



Possibility grows here.

# Opportunities for Growth: Ontario Fresh Grapes

**Ontario’s fresh grape season is short but sweet!** Otherwise known as table grapes, you can find delicious fresh grapes at your local grocery store and farmers’ markets from late summer to early fall.

While Ontario-grown fresh grapes currently supply a small portion of all the grapes we eat in the province, investments in developing new cultivars will help us get more locally grown grapes on our plates.

## GRAPE PRODUCTION IN ONTARIO



There are 91 fresh grape growers in Ontario with a total of 465 acres in production.



More than 90 per cent of fresh grapes grown in Ontario are a variety called Coronation with a dark blue, soft



Photo Credit: Lisa Kates

The grapes we eat fresh are different from the grapes we grow for wine. Both fresh and wine grapes are mostly grown in the Niagara region, with some production in Essex County near Lake Erie. Ontario-produced grapes currently account for a small share of annual local consumption—only 0.1% to 1.6%—after accounting for grapes shipped into other provinces.



## GARLIC EXPANSION OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity for an eight-fold increase in Ontario’s grape production to supply 8.3 per cent of annual provincial consumption, and up to 50 per cent during the harvest period of August and September. This means that an additional 3,720 acres of fresh grapes could be planted in southwestern Ontario.

**At \$7,000 in gross revenue per acre, this opportunity represents an additional \$26.4 million in farm gate revenue.**



## WHAT WILL ENABLE EXPANSION?

Fresh grape expansion is constrained by competition with imported grapes, a short harvest season, and limited suitable growing areas as winter hardiness affects the location of grape production. Growers, marketers, retailers, research and development institutions, and governments, as well as consumers, all have a role to play in expanding fresh grape production.

### **The following actions would enable expansion:**

- Dedicating resources towards researching and developing new cultivars that are suitable for Ontario's growing season. Expansion can be based on various attributes including a longer harvest period, different colour (red or green), a larger berry, and a crisper berry with longer shelf life. Producing a larger, seedless red or green grape with a crisper skin would allow for a longer shelf life and storage and would meet market demand for this kind of grape. A larger seedless grape would also compete directly with imported fresh grapes, allowing for import replacement during the harvest season.
- Expanding production along the north shore of Lake Erie in southwestern Ontario. Currently, most fresh grapes are grown in Niagara, where there is minimal opportunity for expanding fruit production acres. As grapes for wine production are grown in southwestern Ontario, fresh grapes can also be grown there.
- Promoting local Ontario fresh grapes. Ongoing promotion by retailers, interested organizations, and local food advocates can help keep consumers aware of when fresh grapes are in season and the value of buying local.

Read the full report by JRG Consulting Group: [www.greenbelt.ca/planting\\_seeds](http://www.greenbelt.ca/planting_seeds)