

Keeping it in Kittiwake – 'Buy Local' Campaign to Facilitate Regional Development



"The regional economic development process works under a simple philosophy: sustainable, effective economic development demands involvement."
(KEDC, 2012)

Throughout the world, buy local food initiatives have become a strategy for regional development. The benefits of buying local include it supports local farmers, supports the local economy, keeps residents' money circulating within the region, minimizes emissions from transportation, and provides fresher food to the consumer. What happens in the Newfoundland setting when these ideas are applied in a region that has not historically been known for its agricultural activities?

The "Buy Local" campaign in the Kittiwake region was initiated in 2007 by the Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation (KEDC) and has since become a catalyst in the growing trend toward local food consumption. Initially, KEDC intended to highlight various fruits and vegetables produced in the region not otherwise realized by residents (KEDC 2011). The primary partners for the initiative were Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development; and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture (NLREDA, 2012).

KEDC undertook numerous initiatives within the "Buy Local" campaign to promote the benefits of buying local and supporting producers from within the region. For instance, KEDC has compiled a database of the products available in the region and the producers. This information is distributed to the various retailers that can offer the products for consumers. The program has banded the farmers in the area together and helped raise awareness among residents. KEDC also boasts you can support local businesses while offering the "freshest, best tasting food" (KEDC, 2011). The products available in the database range from baked goods (including fudge, pies, breads, rolls and cookies), berries (including strawberries, bakeapples and blueberries), beverages (including wine and bottled water), fish (like cod, salmon, and herring), local organics (which include everything from beans and celery to jalapeno peppers and zucchinis), meat and poultry, and produce (a list that contains everything from broccoli and pumpkin to romaine lettuce and rutabaga). In short, the range of foods available in the region is astounding, and the variety rivals that of most local grocery stores. The database also provides the contact information for the producer as well as any special instructions for ordering or picking up freight. It is an incredible resource for any retailer promoting local foods in the region.

The 'Buy Local' program was divided into three phases. During Phase 1 of the campaign, participating stores in the area were provided with materials to promote the sale of local foods, such as signage, stickers, brochures and other information about the benefits of buying local. The

overall purpose of these materials is to educate consumers about the importance of buying local, such as keeping their “hard-earned” money in the area, supporting the local economy as well as providing customers with fresher, locally grown foods (NLREDA, 2012).

In 2008, KEDC began Phase 2 and expanded the campaign to include restaurants within the region. In particular, this helped highlight local produce, seafood, desserts and wine (NLREDA, 2012). In this initiative, restaurants were given tent cards as well as place-mats that included information on the benefits of buying local as well as the “Buy Local” logo and slogan, KEDC and NLREDA logos. Besides offering residents the opportunity to consume food grown locally at their preferred establishments, it also allowed a more authentic “Newfoundland” experience for tourists visiting the region.

Phase 3 began in 2009, when KEDC furthered the campaign again by distributing binders filled with local product and producer's information to 170 grocery retailers and restaurants in the summer of 2009 (NLREDA, 2012). As of 2009, the campaign was actively supported by 38 communities, including retailers, restaurant owners and farms. The campaign reached over 100 communities and 170 establishments through the delivery of the local food database binders (NLREDA, 2012). Although the program has been very successful, it has not been without challenges. A KEDC representative noted a major challenge was local retailers leaving their “local” signage up year-round, even during months when no local produce was available. This confused several consumers since in many instances the local food section was accidentally filled with imported produce, such as carrots which are generally much larger when imported. In this case, when the locally grown carrots were placed back on the shelf, consumers were startled by how small they were in comparison.

Overall, the initiative has been a success in the region for supporting local farmers and providing residents with quality food. In 2010, the Buy Local Campaign received a Community Economic Development Award for Excellence in Best Practices at the NLREDA’s Community Economic Development Awards Banquet. The campaign can be seen as an example of what can be accomplished when a region bands together to support both its local producers and consumers, and how regional development success can be initiated and followed through by local residents.

References

- Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation. (2011). Buy local campaign. Accessed 17 July 2012 from <http://www.kittiwake.nf.ca/documents/buylocal.pdf>.
- Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Economic Development Association. (2012). Kittiwake Coast encouraged to buy local. Accessed 17 July 2012 from <http://www.nlreda.ca/article.php?aid=87>.

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