



ClearWater Farm

York Region has a thriving and vibrant agriculture and agri-food sector, with more than 700 farms and 270 food and beverage businesses.

Located at the north-end of York Region, ClearWater Farm is a perfect example of honouring the past while embracing the future. The farm sits on a historic property by Lake Simcoe owned by an early settler family for over 180 years. It was leased to the Ontario Water Centre by the Town of Georgina in 2015, and they've been busy ever since.

A Snapshot of ClearWater Farm Activities

- Food grown on-site is distributed through wholesale markets in the Greater Toronto Area, a weekly food basket program organized on their website, clearwaterfarm.ca
- Experiential learning activities are offered for children with their families and schools
- ClearWater Farm hosts cultural events for the community linking food and the environment
- A "Young Agri-preneur" farmers training program provides young adults with an opportunity to discover their passion for nature and gain employment in fields related to agriculture

Their Commitment to Growing Food Sustainably

When you enter the gates of ClearWater it is obvious that this is no ordinary farm. From small plot regenerative farming, four state-of-the-art greenhouses, edible food gardens in the forest and more, the farm is adopting the latest sustainable farming methodologies. One of the technologies used on-site is a mini-biodigester that will convert organic waste material into natural gas for heating greenhouses and running vehicles.

The not-for-profit ClearWater is committed to sustainable food production by demonstrating how growing healthy food is also good for the surrounding land, water, local economy and community. All this is happening as more capital improvements are underway. Future plans include a food learning building with a commercial kitchen, a renovated farmhouse where people can learn to cook with chefs and an interactive exhibit where visitors can learn more about water's primary role in the ecosystem.

Supporting the local economy

The entire agri-food sector in York Region – everything from farms to food processors, grocery stores and restaurants – provides approximately 57,000 jobs and contributes \$2.7 billion to the economy. ClearWater Farm is doing their part to grow and support this important sector by supporting young entrepreneurs through their Young Agri-preneur Program.

Developed in 2018 with support from the RBC Foundation, the program helps youth find their path toward gainful employment in local food and agriculture. The program offers training, mentoring and even land to help youth start their businesses. The program offers access to equipment, marketing support, affordable living arrangements and guidance to help the aspiring agri-preneurs get started on their own ventures.

While the technology may be new, the concept of biodigestion is not - gas street lamps in early 17th century London were powered by biofuel.



Danielle Flynn, 25, and Alex Powell, 27 (pictured right) were the first young agri-preneurs to join ClearWater Farm. Alex and Danielle grow, market and sell veggie baskets across Toronto and York Region – including direct sales to a few restaurants in Toronto. This year they have been joined by Michael Wilson, 29, who is particularly enjoying developing his skills in the sales and marketing side of local food production.

"We're lucky to be in such a supportive environment and learn how to run a market garden farm," said Alex Powell. "Joining ClearWater has made it possible for me to pursue my passion while building my experience and knowledge of regenerative and sustainable farming."

"Through up to five years participation, those who are involved with us have access to top skills building oversight, mentorship, equipment, business training and subsidized on-site residence. But we also envision us all learning from their fresh ideas. In five year's time, we'd like to see 20 young people involved every year."



York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy

York Region is committed to supporting our vibrant and thriving agriculture and agri-food sector. This work is being guided by the Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy – an action plan that was endorsed by York Regional Council in 2017. With five strategic goal areas accompanied by 45 recommended actions, the strategy is an ambitious framework designed to achieve results and demonstrates York Region's commitment to the sector.

To learn more about York Region's agriculture and agri-food sector, visit york.ca/agrifood

