

# Jason Verkaik hand-picks possibility.



Jason Verkaik at Carron Farms in the Holland Marsh

**“In Ontario, we shouldn’t have to import produce. We can grow it locally,”** says Jason Verkaik. Jason’s a farmer in the Holland Marsh, 35 minutes north of Toronto. It’s home to about 150 farmers, over 10,000 acres of some of the most fertile soil in Canada, and some of the most fertile thinking about local food production anywhere. All on farmland protected by Ontario’s Greenbelt.

Until recently, the Marsh mostly grew carrots, onions and celery that were shipped around the world. But the farmers of the Holland Marsh Growers’ Association turned that model on its head, starting with an initiative to grow international food for local markets.

Jason holds beautiful red carrots, often used in East Indian cuisine,

that are perfect examples. “Growing them here means they don’t have to be shipped in from halfway around the world.” Less shipping also means a reduced carbon footprint. Crop diversity actually improves the soil. And it’s all boosting the local economy, as the Marsh now grows more than 40 different kinds of produce. Swiss chard, bok choy, Asian radishes, with more on the way. “If you want something, let us know,” Jason says.

The farmers of the Holland Marsh are fired-up about the possibilities they’re harvesting in Ontario’s Greenbelt, and what it means to a world hungry for local food solutions. More and more farmers can grow a wide variety of food and get it on local dinner plates within 24 hours. “It’s really exciting to see what’s going to be next.”



To see a video of Jason and other stories from Ontario’s Greenbelt visit: [www.greenbelt.ca](http://www.greenbelt.ca)



Possibility grows here.

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