



The Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

April 2025

WHAT WE DO

The Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems addresses the complex environmental, social, and economic challenges facing our food systems by creating:

- **Collaborative research opportunities** among food systems researchers and community partners
- **Robust knowledge sharing networks** that connect food systems actors at the local and international level
- **Sustainable food systems change** through community-driven research, knowledge mobilization, capacity building, and advocacy
- **Experiential learning opportunities** for students, research associates, practitioners, community members, and partners
- **Resources and tools** for community partners and food systems actors to support on-the-ground work in sustainable food systems



OUR VISION

Our vision is a world where food systems are key to a more equitable, ecologically regenerative, and economically sustainable future in which all actors have the capacity to advance positive food systems transformation.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to conduct and share community-driven research through local, national, and global networks to foster more sustainable food systems.

RESEARCH APPROACH

In our community-engaged research we work with diverse food systems actors to:

- **Co-create knowledge** about sustainable food system practices and solutions to community and place-based challenges
- Bring together food systems actors in dynamic global **knowledge sharing networks** to learn from each other and build community capacity to affect meaningful change at multiple scales



Highlights



In 2024-2025 the LCSFS's key highlights include:

- 1 Strengthening Sustainable Food Systems Research**
New partnership established with the Food System Roundtable of Waterloo Region. Ongoing support for the Food Learning and Growing (FLOW) Partnership, Common Ground Network and the Future Harvest Partnership.
- 2 Supporting Early Career Researchers**
Continuing to build the ECR Network - engaging over 40 undergraduates, graduate students and post-doctoral fellows from Laurier and other universities in monthly peer led meetings.
- 3 Knowledge Sharing and Community Building**
Launched Season 4 of *Handpicked: Stories from the Field* podcast, featuring the Voicing Change project. Hosted the annual LCSFS Research Symposium, showcasing 13 presentations of researchers.
- 4 Growing Our Audiences & Online Engagement**
Continued growing our communication and networking opportunities through seasonal newsletters and our online LinkedIn community.

Engagement



Newsletter

Published **2** seasonal newsletters highlighting updates, upcoming events, and resources.

Fall 2024 issue - delivered to **249** recipients.

Winter 2025 issue - delivered to **274** recipients

The number of subscribers to the LCSFS mailing list has increased **15%** growing from **240** to **277** in the last year.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn has become our main social media channel for online engagement.

The number of followers to the LCSFS LinkedIn page has increased by **33%** growing from **253** to **339** total followers in the last year. More people are seeing and engaging with our content.

- **12,841** organic impressions from page posts
- **188** post reactions
- **14** post comments

Knowledge Sharing



LCSFS Podcast

Handpicked: Stories from the Field

Handpicked: Stories from the Field has been our premier knowledge sharing platform since 2019. *Handpicked* amplifies the voices of researchers and community partners through accessible and open access episodes focused on sustainable food system research.

In May 2024, **Season 4** was released in **6** new episodes featuring the project "Voicing Change: Co-Creating Knowledge and Capacity for Sustainable Food Systems." The podcast featured Laurier students, post-doctoral fellows, and faculty, and experts from the University of Guelph, Rongo University (Kenya), CEDERVA (Brazil), and more.

Season 4 was supported by **3 graduate Research Assistantships**, providing ongoing HQP training to students and collaborators part of the Voicing Change project.



VOICING CHANGE

Co-creating Knowledge & Capacity for Sustainable Food Systems

6,038 All time podcast downloads

821 Downloads in the past year.

415 Season 4 downloads from podcast hosting platforms

333 Season 4 views on YouTube

31 Countries where listeners are from

Community Building

Student Engagement

Laurier Food Festival – Nov 21, 2024

As part of International Education Week, the LCSFS co-hosted the Laurier Food Festival in partnership with Laurier’s Enactus Club and Laurier International. This market-style event engaged over **100** students who sampled international foods from KW vendors, learning about the impacts of climate change on global foodways.



Campus and community organizations also participated so students could learn about local sustainability initiatives and ways to take action. At the LCSFS table students were encouraged to reflect on what a sustainable food system means to them reflection, explore research materials and learn about our work.



Community Engagement

Local Food Systems Discussion – Dec. 21, 2024



In collaboration with the Food Systems Roundtable of Waterloo Region the LCSFS co-hosted a dinner and discussion at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, welcoming **40** participants from **20** local food and community organizations. The event served as a platform for building connections and strengthening regional collaboration around food justice and food security.

The LCSFS supported the event by facilitating engagement across sectors and reinforcing the role of policy and partnership in addressing local food system challenges.



Research Updates

Voicing Change: Co-Creating Knowledge and Capacity for Sustainable Food Systems

Voicing Change aims to create healthier, more equitable, and socio-ecologically resilient futures grounded in sustainable local food systems that centre Indigenous and traditional knowledge. Now in its final year Voicing Change has produced podcasts in each regional community of practice in the Northwest Territories, Canada (led by Laurier); Migori County, Kenya (led by Rongo University); and Southern Brazil (led by CEDERVA and Embrapa Forestry).

Towards a sustainable food system for all: Strengthening food sovereignty in Waterloo Region

This past year the LCSFS established a new partnership with the Food System Roundtable of Waterloo Region. We submitted a SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant in March 2025 to deepen engagement and establish a network of local organizations to strengthen food sovereignty in the Region. The partnership aims to foster collaboration, build community capacity, and develop a strategic plan to strengthen regional food system partnerships.

Supporting Projects

The LCSFS is proud to support many collaborative research projects. We have been involved in the following projects in 2024-2025.

Future Harvest Partnership: Research for climate-resilient local food systems in the NWT (led by Dr. Andrew Spring)

Food Learning and Growing (FLOW): Seeding sustainability transformation (led by Dr. Alison Blay-Palmer)

The Common Ground Network Canada: Building relationships for just and sustainable food system transitions (led by Dr. Karen Foster)

Supporting Early Career Researchers

Early Career Research Network

The LCSFS launched the Early Career Research Network in 2023 for PhDs graduate, undergraduate, and other food-related researchers to share research updates, provide peer-to-peer support through the exchange of ideas, build community, engage in knowledge-sharing and training, host events and meetings.

In its second year, the ECRN has over **40** members on its mailing list, with representation from five Canadian and two international institutions. Monthly meetings are driven by the needs and interests of the group.

Geography and Environmental Studies Food Cluster

In partnership with the UNESCO Chair on Food Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies, the LCSFS launched the GES Food Cluster in 2025. With new food studies researchers recently joining the department, the research cluster provides an opportunity for students and faculty to present and discuss current and planned research, foster connections and create opportunities for linkages among Laurier research groups and beyond.



Trained and supported **12** HQP through studentships and research assistantships