Dear Local Producer,

Food security is a public health issue gaining recognition at local and global levels. In Canada, many individuals are experiencing a lack of food security, which significantly impacts health outcomes. In Chatham-Kent, almost 8% of the population faces food insecurity. The Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council has determined that food access is a priority area and have been working to develop a gleaning project for Chatham-Kent.

Gleaning is one initiative that aims to increase food security by increasing food availability, food access, and food use. Gleaning is commonly understood as the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers’ fields after they have been commercially harvested, or collecting produce individual homeowners who have excess in the gardens or on fruit trees.

As a first step, in June 2014, a forum was held to bring together individuals who were interested in hearing what had been done in other communities. In February 2015, a literature review was conducted to determine best practices for a gleaning initiative here in Chatham-Kent. Following this report, we conducted a pilot project over the summer and fall and were successful at bringing leftover produce to local service agencies in the community. We are now ready to expand the program to include more local agencies and more local producers, and would like to invite you to participate in the Chatham-Kent Gleaning Project.

Here is some information to help you become familiar with the project:

**Vision:**

Equipping people to rescue surplus produce from fields and gardens.

**Mission:**

Connecting food producers who have surplus produce with neighbours and community food programs through relationship building, experiential learning and volunteer engagement.

**Program Priorities:**

* *Building Partnerships*
	+ Our goal is to develop partnerships that connect local farmers and community food programs
* *Facilitating Food Redistribution*
	+ We harvest excess produce and share with local community food programs
	+ Local agencies receive gleaned produce free of charge for use in food banks, soup kitchens, and food skill programs.
* *Helping Our Volunteers*
	+ We aim to identify, recruit and provide comprehensive training and supports to individuals wishing to participate in experiential learning opportunities
	+ Those who help harvest the produce will also receive a portion of the food to take home and share with their families
* *Developing Resources* – creation of tools and resources to support the gleaning program.
* *Evaluating*- ongoing program evaluation and improvement for continued success.

**Expectations for participating producers:**

* Participating producers will need to provide their contact information, the location of the fields to be gleaned, the types of crops that are available for gleaning/pick up, and how we can access them.
* Producers will be responsible to advise (by phone or email) as fields are ready to be gleaned to arrange the date and time that works best for them to have the gleaners come to their fields.
* To keep volunteers safe, farmers must inform us of any special instructions/additional training required for the gleaning process. *Volunteers will be required to participate in and receive Safety training through the health unit, and are covered by the municipality volunteer policy.*

Thank you for your interest in the Chatham-Kent Gleaning Project.

 **To become involved, please apply using the attached intake form.**

**For additional information, please contact:**

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