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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee
From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2024-EDT-11
Date: June 4, 2024

Subject:

Local Food in Durham Region: Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association Annual Update and Ontario Local Food Week

Recommendation:

That the Planning and Economic Development Committee Recommends:

That this report be received for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a. Provide an update on recent activities of the Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association (DFFMA); provide an update on their planned workplan activities; and to advise that a DFFMA representative will be appearing as a delegation before the Planning and Economic Development Committee at its meeting on June 4, 2024, to provide an annual update; and
- b. Inform Members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee that the first week of June each year is Ontario Local Food Week.

2. Background

2.1 The Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Section of the Economic Development and Tourism Division works with several local agricultural

organizations, including the DFFMA, to implement programming in support of the agricultural and rural economy in Durham Region.

- 2.2 The Region contributes \$13,500 in core funding annually to the DFFMA through the Division's Annual Business Plan and Budget to support the local agri-food sector.
- 2.3 The DFFMA is a largely volunteer-led and membership-based organization with one part-time coordinator. DFFMA has been promoting the production and consumption of local food in Durham Region for 30 years.
- 2.4 Established in 1993, the DFFMA has been a leader in the producer-led local food marketing movement in Ontario. Members of Regional Council, businesses, and residents will be familiar with the DFFMA branding; including: the annual 'Buy Fresh, Buy Local' map and brochure; directional road signs; and the [DFFMA website](#) promoting its members.
- 2.5 There were 59 DFFMA members in 2023. DFFMA's membership structure has categories for full members, associate members, and supporting members. This reflects the evolving interests of consumers in not only local food products but also local food experiences, local beverages, agri-tourism (e.g., sunflower, and lavender farms) and other forms of on-farm diversification.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 [#2023-EDT-3](#) – Best Practices for On-Farm Diversified Uses
- 3.2 [#2023-EDT-8](#) – Local Food in Durham Region Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association Annual Update and Ontario Local Food Week (The DFFMA reports and delegates annually to the Planning and Economic Development Committee).
- 3.3 [#2023-EDT-13](#) – Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan Annual Report
- 3.4 [#2024-EDT-6](#) – Gather at the Farm 2023 Agri-Food Marketing Campaign

4. 2023 Review and 2024 Workplan Activities

- 4.1 Throughout 2023, the DFFMA continued to support their members by facilitating joint marketing opportunities through KX-96 radio campaigns to highlight members timed with seasonal products, offering networking and social opportunities for farm members to increase their business-to-business connections, and introducing a subcommittee structure to focus on advancing key priorities such as policy reform, funding opportunities, member recruitment, education, and more.

- 4.2 Over the past year, Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Section staff and the DFFMA have collaborated to complete several activities that support the agri-food sector:
- a. Joint application in partnership with DFFMA and Durham Farm Connections to the province's Rural Economic Development (RED) funding program to support the hiring of a shared coordinator and to fund workplan priorities for both organizations;
 - b. Gather at the Farm digital marketing campaign to highlight farm product and experiences offered across the region throughout the month of October 2023;
 - c. Durham Farm Fresh networking event at Old Flame Brewing Co.; and
 - d. Durham Farm Fresh and Durham Farm Connections Holiday Party and networking at Pingles Farm Market.
- 4.3 Staff continue to engage the DFFMA regularly to advance the implementation of the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan. Plans are underway to develop a 2024 Gather at the Farm digital marketing campaign in collaboration with DFFMA, and to support a selection of culinary activations that highlight seasonal local food and food products.

5. Ontario Local Food Week – June 3 to 9, 2024

- 5.1 Every year, the first week of June marks Ontario Local Food Week. This is an opportunity to make an intentional effort to shop local and support the local agri-food economy. Buying and supporting local food creates jobs and contributes to economic growth.
- 5.2 Below are some ways to celebrate Ontario Local Food Week in Durham Region:
- a. Purchase from DFFMA members; look for their recognizable road signs on Regional roads or visit www.durhamfarmfresh.ca and use the interactive farm map to find members across the region;
 - b. Search for local farms across the region by visiting www.investdurham.ca/localfood; and
 - c. Promote Ontario Local Food Week on social media, use the hashtag #LoveONTfood and tag Invest Durham and Durham Farm Fresh.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Goal 3: Economic Prosperity
 - Item 3.5: Provide a supportive environment for agriculture and agri-food industries.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The DFFMA is a long-standing farm organization that continues to promote and enhance the agri-food sector in Durham Region. They serve as a valued partner in implementing the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan to grow the agri-food industry in Durham.
- 7.2 As trends in the agri-food industry continue to shift to meeting the demands of consumers, the DFFMA continues to offer a collaborative marketing platform and business opportunities for local food producers across the region.
- 7.3 Staff will continue to work closely with DFFMA to assist in their sustainability plans and encourage consumers to buy fresh, local food.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Nancy Taylor for
Elaine Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer