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OTTAWA VALLEY FOOD CO-OPERATIVE

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# Annual Report For 2022



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# A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This has been another challenging year for the OVFC, as it was for everyone. Demand for local food continues to grow, allowing us to continue to meet our consumer demand and gain new members. At the same time, rising inflation has impacted the cost of food and the ability of local consumers to continue to buy from the OVFC.

We remain convinced that growing the capacity for local producers to meet the needs of local consumers, while using farming methods that are sustainable, is critical to our future. Our focus this year will be on marketing to help us with retaining and growing our consumer base and on events that help us to market local foods and emphasize the importance of healthy food and sustainable agriculture practices to the local economy.

We are hopeful that the OVFC will be able to retain the majority of the customers that shopped on our platform during the peak of the Covid crisis. To do this we will need to maintain excellent customer service and broaden the range of grocery items shoppers can put in their basket. The OVFC will also strive to build its community network and deepen its customer connections.

We look forward to meeting the growth of the local food market in the years to come!

Marshall Buchanan  
President, Board of Directors, OVFC

# OUR MISSION

To connect local producers and consumers through a marketing network in the Ottawa Valley for locally grown or processed foods and other locally made products.

We create farm-to-neighborhood access to local food and products, benefiting the local economy, building food security and sustainable agricultural practices.

The Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative has a unique position among food organizations in the Ottawa Valley because it facilitates the connection between farmers and customers. There is no other “not-for profit” organization in the Ottawa Valley that has a membership list of people dedicated to local food & artisanal products while also supporting member producers to find these customers.



# OUR VISION

We inspire healthier, economically viable communities by connecting people to real food and products.

# OUR BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The OVFC is a non-profit co-op that distributes local food across the Ottawa Valley and engages in consumer awareness and educational activities related to the local food sector.

We use an online market to provide a distribution chain between consumers and businesses that produce food and other artisanal products in our region.

The purpose of the OVFC is to facilitate access to local foods and products for consumers, while providing local producers with a larger market, thereby increasing their viability.

The OVFC was established in 2007 as a result of the efforts of a small group of local consumers and producers. We are incorporated in Ontario as a non-borrowing, non-share issuing, non-profit co-op, with a ten-person board of directors. The board consists of volunteer producers and consumers,

Producers who sell through the OVFC and consumers who purchase through the OVFC are all members of the organization. The membership votes on the positions for board of directors and other important issues.



**2007 Founding Members**

# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2022 AT A GLANCE



- 47 new Consumer members
- 3 new Producer members
- 2400 follows on Facebook
- Hired 2 Summer Students to help with events
- Partnered with North Algona Wilberforce Township to host a valley wide Career Fair for students with the assistance of a Canadian Agricultural Partnership grant
- Partnered with Renfrew County Economic Development, the National Farmers Union and the Renfrew County Federation of Agriculture to host Farms Open Day
- Over 50 Volunteers participated in our order sorting and delivery (while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines and regulations)
- Maintained over 50 producer members.
- Delivered 10,302 products valued at \$136M to consumers at 10 pick up locations throughout the valley

# PROGRAM UPDATES

In addition to continuing to provide local food and products to our members, we participated in local events to help build awareness of the benefits of local food to consumers, producers, the environment and to the local economy.

## Career Fair



The OVFC partnered with North Alton Wilberforce Township to launch an Agri-food Career Fair. This was a multi-day immersive learning experience for 20 young prospective farmers to visit local farms, listen to keynote presentations by local experts, meet farmer mentors and engage with opportunities for employment, farmland leasing, and startup support.

## Farms Open



We partnered with the Renfrew County Economic Development, the National Farmers Union and the Renfrew County Federation of Agriculture to organize the first Farms Open event for Renfrew County. Farms Open gave host farms and food artisans a chance to open their space to the public and share their passion and unique lifestyle with families, foodies and the rural curious. Despite the uncooperative weather, hundreds of visitors visited 9 participating sites

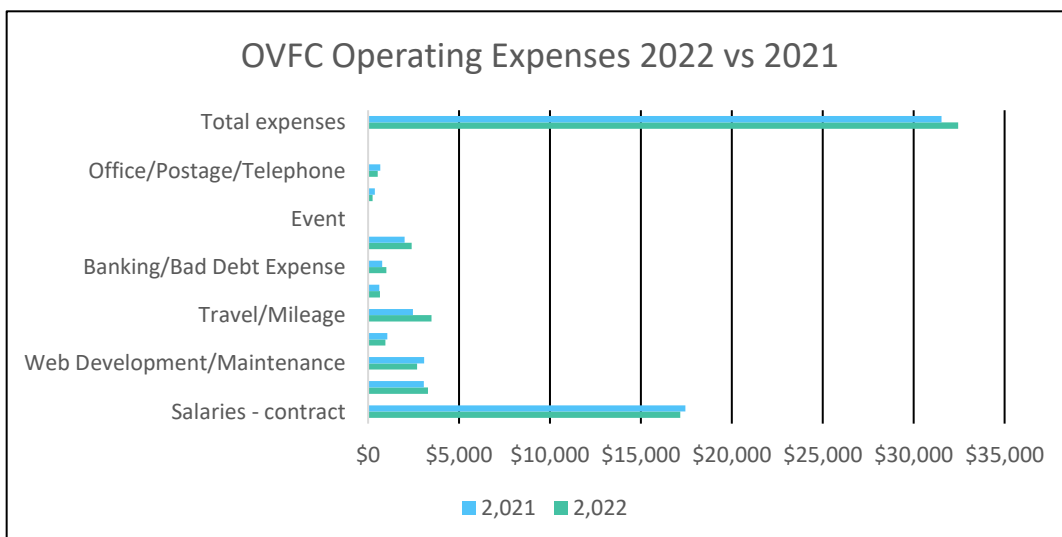
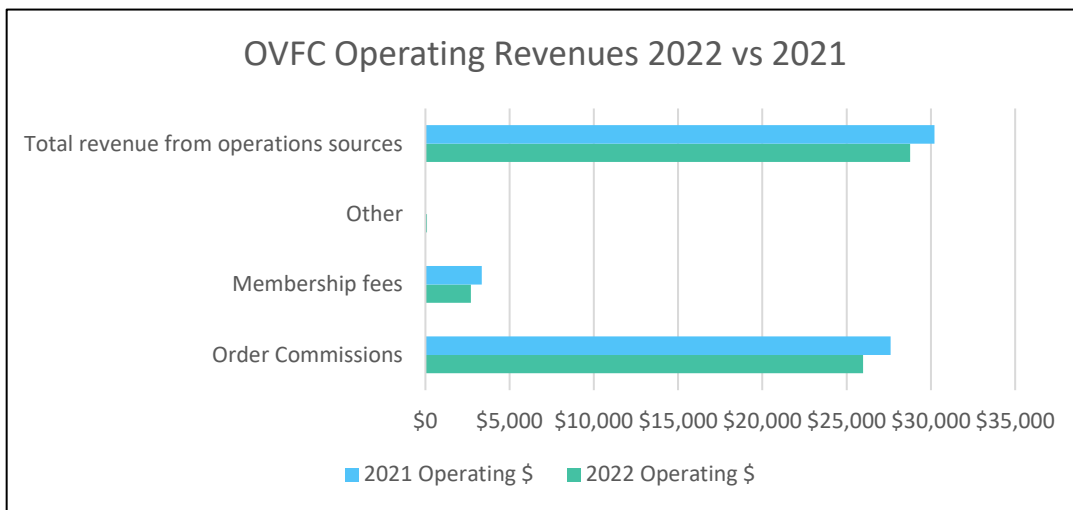
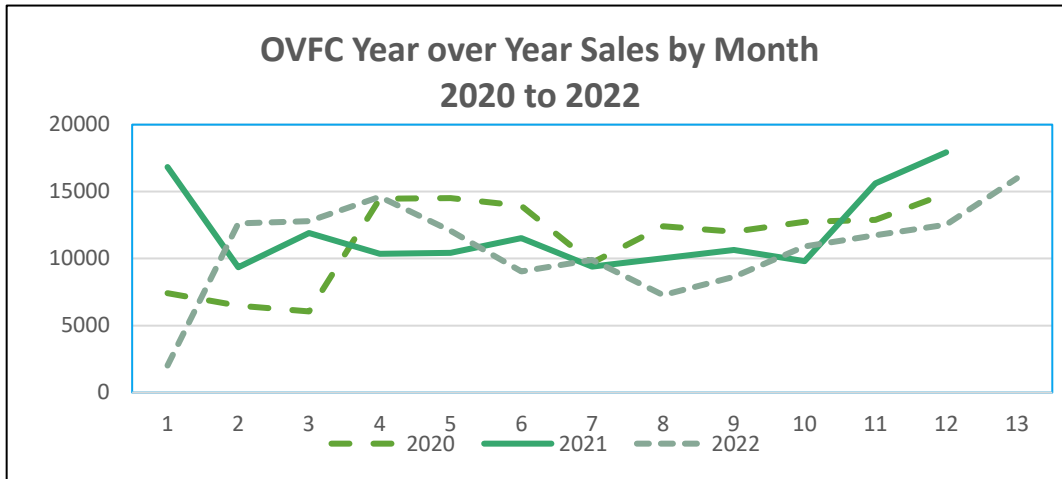
## Summer Help



We hired 2 summer students under the Canada Summer Jobs program and an Agri Business grant to help the Board implement projects, build community networks and plan events for 2022.

# OUR FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

We finished the year with an operating loss. Our orders and memberships this year were slightly lower than 2021 and our costs for rent, banking fees, mileage and supplies all increased.. We also had a few one-time expenses related to our events that were not covered by outside funding. For 2023 we will need to focus on increasing revenues while continuing to manage our costs.





# OUR TEAM

## Our Volunteers

There were over 50 volunteers who helped out the OVFC in 2022. Most worked at the distribution locations. Others did driving, writing, volunteer management and social media.

## Our Board of Directors

The board of directors was made up of 10 directors in 2022 as follows:

### Producers

- Marshall Buchanan (president)
- Sarah Bennett

### Consumers

- Emily Behm
- Perri-Rae Boell
- Cara Butler
- Ashleigh Anne Cluff (vice president)
- Connie Matthews-Cull
- Dianne Isaacs
- Joanne McManus (treasurer)
- Chris Tanner (secretary)

## Our Key Support and Donors

Cheryl Keetch (Coordinator)

Emily Behm (Career Fair)

Kat Foley (Summer Student – Farms Open)

Natalie Robinson (Facebook Marketing and Communications)

Connie Matthews-Cull (Newsletter)

Lynn Epps (Volunteer Coordinator)

NFU (Donations – Career Fair, Farms Open)

Perri-Rae Boell, Co-operators Insurance (Donations)

**Without the tremendous commitment from our volunteers, board and staff the OVFC would not be possible. It really is a team effort!**



# WHAT'S AHEAD



While we are still impacted by COVID-19 in 2023, we expect to continue to grow and support the local food movement in the Ottawa Valley. Our sales platform is enabling us to better serve members and we continue to look for opportunities to partner and grow within our community. The current economic conditions may hinder our growth

## 2023 Farms Open Day – Ottawa Valley Agri-tourism

The purpose of this event is to bring more value to OVFC members, promote local food, improve education about agriculture and artisanal foods and to take advantage of the desire for urban people to have “Earth Day” on a farm. Based on the success of the 2022 event, we are looking to develop a formal plan to continue this event on an annual basis. Strong support has been offered from the County of Renfrew Economic Development Office, Ottawa Valley Tourism Association, the National Farmers Union, and others.

## Community Outreach

Building relationships with community wellness partners will help the OVFC be more socially engaged and gain credibility as an organization that is an integral part of a local food system. These relationships and community partnerships will help the OVFC succeed and are an important key to a winning grant application. This may include farm to fork dinners and other opportunities which were limited over the past few years.

## Update Our Strategic Plan

We will work on our 5 year strategic plan and explore opportunities such as:

- Expansion of delivery area and delivery methods
- Continuing to expand our product line
- Looking for ongoing partnerships and grants
- Survey consumers to determine ongoing and future needs

**We look forward to continuing to meet the needs of both our consumer and producer members in 2023!**



# THANK YOU!

We couldn't have done it without your help.

Thank you for being part of the OVFC community.

Thank you for believing in our mission.

We are forever grateful.

The Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative Board

