



One day, Justin and Andrea Hilborn hope the revenue from their farm will be significant so Justin can quit his day job .

New Generation of Farmers

Photos and story by Guillaume Nolet

Last summer, when Canadian giant grocery retailer Loblaw merged with the country's biggest pharmaceutical chain, Shoppers Drug Mart, many saw it as the end of competition and of choice in the Canadian food industry.

There are a growing number of Canadians who believe that buying local is better for the local economy but also a plus for the environment.

Andrea and Justin Hilborn are a great example of doing just that. Not only do they buy local, they raise and sell meat on their 80 acres of farmland, near Moscow, 30 kilometers west of Kingston, Ontario.

Both in their mid-twenties when they purchased their property, the Hilborns wanted to get away from the city and live a more sustainable and healthier lifestyle.

"We wanted to do farming because we love being outdoors, we love making things grow and we love food," says Andrea Hilborn.

Their love of food and farming started in their teenage years when they became interested in environmental justice and sustainable food movements.

"More and more people want to know where their food comes from and look for healthier choices," says Justin Hilborn.

According to the Business Development Bank of Canada report released last October, "half of Canadians consider the health impact of a product when making purchasing decisions and one-third are willing to pay a premium for healthy products."

Running a mixed farm with emphasis on pasture-based farming, the Hilborns sold out of all their meat this year.

The Hilborn's farming technique means their animals live outside and are rotated to fresh pasture daily, in a way that maintains the land and allows the animals to live a more natural life.

"Our animals eat GMO-free (genetically modified organism-free) grain in addition to legumes, grasses, weeds, insects and probably small frogs out in the pasture," says Andrea.

The BDC research also shows that 96 per cent of consumers who buy local do so to support local farmers while 93 per cent do it to create local jobs.

According to Sustain Ontario, a province-wide charitable organization that promotes healthy food and farming, "if every household in Ontario spent \$10 a week on local food, we would have an additional \$2.4 billion in our local economy at the end of the year and create 10,000 new jobs."

In other words, the multiplier effect, the amount of local economic activity generated by the purchase of any one item, of buying local food is 2.4.

The Hilborns are tightly connected to their local economy by using a nearby meat processing facility and butcher for custom meat preparation. They also pay local farmers to help them with seasonal farm tasks.

"Our meat travels less than 5 kilometers from our land to the meat facility. Can't be any fresher than that," says Justin Hilborn.

Studies have shown the positive impact of buying locally in the overall health of the economy.

Even if a larger amount of consumers are buying local and their behavior is having a positive impact on the economy, the average

consumers are too often disconnected from the food that ends up on their plate.

In June 2012 when The Telegraph surveyed 2,000 British adults online, more than a third of 16 - 23 year-olds, 36 per cent did not know that bacon comes from pigs and 40 per cent failed to tie milk with an image of a dairy cow.

Young farmers Andrea and Justin Hilborn are one proof that buying local is sustainable. Next year they will expand to 10 beef cows and probably double their amount of pigs. They also have plans on fixing their barn so they can accept more turkeys and chickens, which will increase their egg production and insure higher revenue around Thanksgiving time.

The Hilborns are looking forward to the day when their customer base has increased to the point where Justin can quit his day job and focus only on the farm business.

"We hope to be the number one name in grassfed beef and pastured pork in the region," says Andrea Hilborn.



Once a week before going to work at her naturopathic clinic in Kingston, Andrea Hilborn loads up with fresh eggs to be delivered to her customers in the city. A naturopathic Doctor she believes a healthy lifestyle starts with a healthy dietary practices.



Twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, Justin makes sure the pigs have enough to eat. On average, a pig eats eight pounds of feed daily when it approaches finishing weight, which means it is ready to go to slaughter.

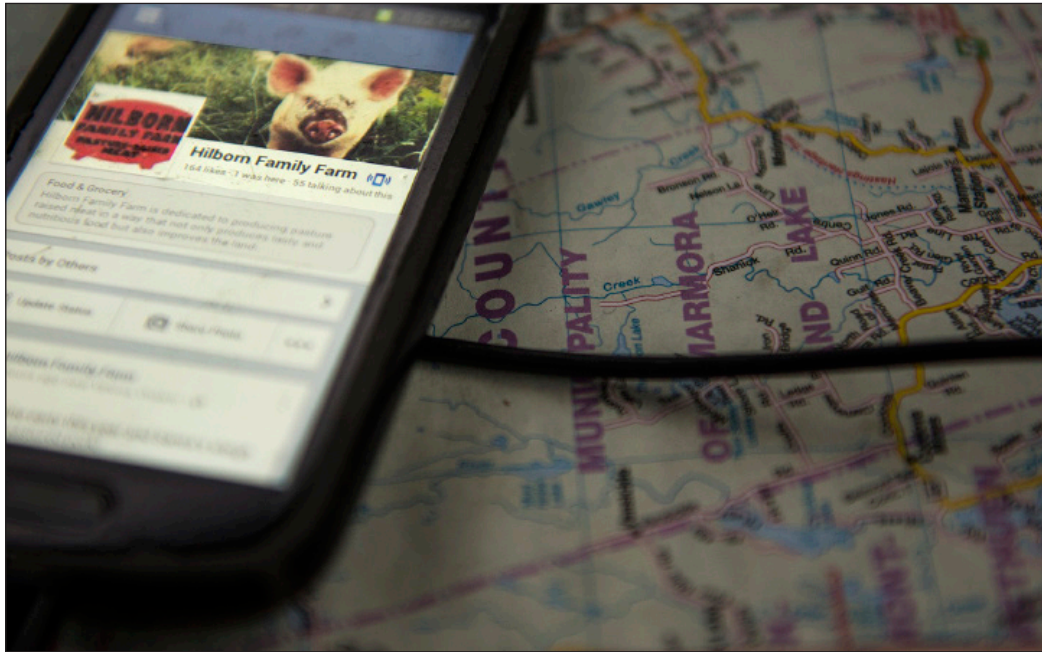
***“We came to farming because we love being outdoors, we love making things grow and we love food.”
-Andrea Hilborn***



Coming back from the barn where he picked up fresh eggs, Justin meets up with his wife Andrea, who is texting on the porch of their house.



This year the Hilborns raised a dozen pigs to be sold to customers, 20 turkeys , 175 chickens and three beef cows.



The Hilborns rely heavily on social media to promote their farm business. Everyday they update their web content with photos and news on their experience in growing healthier food.



Pasture based farming means the animals are rotated daily on fresh pasture. Justin is moving a rolling pen he built which allows turkeys to feed on new grass everyday in a way that maintains the health of the land and allows the animals to live a more natural life.



Justin and Andrea relax after dinner in the house they built from scratch just over two years ago. Some of their furniture including their woodstove was purchased second hand. Living off the grid allows them to save hundreds of dollars each year in heat and electricity alone.