Expansion Opportunities for Food Hubs

We sent a survey to food producers, processors, and distributors involved in local and sustainable food across Ontario, Canada.

We heard back from 125* operations connected to **food hubs.**

Here's what we learned about **opportunities** and **challenges** around **food hub expansion**.
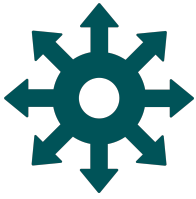
What is a food hub?
Food hubs are actual or virtual spaces that collect and distribute food to processors, retailers, restaurants, and/or consumers.

Food hubs can also provide space for other activities including food preparation, handling, processing, education, and/or training.
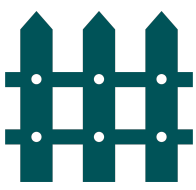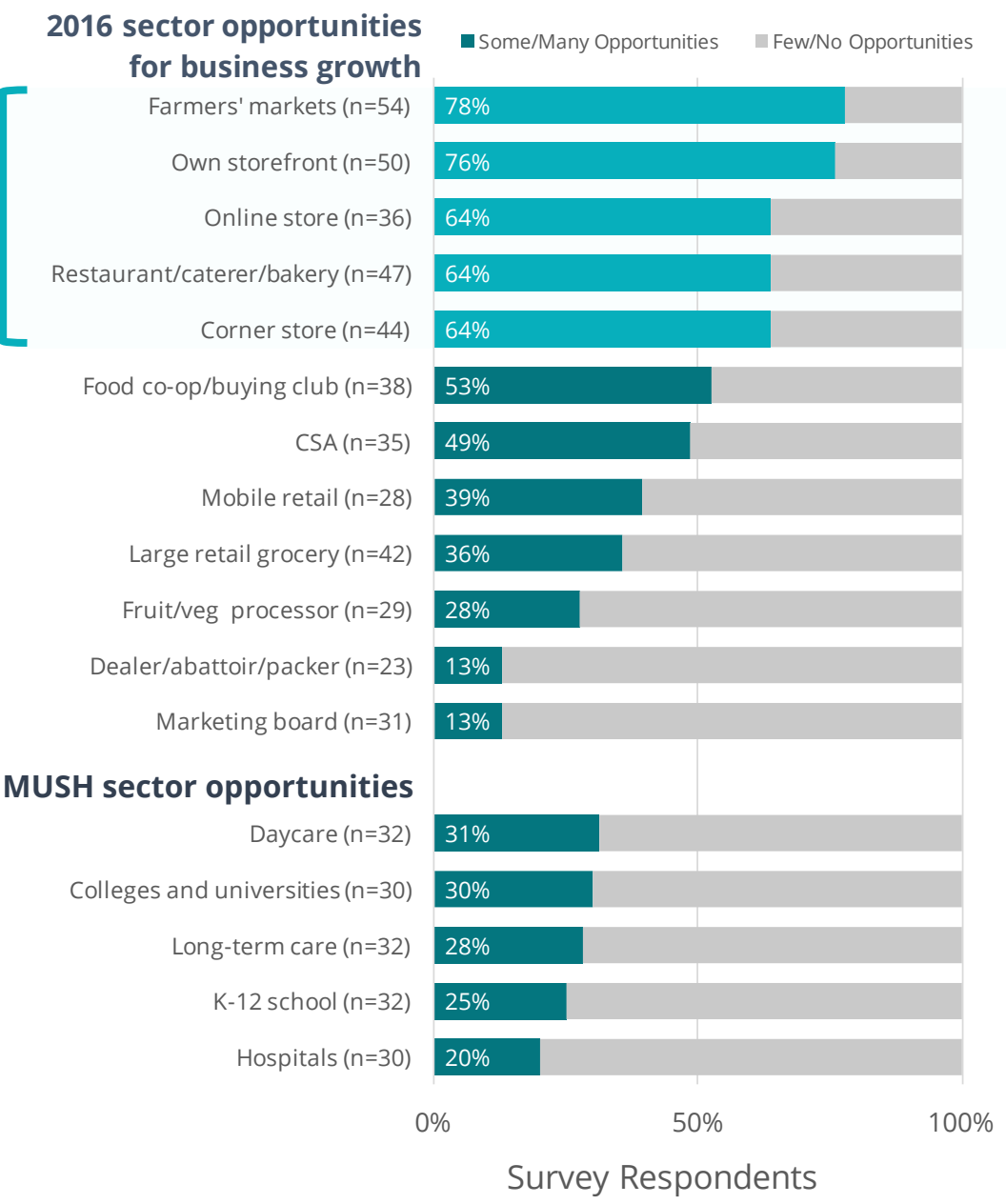
What do we mean by "sustainable food"?
Sustainable food systems demonstrate varying degrees of economic viability, social justice/equity, and ecological regeneration from seed to plate

*Our total sample was 125; response rates for each question may be lower.

Opportunities for Food Hub Expansion

Food Hubs see the most opportunities for expansion and growth in **farmers markets and storefronts**, as well as **online stores, restaurants, and corner stores**.

2016 sector opportunities for business growth

Legend: ■ Some/Many Opportunities ■ Few/No Opportunities

Sector	Some/Many Opportunities
Farmers' markets (n=54)	78%
Own storefront (n=50)	76%
Online store (n=36)	64%
Restaurant/caterer/bakery (n=47)	64%
Corner store (n=44)	64%
Food co-op/buying club (n=38)	53%
CSA (n=35)	49%
Mobile retail (n=28)	39%
Large retail grocery (n=42)	36%
Fruit/veg processor (n=29)	28%
Dealer/abattoir/packer (n=23)	13%
Marketing board (n=31)	13%

MUSH sector opportunities

Sector	Some/Many Opportunities
Daycare (n=32)	31%
Colleges and universities (n=30)	30%
Long-term care (n=32)	28%
K-12 school (n=32)	25%
Hospitals (n=30)	20%

X-axis: 0% 50% 100% — Survey Respondents

Challenges to Food Hub Expansion

Access to capital, reliable seasonal or part-time labour, and meeting regulations are top operating challenges.

Daily Operating Challenges

Legend: ■ Important ■ Neutral ■ Unimportant

Challenge	Important	Unimportant
Access to capital (n=40)	53%	38%
Reilable seasonal/part-time labour (n=42)	52%	29%
Meeting regulations (n=32)	47%	31%
Balancing supply/demand (n=54)	44%	28%
Food safety requirements (n=40)	43%	35%
Access to operations mgt. tech (n=44)	40%	55%
Negotiating prices (n=44)	39%	32%
Meeting buyer specifications (n=24)	38%	38%
Depend on volunteers (n=25)	32%	68%
Inventory management (n=29)	28%	59%
Access to processing (n=30)	27%	57%
Lack of infrastructure ownership (n=44)	26%	58%
Product source ID (n=20)	25%	55%
Managing growth (n=44)	23%	45%

X-axis: 0% 50% 100% — % of Respondents

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