can't be calculated, but the numbers can be examined separately by three key indicators: income level, family composition, and age group.

6.5.1 Income Level

Sixty per cent of Food Hub members have household incomes above $60,000 (which is above the median income level of $53,862). According to Statistics Canada data, 25,900 households in Cape Breton have combined incomes exceeding $60,000.

Income Level	# of Households
$60,000 to $69,999	4,190
$70,000 to $79,999	3,660
$80,000 to $89,999	3,210
$90,000 to $99,999	2,535
$100,000 to $124,999	4,840
$125,000 to $149,999	3,015
$150,000 to $199,999	2,925
$200,000 and over	1,525
Total Number of Households	**25,900**

6.5.2 Family Composition

According to Food Hub surveys, 74 per cent of consumer members are part of a couple or a couple with children. Data from Statistics Canada indicates that there are 29,760 households in Cape Breton comprised of couples or couples with children.

1-person household	17,755
Couples without children	17,070
Couples with children	12,690
Total lone-parent families	9,205
Other (i.e. roommates)	795
Total Households in Cape Breton	**57,515**

6.5.3 Age Group

Food Hub surveys indicate that 42 per cent of members are between the ages of 25-35, and 57 per cent of members are between the ages of 25 and 45. 2015 data from Statistics Canada indicates there are 25,815 people in Cape Breton in that age group.

Age Group	Individuals in Group
25 to 29 years	6,190
30 to 34 years	5,945
35 to 39 years	6,385
40 to 44 years	7,295
Total people (25-44)	**25,815**

6.5.4 Analysis

Data points to determine how many people in Cape Breton fall into all of three categories (people who are between the ages of 25-45, have incomes over $60,000 and also are part of a couple) are not currently available. However, looking at these indicators separately as market segments, there are 25,815 individuals in the primary age group of the Food Hub, 29,760 couples, and 25,900 households with incomes higher than $60,000.

Data should be released in late 2018 that will help to cross-tabulate these data sets and provide a clearer picture of the size of the consumer target market for local food in the region.

Regardless of the exact figures, the relatively small size of the consumer market and the island's aging population mean the local food sector in Cape Breton cannot rely entirely on the local consumer market. In order to grow businesses and support increased production food producers will need to be able to access the export and wholesale market that does not only rely on the spending of local households.

The demographic composition of Cape Breton not only impacts the number of people purchasing local food but also has a significant impact on the availability of workers for food businesses in Cape Breton.

7. OPTIONS TO EXPLORE

In order to address the challenges identified by local food businesses and industry stakeholders, as well as the obstacles facing the industry as a whole, a number of options have been identified. Improving infrastructure, implementing more educational and resource/support programming, developing more partnerships to conduct research and tackle big projects, and doing an in-depth look at new market opportunities are the top four areas.

7.1 – Improve infrastructure

Improved infrastructure would address many of the issues currently facing food producers. New and upgraded infrastructure would give them the tools to compete and grow in the food industry, to ensure quality control, and to allow their product to be viable year-round. Utilizing the latest in food technologies, local operators will be able to develop new and innovative products.

Among the infrastructure needs identified are a shared-use food processing facility, more storage facilities, a seedling program, and more access points to sell/buy food products.

7.1.1 A Shared-use Food Processing Facility

The establishment of a shared-use food processing facility would serve the entire food industry in Cape Breton, ensuring that products are food safe and consumer ready for various markets. The facility could include a commercial kitchen, processing and dehydration capabilities, and packaging and cleaning equipment.

Such facilities are proving successful in Canada and in the United States. The following sections outline just three examples of how and where it is working.

Proof of Concept #1 – Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre (Northumberland Co., ON)

The Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre (OAFVC) is a not-for-profit, small-batch food processing facility in Northumberland County, Ontario, designed to support and advance a sustainable regional local food economy. [23]

The centre supports fresh fruit and vegetable value-adding opportunities to increase farm revenues, works with food processing start-up companies, and facilitates small batch co-packing.

Its services include washing, cutting, quick chill, flash freeze, labelling, packaging, cold/frozen/dry storage, a fully-equipped commercial kitchen, training facility and business incubation. It was built as the result of a partnership between the local, provincial, and federal government (through the Federal Economic Development Agency of Southern Ontario), as well as several businesses, foundations, agencies, and educational institutions.

Proof of Concept #2 – Mad River Food Hub (Waitsfield, Vermont)

The Mad River Food Hub (MRFH) is a food processing, storage and distribution facility in Waitsfield, Vermont, that was a first-of-its-kind operation in the New England region when it opened in 2012. [24]

The fully equipped food processing and storing hub is approximately 4,000 square feet and was designed as a central facility to be shared by local processing and agricultural businesses to reduce the costs. The food hub enables local small farmers to process and preserve their products and get them to market, helping to meet the demand for meat and value-added foods in and around the Mad River Valley.

The cost of establishing the facility was approximately $200,000 - funded predominantly through federal and state grants, foundation funds and donations, while some also came through private investments.

Proof of Concept #3 – Grange Kitchen (Dartmouth, NS)

The Grange Kitchen in Dartmouth, NS is a certified workspace for food preparation, production, and storage for light small-scale food production and food service operations. [25]

Opened in 2007, this 2,000 square foot addition to the Dartmouth Grange's historic Patron's Hall, provides space for entrepreneurs, artisan food producers, farmers market vendors, caterers, and growers. There are about 250 local farms in the nearby area.

The space is available for rent 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Grange Kitchen Members receive reduced rates, and assistance in finding experts to help with research and business development.

7.1.2 Storage Facilities

In consultations, food operators identified cold storage (freezer and refrigerated) as seriously lacking on the island. The majority of existing cold storage on the island exists in the fish industry, but other food producers also require such facilities. With the exception of a few larger farms, most producers have very limited cold storage for vegetables and even more limited freezer storage for meats or frozen berries and vegetables.

With more storage, food business operators would have access to new markets, and would be able to extend the shelf life of their products. Without sophisticated storage facilities on farm, meat producers are forced to check and record freezer temperatures daily and have a difficult time making this feasible for long-term storage. This is also an impediment to growth, and impedes their ability to supply larger restaurants or institutions with product year-round.

> *"I do think that 'if' there was interest in schools we could do something in the future at a wholesale price. I would much rather supply local schools than ship berries to the mainland for literally nothing. Our issue is freezer storage. We can certainly produce and fresh pack more berries, we just can't hold them right now. At some point I will have to look at a walk-in freezer on site and the building to house it."* – Food Hub Producer

A first step in addressing the freezer storage problem could be an asset mapping exercise to determine which facilities have available storage space for rent. Research to determine what procedures should be followed to avoid quality issues when using mixed freezer storage could solve some of the quality concerns producers share.

7.1.3 Seedling Program

With both weather conditions on the island and space issues at individual operations making it difficult for many producers to manage their transplant needs, a seedling program has been proposed as a way of assisting producers.

A few facilities were noted as possible partners for the industry in developing a seedling program, including the Strathlorne Forest Nursery in Inverness County. That nursery traditionally produces conifer seedlings through a one crop per growing season schedule and trees are typically ordered 14 months before they are required for planting.

7.1.4 More access points for local food

A desire to have local food in more places for purchase was expressed by many during consultations. From having local food options in as many retail locations as possible, to home delivery that would take the food directly to individual consumers, to the possibility of establishing a mobile farmer's market truck, the hope is have local food front and centre where people shop. In order to attract new producers, the Food Hub should also consider adding more drop-off depots in convenient locations.

According to a 2013 Conference Board of Canada report [26], food grown and consumed locally across Canada should be more deeply integrated into the broader national food distribution system; a move that would benefit local producers and ultimately the whole food economy. It noted that most food grown locally in Canada is currently sold through large retail chains and major distributors within the food system, a pattern that is likely to continue. It also found that availability and convenience, as well as the price of some local food products, are the main barriers preventing consumers from buying local food.

7.2 – Implementing More Educational and Support Programming

More education and improved access to support and resources have been identified as needs for both food business operators/producers as well as consumers.

7.2.1. For Consumers

In order to grow the local market, local consumers need to buy-in to buying local. Through marketing initiatives, education in the schools, tips and training on how to incorporate local food into one's diet, and education for restaurant owners, chefs, and culinary students, the idea is that new purchasing habits can be established.

Local marketing initiatives

Marketing local food to local consumers is essential in creating a local food culture in Cape Breton. Marketing initiatives could include farm tours, more consumer education about the importance and many benefits of purchasing local, and information about where they can easily access and buy local products.

Education in the schools

More food-focused education and programming in schools and post-secondary institutions would set students on a course to incorporate local food throughout their lives.

Tips and training

Training on how to cook, process, and store the types of foods that are available locally, a recipe app focused on local ingredients, and providing meal planning tips were just some of the ideas put forward to motivate consumers to include integrate local food into their lives.

Restaurant owner, chef, and culinary student education

Information about what local products are available and when would help restaurant owners, chefs, and culinary students access local food consistently and incorporate it into their menus. Educating them about the benefits of showcasing local food and having flexible menus are also important.

7.2.2 For Producers/Food Business Owners

Food business operators and producers have identified a number of areas where they require education and support services. They include:

Attracting new producers

The need to attract immigrants and newcomers to live and work in Cape Breton, and in the island's food sector specifically, was a point of discussion throughout consultations. The development of a detailed package of information for people considering or entering into careers in food production was identified as one way of helping that process. A comprehensive package could be modeled after the Guide for Beginning Farmers in Nova Scotia, by Think Farm [27], but also include information about the Food Hub and be tailored to Cape Breton.

Business and succession planning

Business and succession planning are critical for any business operator, and the food sector is no exception. More support in this area is required in order for the industry to grow on the island.

Marketing and product development

Local food business operators require assistance and support in branding and marketing their products, as well as packaging and labelling.

Improving information on Accessing Capital

According to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce [28], access to capital is essential in stimulating business growth. And the federal government agrees, noting in a release [29] that “access to capital is vital for growing companies to develop ideas, market new products and create middle-class jobs in communities across the country.”

In order to grow, many local food production businesses require financial support in the initial stages of any expansion. While there are funding and programs that they can access, awareness of them is often lacking. All industry stakeholders need to be educated about the opportunities that exist and producers need to be supported in accessing them.

Mentorship Program

Mentorship is critical to bringing new people into any new industry, and there is existing programming the food sector can tap into, including the Cape Breton Partnership’s Mentor Connect program, which is proving successful. Producer-to-producer farm tours would also provide knowledge-sharing opportunities.

7.3 – Partnerships and Research

Consultations revealed that many in the industry feel there is not enough integration between the major players/stakeholders in the food and agriculture sector, and that there is a need for more research on large and widespread issues impacting the industry.

Investing in more research and exploring new partnerships to deal with issues that cannot be solved by the Food Hub alone, or by any one organization on their own, is required.

These larger issues include ensuring access to agricultural land and equipment; climate change adaptations such as greenhouses and high-tunnels, and irrigation; the need for an abattoir and meat processing options; employee recruitment, retention, and childcare challenges; food access for low-income families; and increasing production across the board. Food business operators would also like to see more people in paid positions, in the Food Hub and industry-wide, working to support and market the food and agriculture sector and ensuring goals and outcomes are met.

Each of these issues are significant and will require research and a concerted effort by a partnership of sector organizations and stakeholders to address.

7.4 Market Expansion

As capacity increases on the production side of the food sector in Cape Breton, new markets must be tapped into to increase demand for these products. Processing facilities, year-round supply, increased production, and new product development will mean new opportunities, particularly in supplying medium/large size institutions and export markets.

The opportunities for growth in exports are significant as there is strong international demand for Canada's safe, high-quality agricultural products, according to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Canadian exports of agriculture, agri-food, fish and seafood to all countries in 2017 rose to $64.6 billion, a $2 billion increase from 2016 exports. Increasing exports from Cape Breton would be in line with the federal government’s trade target of growing agriculture and food exports to $75 billion by 2025. [30]

7.4.1 Export Market

An examination of the opportunities for Cape Breton food products in the export market is required to determine where the potential markets are, how to reach those markets and what is required to ensure that products are ready for the needs and regulations of that market.

7.4.2 Medium/large Size institutions

Relationships with larger buyers need to be developed over time and their quality assurance and food safety requirements need to be better understood in order to determine what needs can be satisfied with local supply.

8. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the challenges and opportunities facing the local food sector, four key recommendations have been identified. A roadmap for achieving results on each recommendation is also outlined as the Food Hub and other partners move forward.

8.1 – Address Gaps in Infrastructure

Determine infrastructure priorities by developing and studying the business cases for several key infrastructure needs that have been identified - a shared-use food processing facility, storage facilities, a seedling program, and more access points for local food. Once examined in-depth, the industry and industry stakeholders can make informed infrastructure decisions for the future.

THE ROADMAP TO RESULTS:

- Identify facilities that could be used for shared-use processing and determine the feasibility of developing and operating this type of facility
- Develop an asset map of current refrigerated and freezer storage facilities and determine if there are ways to partner with them or if new facilities are needed
- Set up a working committee to explore various options to create a seedling program
- Develop a plan to offer home delivery to Food Hub consumers in 2019
- Work with producers to establish more drop-off locations and determine what equipment is required at these sites.
- Explore additional access points for local food such as retail and mobile markets

8.2 – Improve Access to Information and Education

Improve education programming and resources available to food business entrepreneurs on everything from business development to succession planning, and to consumers on the benefits and importance of purchasing local food.

THE ROADMAP TO RESULTS:

- Work with producers to develop a mentoring program within the Food Hub
- Facilitate more interaction between producers to serve as a support network for them
- Develop a package for new producers with detailed information about the Food Hub and general information about business planning, succession planning, access to capital, and the market in Cape Breton; provide package to organizations that work with new immigrants and newcomers to the food sector

- Develop branding around Food Hub products and work with producers to develop better packaging and labelling.
- Expand Food Hub farm/business tours to include producer-to-producer focused tours and tours for culinary students and consumers
- Develop a guide for restaurants/chefs/culinary students about buying local, indicating what is in season and best practices around menu development
- Build relationships with schools and post-secondary institutions to partner on more local food-focused education
- Develop software that can help consumer members find recipes that use local ingredients
- Establish a marketing plan to reach more household consumers and educate them on the benefits of buying local
- Develop more opportunities for consumer education around issues such as meal planning and how to cook and store local food products

8.3 – Develop Partnerships to Address Larger Issues

Explore new partnerships and put more research into issues that need to be addressed but cannot be solved by the Food Hub alone, or by any one organization on their own. Issues like access to land, the need for an abattoir, employee recruitment and retention, and increasing production across the board are significant ones that will take research and a concerted effort by a partnership of organizations and stakeholders to solve.

THE ROADMAP TO RESULTS:

- Hold a food sector stakeholder meeting in early 2019 to begin bringing people together on these issues and determining paths forward
- Meet with stakeholders and potential partners to see what joint opportunities may exist
- Continue to support other organizations in their work in moving the needle on needed change in Cape Breton's food sector
- Identify areas that require further research and connect with potential researchers
- Help link producers with resources to allow for season extension and climate change adaptations
- Work with other organizations to help solve the issues low-income families experience when accessing local food
- Support the work of organizations that are strengthening community food assets such as community pastures and tool banks
- Work with partners to promote the establishment of more paid positions in the food sector in Cape Breton

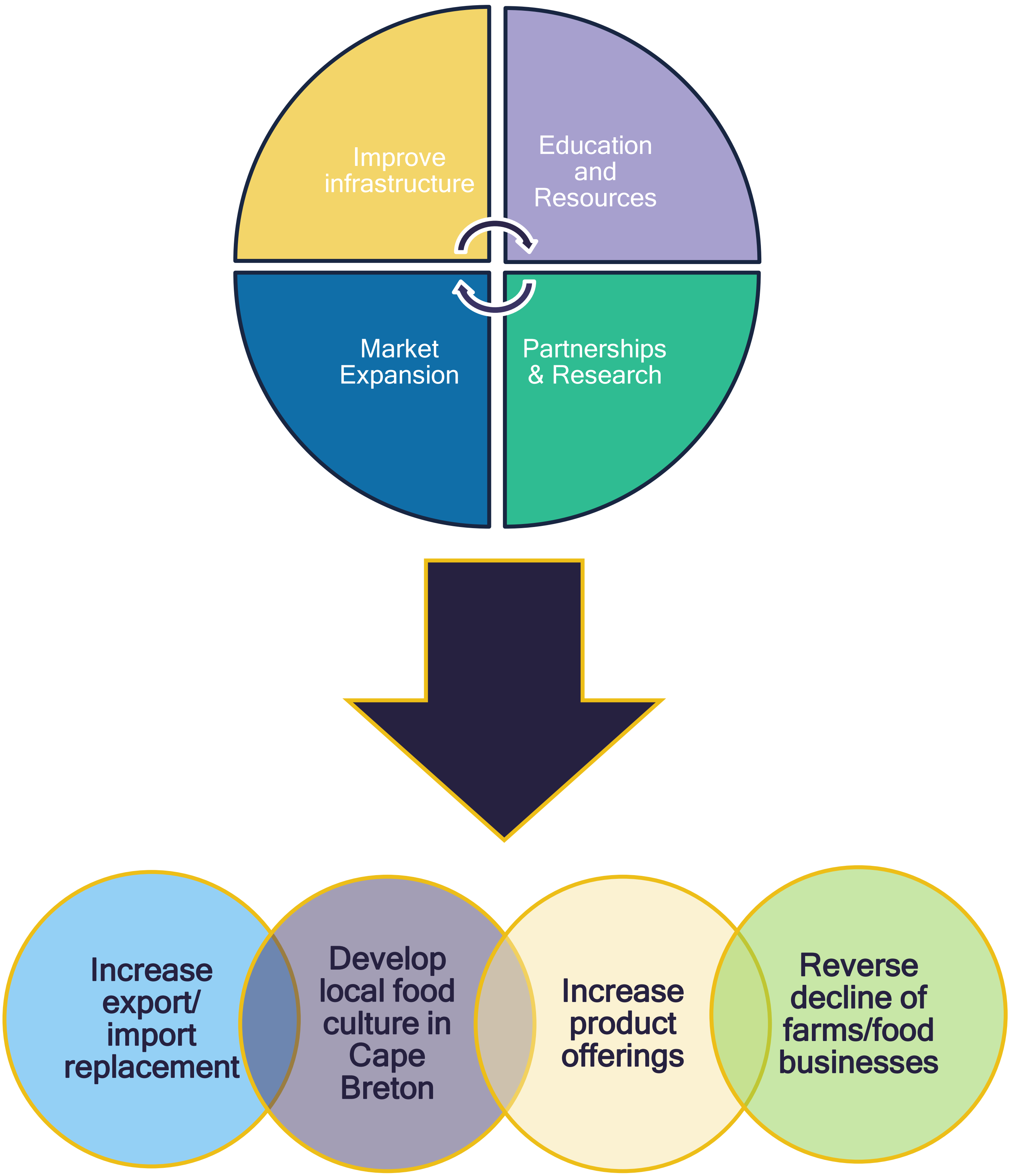
8.4 – Explore New Markets

Work with partners and organizations to begin to develop new market opportunities both locally with larger institutions and in the export market. Significant energy needs to be put into identifying these markets and building relationships with these buyers.

THE ROADMAP TO RESULTS:

- Build relationships with organizations that develop institutional procurement
- Identify products that currently have extra capacity that could be sold to larger buyers
- Explore opportunities in the export market and the logistics of meeting that demand, including research on marketing
- Work with producers to expand capacity and create new market-ready products
- Ensure that all regulations are understood and followed to supply this new market
- Develop quality assurance procedures and policies to ensure top-quality and consistent supply of local products
- Document the Food Hub's food safety recall plan and formalize other food safety policies

9. THE END GAME



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