

# METCALF FOUNDATION

## **New solutions to fix our broken food system** *Metcalf Foundation releases grant-winning reports*

**TORONTO, June 15, 2010** - Five new reports were released today that together present a new vision for how we think about, produce and consume food. The reports offer a range of strategies to promote local economic development and improve access to healthy and abundant locally-produced food.

The report collection, titled Metcalf Food Solutions, is the result of an open competition led by the Metcalf Foundation, a private family foundation that has been working behind-the-scenes for the past eight years to jumpstart a sustainable food movement in Ontario.

From more than 40 applications, top innovators and experts were identified and funded to carry out five research projects to tackle food system reform. According to the Foundation's President Sandy Houston the province's food system – including the growing, processing, distribution and consumption of food – runs contrary to the very essence of food. “Food is a fundamental human concern central to our health, economy and environment and yet the system we have built around it is complex, rigid and opaque.”

At the core of the problem is an outdated system designed for the export market that is no longer producing local food for local markets:

- Farmers are in a financial crisis;
- Agricultural land is fast disappearing;
- Food bank use is increasing and;
- Health is declining due to lack of access to nutritional food.

The combined solutions in the reports aim to address these issues through new, integrated approaches that span sectors and interests. One of the report authors, Sustain Ontario, was launched by the Metcalf Foundation with a mandate to facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement, bringing farmers and agri-business together with health, environmental and anti-poverty groups. Their report, Menu 2020, the collection's anchor document, offers a high level summary of the reports, identifying ten leading ideas that have surfaced across this burgeoning sector.

“For the first time, we're offering a new, integrated vision for farming and food that will contribute to health and economic viability along the food chain. These reports are must-reads for anyone who cares about poverty and health, the environment or economic development,” says Dr. Lauren Baker, Director, Sustain Ontario – The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming.

Overall, the recommendations are designed to build a healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable food system for Ontario. This will mean protection of rural and urban land to grow food, a thriving local food and farming economy, jobs and infrastructure, and healthier Ontarians demanding locally-produced food.

Recommendations:

- **Rural Entrepreneurship:** Investment, regulation and marketing should support new and innovative farmers growing and processing organic and niche products that respond directly to consumer demand thereby contributing to local, sustainable economic development;
- **Return of the Cannery:** A stronger regional processing sector is recommended to build a local food economy, helping Ontario's farmers and processors benefit from and meet consumers' growing demand for local food;
- **City Gardens and Farms:** Urban agriculture is recommended as a strategy to grow a sizable amount of the city's vegetables and herbs, increasing access to healthy food for all while growing green jobs and cities;
- **Community Food Centres:** Toronto's The Stop presents an innovative model – a place where people come together to grow, cook, eat, learn about and advocate for good food for all – that is ripe for roll-out across the province.

To facilitate implementation of the reports' collective recommendations, the Metcalf Foundation has committed financial support to a roundtable venture launching in the fall of 2010. Metcalf Food Tables will convene key stakeholders committed to food system reform through a series of tactical meetings designed to forge new linkages and expedite progress.

To download the reports go to: [www.metcalffoundation.com](http://www.metcalffoundation.com).

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Julia Howell, 416-402-4274, [julia@communityinvestmentpartners.ca](mailto:julia@communityinvestmentpartners.ca)