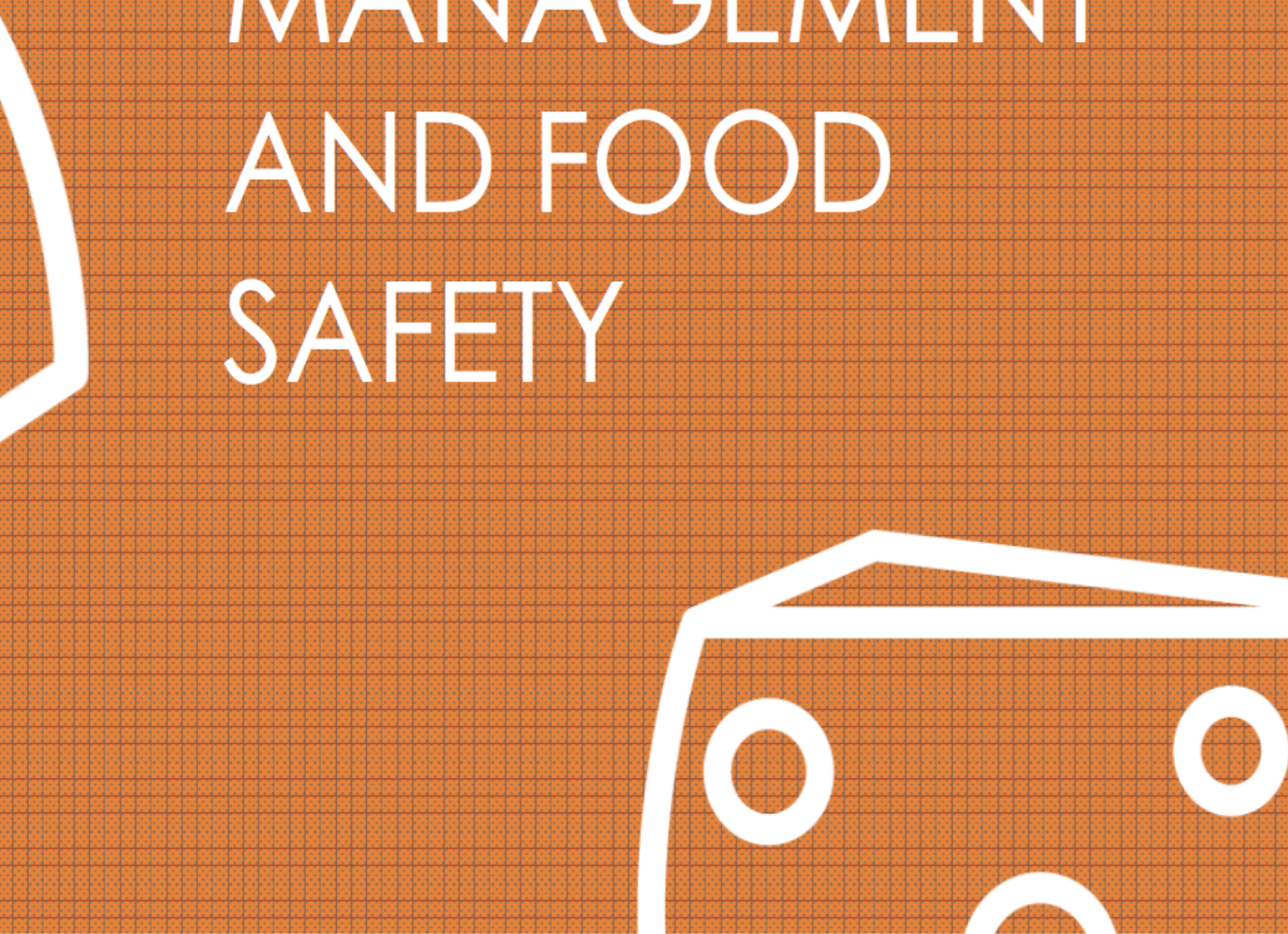


9.0 RISK MANAGEMENT AND FOOD SAFETY



9.0 RISK MANAGEMENT AND FOOD SAFETY

9.1 Findings

The World Health Organization defines food safety as all the actions aimed to ensure that all food is as safe as possible. This includes a focus on food safety across the entire food chain, from production to consumption.²⁶⁵ The World Health Organization recognizes food safety as an essential public health function due to the major toll that consumption of unsafe food takes on people's health.²⁶⁶ As a result, access to safe and nutritious food is essential to promoting good health and sustaining life.²⁶⁷

In a 2014 report Canada's food safety system was ranked to be one of the best in the world amongst a comparison of 17 Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (Canada tied for first place with Ireland). Canada was also ranked the highest in public trust in food safety.²⁶⁸ Ontario consumers, in turn, benefit from one of the safest food supplies in the world. The Province of Ontario continues to make protecting Ontario's food supply a priority.²⁶⁹

This section of the environmental scan addresses risk management and food safety; it focuses specifically on food safety risk management plans and food safety risks within the local food system. It aims to identify what food system risk management plans are in place and the food safety risks associated with the local food system.

Emergency Response Plans

In analyzing risk management and food safety within Middlesex-London, emergency response plans are a useful resource to depict whether places prioritize the safety of local food in emergency situations. Emergency response planning is completed by the MLHU and community partners and agencies in order to be prepared should a significant emergency arise. Emergency response plans state how to mitigate and respond to hazards in an emergency situation. Middlesex County reviews their emergency response plan on an annual basis.²⁷⁰ The most recent emergency response plan (revised November 2014) makes no mention of risk to local food during an emergency. Rather, in the event of an emergency or unforeseen event The

²⁶⁵ World Health Organization, "Food Safety," No Date, Web, at http://www.who.int/topics/food_safety/en/

²⁶⁶ World Health Organization, "Food Safety," No Date, Web, at http://www.who.int/topics/food_safety/en/.

²⁶⁷ World Health Organization, Food Safety Fact Sheet, 2014, Web at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs399/en/index.html><http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs399/en/>.

²⁶⁸ Canadian Food Inspection Agency, "Canada's Food Safety System Ranked World's Best," 2014, Web, at <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=906309&tp=1>.

²⁶⁹ Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, "Food Safety," 2013, Web, at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/infores/foodsafe/safety.html>.

²⁷⁰ Middlesex County, "Emergency Management," No Date, Web, at <http://www.middlesex.ca/departments/emergency-services/emergency-management>.

Salvation Army is contracted to provide food to residents.²⁷¹ The lack of planning to protect food safety is consistent with London's emergency response plan as there is no mention of managing any risk posed to local food.²⁷² Upon examining municipal/township emergency response plans within Middlesex County, the following provides a demonstration of the presence of local foods within the plans:²⁷³

- North Middlesex,²⁷⁴ Middlesex Centre,²⁷⁵ Strathroy-Caradoc,²⁷⁶ Thames Centre,²⁷⁷ Southwest Middlesex²⁷⁸ and Lucan Biddulph²⁷⁹ note the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs as being a useful resource in understanding the effect of hazardous vapours on crops and animals.
- Middlesex Centre,²⁸⁰ Strathroy-Caradoc,²⁸¹ Thames Centre,²⁸² Newbury,²⁸³ Southwest Middlesex²⁸⁴ and Lucan Biddulph²⁸⁵ mention agriculture and food emergencies as one of the most likely emergencies within the area.
- A few municipalities mention someone who is responsible for directing precautions in regards to food or water supplies when warranted²⁸⁶ however, it is not clear whether these precautions pertain to risk posed to local food or risk posed to the food supply more generally.

An analysis of the emergency response plans in place within Middlesex County illustrates that the risks to the local food system are not being mitigated in the event of an emergency or unforeseen event. This illustrates a lack of preparedness for implementing local food safety measures. This poses a significant risk to the food system itself, as well as the health and nutrition of residents, as access to healthy and nutritious food may no longer be possible after the initial threat of an emergency has passed.

²⁷¹ Middlesex County, Middlesex County Emergency Response Plan, 2014, Print, at p.30.

²⁷² City of London, City of London Emergency Response Plan, 2014, Print, at pp.1-45.

²⁷³ The emergency response plan for Southwest Middlesex was not included in this analysis.

²⁷⁴ Municipality of North Middlesex, Municipality of North Middlesex Emergency Response Plan, 2011, Print.

²⁷⁵ Municipality of Middlesex Centre, Municipality of Middlesex Centre Emergency Response Plan, 2012, Print.

²⁷⁶ Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc Emergency Response Plan, 2013, Print.

²⁷⁷ Municipality of Thames Centre, Municipality of Thames Centre Emergency Response Plan, 2010, Print.

²⁷⁸ Municipality of Southwest Middlesex, Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Emergency Response Plan, 2008, Print.

²⁷⁹ Township of Lucan Biddulph, Township of Lucan Biddulph Emergency Response Plan, 2011, Print.

²⁸⁰ Municipality of Middlesex Centre, Municipality of Middlesex Centre Emergency Response Plan, 2012, Print.

²⁸¹ Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc Emergency Response Plan, 2013, Print.

²⁸² Municipality of Thames Centre, Municipality of Thames Centre Emergency Response Plan, 2010, Print.

²⁸³ Village of Newbury, Village of Newbury Emergency Response Plan, 2008, Print.

²⁸⁴ Municipality of Southwest Middlesex, Municipality of Southwest Middlesex Emergency Response Plan, 2008, Print.

²⁸⁵ Township of Lucan Biddulph, Township of Lucan Biddulph Emergency Response Plan, 2011, Print.

²⁸⁶ Township of Lucan Biddulph, Township of Lucan Biddulph Emergency Response Plan, 2011, Print.

Emergency Food Programs

In the case of an emergency or unforeseen event, individuals may access emergency food programs in order to meet their basic need for food. Within the City of London, there are a number of emergency food programs including 35 meal program locations (33 individual meal programs) and 24 food bank locations (17 individual food bank programs).²⁸⁷ In Middlesex County (excluding London) this number is much smaller and encompasses a total of four food bank locations and four meal programs. In addition to these programs, several churches, community organizations, and community centres have food cupboards where they store food to donate to people in need.

While there are a number of opportunities available to residents, it is important to keep in mind that community emergency food programs are not able to feed all community members whenever they are hungry; in Ontario, food banks are visited by approximately

375,000 people every month (many of these organizations rely on donated food and dedicated volunteers to operate).²⁸⁸ Community emergency food programs are structured to feed people who experience their own personal emergencies that result in them being unable to feed themselves, and are not equipped to feed mass amounts of community members in cases of major crisis (e.g. a natural disaster).

Table 41: Emergency Food Programs in Middlesex-London (Source: Information London, *Help Yourself Through Hard Times Report*)

Geographical Area	Number of Emergency Food Programs
City of London	35 meal program locations; 24 food bank locations
Middlesex County	4 food bank locations

While London has numerous meal programs and food bank locations, one must also consider their effectiveness in meeting the needs of their target clientele on a day-to-day basis. One way of determining the effectiveness of emergency food programs is by their accessibility for the populations they serve. In London, all food bank locations are only available during specific hours of the day and limit the number of times individuals can pick up food items.²⁸⁹ For example, central food banks in London provide food items on an emergency basis, usually a one to three day supply, and are available for pick up once a month to once every three months. So while emergency food programs are available, the frequency by which individuals can participate in the programs is severely limited. It is also notable that only two of the 24 food bank locations are open on the weekends. With the exception of one food bank, there are no food bank locations that are open past 4:00pm on the weekdays. The exception, Youth

²⁸⁷ Information London, "Help Yourself Though Hard Times: Basic Needs Services for London and Middlesex County," 2014, Print.

²⁸⁸ Ontario Association of Food Banks, *Hunger Report 2014 Going Hungry to Pay the Bills: The Root Causes Behind the Pervasive Cycle of Hunger in Ontario*, 2014, Print, at p.3.

²⁸⁹ Information London, *Help Yourself Though Hard Times: Basic Needs Services for London and Middlesex County*, 2014, Print, at pp.6-12.

Opportunities Unlimited, only offers food to youth ages 16-24 years old.²⁹⁰ These operational hours impact people particularly who work 9:00am-5:00pm jobs from Monday to Friday as they would have very limited ability to access food banks. In order to gain access to emergency food they would need to take time off work, which, in many cases, may not be a realistic option.

There is the assumption that people who have full-time employment do not need to access emergency food through meal programs or food banks because they have an income that enables them to purchase all the food they need to consume. However, the Nutritious Food Basket in Middlesex-London shows that the weekly food costs for a family of four take up 29% of the income of a minimum wage earner (which is then accompanied by the costs of rent (40% of income), utilities and other weekly expenses).²⁹¹ For most people, it is not the cost of food that is the issue but rather that their income is too low. The Nutritious Food Basket annual survey has repeatedly shown that in Middlesex-London, people with low incomes cannot afford to eat healthy, after meeting essential needs for basic living.²⁹² This is problematic as people earning low incomes are not able to afford healthy food, which increases the risk of chronic and diet-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer.²⁹³

In regards to meal programs in London, each organization that provides breakfast programs offers them once a month and typically on Saturdays.²⁹⁴ Sisters of St. Joseph Hospitality Centre and The Youth Action Centre (for youth 16-24 years) offer breakfast programs Monday to Friday. Lunch and dinner programs in London are offered on a more regular basis (i.e. more times per week) when compared to breakfast programs.²⁹⁵

For an individual or family seeking food banks and emergency program locations on a regular basis, it would be difficult to navigate the dates and times they can access the different services. To assist in this process, Information London produces a monthly meal calendar which highlights the days and times services are available (the calendar is a project of Hunger Relief Action Coalition).²⁹⁶

²⁹⁰ Information London, *Help Yourself Though Hard Times: Basic Needs Services for London and Middlesex County*, 2014, Print, at pp.6-12.

²⁹¹ Middlesex-London Health Unit, "The Weekly Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket London and Middlesex County," 2012, Print, at p.4.

²⁹² Middlesex-London Health Unit, "2014 Nutritious Food Basket Survey Results and Implications for Government Public Policy," 2014, Print.

²⁹³ Middlesex-London Health Unit, *The Cost of Healthy Eating*, 2014, Web, at <https://www.healthunit.com/cost-of-healthy-eating>

²⁹⁴ Information London, *Help Yourself Though Hard Times: Basic Needs Services for London and Middlesex County*, 2014, Print, at pp.8-10.

²⁹⁵ Information London, *Help Yourself Though Hard Times: Basic Needs Services for London and Middlesex County*, 2014, Print, at pp.8-10.

²⁹⁶ Information London, "Meal Calendar" and "Food Banks," February 2016, Web, at <http://info.london.on.ca/meal.asp>.

While Middlesex has significantly fewer food banks available when compared to London, when considered individually they are much more accessible in terms of their operating hours. In particular, Ailsa Craig and Area Food Bank is open six days a week from 10:00am to 5:00pm. Additionally, Women's Rural Resource Centre of Strathroy and Area specifies that non-perishable food items and produce are available when needed (rather than limiting access to once a month to once every three months).²⁹⁷

Risk Management

Risk management in regards to food safety not only focuses on ensuring people have access to food but that the food they access is safe. As mentioned, Canada and the Province of Ontario, take several precautions to limit risks to food safety. This has led to the impression from Canadians that food produced in Canada is of good or excellent quality (85% of participants) and just over half (56%) are very or completely confident in the safety of Canadian food products.²⁹⁸ The Consumer Perceptions of Food survey also found perceptions of food safety was influenced by province and education level. More specifically, residents of Ontario (65%) are very/completely confident in the safety of Canadian food. Canadian with a lower education level, specifically a high school degree, (60%) were statistically more likely to rate their confidence in Canadian food safety as very or completely confident compared to those with a higher education.²⁹⁹ The authors of the study do not draw any conclusions as to why Ontarians and Canadians with lower education are more likely to be confident in the safety of Canadian food.

Despite Ontario's commitment to food safety, risks to food safety do occur. Food can become contaminated during "growing, harvesting, processing, shipping, storing or handling" and can therefore, never be risk-free.³⁰⁰ The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that approximately one in eight Canadians (or four million people) become sick from domestically acquired foodborne diseases each year.³⁰¹ Specific populations of people are more vulnerable to health risks that stem from unsafe food; these include infants, young children, pregnant women, seniors and those with underlying illnesses.³⁰²

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) research strategy focuses on three priorities, namely food safety, animal health and plant production, in order to mitigate the health risks

²⁹⁷ Information London, Help Yourself Though Hard Times: Basic Needs Services for London and Middlesex County, 2014, Print, at pp.43-44.

²⁹⁸ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, *Consumer Perceptions of Food, Wave 4*. 2014, Print, at p.10.

²⁹⁹ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, *Consumer Perceptions of Food, Wave 4*. 2014, Print, at p.10.

³⁰⁰ Canadian Food Inspection Agency, *Safe Food Canada - The Learning Partnership*, 2015, Web, at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/transforming-the-cfia/action-plan/learning-partnership/eng/1435618870031/1435618978540>.

³⁰¹ Public Health Agency of Canada, "Estimates of Food-borne Illness in Canada," January 14, 2014, Web, at <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/risks-recalls-rappels-risques/surveillance/illness-estimates-estimations-maladies/yearly-annuel-eng.php>

³⁰² World Health Organization, *Food Safety Fact Sheet*, 2014, Web, at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs399/en/>.

that unsafe food poses. In regards to food safety, the CFIA predicts regulatory needs and assesses new means of early intervention.³⁰³ Part of their responsibility includes issuing food recalls for food products when there is reason to believe that food has been contaminated or does not follow federal regulations.³⁰⁴ On a national level, CFIA conducts 3 000 food safety inspections each year. On average 350 unsafe food products are removed from store shelves through recalls each year.³⁰⁵

The CFIA implements food recalls and allergy alerts on a national, provincial, and regional level. For some food safety risks, the CFIA is able to track the risk to food safety to a particular food retailer. A search of high-risk food recalls and allergy alerts in London, Ontario found two significant health hazard alerts directly related to the London area from 2011-2015. These include:³⁰⁶

- Raw shelled walnuts sold from certain retail stores in London, Ontario may contain E. coli o157:h7 bacteria (issued April 2011). This recall affected three products within one food mart.³⁰⁷
- Fresh-shelled peas sold from a specific farm market may have contained listeria monocytogenes (issued July 2012).³⁰⁸

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has not issued any food recalls and allergy alerts specific to any of the eight municipalities of Middlesex County.

Based on the low frequency of high-risk food recalls within Middlesex County it appears that food safety is being managed well. However, province wide recalls on food products do not provide an indication on how many food products and number of units are removed from store shelves within Middlesex County. So while there are few food recalls specific to Middlesex County, Middlesex, like all other areas in the province, is still affected by province wide food

³⁰³ Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, "Innovation in Agriculture: The Key to Feeding A Growing Population," 2014, Print.

³⁰⁴ Canadian Food Inspection Agency, *The Canadian Food Safety System: Food Recalls*, 2014, Web, at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/newsroom/food-safety-system/food-recalls/eng/1332206599275/1332207914673>.

³⁰⁵ Canadian Food Inspection Agency, *Safe Food Canada - The Learning Partnership*, 2015, Web, at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/transforming-the-cfia/action-plan/learning-partnership/eng/1435618870031/1435618978540>.

³⁰⁶ This analysis does not include food recalls that were issued on a Provincial level. It is possible that province wide recalls did affect Middlesex County however it is not possible to investigate this based on the public data available.

³⁰⁷ Canadian Food Inspection Agency, "Health Hazard Alert - Raw Shelled Walnuts Sold From Certain Retail Stores in London, Ontario and Calgary, Alberta May Contain E. coli O157: H7 Bacteria," 2011, Web, at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/newsroom/food-recall-warnings/complete-listing/2011-04-11b/eng/1359548339785/1359548339801>.

³⁰⁸ Canadian Food Inspection Agency, "Health Hazard Alert - Certain FRESH SHELLLED PEAS Sold From Thomas Bros. Farm Market, 5856 Colonel Talbot Rd, London, Ontario may contain LISTERIA MONOCYTOGENES" 2012, Web at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/newsroom/food-recall-warnings/complete-listing/2012-07-06/eng/1355956871805/1355956871821>.

recalls because most products that are recalled have wide distribution (although the extent of this effect is not known at this point).

County health units also track events pertaining to food safety, particularly in regards to number of suspected and confirmed food borne illnesses. The Middlesex-London Health Unit, over the last five years, has seen fluctuation in the number of suspected food borne illnesses that are called in.³⁰⁹ Between 2010 and 2015, 2014 and 2012 saw the highest number of suspected food borne illnesses with 177 and 166 suspected illnesses respectively.³¹⁰ Food borne illnesses, commonly referred to as food poisoning, is a sickness that can happen when someone consumes food that is contaminated with germs or chemicals.³¹¹ These types of illnesses are common and serious, but are not a major health concern. Public Health Ontario estimates that about 100,000 cases of foodborne illnesses occur every year, of which approximately 4% are reported.³¹²

The number of suspected food borne illnesses is shown in Table 42; however, it is important to note that these numbers do not reflect the number of confirmed food borne illnesses. The difference between the two is that food borne illnesses are confirmed through detection in samples submitted to a lab whereas suspected food borne illnesses are not lab confirmed but can be still be a food borne illness, thereby potentially shedding light on unsafe practices. Suspected food borne illnesses are calls that are made to the MLHU for investigation purposes and the MLHU has a process in place for responding and risk assessing all calls related to suspect food borne illnesses. Therefore, many of the suspected food borne illnesses are not a result of unsafe food within the local food system but can be attributed to travel outside the Middlesex-London area and outside the country, environmental exposure, or other sources.³¹³

Table 42: Suspected Food Borne Illnesses in Middlesex-London (Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit, 2015)

Year	Number of Suspected Food Borne Illnesses
2015 (as of the end of July)	93
2014	177
2013	122
2012	166
2011	118

Risk to food safety is also assessed through food safety inspections of food premises. During food safety inspections, Public Health inspectors assess the food premises' compliance with food safety laws (i.e. Ontario Food Premises Regulation (R.R.O. 1990. Reg. 562 and 568)).³¹⁴

³⁰⁹ Middlesex-London Health Unit, Manager, Environmental Health, 2015.

³¹⁰ Middlesex-London Health Unit, Manager, Environmental Health, 2015.

³¹¹ Middlesex-London Health Unit, "Foodborne Illness," 2015, Web, at <https://www.healthunit.com/foodborne-illness>

³¹² Public Health Ontario, "Foodborne Illness: What We Don't Know Can Harm Us," No Date, Print.

³¹³ Middlesex-London Health Unit, Manager, Environmental Health.

³¹⁴ Middlesex-London Health Unit, "Food Safety Inspections," 2015, Web, at <https://www.healthunit.com/food-safety-inspections>.

Food safety inspections are an important component of the effort to reduce the number of food borne illnesses that occur every year. The Middlesex- London Health Unit completes routine inspections to ensure the minimum standards are being met and re-inspects food premises to follow-up on any problems identified in the routine inspection.³¹⁵

All food premises within the province of Ontario are risk assessed based on several criteria that can elevate the risks in acquiring a food borne illness. A standardized tool that incorporates performance and profile is used to assess risk. See Table 43 for the results of food safety inspections within Middlesex County. The level of risk determines how often a food premise is inspected. Those food premises deemed high risk are inspected three times a year, moderate risk premises are inspected twice a year and low risk premises must be inspected once a year. Food safety inspections may also be conducted in response to complaints.

Table 43: Number of low, moderate and high-risk food premises in Middlesex County (Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit, 2015)

Year	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
2015 (as of July) ³¹⁶	931	746	554
2014	773	808	641
2013	761	828	637
2012	756	841	601
2011	796	839	581

Establishments deemed as low risk are those where food is rarely or never being handled directly. Moderate risk food premises are typically average-sized restaurants with moderate to high levels of food handling and/or prepare hazardous foods. High-risk food premises can be labeled as high risk for a number of reasons including:

- Food premises serves a high-risk population based on age or medical condition (i.e. kitchen in seniors’ home or a hospital)
- Food premises that prepare hazardous foods (any food capable of supporting the growth of bacteria)
- Food premises with a history of repeated non-compliance
- Food premises with cases of food borne illnesses within the last year
- Food premises where operations involve the handling of large quantities of food^{317 318}

³¹⁵ Middlesex-London Health Unit, “Food Safety Inspections,” 2015, Web, at <https://www.healthunit.com/food-safety-inspections>.

³¹⁶ The number of low, moderate and high risk food premises is subject to change as not all food premises had received their annual risk assessment at the time this report was written.

³¹⁷ Eastern Ontario Health Unit, *Food Establishment Inspection Reports*, No Date, Web, at <http://www.eohu.ca/inspections/index.php?page=fag>.

³¹⁸ Halton Region, “Food Safety Inspections - Information for People Working in Food Services,” No Date, Web, at <http://www.halton.ca/cms/one.aspx?pagelD=11870>.

DineSafe Middlesex-London is a food safety program that provides the public with quick and easy access to the results of food safety inspections. DineSafe stores the results of the ten most recent inspections per each food premise. Current data shows only two locations for which a conditional pass was granted on the premises' last inspection (most recent inspection dates range from July 2014-July 2015 assuming premises are inspected minimally once a year). There were zero food premises that were closed as a result of their most recent food safety inspection. DineSafe shows 1910 food safety passes. It should be noted that there are only a very small number of food premises inspections that are not disclosed through DineSafe, for reasons that address operational processes and logistical consideration. Also, conditional passes would only appear as the most recent inspection for a limited time due to the requirement for a re-inspection shortly thereafter. Furthermore, hazards are mitigated in a timely fashion; therefore, conditional passes and closures are addressed will not appear through a search of the most recent inspections. Therefore, while the majority of food premises in Middlesex-London receive pass signs resulting from their most recent inspection—indicative of substantial compliance with the regulations—infractions or unsafe practices still exist, thereby creating a level of risk. Table 44 below shows the number of food safety inspections completed by the Middlesex-London Health Unit on an annual basis.

Table 44: Number of Food Safety Inspections in Middlesex-London (Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit, 2015)

Year	Number of Food Safety Inspections
2015 (as of July)	1809
2014	3629
2013	3942
2012	3877
2011	3414

In conclusion, there appears to be a lot of work focused on risk management in regards to food safety in Middlesex-London. However, the focus on risk management in regards to food availability, does not seem as strong due to the lack of planning around protecting access to locally produced food in the event of an emergency (as reflected in the emergency plans) and the mostly inaccessible emergency meal programs within London. While emergency plans state how to mitigate and respond to emergency situations, protecting locally produced food is not noted as one of the responses.

9.2 Gaps in Knowledge

While data on the number of food recalls specific to Middlesex-London was retrieved and is relatively small, it is unclear how many provincial level food recalls affected food being sold in Middlesex-London. It is possible that food recalls affect Middlesex-London on a much larger scale than is being seen through area specific recalls. It is imperative that we have a clear picture of food recalls in the region as “Food safety, nutrition and food security are inextricably linked. Unsafe food creates a vicious cycle of disease and malnutrition, particularly affecting

infants, young children, elderly and the sick.”³¹⁹ If one is concerned about food security, they are also concerned with the safety of food of which people do access.

There is also not a clear indication of the number, or how often, local food risk assessments are conducted within Middlesex-London. All that is known is that risk assessment are conducted regularly by a variety of regulators including MLHU, OMAFRA, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. Food risk assessments focus on the risks that food, or a lack thereof, can have on the health and well-being of humans. The risk assessment includes a wide range of possible risks including risks associated with microorganisms in food to risks the environment poses to the food supply. Typically included in these risk assessments are the risks themselves, the danger they pose and ways to mitigate the risk.

9.3 Strengths and Assets

Risk management and food safety in Middlesex-London’s food system is not without its strengths. There is a relatively even balance between the number of meal program locations (35) and food bank locations (24) in London, which helps to mitigate the risk of people being without the basic provisions of needed food. In addition to these opportunities, several churches, community centres, and community organizations have food cupboards at their locations so that they can provide food to those in need. In total, residents of London have over 50 opportunities by which they can seek emergency food. Having these opportunities available is especially important given an average lower income in Middlesex-London than the province, but food costs that are relatively the same.

Food safety (through food retail inspections) is well regulated by the Middlesex-London Health Unit with over 3000 inspections per year. The standards in place for maintaining safe food are fairly high in Ontario, which helps to ensure food is safe for consumption.

Of these noted strengths and assets, the majority belong to the social and political asset type.

Table 45 lists all of the strengths and assets identified through the community food assessment process that pertain to this section of the report (please see 1.2 for Asset Legend).

³¹⁹ World Health Organization, “Food safety,” 2015, Web, at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs399/en/>.

Table 45: Strengths and Assets within Risk Management and Food Safety

RISK MANAGEMENT AND FOOD SAFETY						
						
107. Large number of meal programs (33), food banks (17) and a good food box program in London						
108. Churches and community centres with food cupboards						
						
109. Food safety regulations (3000 food retail inspections per year)						
110. Numerous emergency food programs (51 programs in total in London)						

9.4 Areas to Cultivate

Throughout the creation of this Community Food Assessment, there were no identified cultivation areas within risk management and food safety by the community. However, in reviewing the emergency plans for the municipalities it becomes evident that there are no appropriate planned safety measures to protect the local food supply in cases of emergency. In times of major crisis, it is important to have food available to feed individuals who may have been displaced from their homes and/or lack access to their usual means of food supply.

9.5 Opportunities for Change

Through the environmental scan, key informant interviews, community survey and the community engagement sessions there was no mention of opportunities to strengthen risk management and food safety within the Middlesex-London food system. Through consultation with local food system stakeholders, there appeared to be a focus solely on food safety, rather than risks that affect the sustainability of a food system as a whole. From this perspective, stakeholders appeared satisfied with Middlesex-London’s current efforts on food safety.

However, when it comes to risk management, Middlesex-London would benefit from a more holistic approach that focuses on food safety and food availability. It is common practice to focus on food safety and as a result the risks associated with food availability garner less attention. This undermines the goal of a sustainable food system. Risk management is much more than compliance with rules and regulations. In order to have a sustainable food system for generations to come, stakeholders and community members need to think about all the risks that influence the availability of safe, nutritious and local food to community members.

9.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

AND FOOD SAFETY

146 suspected

food borne illnesses

~ 716 inspections/year

risk of food premises

low = 773

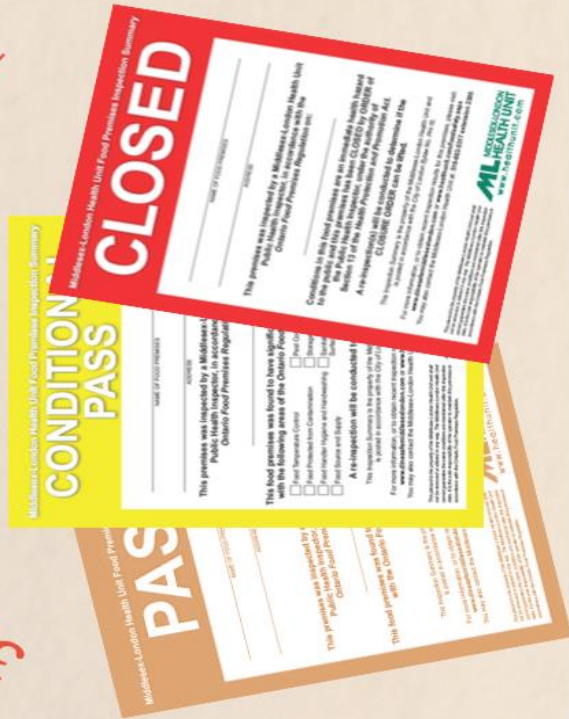
medium = 808

high = 641

1910



FOOD SAFETY PASSES



39 meal program locations

28 food bank locations

