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2015

Trent U Now Supports Local Dairy

DFO & FAW collaborate to allow for easier on-campus access to local dairy products

Trent University was ahead of the pack when they put out a Request for Proposals in 2013 for a five year food services contract that made increasing procurement of local food a priority.

The contract was awarded in 2014 to Chartwells Education Dining Services, and [specified that](#) [1] 50% of the food would be Ontario-grown, 35% of which must be sourced within 250km, and 2% of which must be sourced from within the Kawartha Region.

With limited direct connections to local producers, Chartwells General Manager Carolyn Bennett reached out to Pat Learmonth, Director of Farms at Work (FAW), for assistance. Farms at Work is a non-profit charitable project of Tides Canada Initiatives, with connections out into the local food community across east central Ontario.

Bennett and Learmonth toured farms and dairy processing plants over the course of the fall, and talked about the challenges and opportunities for institutional procurement. One challenge was verification of the origin of the products, which the University would need to satisfy the contractual requirement. After visiting local processors, Kawartha Dairy and Empire Cheese, Chartwells was interested in including dairy products in the local food mix. The real challenge would be determining precisely how far the raw milk had travelled before arriving at these local plants.

Enter Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO), the provincial-level commodity organization that oversees the supply management system for cow milk in Ontario. Under this system, raw milk is picked up from the farms and delivered in the most efficient way available to a processing plant. As a result DFO has the computerized delivery and traceability data available that would support verification of origin.

Over a period of several months, Farms at Work and DFO worked together to develop standardized Statement of Origin of Raw Milk. The first two Statements were completed in April 2015 for Empire Cheese and Kawartha Dairy.

These annual reports can now be generated for dairies and processors such as cheese plants across the province. The Statements outline the radius from the plant from which the raw milk originates, by percentage. The format provides information on a 25 km, 50km, 100 km and province-wide basis. Alternatively, data can be provided on the percentage of milk originating on a county basis if needed. No identifying data is provided on volumes or individual farms. Says Kawartha Dairy Marketing Manager, Tom Leger: "From time to time I am asked specifically about how far from Bobcaygeon our raw milk originates. It will be nice to be able to give an authoritative answer."

Armed with this new information, purchasers will now be able to buy dairy products from local processors, knowing where the primary ingredient – the raw milk – comes from. Trent University should be proud of its leadership in setting targets to support the local economy - and students at the school will soon be able to rest confidently in the knowledge that their next plate of mac 'n cheese will be in direct support of local dairy farms.



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Published on Farms at Work (<http://farmsatwork.org>)



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Links

[1] <http://www.trentu.ca/newsevents/newsDetail.php?newsID=7019>