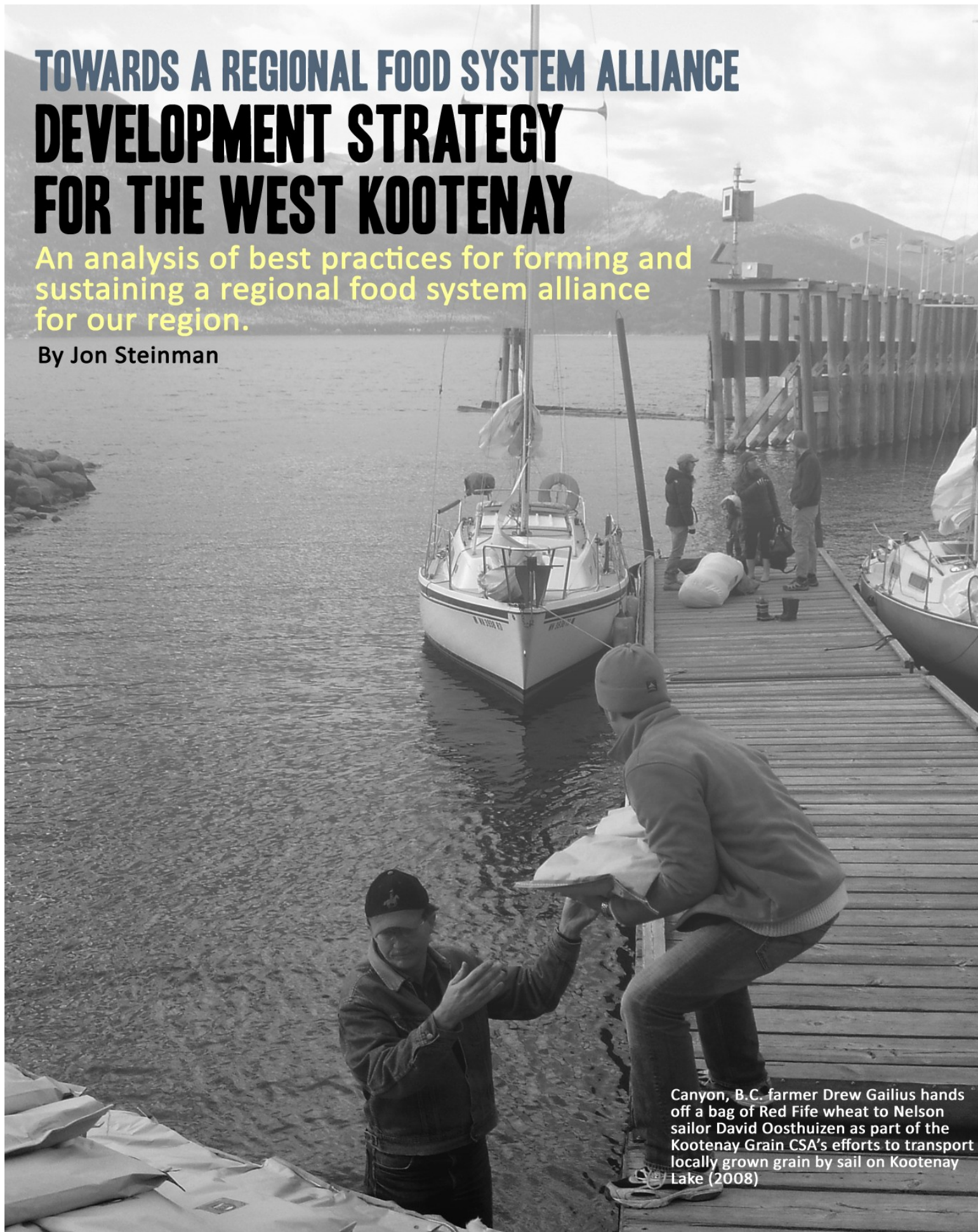


TOWARDS A REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM ALLIANCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE WEST KOOTENAY

An analysis of best practices for forming and sustaining a regional food system alliance for our region.

By Jon Steinman



Canyon, B.C. farmer Drew Gailius hands off a bag of Red Fife wheat to Nelson sailor David Oosthuizen as part of the Kootenay Grain CSA's efforts to transport locally grown grain by sail on Kootenay Lake (2008)

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Introduction

Prior to the rapid industrialization of the food supply post-WWII, food production, processing and distribution was comparatively localized. Most of the components necessary for a local food supply were found within or near a particular community. Americans and Canadians were also more inclined to eat seasonally and to preserve food when available for consumption throughout the winter.

With the industrialization of the food supply, local food systems and their accompanying infrastructure, skills and knowledge were, and continue to be, replaced with large-scale, homogenous and capital-intensive farming and production practices, centralized systems of processing and distribution, and long-distance transportation. Local food systems have been hollowed out if not completely destroyed.

In the early part of this century, awareness of the many present and forecasted risks associated with this rapid shift in how we produce and access food experienced a substantial increase. Concern has quickly turned to action among farmers, hunters/fishers/gatherers, processors, retailers, foodservice, government, communities, gardeners and eaters. This activity is the result of a strong recognition that each of us possesses *significant* power to create and be a part of a food system that suits the interests of ourselves and our community.

Isolated initiatives are now sprouting up across the continent, which are reclaiming components of local food systems and in some cases cultivating entirely new food systems. These efforts, while not limited to this list, come in the form of farmers' markets, urban food production, small-scale organic and biodynamic farms, permaculture, agroforestry, wildcrafting/hunting, CSAs (community supported agriculture), artisanal food processing/value-adding, co-operative food stores, seed/gene banks, farmer co-ops, local and seasonal food sourcing by foodservice, and other key infrastructural pieces.

As the frequency of these initiatives increases, so too do the opportunities for more coordinated systemic actions which can bring together stakeholders within a given food system for the purpose of; networking, communication, education, advocacy, collaboration, initiating projects and encouraging the presence of a unified voice to speak on food system issues.

The West Kootenay region of British Columbia is an excellent example of a geographic area which is home to a comparatively well-educated population on food system issues. In turn, there is a notable appetite for locally produced food. The region is home to what is perhaps Canada's largest and most-successful independent consumer-owned retail food co-operative – the Kootenay Country Store Co-op, and Canada's first community supported agriculture (CSA) project for grain! The region has a diverse history of growing, hunting, fishing, gathering and processing significant amounts of food to sustain the population. Much of this, however, has declined or disappeared, and the region now relies heavily on food imported from distribution centres in the Vancouver area and Calgary (over 650km away).



Paul Hoepfner-Homme grows food on multiple gardens within the City of Nelson, BC, and sells his produce at weekly markets. Nelson Urban Acres is an example of a new paradigm emerging across Canada and the United States for producing and accessing fresh produce.

There was once a time everyone thought the world was flat. Figuring out that it was round changed how we saw everything. Now the next revolution in perspective has taken hold - the world is not just round, it is connected. The Global Village - Marshall McLuhan's phrase for the connected world created by new communications technologies - has arrived, and not just in communications but also with food and foodways. We think this global food village must be connected by conscience and fairness - to the other villagers, and to our environment.

- Sustain Ontario

As is the case in many regions across the continent, despite the presence of these efforts to encourage a more resilient food system in the region, there are many gaps and opportunities needing to be addressed. With a more coordinated approach to identifying and/or acting upon these gaps and opportunities, significant improvements to the cultural, social, health and economic well-being of the region's communities and people can be realized.

With no efforts currently underway in the West Kootenay to consistently bring together a diverse range of food system stakeholders and residents around the same table, a regional food organization is recognized as an ideal forum to enhance the local food system. In the case of the West Kootenay in particular, a regional approach to food system issues might be a tool for people to begin to recognize just what the local food system is and how everyone can be a part of it.

These more coordinated and localized approaches to food systems are already underway throughout North America and can be found within small communities, large cities, regions, provinces and states. These approaches come in the form of food councils, coalitions, roundtables and other non-profit and grassroots food system organizations. In an effort to develop a framework for dialogue which can support the establishing of such an approach in the West Kootenay, the experiences and practices of these organizations have become the foundation for this report - *Towards a Regional Food System Alliance Development Strategy for the West Kootenay* and its accompanying strategic recommendations. These two documents are intended to be a first and hopefully giant leap forward towards a collaborative and inclusive process of developing a financially sustainable regional food alliance.

- Jon Steinman

Purpose

This report serves a number of purposes:

- It stands alone as an analysis of approaches to coordinated food system development work in the United States and Canada. The report was authored to be of interest to two audiences: North Americans involved or interested in food system organizations or initiatives, and; to residents of the West Kootenay region of British Columbia who support the establishment of an alliance which will foster a more resilient local food system.
- This report is also intended to serve this project's start-up advisory committee by informing the committee's work to develop and communicate a recommendation for consideration among West Kootenay residents and food system stakeholders. Communicated will be a vision and recommendation for how a food system alliance in the region should function and what steps could be employed to realize this vision. Official endorsements/support from food system stakeholders will be gathered.
- The final recommendation from the committee will act as a guiding document for the development of a West Kootenay food system alliance and become a strong tool to help garner interest among possible funders who could support the alliance's start-up phase.

Reading This Report

Beyond the introductory sections of the report, two distinct sections are worth noting. The second section consists of 12 organizational profiles and 3 supplementary organizations of interest to the report's purpose. The first section consisting of 'themes', derives its content from the profiles. If your interest in this work is of a general nature, it is recommended to read the Themes section first and supplement any emerging points of interest with the organizational profiles.

What is a Local Food System?

Our core local food system includes all of the food producers, processors, distributors, retailers, and foodservice who operate in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia. Finally, the food system includes each one of us because we all eat food and we all maintain the ability to insert ourselves within the food system at every link of the chain!

While there is no one definition of “local” for the purpose of identifying a specific food system, most often, ‘local food systems’ are defined through the consideration of multiple factors, which include, but are not limited to; geography, ecology/bioregion (climate, soil, watershed, species), economics, population/demographics, urban centres, culture, political boundaries, and already-established individual and commercial relationships within the food chain.

The West Kootenay Food System

For the purpose of this report and the rationale for a regional food organization for the West Kootenay, geography, ecology, population, urban centres, and already-established relationships were the most important themes considered in identifying just what the geographic region for our ‘local food system’ is . It is, however, important to recognize that the geographic perimeter identified in the illustration below does not, nor should, confine the dynamic relationships which do and could exist between those within and outside of the identified region.



Background on Food Councils & Regional Food Organizations

A number of reports have been published which have offered excellent overviews on the emergence of food councils. While food councils take on different forms and functions, there has not been any substantial body of research which has offered a broad overview of food system organizations in *all* of their forms; whether they be registered non-profits, charities, roundtables, coalitions, co-operatives, alliances, or the like.

While most food councils are policy oriented and officially sanctioned bodies (referred to more specifically as food policy councils), there is a need to differentiate between the two as many councils do not assume a policy focus and are not officially sanctioned by a local or regional government.

Food Councils and Food Policy Councils

The following are two summaries of food councils extracted from already-published research.

Food council models have the advantage of inviting and including a wide variety of public and private stakeholders to formally participate in decision-making processes. This allows for a more informed perspective of the potential reception of program initiatives by the wider community, as well as increased understanding of and consideration for the attitudes, judgements, and needs of broad cross-sectors of the population in question.

Planning processes conventionally fail to recognize the relationship of agricultural production to various other food-related (non-agricultural) sectors, missing out on potentially valuable collaborative partnerships with education, health, housing, tourism, transport, and other governmental agencies or industry sectors.

While the general focus of interest of food policy councils lies in a comprehensive or integrated approach to the entire food system, individual councils target particular aspects or issues within the food system (Yeatman 1994).

Non-governmental organizations can be a tool to be utilised by government or a valuable alternative where government programs or processes face limitations.

- From Schiff, Rebecca (2008) 'The Role of Food Policy Councils in Developing Sustainable Food Systems', *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*

A Food Policy Council (FPC) consists of a group of representatives and stakeholders from many sectors of the food system. Ideally, the councils include participants representing all five sectors of the food system (production, consumption, processing, distribution and waste recycling). They often include anti-hunger and food justice advocates, educators, non-profit organizations, concerned citizens, government officials, farmers, grocers, chefs, workers, food processors and food distributors. Food Policy Councils create an opportunity for discussion and strategy development among these various interests, and create an arena for studying the food system as a whole. Because they are often initiated by government actors, through executive orders, public acts or joint resolutions, Food Policy Councils tend to enjoy a formal relationship with local, city or state officials.

The central aim of most Food Policy Councils is to identify and propose innovative solutions to improve local or state food systems, spurring local economic development and making food systems more environmentally sustainable and socially just. To this end, FPCs often engage in food system research and make policy recommendations, and can even be charged with writing food policy. Because no U.S. cities or states have agencies devoted explicitly to food (and since there is no federal "Department of Food"), FPCs can improve coordination between government agencies whose policies influence the food system. FPCs can also give voice to the concerns of various stakeholders and serve as public forums for the discussion of key food system issues. In this capacity, they help to ensure that food policy is democratic and reflects the diverse needs and perspectives of the food system's various constituents. They can also help to build relationships between government, non-profit and private sector organizations. Additionally, Food Policy Councils often play an active role in educating policy makers and the public about the food system.

- Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned (2009), *FoodFirst*

Regional Food Organizations

There are many organizations throughout Canada and the United States which share similar missions, visions and goals as food councils and food policy councils but assume a more traditional non-profit model with decision-making being the responsibility of a board of directors and or staff.

These organizations are often project-driven, seeking to devote energy towards initiatives which benefit all sectors and stakeholders within a food system. In some cases, the success of these organizations preclude the need for local food councils while in other cases they work closely with already established councils.

Why Food Councils and Food System Organizations ?

- In their formative years, were created to address low-income food access. Today, many councils address food access with a broader lens; access to healthy and responsibly produced food for all.
- Creating democratic spaces for convergence in diversity.
- Forum for identifying, discussing and understanding food issues (challenges, threats, barriers, opportunities) and providing a platform for coordinated action.
- Educate people about their local food system(s).
- Strengthen urban-rural connections.
- Identify areas where non-food related organizations/businesses can support the local food system.
- To launch or support programs and services that address local needs.
- To evaluate and influence policy as it relates to sustainable food systems.
- A community-driven on-the-ground vehicle for national, provincial/state and/or local governments to look to to carry out mandates.
- Promote economic development within the food system.
- Advise and or take action on connecting local food producers with eaters.
- Promote healthy eating at home and proper nutrition in schools.
- Enhance and celebrate a region's food culture.
- Amplify the voice of a region's food system and stakeholders.
- Putting into practice the principles of Food Sovereignty* and Food Democracy**

* Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations. (Declaration of Nyeleni, 2007)

** Defined as “the idea that people can and should be actively participating in shaping the food system, rather than remaining passive consumers.” (Hassenein, Neva. 2003. “Practicing Food Democracy: A Pragmatic Politics of Transformation.” Journal of Rural Studies. 19: 77-86.)

Alternative vs. Industrial Food Systems

Food Councils and Regional Food Organizations identified within this report predominantly focus their attention on ‘alternative’ food systems that operate on the fringe or entirely outside of the predominant ‘industrial’ food system. Whereas traditional conceptualizations of food and agricultural activities have been fragmented, there is a shift encouraged by these types of organizations towards a more inclusive, comprehensive “food systems” framework and approach. – Derived from *CR-FAIR*'s “Proposal to Establish a Capital Region District Food Policy Council”.

Why a Regional Food Organization/Council for the West Kootenay?

Despite a very active presence of individuals, producers, processors, distributors, retailers and foodservice operating within the region, there is no single locus of activity in the region which seeks to connect together all of these and other non-food focused sectors which are all a part of the food system.

In helping to identify just what our regional food system is and the opportunities which can inevitably be found within it, the idea of forming a regional food council or similar organization to help seek out and take advantage of these opportunities has been discussed for many years. In July 2010, Deconstructing Dinner hosted a group of over thirty stakeholders from throughout the region, where the idea for such an organization was unanimously supported.

Limitations of this Report

Available time and funding for this research limited the number of organizations which could be interviewed and profiled.

Some organizations which were identified as ideal candidates to participate in this research were unavailable to participate within the timeframe allocated.

It should also be noted that to best accommodate the purpose of this report, some of the organizational profiles are limited in scope. For example, the profiles of urban food policy councils were more restricted to their structure and formation and less emphasis placed on their function.

Summaries of Thirteen Organizations Interviewed

The twelve organizations selected for this research were chosen to primarily reflect the diversity of structural models employed by food councils and food system organizations throughout North America. With the West Kootenay region of B.C. as the intended target to benefit from this research, additional consideration was given to the geographic, social and political climate these organizations operate within and their similarities to those factors locally. Efforts were also made to ensure that a diversity of activities/function which councils and food system organizations are involved in was well represented.

As a baseline reference, the West Kootenay region as defined for this research consists of:

Area served: approx. 21,000km²

Population: approx. 80,000

Main urban centres: Nelson, Castlegar, Trail, Creston, Rossland, Grand Forks

Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable

Primarily a networking organization which has successfully positioned itself as an umbrella organization for local food system development in the Region of Waterloo. The organization maintains strong organizational procedures and policies for start-up food system organizations to look to as a model and offers a good example of a food system organization with no budget and staffed by a health authority.

Type of Organization: 18-member roundtable staffed by regional health authority
Area served: Region of Waterloo, ON
Population: 534,900
Main urban centres: Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge
Founded: 2006

www.wrfoodsystem.ca

Sustain Ontario

A young organization which has positioned itself very quickly as a unified voice for local food system issues and interests in the Province of Ontario. Has produced a number of seminal reports/documents which help to unify its members. Offers a unique model for how food system work can be housed within a host agency and a unique, albeit young model for democratic decision-making among members.

Type of Organization: Project of Tides Canada utilizing the Constellation Open Source model for organizing.
Area served: Province of Ontario
Population: 13,210,667
Main urban centres: Greater Toronto area, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Kitchener-Waterloo
Founded: 2009

www.sustainontario.com

Food Matters Manitoba

The only charitable organization profiled. Has positioned itself as a lead organization in local food system development within the Province of Manitoba. Offers perhaps the greatest diversity of functions among the organizations profiled.

Type of Organization: Registered charity
Area served: Province of Manitoba
Population: 1,232,654
Main urban centres: Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, Portage la Prairie
Founded: 2005

www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca

Halton Food Council

A young organization modeled in part after the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable. A good example of an independent, grassroots initiative receiving support from the regional health authority. Following successful start-up initiatives, the Council is currently developing its function and activities.

Type of Organization: Grassroots, independent 12-member council supported by local health unit
Area served: Regional Municipality of Halton, ON
Population: 493,000
Main urban centres: Burlington, Oakville, Milton, Halton Hills
Founded: 2009

www.haltonfoodcouncil.ca

Kamloops Food Policy Council

One of the longest standing food councils in Canada. Primarily an incubator and host agency for food system initiatives and a networking organization. Offers a strong model for an organization with an informal and very open membership model.

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit with staff support from regional health authority
Area served: City of Kamloops, BC
Population: 86,376
Main urban centres: Kamloops
Founded: 1995

www.kamloopsfoodpolicycouncil.com

Ten Rivers Food Web

A well-constructed organization with a strong strategic direction. A good example of a regional food organization which has identified an appropriate geographic region to be an umbrella organization within. Offers a unique model for ensuring all communities within the region are represented.

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit
Area served: Linn, Benton & Lincoln Counties, OR
Population: 246,000
Main urban centres: Corvallis, Albany, Lebanon, Newport, Sweet Home
Founded: 2006

www.tenriversfoodweb.org

Willamette Farm and Food Coalition

A well-established organization with a diversity of activities. Focuses primarily on the local food economy and its producers and businesses. A strong example of an organization producing a successful local food guide. Currently seeking to narrow its focus and expand its role within the food economy.

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit
Area served: Lane County, OR
Population: 351,715
Main urban centres: Eugene, Springfield
Founded: 2000

www.lanefood.org

Toronto Food Policy Council

One of the longest standing food councils in Canada. Maintains a strong presence within the City of Toronto and has influenced many policy and programmatic changes. A strong model for a food system organization housed within a municipal government.

Type of Organization: 30-member Council responsible to the City of Toronto's Department of Public Health.
Area served: City of Toronto, ON
Population: 2,503,281
Main urban centres: Toronto
Founded: 1991

www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc

Vancouver Food Policy Council

A strong model for an officially-sanctioned municipal food council. With a very credible roster of members from the local food system, it maintains considerable influence on the City of Vancouver. The public is invited to meetings and to sit on its many working groups.

Type of Organization: 21-member Council housed within the City of Vancouver's Social Planning department
Area served: City of Vancouver
Population: 578,041
Main urban centres: Vancouver, BC
Founded: 2003

www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy

The Center for an Agricultural Economy

A unique model for a food system organization which believes that developing the local food economy is the most powerful vehicle to enhance a local food system. The organization is located in what has become an internationally recognized community for how a town can use food to enhance its economic and social well-being.

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit
Area served: Northeast Kingdom, VT (Essex, Caledonia, Orleans Counties)
Population: 62,438
Main urban centres: Newport (5,000+)
Founded: 2004

www.hardwickagriculture.org

Ag Innovations Network – The Alliance Project

Offers consulting and facilitation for start-up and existing food system organizations. Its Alliance Project maintains strong resources and models for developing umbrella food system organizations within a region. Ensures all voices within a food system are around the table.

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit administering and facilitating 7 food system alliances
Area served: 7 counties in the State of California
Population: N/A
Main urban centres: N/A
Founded: 2006 (first food system alliance founded)

www.aginnovations.org/alliances

Burlington Food Council

Great example of an informal food council which maintains a strong presence within its local government without having to maintain a formal relationship. Operates without a budget. Brings together many inspiring organizations involved in food system education and development.

Type of Organization: Grassroots currently staffed by local food co-op
Area served: City of Burlington, VT
Population: 42,417
Main urban centres: Burlington
Founded: 2003

www.burlingtonfoodcouncil.org

Themes

Using the information gathered from the thirteen organizations interviewed and supplementary research acquired from reports on food councils and food systems, the following themes have been identified as key subjects to consider when forming and operating a regional food organization.

Missions / Visions

This section contains a sample of missions and visions from the organizations profiled for this report which are seen to represent common themes among most food councils and food system organizations.

Missions

“To champion a vibrant and healthy local food system.”

“Facilitates and supports the development of a secure and sustainable food system in Lane County, Oregon.”

“Encourage and facilitate dialogue and collaboration among food related organizations, agencies, services, food producers and distributors, consumers, business and government to develop strategies for the promotion and facilitation of the vision and bring it to action.”

“To bring together the community resources and programs needed to develop a locally-based, sustainable, healthy and regional food system.”

“Partners with business and community groups to develop policies and programs promoting food security. Our aim is a food system that fosters equitable food access, nutrition, community development and environmental health.”

“An open community group exploring ways to ensure that Burlington creates and nurtures a healthy, equitable and sustainable food system for all members of the community.”

Visions

Sometimes expressed through Food Charters.

“All residents have access to adequate, affordable, safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food. There is a fair and sustainable food system (e.g. local foods are available and promoted, local agricultural lands and farmers are protected and supported, urban agriculture is encouraged, and food has been produced and distributed in an environmentally acceptable way). Food is an important part of our heritage and culture.”

“The Ten Rivers foodshed will be robust in the face of ecological and economic pressures. At least 30% of the food consumed in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties will be locally grown, processed, and distributed.”

“To support the desire of rural communities to rebuild their economic and ecological health by building upon local tradition and innovative, thoughtful opportunities.”

Function

1. Networking

Most of the organizations profiled in this report are engaged in some form of networking activities.

Meetings

Most common of a networking tool are the administrative meetings themselves which often bring together a diverse group of individuals involved in various sectors of the food system.

Conferences / Forums

Many food councils and food system organizations are responsible for hosting annual gatherings of food system stakeholders and advocates. It's clear that these events serve multiple and very effective purposes; networking, communication and education being the most significant. These conferences and forums also draw attention to an organization's other activities, and the work of the event's partner organizations and participants. Organizations like *Ten Rivers Food Web* are also active in hosting more localized forums within their region's communities and in turn bringing the outcomes of those forums to region-wide annual gatherings. In addition to TRFW, *Food Matters Manitoba* and *Sustain Ontario* have annual conferences as an important part of their activities.

Catalyst and/or Facilitator of Initiatives

Of the organizations profiled, including many of those which were not mentioned in this report, playing the role of facilitator in bringing together food system stakeholders around a specific issue is commonplace. Organizations like *Sustain Ontario* have built this function directly into its daily operations and its experimentation with the Constellation Model is a unique example of a vehicle for

carrying out this function democratically. Other organizations like the *Kamloops Food Policy Council* have successfully initiated over 5 organizations, all of which continue to operate independently from the Council itself. The *Burlington Food Council* was also tremendously successful in facilitating the start-up phase of the now highly successful Burlington School Food Project.

While acting as a catalyst for projects is often the function of a food system organization, many of the networking functions employed by these organizations achieve the same outcomes, perhaps unintentionally. Simply bringing food system stakeholders into the same room together provides a forum for conversations which often turn into collaborations.

Working Groups

When specific issues are requiring more focused attention, working groups are often formed and made up of stakeholders and/or council members. *Food Matters Manitoba* supports the Winnipeg Food Policy Council Working Group, the Manitoba Food Security Network and the North End Food Security Network. *Sustain Ontario* offers administrative support and facilitates a number of working groups which its members have proposed. The *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition* was responsible for the development of a food policy council which began as a working group and is now a separate organization. The *San Mateo Food System Alliance* – a project of the *Ag Innovations Network*, maintains 3 formal committees: Farm-to-Institution; Food Security; and Land Use. The Farm-to-Institution Committee takes on its own projects and seeks its own project funding.

Some organizations like the *Halton Food Council* host meetings which are not open to the public but do encourage the formation of working groups / committees, which can include both council and non-council members.

Direct Marketing

Organizations which become the hub (or umbrella) for local food system work often become the go-to resource for farmers and eaters on market access inquiries. The *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition* has successfully tracked the number of interactions it has ‘brokered’ between producers and eaters. In 2008, the WFFC received 213 inquiries from residents who were seeking local food products. Producers also contact the organization looking for opportunities to get their product to market. *Food Matters Manitoba* operates its Farm to Cafeteria initiative, which works to develop a network of rural producers, potential new farmers, food processors and food distributors to help institutions access local food. It’s common for food system organizations to work on developing these producer-institutional relationships.

Information Resource

With the growing interest among the public to access and support local food systems, there continues to be a significant information gap throughout many North American communities which can take advantage of that interest and direct it to the appropriate places. Food system organizations and councils can act as that resource to help steer members of a community toward becoming a part of a local food system. *The Center for an Agricultural Economy*, as an example, maintains an easy-access office to facilitate community inquiries and is also in the process of developing a sustainable agriculture educational and resource center. The vision of the project is to, “encourage and inspire community members to engage in the local food system.”



Grower Networks

In some communities/regions, farmer-driven organizations do not exist or are inactive. In other cases, these organizations bring together traditional commodity groups or are specific to the growing practices employed, i.e. organic. With many emerging market opportunities for producers, food system organizations are capable of identifying and/or facilitating groups of farmers of various backgrounds to come together to network and/or collaborate. The Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Project of which the *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition* and *Ten Rivers Food Web* are a part, is an excellent example of the role food system organizations can play in stimulating farmer-driven initiatives.

2. Education

There is a noticeable lack of information and education available on food systems issues both locally and abroad. Food system organizations are often engaged in awareness campaigns, report publishing, educational activities & partnerships, and maintaining close relationships with media.

Conferences / Forums

While food system conferences and forums usually seek to offer educational opportunities to those already working within the food system, these events do also seek to offer educational opportunities to the general public.

Workshops / Skills Development

Offering workshops is a common function of many food system organizations and councils. *Food Matters Manitoba* is very active in offering an ongoing stream of workshops to urban & rural communities and producers. Gardening, food preservation/processing, distribution, nutrition and general food education are a common focus. *Ten Rivers Food Web* devotes some of its energy to hosting presentations and ‘cook-offs’ which seek to increase ‘food literacy’ within the region. TRFW also looks to partner with other organizations to host ‘food entrepreneurship workshops’. *Just Food* partners on offering gardening workshops, farming training workshops and food preservation workshops.

Local Food Guides – Eaters / Businesses / Institutions

Food system organizations are in ideal positions to benefit in a number of ways from the publication of local food guides and directories. The process of publishing the guides can act as a strong tool for the organization itself in reaching out and developing relationships with food system stakeholders. The guides are also capable of promoting the work of the organization either explicitly via the sharing of organizational-specific information, or through the more subtle outcome of the guide being able to communicate, “this is our local food system and we are the organization which brings all of its components together”.

The **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** is an excellent example of an organization that has placed the publishing of a local food guide as a priority function. Now into its 8th year of publication, WFFC’s annual print-based *Locally Grown* guide acts; as a vehicle for local food-based advertising; an introduction to the organization and other projects they’re involved in; editorial content on timely food system issues; farm listings; seasonal crop availability charts; U-pick guides; community supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives; restaurant, catering, retailers and processors listings; farmers’ markets; and books, films and resource listings. The guide also offers details on how the public can support the work of WFFC. *Also see Communication – Local Food/Resource Directories*

Food Charters

One of the more common functions and guiding documents for food councils and food system organizations are food charters. A food charter acts as a vision for how an organization and those who support the document believe the food system should be. Food Charters are strong educational pieces to introduce members of a community to the importance of local and resilient food systems. **Food Matters Manitoba** began as *Manitoba Food Charter*, with the organization’s sole purpose in those formative years being to develop and communicate the charter and encourage organizations, businesses, government and institutions to sign on in support of it. **CR-FAIR**, the **Halton Food Council**, **Vancouver Food Policy Council** and **Toronto Food Policy Council**, have all produced food charters.

Food charters and the processes through which they’re created, have been demonstrated to be strong organizational development tools which can support a food council or organization to articulate its vision and build cohesiveness among members, boards, staff, stakeholders and/or the public.

Schools / Youth

What is learned and experienced as a young person can have significant and lasting impacts later in life which can support people to make choices which can positively affect the food system. As a result, child- and youth-focused programs are common among food councils and food system organizations. Examples of such programs are the *Farm to Cafeteria* project of **Food Matters Manitoba** – with the goal of encouraging institutions such as schools to more easily access local food. FMM also manages the *Manitoba Food Miles* project – involving 29 workshops delivered to over 1100 students, and the *Localvore Iron Chef Cook-Off* – a cooking competition among high-school students. The **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** offers a *Farm to School* program, which aims to increase student knowledge of where food comes from; encouraging more local foods in schools and improving childhood nutrition. The **Burlington Food Council** was also instrumental in incubating the similar *Burlington School Food Project*. **Sustain Ontario** is host to the *Good Food Ideas Kids* website – a showcase of school and childhood programs throughout Ontario which offer unique food-focused learning initiatives. **Ten Rivers Food Web** partners with the *Corvallis Environmental Center* on a Farm to School Initiative. The project supports the school district’s efforts to purchase local foods. **TRFW** also partners with the **WFFC** on its *Farm to School* program. The development of school gardens is also a feature of some organizations.

The direct involvement of youth in the operation of food councils and food system organizations is not common. The **Toronto Food Policy Council** does however support the **Toronto Youth Food Policy Council**. The **TYFPC** maintains a direct relationship with the **TFPC** and exists to provide youth in Toronto with a space to network, share and learn about food system issues. The **Vancouver Food Policy Council** is home to a *Youth Engagement Working Group*.

Film Screenings / Speaker Series

Screening films and hosting speakers from the local area and abroad are great tools for food system organizations to use in order to build awareness within a community/region on the issues which the organization is concerned with. Among many outcomes, such events can act as launching pads for initiatives which the organization is about to involve itself with, and as opportunities to bring like-minded people within a community together to become collectively inspired. The **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** hosted a monthly *Healthy Food Systems* speaker series which was open to the public. A diverse selection of topics was chosen with some topics aligning themselves with other priority issues on the table at any given time. **WRFSR** also acts as a communication vehicle and partner on local food-focused film screenings. **Just Food** co-hosts the *Reel Food Film Festival*, which screens films throughout the year.

Farm & Food System Tours

The **Center for an Agricultural Economy** coordinates monthly guided tours of area farms and small-scale agricultural and food-based businesses. The *Bean and Grain Project* of which **Ten Rivers Food Web** and the **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** are a part, also hosts tours of the farms which are a part of the project.

Nutrition

A number of organizations offer nutrition-based educational opportunities.

3. Communication

With many local food system initiatives being short-term and/or operating with little to no staff or budget, food system organizations can maintain a critical communication role within a community/region. Underscoring this need for a strong communication vehicle within a food system is the rapid consolidation and disappearance across North America of many important community news resources.

Web Sites / Blogs / Social Media

The on-line presence of food system organizations can be an important tool for a community and/or region to be kept informed of the work of the organization itself, partner organizations and/or food system related events/issues. How a web site is used by a food system organization varies widely. Blogs have become a common feature linked to on web sites, which allow for single or multiple topics to be explored in greater depth – often resembling news/magazine articles. Visitors and/or members are often able to engage in dialogue on the given subject. **Ten Rivers Food Web** maintains a comprehensive and informative [web site](#) and offers a number of news feeds on various topics to visitors. Categories include *In the Garden*, *In the Kitchen* and *In the Field* among others. Similar to a number of the organizations profiled, **TRFW** also acts as the communication piece for other organizations and initiatives happening within the region's food system. The **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** also maintains a good [example of a blog](#) on their web site.

Social media is used by some organizations to reach out to their members/community(ies). Facebook and Twitter are the most popular tools.

Listserves

Email listservs are a popular way to reach members and/or the community with some organizations relying almost entirely on this tool to communicate their activities and food system news. Organizations like **Ten Rivers Food Web** put a lot of attention into their listserv which reaches 500 people.

Newsletters

Many of the organizations profiled publish and distribute a newsletter. Most of the newsletters are digital format only - distributed via email and available on the organization's web site. **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** distributes a bi-weekly e-newsletter to over 400 people. One of the most comprehensive newsletters maintained by the organizations profiled is the **Capital Region Food & Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR)** [Making Food Matter](#) e-newsletter.

On-line Calendars

Easy to access and free calendar technologies are employed by a number of organizations on their web sites. Google Calendar is the most widely used. **Sustain Ontario's** [calendar](#) is a great example of the value of an on-line calendar to the organization and its members.

Local Food and Resource Directories

Similar to the model of local food guides like that produced by the *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition*, on-line directories to local producers are also a function of some food system organizations. **Ten Rivers Food Web's** web site is home to a [good example of a tool](#) for visitors to search a listing of growers, processors, merchants, artisans, and supply & service oriented businesses. Geographic and food-specific searches are available and the tool also offers an integrated Google map. **TRFW** also maintains a list of and links to other regional food organizations. **Just Food** maintains a similar tool on its web site called the [Buy Local Grow Local Food Guide](#). The guide also includes the ability for visitors to narrow their search to production practices and offers a guide to community gardens in the City of Ottawa.

Awards

As overarching food system organizations within a community/region, organizations like **Food Matters Manitoba** use an [annual awards event](#) as a strong tool to; carry out its educational goals and raise public awareness about the food system.

Event Presence

Food system organizations often maintain a presence at events which can act as a vehicle to communicate both their own work and the work of members and non-members working within the food system.

Press

With the rising interest among the public in the current and future state of global and local food systems, there is much need for a strong voice within a local food community to communicate to media on these issues. The organizations profiled in this report are all in ideal positions to act as a voice on these issues and in some cases represent stakeholders within the food system – some of which might be members of the organization.

4. Policy / Advocacy

Policies among all levels of government have evolved over previous decades to support the long-distance industrial food system at the expense of local food systems. As a result, there is an ever-present need for a strong voice to work with government and advocate on behalf of stakeholders and the public to support policy development which enhances the resilience of local food systems.

Food Charters

Food charters act as key policy tools to guide strategic decision-making for government and other supporters or signatories of the charter. See 'Food Charters' under Education

Government Policies, Advocacy and Relations

Food system organizations and especially those identifying themselves as food councils are often actively involved in advocating for policies which support local food systems. This role can also be collaborative, whereby the organization/council works alongside city, county or regional staff. Official Community Plans and similar planning documents are a common focus of attention, including policies relating to urban food production and community gardens. The **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** identifies one of its greatest successes being its input into the Region of Waterloo's Regional Official Plan. The Plan contains a section titled '[Access to Locally Grown and Other Healthy Foods](#)'. For an example of the WRFSR's input into the plan, follow [this link](#). **Sustain Ontario** is undergoing a comprehensive policy recommendation through its Good Food Programs and Policies initiative, which intends to inform politicians and bureaucrats on how they can help develop policies to support Ontario's food system(s). In addition, **Sustain Ontario** provides resources (toolkits) to stakeholders and the public on how to engage candidates running in municipal, provincial and federal elections on food system issues. **SO** also lobbies the Province to adopt local food procurement policies. The **Burlington Food Council** devotes much of its energy toward working with the City of Burlington on developing urban food production policies. The **BFC** also contributed to the City's *Climate Action Plan*. The **Kamloops Food Policy Council** has worked for many years with the City of Kamloops and has contributed to the Kamloops Social Plan (2009) and Sustainability Plan (2010). The **Toronto** and **Vancouver Food Policy Councils** are both housed within government agencies and work directly with City staff on policy development that is supportive of the city's food system. The **VFPC** was recently instrumental in working with the City to amend a bylaw to permit the raising of hens within city limits. Previous to that, the **VFPC** also worked with City staff to permit urban apiculture (bee-keeping).

In a number of cases, government staff and/or elected officials are members of food councils or sit on the boards of food system organizations. The **Ag Innovations Network** encourages all of its Food System Alliances to include members from a diverse range of government agencies. Some organizations do not believe maintaining ongoing relations with local government is a critical component of their work.

Food Policy Council formation

With many food system organizations choosing to not be actively involved in policy work, some organizations have chosen to incubate food policy councils. The **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** spent considerable energy in developing the **Lane County Food Policy Council** – a now separate organization. **Food Matters Manitoba** supports the **Winnipeg Food Policy Working Group**, which hopes to eventually become the Winnipeg Food Policy Council. **CR-FAIR** has also been working towards the development of a food policy council for the Capital Region District on Vancouver Island.

Farmland Preservation

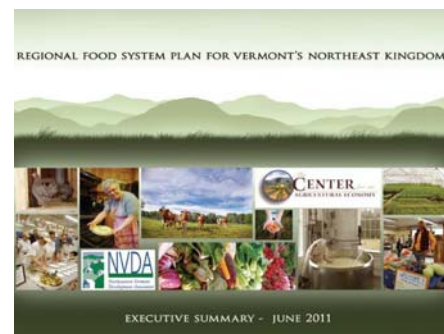
To a lesser extent than other functions, land use and farmland preservation are sometimes a focus of attention for food system organizations. The **San Mateo Food System Alliance** is home to a **Land Use Committee** which is currently focusing its attention on water issues and succession. The **Missoula County Community Food and Agriculture Coalition** in Montana, which was not profiled in this report, identifies land use as a priority area. The organization has published reports on the subject and lobbies around subdivision proposals and their impact on agriculture. They are also involved in **Land Link Montana** – connecting agricultural land owners with those seeking to lease or buy agricultural land in a seven-county region of western Montana. The **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** in partnership with the **Lane County Food Policy Council** is conducting GIS mapping of high value agricultural land and documenting its current production and potential. The project will produce educational materials for policy-makers and planners.

5. Assessment

Prior to the carrying out of initiatives by food system organizations, assessments are often required to determine what needs and wants are present within the community/region. Assessments can also come in the form of issues identification.

Food System Assessments

Food councils and food system organizations are in ideal positions to stimulate dialogue within a community or regional food system. One tool to achieve this is through the publishing of reports which can assess specific or broad food system issues. Examples of such reports are the **Winnipeg Community Food Assessment** - a project of **Food Matters Manitoba** to assess the city's food system and develop a strategic plan to address food related issues. **The Center for an Agricultural**



Economy has just completed a [Regional Food System Development Plan for the Northeast Kingdom](#) of Vermont. *CAE* has also developed a process for *Local Food System Monitoring* by developing baseline data for assessing trends and patterns. The **Halton Food Council** completed a *Community Food Assessment* and the Council is now working on turning the identified priorities into a work plan. **Ten Rivers Food Web** is currently undertaking a food system assessment through the three counties the organization operates within. After three years in development, the **Vancouver Food Policy Council** is set to release a Vancouver food system assessment which will answer the question, “how food secure is Vancouver?” **Just Food** is a partner in the *Food for All* project – a two-year project to develop a food action plan and community food assessment toolkit.

Issues Identification / Assessment

Sustain Ontario published *Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario*. The report identifies ten ideas/issues of importance in the Province that would ‘contribute to health and economic viability along the food chain’. Each of the ideas has ‘multiple societal benefits, involves many stakeholders, and requires integrated policy support’. In 2007, **Ten Rivers Food Web** evaluated food processing in the Willamette Valley to produce the *Willamette Valley Local Food Processing Assessment*. In 2008, *TRFW* also produced the *Local Foods Project* – a report on the feasibility of small- and large-scale primary processing on Willamette Valley farms. In 2007, the **Kamloops Food Policy Council** produced *Best Practices in Urban Agriculture* – a background report to help guide the City of Kamloops in urban agriculture development. The **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** is active in continuing to reassess the most important issues within their regional food system. Identifying these issues informs the organization’s *Food System Priorities*.

In the case of *Food System Alliances* of the **Ag Innovations Network**, issues identification is an important process to support the development of and ongoing functioning of an Alliance.

Economic Assessments

The **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** worked with the University of Oregon in publishing the *Lane County Local Food Market Analysis*. The report is a market analysis of the local food system in Lane County, Oregon, and identifies opportunities to expand local markets for locally produced food.

6. Economic Development / Infrastructure

Despite many organizations choosing to not be directly involved in food system economic development, most organizations are all involved indirectly. As Lynne Fessenden of the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition says, “all food system work is economic development work”.

Infrastructure Development

Significant gaps are present within most local and regional food systems throughout North America. With food system infrastructure standing to benefit all stakeholders and eaters, food system organizations are in a great position to take on infrastructure projects or help facilitate their development. Distribution and processing are two areas of notable focus.

The **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** identifies ‘local food infrastructure’ as one of six priority areas it works on. The organization seeks to act on this priority by encouraging the rebuilding of processing and distribution infrastructure and farm-to-institution programs. **Ten Rivers Food Web** and the **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** have been actively involved in the *Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Project* which has been helping increase the infrastructural capacity to process beans and grains in their regions. Both organizations are active in other infrastructural development work. *WFFC* is also in discussion with the *Lane County Farmers’ Market*, the possibility of a permanent, open-air, year-round market. Local food infrastructure is also a focus of **Sustain Ontario** which has engaged in the development of a provincial action plan on the topic. The **Center for an Agricultural Economy** in Hardwick, VT, is the new home of the *Vermont Food Venture Center* – a shared-use kitchen incubator for small-scale processors and value-added businesses and start-ups. The **Kamloops Food Policy Council** was involved in the development of a producer co-operative food distribution business. A goal of **Ten Rivers Food Web** is to “facilitate efforts to develop food production infrastructure”. *TRFW* currently partners with *Oregon State University* on *Lincoln County Local Foods* – which maintains a goal to connect farmers and producers and the organization runs *Fill Your Pantry Markets* – farm-direct markets where customers can purchase bulk local foods. *TRFW* is now working towards stimulating the development of fish and meat processing facilities in the region. The **Burlington Food Council** was the recent event host for the *Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund* and its ten-year plan for local food economic development in the State.

Food Waste Recovery

The **Vancouver Food Policy Council** is home to a *Food Waste Working Group*. While not an organization profiled in this report, **The Intervale Center** in Burlington, VT (a member of the *Burlington Food Council*), launched its first venture in 1987 to “help restore the depleted agricultural lands of the Intervale”. It has since grown to become Vermont’s [leading compost operation](#), recycling 30,000 tons of waste each year to produce a wide range of compost-based agricultural and horticultural products. The facility is now operated by the *Chittenden Solid Waste District* at the Intervale site.

Small Business and Agricultural Advising

The Center for an Agricultural Economy in conjunction with the *Vermont Small Business Development Center* employs an Agricultural Business Advisor who provides regional support, counselling, training, and resource networking services to small food- and agriculture-based businesses owners and prospective business owners within the Northeast Kingdom region. This work also

functions in conjunction with *CAE's Vermont Food Venture Center*. *CAE* also maintains a *Vermont Farm Fund* which works to support start-up farmers. ***Food Matters Manitoba*** recently commenced a five-year project working with small-scale producers who want to direct market to eaters. A goal of ***Ten Rivers Food Web*** is to “promote economic opportunities for small farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs. They achieve this through improving access to micro-enterprise and small business development resources and promote access to microlending opportunities

School & Community Gardens

While not often viewed as an ‘infrastructural’ piece to a food system, school and community gardens do indeed increase the amount of food-producing land available within a food system and encourage the sale of seeds, plants and tools within a local economy. ***Food Matters Manitoba, The Center for an Agricultural Economy, the Vancouver, Toronto and Kamloops Food Policy Councils*** and the ***San Mateo Food System Alliance*** have in the past or are currently involved in supporting school and community garden initiatives. In the case of food policy councils, community garden work often involves working with the city on their development. ***Just Food*** manages information and resource-sharing for the *Community Gardening Network of Ottawa* and is a partner on the *Community Garden Development Fund*.



A community garden in Vancouver, B.C. (*City Farmer*)

7. Low-Income Food Access

Many well-established food councils and organizations began with a focus on low-income food access. While most of these organizations have expanded their scope to include food access for all, some continue to partner on low-income initiatives and many encourage membership or board members to be from social service agencies which are involved in low-income food access issues.

Education

Food Matters Manitoba invests considerable attention into the challenges facing low-income demographics in Manitoba. *FMM* is home to the *North End Food Security Network* working group which was formed to address the low-income food access issues in the North End of Winnipeg. The group has compiled [an inventory](#) of food security activities taking place in the North End and features locations and contact information for community gardens, community kitchens, cooking programs, other food or meal programs, community cupboards, and programming for youth, parents with children, and seniors. ***Just Food*** is home to the *Food Link Directory* – a guide to programs and services promoting access to food in Ottawa. ***Ten Rivers Food Web*** hosts nutrition education classes for low-income consumers and local food cooking demonstrations at farmers’ markets and food pantries.

Distribution

The ***Willamette Farm and Food Coalition's Local Food for All*** initiative is exploring ways to increase access to locally grown food in low-income neighbourhoods and to increase the availability of subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares and farmers’ market dollars. ***Sustain Ontario*** maintains a working group which is promoting the idea of a voucher for low-income eaters to be used at farmers’ markets. ***Ten Rivers Food Web*** partners with *Oregon State University's Emergency Food Pantry* and is supported by the Oregon Food Bank. One of *TRFW's* goals is to “increase access to fresh local foods for low-income consumers” and maintains a number of strategies to achieve this. ***The Center for an Agricultural Economy*** focuses some attention on food access by maintaining the *Food Access Fund*, which aims to offer better availability of locally grown and produced food to the *Hardwick Area Food Pantry* as well as provide support to other food access and security programs. The ***Toronto, Vancouver and Kamloops Food Policy Councils*** are very active in addressing low-income food access and including those voices around the council table.

Community Kitchens

Organizations like the ***Kamloops Food Policy Council*** have been instrumental in developing community kitchens where residents can learn skills, prepare food together and use kitchen facilities.

Gleaning

There are some initiatives supported by organizations like the ***Burlington Food Council*** and ***Food Matters Manitoba*** which harvest and gather food that would otherwise go to waste and redistribute the produce to community service agencies.

8. Culture

While food system organizations are predominantly engaged in systemic issues affecting the local food supply, some organizations do involve themselves in work which celebrates and enriches the food culture of the community and/or region. There is, however, no distinct line dividing systemic and culturally-focused activities as they are both integral to each other. Local branding, as described below, acts both as a cultural promoter of a food system as well as a strong economic development tool.

Slow Food initiatives

The **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** is supported by [Slow Food Eugene: Willamette Valley Convivium](#) – a local chapter of the international [Slow Food](#) organization. *Slow Food* is a strong advocate for more responsible and localized food systems and is also an active network of individuals, producers and organizations who celebrate the culinary and cultural aspects of food.

Regional Branding

Alongside the *City of Ottawa* and *Ottawa Tourism*, **Just Food** is a partner in [Savour Ottawa](#) - a branding initiative which informs the public of local agricultural products. The Savour Ottawa logo is found at farmers' markets, butchers, retail grocery stores and other purveyors, and assures the eater that the product has undergone a verification process to ensure the producer is using local food in their products, or is a local producer. Savour Ottawa works to develop and promote Ottawa and the surrounding area as a culinary destination for locals and visitors.



Cultural Events

Food system organizations are often the initiators of or partners in cultural food events. **Ten Rivers Food Web** hosts seasonal food fairs across their region and a fall food series of dinners and other events. A number of organizations partner in the hosting of culinary events.

Council/Organization Formation

Some common themes permeate the formative and developmental processes of food system organizations.

Food System Assessment and/or Plan – One of the two most common catalysts for the formation of a food system organization is a comprehensive assessment of an area's food system and/or a strategic plan outlining the perceived needs of the food system. The **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** emerged out of a food system plan led by the Region of Waterloo Public Health and titled "Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region". The plan identified priority areas and a subsequent forum was held, during which, stakeholders and the public supported the development of an organization to help address those priorities. **Sustain Ontario** was the outcome of a two-year process which culminated into the "Food Connects Us All" report – an outline of opportunities for collaborative, cross-sectoral food system work. In its early stages as the **Lane County Food Coalition**, the **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** surveyed 40 stakeholders by telephone to gather their concerns, ideas and suggestions for developing a stronger local food system. This helped establish the functions which the organization could serve.

Assessments and/or plans can act as strong tools to access support and funding for the formation of a food system organization.

Food Forum / Conference – Within the past ten years, a community or region's initial effort to recognize its food system and the individuals who are most involved has been through an event such as a forum, conference or summit. These gatherings offer a tangible lens through which a local food system can be identified and they further generate motivational energy toward more coordinated work among stakeholders. **Food Matters Manitoba** emerged out of a national food security conference held in Winnipeg. Upon conceiving the idea for a food council in the Halton Region of Ontario, the **Halton Region Health Department** hosted a food forum to stimulate dialogue for the development of a food council. Speakers from already-established food councils were invited to speak. The need for a food council was affirmed at this forum and the **Halton Food Council** emerged. The **Ten Rivers Food Web** emerged out of a 2004 food summit – the first major gathering on food system issues in the region.

Health Authority / Mandates – In some cases, food organizations have been introduced by regional health authorities as a tool to improve the overall health of the population. Both the **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** and the **Halton Food Council** were instrumental in planting the seeds for the eventual development of a food system organization. The **Toronto Food Policy Council** was conceived as a vehicle for the City of Toronto to carry out the values expressed in the *World Health Organization's Healthy Cities Charter*.

Sustainability Approach – A general interest in more sustainable communities emerged well before the more recent and quite 'ravenous' interest in local food systems. As a result, some of the collaborative efforts to address the concerns and opportunities within a community's or region's food system have come out of already established sustainability efforts. The **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** emerged out of the well-established Edible City Resource Center in Eugene, OR, whose work was focused on broad sustainability issues. The **Burlington Food Council** emerged out of the City of Burlington's *Legacy Project* – a long-term sustainability planning process.

Economic Development - The **Center for an Agricultural Economy** was conceived by a local producer who believed the resilience of the local food system was best addressed through more coordinated value-added processing among already-established producers.

Ag Innovations Network - Seven food system organizations in California have all emerged out of the facilitated and supportive resources provided by the **Ag Innovations Network** – a non-profit whose *Alliance Project* supports the development of food system organizations.

Independent vs. Officially Sanctioned

Food system organizations can often exist as ‘councils’ which are directly housed within a government agency, or, can exist as stand-alone organizations. In some larger urban centres, there is an officially sanctioned food council working on policy-oriented activities and at least one other independent non-profit engaged in more project-oriented food system work. In other cases, the organization operates somewhere in the middle – not being officially sanctioned or mandated but maintaining a strong relationship with a government agency. Opinions on how to best situate a food system organization and its ‘official’ status were quite varied among the organizations profiled in this report. In the end, every region/community is quite different from one another and the desired function of the organization can often support the process of determining its form.

Officially-Sanctioned

Of the organizations profiled in this report, the **Toronto** and **Vancouver Food Policy Councils** are the only officially-sanctioned organizations housed within a government agency. The *TFPC*'s Wayne Roberts believes substantial systemic change can come out of such relationships. “To make serious progress, you have to have the weight of the law behind you,” says Roberts. Despite being a sub-committee of the *Toronto Board of Health*, Roberts believes the *TFPC* has “one foot in government and one foot out,” - referring to the freedoms afforded to the Council and FPC staff. Roberts also believes in the importance of an organization that is able to “speak of food in general and is not hampered by government dialogue.”

Herb Barbolet of the *VFPC* stresses the influence which a unified local food system can have on the planning processes of local government. With local governments throughout North America having been slow to recognize the role they play (and could play) in shaping a more resilient and responsible food system, there is a seeming need for stakeholders within the food system to help guide a government and its departments and encourage this shift. The *VFPC* is a great example of the role an officially sanctioned food council can have in shaping a local food system.

Independent

Many of the organizations profiled in this report are independent of any government agency. **Food Matters Manitoba** is an independent registered charity and has succeeded in positioning itself as the leading voice for local food system work in the Province. *FMM* maintains a strong relationship with the Province of Manitoba. Both *FMM* and the **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** have demonstrated that as independent organizations, they are still able to incubate the formation of food policy working groups which are both in the process of seeking official status as councils within the City of Winnipeg and Lane County respectively. A number of the organizations profiled, such as the *WFFC*, do not maintain policy-oriented goals and are thereby not suited to be officially sanctioned bodies. Independent organizations like **Sustain Ontario** exist, in part, to advocate for policy change. *SO* believes its independence from the governments and agencies it wishes to work with enables it to better carry out these advocacy goals. Both the **Burlington Food Council** and **The Center for an Agricultural Economy** are independent of government yet maintain strong relationships with government. Both Meg Klepack and Erica Campbell believe the already well-established food system work underway in Vermont is one reason why there are so few officially sanctioned food councils. They believe that the need for food councils is more apparent in areas where the resources and infrastructure to support food system work are not yet well established. The *Food System Alliances* of the **Ag Innovations Network** are all housed within the *AIN* umbrella and are independent of government. *AIN* does, however, ensure that all *Alliances* are directly engaged with the County Board of Supervisors and ensures representatives from all levels of government are a part of an *Alliance*. The **Kamloops Food Policy Council** is another good example of an organization who has remained independent (as a registered non-profit) yet maintains a strong relationship with the City of Kamloops as the umbrella local food system organization.

Hybrid

The **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** in its current form is entirely dependent on the staff support (and to a much lesser extent, financial support) provided by the *Region of Waterloo Public Health* department. The Roundtable does however operate almost entirely independent from the agency and the organization does not believe the relationship has posed any barriers to the group carrying out its mission and goals. Similar to the *WRFSR*, the **Halton Food Council** does receive all of its staff support from the *Halton Region Health Department*, however, it maintains complete independence from the agency. The *Health Department* has indicated that the staff support it offers to the grassroots group could be withdrawn if the *Council* were to take an adversarial stance towards the *Regional Municipality of Halton*.

What do you see as the pros/cons of food councils being housed within a government body?

“The idealistic response: the closer you are to power the better.

The practical response: maybe government isn't going to be receptive or their effectiveness is mediocre or maybe even hostile.

If being independent is decided as the approach to take, the best way to be independent is to affiliate with an existing non-profit (find an umbrella organization, maybe a fiscal sponsor). This gives you more resources to draw on. But it's still important to develop relationships with government so certain agencies will participate in your work.”

- Mark Winne, *Community Food Security Coalition*

“The strengths of the non-profit approach versus the traditional models of food policy councils being of a local or regional government, is the ability to access funding from a diversity of sources. For **The Center for an Agricultural Economy**, it's also offered a good venue for an entrepreneurial approach to food systems work (i.e. food venture centre, infrastructure development, food hub role)... which is something *FPCs* don't usually get into.”

- Erica Campbell, *Center for an Agricultural Economy*

Policy vs. Project Driven?

Perhaps by virtue of the very nature of this report which seeks to intentionally offer a diverse perspective on coordinated local food system organizational strategies, there is a wide variety of perspectives on how a food system organization should invest its energy. Two distinct foundations from which organizations either choose between or cultivate a balance between are policy-oriented activities versus project-driven activities. In the end, there doesn't appear to be a right or wrong choice between a policy- or project-driven orientation, and the choice is instead best determined by the unique challenges and opportunities within an identified food system and what work is already underway. In large urban centres for example, it's common to have one policy-driven organization and one or more project-driven organizations.

It is clear that the depth of experience of an organization helps answer the policy vs. project question. Influencing policy on any level requires credibility within a community/region and is best suited to organizations with experience and which are respected among policy-makers.

There is a strong and growing belief that the most substantial change to the food system will be driven by policy change:

What are your thoughts about the approach to not necessarily focus on policy as the foundation of a proposed council?

It's a bit short-sighted to think a council shouldn't be policy-focused. You have to recognize that the actions of city, regional, provincial/state and federal governments all have a bearing on your food system. There are a lot of things you'll be able to do and can't do based on how governments act. And as a citizen, I think it's essential that you begin to develop your capacity on food policy matters. It's important to differentiate between being a good food consumer and being a good food citizen.

- Mark Winne, Community Food Security Coalition

As Mark Winne suggests above, it's "essential to develop [an organization's] capacity on food policy matters". Based on interviews for this report, however, it appears that many food system organizations, which have developed strong credibility within a community/region and among policy-makers, have built that 'capacity' on the backs of projects.

Form/Structure (Membership, Boards, Committees, Working Groups, Staff)

The form/structure of food system organizations differs greatly among the organizations profiled; however, some common themes emerged. It should be noted that the diversity in structure among the organizations profiled and how they define themselves and their subsequent parts, makes it difficult to name distinct categories which can communicate the form/structure of these organizations.

Membership

There are not many common membership themes emerging among the organizations profiled. Organizations define the language of 'membership' quite differently from one another; some referring to members as key decision-makers within the organization (i.e. council members) while others refer to 'members' as organizations who voluntarily sign-on in support of the food system organization. Two distinct membership roles are outlined here: voting-members and non-voting-members.

Voting Members

Organizations defining themselves as 'food councils' most often maintain a roster of council members who hold important decision-making responsibilities and voting rights. For the most part, members are affiliated with food system related organizations/businesses and government but are not necessarily representing those affiliations. In some instances, members do represent their affiliations.

Size of Membership and Terms

- Food councils/roundtables with voting members are comprised of between 12 to 30 members at any one time. Members serve between 1-2 year terms.

Selection of Members

- Members of the *Halton Food Council* and the *Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable*, as examples, are selected by nominations committees made up of current members. The committees are often tasked with reviewing the membership to ensure its composition remains relevant to the ever-changing needs of the organization and local food system.
- Candidates often apply to become a voting member through an application process or are contacted by current members.
- Consideration for food system sectors is common among the organizations profiled. In some instances such as the *Vancouver Food Policy Council*, it's a requirement that individual sectors be represented among the membership. Those sectors often consist of; farming, emergency food services, food manufacturing/processing, urban agriculture, distribution,

academic/researchers, educators, retailers, land-use planners, restaurants, institutional foodservice, health professionals, economic development, and government.

- Some organizations require certain seats to be filled by government representatives. The **Toronto Food Policy Council** as an example requires that 2 of its 30 members be from the Toronto Board of Health, 2 from Toronto's City Council and 2 from the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council.
- The most informal process among an organization with voting members is the **Kamloops Food Policy Council** which opens its membership to anyone in the community and grants voting rights to all of its members.

Commitment / Process

- Members are often required to endorse the organization's mission, goals and values.
- Most of the organizations profiled do not encounter challenges with members' attendance at meetings. The **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** deems the missing of 3 meetings in one year as the equivalent of a resignation.

Leadership

- Most organizations maintaining a voting-membership appoint or elect chairs or co-chairs to take on leadership roles. Duties might include proposing meeting agendas, inviting guests, chairing meetings, facilitating dialogue among members between meetings, liaising with staff, and acting as spokespeople. The **Halton Food Council** maintains detailed descriptions of the roles of their Chair and Vice-Chair (*see HFC profile*).

Non-Voting Members

Sustain Ontario maintains a unique membership model which permits any organization to become a member using an on-line application. Members in turn receive a profile on the *SO* web site and remain connected to the work of the organization through *SO's* communication tools and are invited to get involved in *SO* working groups. Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker does, however, believe that the loose membership model of *SO* decreases the legitimacy of the organization as representative of the food system and is an area requiring work. The **Burlington Food Council** maintains an informal membership of over 100 members who have signed on in support of the organization. **The Center for an Agricultural Economy** invites financial donors to the organization to become 'members'. Members receive updates on *CAE's* activities and receive special invitations to events.

No Membership

Some organizations maintain no official membership and instead operate with a more traditional non-profit structure. Organizations like **Food Matters Manitoba** and the **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** do refer to some of the organizations and businesses they work with as 'partners' or 'members'.

Boards / Advisory & Steering Committees

The composition of the Board of Directors among non-profit food system organizations is similar to that of the composition of a government sanctioned food council. Most boards are governance boards and not operational boards and are often involved in the strategic planning processes for the organization. In some cases, such as with the board of **The Center for an Agricultural Economy** – some board members are very active in the operations of the organization; with one board member said to invest up to 20-hours per week into the organization. Most boards select new members through a nomination/election process and range in size from 9-15 members. Advisory committees are as large as 27 members and steering committees usually maintain around 6 members. In one unique example of the role of a board – the six-member board of the **Kamloops Food Policy Council** focuses attention on the administrative tasks of the organization but maintains equal decision-making authority as the informal membership of the Council.

Geographic Representation

In the case of **Food Matters Manitoba**, which represents a large geographic area, the composition of its 15-member Board ensures equal representation among Manitoba's distinct geographic areas (urban, northern and rural). Three non-voting members also sit on the Board: Expert Advisory, Federal Government Representative and a Provincial Government Representative.

Sector Representation

In smaller geographic areas like Lane County, Oregon, the 13-member board of the **Willamette Farm and Food Coalition**, which maintains more of an economic development focus than other organizations profiled, strives to include one-quarter farmers, one-quarter food businesses and the remaining members offering beneficial skill-sets. Board members serve 2-year terms.

Advisory Councils / Steering Committees

As a project of an already-established organization, the direction and mandate for **Sustain Ontario** is informed by a 27-member advisory council made up of organizational and entrepreneurial leaders from throughout the Province and which meets twice per year (mostly via teleconference). As a subset of the advisory committee, a six-member steering committee attends to the administrative oversight of *SO* (budgets, hiring, etc.) and is accountable to *SO's* host agency – Tides Canada. The SC meets every month or two. Two non-voting co-chairs are remunerated and act as public voices of the organization. *SO* is considering formalizing their membership model to empower members of the organization with the ability to vote for the advisory council. In the case of the **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable**, 5 of the 18 Roundtable members sit on a steering committee and are tasked with making agenda decisions, handling requests for information from the public, or authoring letters of support for local food system initiatives among other tasks. The committee is not empowered to make decisions and instead brings recommendations to the full Roundtable.

Working Groups

Some organizations rely on working groups made up of council members, board members, organizational members and/or non-members to focus on specific issues requiring the attention of the organization. Working groups of *Food Matters Manitoba* and *Sustain Ontario* are very much a part of the organization's function, with *FMM's Food Policy Working Group* hoping to become its own food policy council of the City of Winnipeg. The *San Mateo Food System Alliance* of the *Ag Innovations Network* is home to a few working groups which it refers to as 'committees'. The committees are tasked with taking on some of the focus areas of the *Alliance*; Farm-to-Institution; Food Security; and Land Use. The *Vancouver Food Policy Council* maintains a number of working groups; Food Waste; Research; Neighbourhood Level Food Security; Food Resiliency; Institutional Procurement; Youth Engagement; and Urban Farming.

CR-FAIR's Food Policy Working Group has developed a good Member Qualifications reference which offers a model for selecting members of a working group. (See *CR-FAIR Profile*)

Staff

Some form of staff support is clearly an essential piece of a well-functioning food system organization. While some staff support among the organizations profiled is not directly compensated by the organization itself, none of the organizations are *solely* staffed by volunteers. Three common origins of staff support emerged from this research. Volunteers are also common among these organizations.

Internally Funded

A number of the organizations profiled maintain between 1-7 core staff and might include a team of interns and/or project-specific staff. These staff are funded internally through core funding and/or project-specific funding. As an example, *Food Matters Manitoba* maintains an Executive Director, a Community Liaison, a Northern Liaison and an Office Assistant. Interns consist of a Communications Coordinator, Conference Coordinator, School Outreach Coordinator, a Northern Assistant and an Accountant.

Host Organization

Food System Alliances of the *Ag Innovations Network* all receive facilitation support from *AIN's* Alliance Project staff. The coordinating and administrative functions supporting the *Burlington Food Council* are passed between several member organizations. Staff support for 2010-2011 is presently through the Local Food Coordinator of a co-operative grocery store. Staff support in previous years has come from the City of Burlington's *Legacy Project* and the non-profit *Intervale Center*. While *Sustain Ontario* does maintain full and part-time staff, it also receives administrative support through its host agency, *Tides Canada*. This support comes in the form of operations manuals, human resources, bookkeeping, fundraising assistance and organizational accountability.

Government

The *Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable*, the *Halton Food Council* and the *Kamloops Food Policy Council*, all receive staff support from their regional health authorities' community nutritionists and public health planners. Public Health Planner, Marc Xuereb of the Region of Waterloo Public Health, devotes the greatest amount of time to this function. Half of his weekly hours are spent on the *WRFSR*. Both the *Toronto* and *Vancouver Food Policy Councils* are staffed by full and part-time staff of the City governments. The *TFPC* has maintained a full-time Coordinator since its inception alongside a secretary. A team of 3-4 staff working within Vancouver's Social Planning department offer staff support to the work of the *VFPC*.

Volunteers / Internships

Volunteers support a number of the administrative and task-oriented functions of the organizations profiled. In one year, the *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition* received support from 40 volunteers whose combined hours totalled 383. Interns from local educational institutions and community service organizations are also used quite often by the organizations profiled.

Common First Steps

Once established, a food system organization might immediately begin engaging in its established purpose or it might take on a project which will specifically help it integrate into its community and root itself into its organizational structure. A number of first-step themes emerged among the organizations profiled

- **Food Charter** – A common initiative undertaken by newly-formed organizations is the development, communication and advocating of a food charter. Food charters help define the vision of an organization and/or the vision of how the local food system should look. They can sometimes act as policy tools when they are adopted by governments and government agencies. Prior to changing its name to *Food Matters Manitoba*, the organization began as *Manitoba Food Charter*. Its function was to develop the charter following over 70 province-wide consultations. Between 55-60 organizations, institutions and municipalities have signed on in support of the charter. The *Halton Food Council*, *CR-FAIR* and the *Vancouver Food Policy Council* all maintain food charters.

From your experience, what have been the most successful first steps communities have employed when building a food council?

"The first step is to achieve some sort of common identity in that you all want to assume that you all operate within a regional food system and share certain interests in that food system.

I think it's important to help people understand that there is this thing called a food system and what it is we mean by that and how complicated it is but also how inter-related it is. The point of coming together is to connect those dots and that becomes a value and benefit for everyone.

Doing a bit of research on what the issues are in the community is an important and common first step followed by the development of a common vision and action plan."

- Mark Winne, Community Food Security Coalition

- **Issues Identification** – Some organizations have identified key food system issues in their development phase while others take this on as a first step. The *Halton Food Council* took on a food system assessment once the group was developed and presented the results of the assessment at a community forum. The outcomes of those two initiatives are now supporting the development of the organization’s activities. The *Burlington Food Council* also assigned itself a community food assessment as its first task. The assessment became the organization’s guiding document.

While taking place more in the development phase of the organization, the *Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable* established six *Food System Priorities* which were deemed to be the most important issues a food system organization in the region should be addressing. Those priorities are periodically revisited. *Ten Rivers Food Web* engaged in a similar first step; identifying the three main program areas the organization would focus on. The *Ag Innovations Network* recommends that its *Food System Alliances* begin their life with a process of issues identification – often spanning several meetings and support from *AIN* (see *AIN profile*).

- **Terms of Reference / Founding Documents** – Prior to selecting the 18 roundtable members of the *Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable*, an 8-member start-up committee spent one year developing what would become the Roundtable’s Terms of Reference.

- **Quick-Win Project** – In *Food Policy Councils: An Examination of Organizational Structure, Process and Contribution to Alternative Food Movements*, Rebecca Schiff suggests that “meaningful tasks that can be accomplished within a relatively short timeframe help to build credibility for an organization along with member motivation and pride.” As an example, the *Burlington Food Council* collaborated to secure a grant to partner with the Burlington School District Food Service to improve school meals. This work eventually led to the establishment of the *Burlington School Food Project* (a *Farm2School* program) which eventually spun off from the Council as its own organization.

“When people come to the table, they don’t necessarily want to do policy work right away so we began with projects and continue to be driven by projects.”
- Laura Kalina, Kamloops Food Policy Council

- **Capacity Building** – As part of its first strategic plan, *Ten Rivers Food Web* identified its first priority as building infrastructure, resources and capacity for the organization to achieve its vision in accordance with its mission. This included a funding plan to carry out programs over a two-year period and hire an executive director and community organizer.

Communication (On-Line Media and Launch Events)

At a time when digital media is becoming the principle source of communication, it’s no surprise that developing a digital presence is a first step for a food system organization. With food system work being primarily on the ground, public launch events have also been used to announce the formation of the organization.

Setting Priorities

Local and global food systems are incredibly complex - a complexity which is only increased by the seemingly endless (and in some cases unidentified) relationships between non-food focused interests and food system stakeholders. Bringing these diverse (and sometimes divergent) interests together in order to better coordinate a particular food system presents a notable challenge to say the least. While some of the organizations profiled have undertaken comprehensive and careful processes to determine the organization’s priorities, others believe that the scope of the challenge is so great, that it’s important to not get caught up in the overwhelming nature of food system (re)development and they offer suggestions on how to approach this important consideration. Priority development tools can include and be incorporated into; food system assessment/plan processes; public and/or stakeholder forums and; strategic plan development.

Examples of Priorities and Priority Development

- **Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable** – Used the priority issues identified within a food system planning document produced by the regional health authority to form the basis for a public forum which asked participants to discuss and vote on what priority areas the Roundtable should focus on. Priorities are revisited periodically at biennial food summits. **Priorities:** Food Sovereignty; Food Policy; Urban Agriculture; Local Food Infrastructure; Farm Viability; Access to Healthy Food.
- **Food Matters Manitoba** – **Priorities:** Cultivates Community Food Skills; Provides Public Education; Builds Partnerships and Networks.
- **Ten Rivers Food Web** – As part of its first comprehensive strategic plan, *TRFW* articulated its priorities through a “needs statement” and “case statement” (see *TRFW Profile*). **Priorities:** Educate and organize individual, community and institutional

“Don’t focus on the things that divide you, focus on the things that you agree on. There’s so much that needs change that everyone can probably agree on.”

- Wayne Roberts, Toronto Food Policy Council

food buyers and promote grower-direct purchasing relationships; Foster creative new investment in local food processing and distribution capacity, as well as land access for new and non-traditional farmers; Continue to promote food literacy through periodic food summits and regular lectures, discussions, website and listserv; Foster programs that increase access to fresh, local food by low-income people, and; Connect farmer-innovators with one another and with other sources of expertise, and support their on-farm research.

- **San Mateo Food System Alliance – Priorities:** Promoting integrated health and nutrition education programs at all local elementary schools; Enhancing the connection between local producers and large institutional buyers of food; Encouraging increased local food production by looking at land use patterns in the County.

- **Vancouver Food Policy Council** – Has identified a ‘mandate’ to:

Support the development of a food system where food is:

- Safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate
- Affordable, available and accessible to all; and
- Produced, processed, marketed, consumed and waste products reused or managed in a manner that is financially viable, protects the health and dignity of people and has minimum impact on the environment.

Sample of Priorities: Engages in outreach and public awareness activities to communities in Vancouver on matters related to the food system; Acts as a conduit for feedback from community groups, organizations, other government bodies, and businesses on matters related to the food system in Vancouver; Supports groups endeavouring to initiate and develop projects to enhance the food system in Vancouver; Produces an annual work plan and budget with specific objectives each year, in consultation with its Council and Staff Liaison.

Decision-Making

Most of the organizations profiled rely on one or multiple staff to take on the day-to-day decisions required of a food system organization. More strategic decision-making varies among organizations and often falls under the responsibility of council members, boards of directors, steering committees and advisory councils. To discuss and make those decisions, these leadership bodies meet anywhere from 2-12 times per year. Most of the organizations rely on consensus decision making among the council members or board of directors. In some cases, majority votes are accepted unless the decision involves developing a policy position which then requires consensus. Quorum ranges from 50-65%.

In a number of cases, organizations appoint chairs, vice-chairs and co-chairs to take on some of the decision-making requirements of the organization.

To alleviate some of the challenges associated with organizations made up of members with differing opinions, *Sustain Ontario* is exploring what is called the Constellation Model. The model enables member organizations to choose which campaigns they support and to not feel obliged to support *all* of the organization’s campaigns.

Public Input

Some organizations invite public input into the functioning of a food system organization. Some examples of public input vehicles among the organizations profiled include:

- Agenda items wishing to be discussed at meetings can be sent to the organization for inclusion on the agenda.
- At least one meeting per year is open to the public.
- Minutes of all meetings are made available to the public.
- Public input is only invited to satisfy project-specific needs (focus groups, roundtable discussions, forums, interviews, etc.).
- Non-members can participate as part of the organization’s working groups.
- Periodic forums are held to encourage and gather public input.
- Public input is discouraged at meetings to maintain confidentiality and foster a safe environment for more open and candid dialogue among members.
- Some meetings among council members are identified as task-oriented only and not open to the public.

Funding Strategies

With most food system organizations being relatively young, securing reliable funding continues to pose a challenge. There is, however, a growing interest among traditional funding sources to fund food system initiatives. Three main funding needs emerged from this research: staff, operations, and projects. With funding strategies not being defined to any one of the three needs, the following is a general list of strategies employed by the organizations profiled.

- A number of the food system organizations profiled are staffed by employees of a regional health authority or another food organization.
- The *Toronto* and *Vancouver Food Policy Councils* are staffed by dedicated coordinators who are employed by a department of the City. In Vancouver, other city workers are also tasked with taking on some of the functions of the food policy council.
- Municipal governments (Toronto & Vancouver) allocate a small budget towards operational expenses of their food policy councils (\$15,000).
- Three-quarters of the municipal funding to support the coordinator, secretary and office space of the *Toronto Food Policy Council* is covered by the Province of Ontario which mandates municipalities to offer to its citizens a function which the *TFPC* fulfills.
- “I was able to justify my position just based on the urban benefit. I was able to demonstrate that for every \$1 the City spends buying local food from within a few hundred kilometres from Toronto, it created \$5 worth of employment in the city.” – Wayne Roberts, *Toronto Food Policy Council*
- Because of the positive economic ripple effects of coordinated food system work, the past coordinator of the *Toronto Food Policy Council*, Wayne Roberts, encourages local governments and government agencies to view a food council as a revenue item and not an expense.
- Some organizations operate with no budget. This is especially the case with organizations which primarily serve a networking function (i.e. *Kamloops Food Policy Council* and *Burlington Food Council*).
- Small contribution from health authority towards communication & public events.
- Grants are a popular form of operational funding for food system organizations. Operational grants are often multi-year and accessed from government, foundations, research funds and resource management funds of government agencies.
- Some organizations generate revenues from an economic activity although those revenues are often directed towards covering expenses for the specific project generating those revenues. The *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition’s* annual *Locally Grown Guide* is a good example.
- Public events.
- Food system organizations sometimes take on research or other functions on contract. Proceeds from these contracts can be directed towards the organization’s operating expenses. The *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition* generates over 20% of its revenues through contract work.
- The *Kamloops Food Policy Council* invites groups to use the Council as a host agency for projects and requests that 10% of the budget be directed to the Council.
- Donations.
- The *Ag Innovations Network* suggests a Food System Alliance raise \$30,000 to function annually. *AIN* works with an Alliance to raise at least half of that locally and offers to cover the remaining budget. *AIN* also provides staff to an Alliance.

Challenges

Beyond the common challenges of sustaining non-profit organizations, a new challenge emerging among food system organizations is the increasing level of competition for what nevertheless is an increasing availability of funding opportunities for food system work. Accessing national funding opportunities appears to be the greatest challenge, with some organizations diverting their attention away from these sources to instead seek out more localized funding options.

Localized funding options present their own challenges, as many individual organizations which compose a food system organization are often wishing to access those same funds. As past Coordinator of the *Toronto Food Policy Council*, Wayne Roberts, says, “If you don’t fund a food policy council through the government, you place a food policy council in direct competition with the very groups it’s designed to help.”

Revenue Generating Activities

To date, food system organizations tend to not focus much attention on generating revenues through economic activity versus more traditional funding streams. As the economic value of local food systems increases both monetarily and perceptually, it appears that food system organizations might be in an ideal position to insert themselves within the very food system they are seeking to enhance. This might come in the form of very broad education- and communication-driven initiatives such as the annual *Locally Grown Guide* of the *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition*, or more on-the-ground projects like managing farmers’ markets. As *WFFC’s* Lynne Fessenden believes, the ‘low-hanging fruit’ are the economic opportunities available in a region.

“The food system as economic development is the way to go (there are just more pools of money in that realm)”.

- Lynne Fessenden, *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition*

As an organization involved in food system work for longer than most of the other organizations profiled, the *WFFC* has arrived at a transitional point in its evolution. It recognizes that the ability to sustain itself might best be achieved through taking on an already-existing business or developing one from scratch.

There are many pieces making up a food system which stand to benefit all stakeholders within a geographic area, and there are many options for taking on such revenue-generating activities which can sustain the operations of an organization.

In a similar way, *The Center for an Agricultural Economy* is home to an important infrastructural piece within its local food economy: The *Vermont Food Venture Center* is a shared-use kitchen incubator for value-added and speciality food producers. The facility can be rented and co-packing arranged. Staff of the Center offer consulting services to the start-up businesses.

While Mark Winne of the *Community Food Security Coalition* devotes most of his energy to policy-oriented food councils, he shares his perspectives on food system organizations becoming involved in economic activity.

With most food councils being policy-oriented as opposed to task-oriented, what are your thoughts on a food council generating revenues (via projects, businesses, events, workshops, etc.)?

“Haven’t really seen that yet among food policy councils. I’d probably argue against it (but still food councils are still at a stage where anything’s possible and there are no rules).

I don’t think food councils should be out there engaged in projects trying to make money. I ultimately think it could become a distraction.

Using community gardens as an example; should a food council be digging the soil or working to make policies favour their presence?

If a revenue-generating model was chosen, it should be asked, “does this add value or is it duplicating or replicating what others are or could be doing?”

I recommend identifying the need for a project and then helping mobilize others to try and undertake the project.”

Greatest Successes and Challenges

All of the organizations profiled were asked what they believe their greatest successes are. Some organizations were also asked to identify their greatest challenges. Below is a collection of those responses including others observed as part of this research.

Successes

- Input into the Region of Waterloo’s Regional Official Plan. The ROP directs growth and change in the region for the coming 20 years.
- Annual *Growing Local* conference bringing together local food system advocates from across Manitoba.
- *Winnipeg Food Policy Working Group* – working towards establishing a food policy council within the City of Winnipeg.
- Eighth year of publishing an annual *Locally Grown* guide to the region’s food system. The guide generates revenues and pays for itself.
- *Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Project* of which two of the organizations profiled are a part. The project is increasing the production and infrastructural capabilities within Oregon’s Willamette Valley to produce grain and beans for local consumption.
- *Manitoba Food Charter* – of which 60 organizations, institutions and governments have signed on to.
- *Lane County Local Food Market Analysis* – an economic analysis of the local food system which offers significant leverage to the work of the *Willamette Farm and Food Coalition*.
- *Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario* – a report which food system stakeholders from across the Province of Ontario can rally around.
- Commitment made by the start-up committee of the *Halton Food Council*, who, despite lacking any formal processes, was instrumental in the eventual development of the Council.
- *The Center for an Agricultural Economy’s Vermont Food Venture Center* – a shared-used kitchen incubator and consulting services for small-scale producers.
- The *Vancouver Food Policy Council’s* high level of credibility and influence within the city and among the municipal government.
- The *Burlington Food Council’s* strong relationship with the City of Burlington despite not maintaining any formal relationship.
- The *Kamloops Food Policy Council’s* many projects which it has incubated over the past 15 years and which continue to prosper.

Challenges

- Lack of a formal membership structure.
- There isn’t a region-wide recognition of a food system which creates a challenge for the organization to articulate its vision and activities. Similarly, with the increasing activity around food system development work, it’s difficult for the organization itself to identify its own food system and foodshed as there are no clearly defined borders.
- Policy-oriented work is ultimately a very long-term process. Maintaining resources and momentum is a challenge.

- Too much reliance by the organization on staff support provided by regional health authorities, which, depending on budgets and political will, could be reduced or eliminated at any time.
- Perception among rural residents that the organization is urban-centric.

Academic Partnerships

With a rapidly growing interest in the functioning and development of local food systems, academic institutions have much to offer the organizations taking on this work. In many cases, individuals working within or representing academic institutions are members of food councils or are board directors. While working partnerships between food system organizations and academia are not widespread, a few notable examples emerged from this research.

Willamette Farm and Food Coalition – Partnered with the University of Oregon’s Community Services Center to publish *Lane County Local Food Market Analysis*; an in-depth market analysis of the local food system in Lane County with the core objective of identifying the opportunities to expand local markets for locally produced food.

Ten Rivers Food Web – Partners on multiple initiatives with Oregon State University. *TRFW* supports OSU’s Organic Growers’ Club and Horticulture Department and their 2-acre farm; documents local agricultural history alongside OSU students; partners with OSU’s Lincoln County Extension Services’ Lincoln Co. Foods – an initiative to connect producers with buyers;

The Center for an Agricultural Economy – Maintains the most active academic partnerships of the organizations profiled. Memorandums of Understanding are held with the University of Vermont and Sterling College. About a dozen research projects have been completed between CAE and UVM (i.e. engineering students assisting The Cellars at Jasper Hill with developing ventilation systems for the cheese cellars; organic compost development projects and social sciences projects). Sterling College maintains a sustainable agriculture program. CAE is also developing a relationship with Lyndon State College which is looking to build an entrepreneurship program on food value-added processing.

Words of Advice

“I’d recommend to try and include as many people as possible and get someone skilled in facilitation and trusted by disparate partners to lead a process that’s seen as transparent and inclusive of people’s different opinions but yet is firm in trying to move the process forward with clear goals and clear values and who is able to say, “join us if you agree this is what we need”. - *Marc Xuereb, Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable*

“Don’t focus on the things that divide you, focus on the things that you agree on... There’s so much that needs change that everyone can probably agree on.” – *Wayne Roberts, Toronto Food Policy Council*

“I’d recommend to try and include as many people as possible and get someone skilled in facilitation and trusted by disparate partners to lead a process that’s seen as transparent and inclusive of people’s different opinions but yet is firm in trying to move the process forward with clear goals and clear values and who is able to say, “join us if you agree this is what we need”. - *Marc Xuereb, Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable*

“Bring the mainstream into the dialogue.” – *Paul Chorney, Food Matters Manitoba*

“We’re looking at our effectiveness... dealing with being understaffed with the amount of stuff we’re taking on. Because you [West Kootenay region] are at the place you’re at now... with all this awareness and interest... you really have the choice of focusing on what the purpose is of your organization. It’s not like you really have to address *all* things local food... like what I see my predecessors doing... you really have this option to think about wanting to be of service to build a stronger food system and how to do it and pay for the work that needs to be done. Whether you’re involved in a marketing piece or whether you get businesses and farms to pay you something because you’re promoting them, we’ve been this benevolent broker for some time, and I imagine, ‘what if we had \$5 for every transaction we’ve facilitated?’ So, I guess I would say in your first steps, you really think about that funding and staffing piece and initially taking on the pieces that are going to be paid for. In this particular climate there are options... think that way from the start.” - *Lynne Fessenden, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition*

“The food system as economic development is the way to go (there are just more pools of money in that realm)”. – *Lynne Fessenden, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition*

“Engage in a “slow process” when building an organization addressing food system concerns/opportunities. Ensure everyone is being talked to throughout the process. The core of this work is building relationships.” – *Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, Sustain Ontario*

“This Alliance is only as strong as the relationships within it.” – *Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, Sustain Ontario*

“Having some set of ideas that can be agreed upon is huge” (referring to Sustain Ontario’s Menu 2020 report). – *Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, Sustain Ontario*

“Having flexibility in the model from the get-go and allowing for ongoing development and experimentation and not trying to entrench things to quickly is proving really helpful because it’s allowing us to adapt and change and figure out what works. The old models of organizing often work but they often don’t.” – *Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, Sustain Ontario*

“Trust the process and trust the people involved.” – *Lynn Garrison, Halton Food Council*

“I think clarity of mission and goals is really important. Food system work is so broad and that’s what makes it exciting but that also makes it easily overwhelming and encourages going in lots of different directions if it’s not clear what your particular strengths are. That’s what we’ve been seeking to define for ourselves too.” – *Jen Christian Myers, Ten Rivers Food Web*

“In our experience, there are so many organizations trying to tackle one corner of food system work and we really think that communication between groups is an essential piece... making sure people are talking to each other and collaborating and knowing how not to step on each others toes.” – *Jen Christian Myers, Ten Rivers Food Web*

“Identify several strong entities within the region that might not necessarily converse or have traditionally worked together (maybe even an antagonistic history) and engage with them independently and explore the idea of an alliance with them. Find out what they would need in order to participate and how they can support the formation of an alliance. Spend a lot of time on this and then bring everyone together into the same room.” – *Helen McGrath, Ag Innovations Network*

“Within your communications, really identify the need for an alliance (pointing out the silos within the food system and the gaps that need to be filled and the coordination necessary to fill those gaps).” – *Helen McGrath, Ag Innovations Network*

“Be aware of local dynamics.” – *Helen McGrath, Ag Innovations Network*

“If you have a good agricultural plan in the region, the logical thing is to say ‘well let’s follow it up with a good *urban* plan that takes advantage of it.’” – *Wayne Roberts, Toronto Food Policy Council*

“A big problem FPCs have is being driven by big-P policy... they think they’re going to change the world and lead to a real reconfiguration of how agriculture works. Instead, it’s best to intervene as the government’s own processes evolve on their own.” – *Wayne Roberts, Toronto Food Policy Council*

“The single most important thing that the Vancouver Food Policy Council did in its developmental stage was when the City said “we don’t have a mandate for food and see no reason why to be involved in an FPC.” We said, “but you are already involved in food... zoning, health, licensing, engineering, gardens, etc.” They said, “oh ya.” So we encouraged them to do an inventory and they came to us with 7 large landscape-style sheets outlining every department in the City that’s in some way involved in food. They said, “Wow... we really missed it... and we see we’re not coordinating. We could save a lot of money by coordinating.”” – *Herb Barbolet, Vancouver Food Policy Council*

“Key people are community nutritionists. Work with the health authority as much as possible. Local governments listen to them.” – *Herb Barbolet, Vancouver Food Policy Council*

“It’s a challenge for an organization like a food council to only focus on networking as it’s hard to maintain energy and momentum. Having a focal point is key.” – *Meg Klepack, Burlington Food Council*

“I do think this type of work needs to be framed within a health authority.” – *Laura Kalina, Kamloops Food Policy Council*

“Organize around a project! It builds trust and momentum.” – *Laura Kalina, Kamloops Food Policy Council*

“I recommend identifying the need for a project and then helping mobilize others to try and undertake the project.” – *Mark Winne, Community Food Security Coalition*

“If being independent is decided as the approach to take, the best way to be independent is to affiliate with an existing non-profit (find an umbrella organization, maybe a fiscal sponsor). This gives you more resources to draw on. But it’s still important to develop relationships with government so certain agencies will participate in your work.” – *Mark Winne, Community Food Security Coalition*

“The first step is to achieve some sort of common identity in that you all want to assume that you all operate within a regional food system and share certain interests in that food system.” – *Mark Winne, Community Food Security Coalition*

“I think it’s important to help people understand that there is this thing called a food system and what it is we mean by that and how complicated it is but also how inter-related it is. The point of coming together is to connect those dots and that becomes a value and benefit for everyone.” – *Mark Winne, Community Food Security Coalition*

Regional Agriculture Plans

The region identified within this report for a proposed regional food system organization in the West Kootenay spans two Regional Districts – the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) and the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB). In 2011, both districts completed Agriculture Plans.

Since the early 1990s, agriculture plans have been produced for regions throughout British Columbia with the support of the Agricultural Land Commission and Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry identifies the purpose of these plans as “focusing on a community's farm area to discover practical solutions to issues and identify opportunities to strengthen farming and ultimately to contribute to agriculture and the community's long-term sustainability.”

Despite the current mandates and structure of regional districts being able to only address some components of the local food system, identifying these plans within this report is essential. The two plans represent a very recent and comprehensive body of knowledge and accompanying recommendations which can help support and/or be supported by a regional food system organization.

Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Agriculture Plan

Prepared by Brynne Consulting with support from the Steering Committee of the Agriculture Plan Project and completed in June 2011. Funding for the plan was provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C., Regional District of Central Kootenay and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture.

According to the Plan, one of its core goals is to identify priority actions necessary to support the viability of farming in the District. Consultations throughout the region were undertaken to help determine those priorities.

Key concerns identified within the region include:

- continuing loss of farmers and their expertise;
- fallow or abandoned farms increasing weed and pest pressures on the remaining farms;
- loss of biodiversity as farmers are forced to focus on high value crops;
- lack of retirement options and succession for farmers;
- farm income cannot support the purchase of land at residential / recreational market values; and
- difficulty funding equipment and infrastructure needs for start-up farmers, even if they are able to acquire the land.
- the loss of regionally-based extension services, providing professional support to fledgling and established farmers;
- aging farmers and few new entries into the sector;
- limited local equipment, supplies and processing facilities;
- ongoing loss of farmland; and
- the shortage of seasonal and permanent local market options.

Recommendations in the Plan

The following are examples of some of the recommendations included in the plan of which the RDCK is now considering their implementation. For more detailed recommendations, visit www.agplan.ca

- **Farm Support Services:** Partner with Columbia Basin Trust to pilot a project offering agriculture development services to farmers and food producers.
- **RDCK and Agriculture in the Creston Valley:** Create and maintain a database of ag. inventory data in the Creston Valley; Support services on farming regulations; Re-instating exemptions from building permit fees for farm buildings.
- **Regional Meat and Food Processing:** Review zoning bylaws to permit on-farm processing of livestock and/or other crops; Review restrictions on livestock numbers in rural non-agricultural zones and increase them.
- **Pest and Weed Pressures:** Investigate region-wide pest control program.
- **The Land Base:** Discourage subdivisions of ag. land and encourage consolidation of contiguous smaller ag. lots; Mitigate loss of ag. land to urban boundary expansion by working with member municipalities to investigate a co-operative approach to ag. lands within the urban/rural interface; Encourage protection of ag. land; Establish maximum residential footprint policy for all ag. zoned land; Amend zoning bylaw to incorporate maximum setback requirements for residential buildings on ag. land; Develop educational materials in support of no-build clauses on ag. land.
- **The Land Base Governance:** Each RDCK Director to reserve a position on their Advisory Planning Commission for someone with a background in agriculture; Encourage the ALC to update their ALR decision-making guidelines to better accommodate the unique characteristics of the region.

- **Water & Watersheds:** Work with Columbia Basin Trust to encourage household water conservation; Work with farm and food security organizations in the region to provide information on water conservation practices in food production; Explore options for including the provision for agricultural needs in the design and operation of RDCK water systems.
- **New Farmers:** Encourage regionally-based farm organizations, colleges and employment / career development service agencies to establish and administer farmer training and mentoring programs; Inform residents on tax exemptions available to landowners whose land is under production.
- **Pollination:** Encourage a Kootenay-based bee inspector to meet the needs of apiarists across the region.
- **Education:** Work with and support food security organizations in the Region to expand and become more effective in their work; Work with Edible School Grounds Network and School Districts to promote, establish and incorporate working school gardens into their curricula and food supply; Encourage the re-establishment of the ALC's agricultural training programs; Support public libraries to expand their agricultural resources in a range of media.
- **Hunger:** Support agencies like the Kaslo Food Hub to establish small-scale local food distribution centres in other communities.
- **Local Supply & Resiliency:** Assess and initiate mechanisms to expand local market options for regional food; Encourage creation of a regional food and farm marketing program that includes regional food and seasonality guides; Encourage member municipalities to incorporate policies and programs supportive of urban agriculture, food production and food systems.
- **Long Term Vision:** Incorporate agriculture and food systems into community planning.
- **Implementation:** Establish a regional Agricultural Advisory Committee to oversee implementation of the Agriculture Plan.

Boundary Regional Agriculture Plan

The Boundary Regional Agriculture Plan is an initiative of the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary. Funded by the Investment Agriculture Foundation, the Ministry of Community and Rural Development, the Boundary Economic Development Committee and RDKB Area(s) C, D and E. Initiation of the Plan was identified as one of the priorities in 2009 by the Boundary Economic Development Commission. The Plan was prepared by Kelowna-based consulting firm Calissi & Crane.

The key concerns identified in the report echo those from the RDCK process. The major recommendation of the plan is to hire an agriculture development officer to advance the full list of recommendations within the report.

Many stakeholders who have viewed the report have expressed reservations with its content and the RDKB's plan for implementation. As of the date of this report, the Ag Plan is expected to be completed in September 2011 and then proceed through a process of approval.

Conclusion

This report is intended to stimulate thought for existing and yet-to-exist collaborations of local food system advocates. Thus, the report is intended to encourage readers to arrive at their own conclusions. For the Start-Up Advisory Committee supporting this project, the most important conclusions to this work are the recommended next steps as outlined in the following pages. This recommendation will be used to invite further support beyond the advisory committee through endorsements from organizations, businesses and institutions.

For myself, having now been immersed in this work for a number of months, I've come to believe that this report has helped suggest that the role and functioning of food system organizations in Canada and the United States is very much in its infancy. While this report has sought to inform the process of developing a regional food system alliance in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia, I see the outcomes of this research having more specifically demonstrated how much further these types of organizations are capable of expanding their impacts on local food systems. With the importance of viable local food systems becoming more and more apparent among a diversity of demographics, it appears that this is the ideal time for communities to develop even more comprehensive visions than are already in place and put those visions into practice. The necessity of 'tip-toeing' cautiously around the firmly-rooted and more widely accepted food, political and social systems we live among appears to be coming to an end.

However, despite the common interest among communities throughout Canada and the U.S. to enhance their local food systems, the political, geographic and cultural climates of every community/region differs substantially, and the degree to which food system organizations can exert an influence on their local food system is very much dependent on these factors. *The Center for an Agricultural Economy*, as an example, has made considerable gains in a short timeframe to have become a very notable contributor to its local and state food system(s) and has been able to do so within a climate where government and academic support and funding is high, comparative to other regions. Nevertheless, support for

local food system work elsewhere is not as available as it is in Vermont, leaving many organizations in less supportive regions to define their role much differently – often serving more of a networking function than the project-oriented function which the *CAE* has been able to assume.

Another key determinant of the role of a food system organization is the degree to which other organizations, businesses, institutions and/or government are already taking on a piece of the food system. The *Burlington Food Council*, as an example, operates within a State which is home to many local food and agricultural initiatives. As a result, the Council does not see itself needing to serve a broad mandate in the same way most food councils do, and instead has found a niche working on urban agriculture issues alongside the City government. The *BFC* is also able to carry out this function successfully without needing to become an officially sanctioned body of the municipality. In its formative years, the *Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable* also recognized the many groups in the region already working to enhance its local food system and chose to support all of this work by serving a networking, communication and advocacy role.

What is clear from this research is that there is no one single approach to the successful development and functioning of food system organizations. What *is* common to the success of this work are the people involved. Commitment, passion, compassion and patience appear to be the most important human attributes contributing to the successes which can be realized by these organizations. Also common among the organizations profiled are their missions and visions. “To champion a vibrant, secure, sustainable and healthy local food system” is unanimous among all coordinated local food system efforts.

The functions of food system organizations have been isolated into eight categories; networking, education, communication, policy/advocacy, assessment, economic development/infrastructure, low-income food access and culture. The most successful organizations appear to be the ones which have developed their structure and form *around* their intended function(s), not vice-versa. It also appears that the path toward a healthy local food system is when all of these functions are being addressed by a diversity of individuals, organizations, businesses, institutions and government, and not just one entity.

With the depth of experience which has resulted from carrying out these functions among these seminal organizations profiled in this report, the soil for similar and more concerted efforts to enhance local food systems has now been prepared. A debt of gratitude is in order to all of the individuals who have made the tremendous successes of these organizations possible. Their efforts have permitted areas like the West Kootenay region of British Columbia and others to begin the process of more coordinated and unified local food system development with one foot already through the door and with seeds in hand.

In healthy and abundant food,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Steinman', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Jon Steinman

Towards a Regional Food System Alliance Development Strategy for the West Kootenay

Recommended Next Steps

As proposed by the Advisory Committee

The West Kootenay is home to a diverse community of individuals, businesses and organizations who contribute to the production, processing and distribution of food for local consumption. All combined, these efforts, their accompanying relationships, and the very act of eating, make up what can be referred to as our 'food system'. In recent years, the contribution of local food systems to health and well-being, the environment, the economy and culture has become widely accepted to be of paramount importance.

But how do we define this 'system', and, as with any system, how do we identify the relationships within it to make sure that the system is functioning in the best interest of the people it serves?

With no efforts currently underway in the region to consistently bring together this community of food system 'stakeholders', we believe a regional food system alliance is an ideal forum to help enhance our regional food supply. It was this interest which motivated this committee and regional partners to support and commission the report - *Towards a Regional Food System Alliance Development Strategy for the West Kootenay*. The report has since inspired the following vision and recommendations.

Strategic Vision

We recognize an insatiable appetite among residents in the West Kootenay to support and be a part of a thriving local food system.

Our most important resources to realize this vision of a thriving local food system are the people and community-driven interests already present among the many food focused initiatives in the region. The West Kootenay is home to Canada's largest and most-successful independent consumer-owned retail food co-operative, Canada's first accredited food hub, and Canada's first community supported agriculture (CSA) projects for grain! Clearly, cooperation and community are two values rooted strongly within our West Kootenay culture. With such a diverse history of growing, hunting, fishing, gathering and processing a significant percentage of the food which once sustained the population, this region is ready to become an even greater beacon to the world of how food can become the catalyst for enriching culture, respecting local ecosystems; improving the health and well-being of our residents; and, becoming a primary driver of the local economy.

However, despite the many individuals, producers, processors, distributors, retailers, restaurants and caterers operating in the region today, there is no single locus of activity to connect together all of these initiatives to each other and to the rest of the regional community. Similarly, among the food and agricultural community, there is a well recognized lack of infrastructure for processing, storage, distribution and marketing. There are inadequate vehicles for networking and education and no overarching vision that brings people together resulting in an absence of a unified voice on issues of regional significance. A new and long term initiative is greatly needed to address these gaps and opportunities.

Throughout Canada and the United States, many organizations have been successfully demonstrating the positive outcomes that can be found from encouraging more coordination and stronger relationships within a food system. Often, these efforts have successfully enabled a community to identify just *what* the food system is and the opportunities to be found within it. With many models to look to for inspiration, Jon Steinman carried out

We've concluded that the greatest opportunities for our regional food system is through healthy economic development. We believe this should become the primary focus of a West Kootenay regional food system alliance.

research into how food system organizations function and how they are structured (their form). With that research now complete, this committee believes that the best strategy forward is to determine the function(s) of this hoped-for regional food system organization before determining its form. Having also assessed the range of functions which food system organizations often adopt, we've concluded that the greatest opportunity for our regional food system is through healthy economic development. We believe this should become the primary focus of a West Kootenay regional food system alliance.

By 'economic development', we are referring to a sustained effort among all people within the region to support and develop the infrastructure, knowledge and skills, necessary to increase the amount of food produced in the region. It's also essential that this effort be informed by and contribute to an ecosystem-centred approach, culture, health and social well-being. Namely, we believe that through better coordination among individuals, organizations, governments and businesses, a regional food system alliance becomes an exciting tool which could carry out a mandate to take on, stimulate, and/or partner on activities which capture the millions of food dollars leaking out of the region every year. What do we mean by 'leakage'? Using data developed by Oregon State University for Lane County, Oregon, we're able to estimate that West Kootenay residents annually spend in the neighbourhood of \$266 million on food. If only 5% of that is spent locally (as is the case in Lane County), we feel it's safe to conclude that the amount of money pouring out of this region via our food expenditures is both shocking and incredibly exciting.

We estimate that West Kootenay residents annually spend in the neighbourhood of \$266 million on food. If only 5% of that is spent locally*, then we feel it safe to conclude that the amount of money pouring out of this region via our food expenditures is both shocking and incredibly exciting!

(*estimates based on data from Market Analysis for Local Food Products in Lane County, Oregon State University 2010)

We are therefore proposing that this process of developing a regional food system alliance enter into a new stage of research and subsequent development. A three-phased approach is recommended and outlined on the following page.

Food System Alliance

Despite the process thus far having been labelled as the development of a food "council", we are recommending that the intended outcomes of this process be referred to as a 'Food System Alliance'.

Vision

(We propose the following Vision to guide subsequent phases of development and the anticipated Food System Alliance)

The Food System Alliance envisions a West Kootenay food system that shows an increase in the percentage of locally produced food each year, is robust and versatile in the face of ecological and economic pressures, and is an inspiration for a vibrant and resilient culture of food in other regions.

Mission

(We propose the following Mission to guide subsequent phases of development and the anticipated Food System Alliance)

The mission of the Food System Alliance is to:

- support and facilitate activities that encourage individuals, businesses and institutions to buy food products from local sources, thus retaining economic wealth within the region;
- facilitate dialogue and collaboration, and bring together community resources to maintain and enhance the health of the region's food system;
- promote and celebrate West Kootenay food producers and stakeholders and establish the region as a model for a vibrant local food system.

Recommended Next Steps



Phase 1 – a) Coordinate and initiate a Local Food Market Analysis. b) Research best practices and feasibility for producing an annual West Kootenay Local Food Guide and companion guide for businesses and institutions. c) Consult with Tides Canada on how a yet-to-be-formed regional food organization might best position itself to benefit from its services.

a) Local Food Market Analysis

A local food market analysis would identify approaches to localize the food system. In particular, it would identify economic development opportunities created by local food production and consumption.

To help establish an organization as a stimulator of economic development within a region's food system, the ability to set benchmarks and tangible goals appears to be necessary. An excellent example of a local food market analysis was produced by the Community Planning Workshop at the Community Service Center at Oregon State University. OSU conducted a Local Food Market Analysis for Lane County and published its findings in September 2010. The report "proposes implementation strategies that the private sector, local governments, and non-profits should consider in achieving the goal of increasing local production and consumption of food products". The study specifically focuses on what can be achieved within the next one to five years.

Examples of some of the implementation strategies identified in the OSU report include: Create a Local Food Coordinator Position to Link Buyers and Growers; Develop Tomato, Bean and Squash Co-Pack Facilities; Encourage Processor- and Distributor Supported Agriculture; Develop Controlled Atmosphere Storage Capacity; and, Increase Wheat Milling and Storage Operations.

Using the many already-established models for conducting local food market analyses, this phase would involve coordinating a West Kootenay analysis with local and/or non-local partners and identify what external funding is required to carry out the project.

Points of Interest from Market Analysis for Local Food Products in Lane County (2010)

- Expanded local food production potentially provides new jobs and keeps money in the local economy.
- An Iowa study concluded that if Iowans were to purchase seven servings of fruits and vegetables locally for just three months of the year, the direct and indirect economic benefits would amount to the creation of almost 6,000 jobs (equivalent of 1 job per 500 residents).
- Every percentage point of the food market that can be produced locally is worth \$11.7 million dollars to Lane County's economy.

b) Annual Local Food Guides – Best Practices and Feasibility

Inspired by the success of the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition's Locally Grown guide (among many other successful models abroad), a West Kootenay Local Food Guide would be a significant driver of the local food economy and offer a strong tool to communicate the intent of a regional alliance seeking to unify all parts of the food system. The guide would inherently communicate what the regional 'food system' is and help begin the process of establishing the West Kootenay as a home to a distinct and identifiable culture of food. Included would be; editorial content on food system issues; farm listings; seasonal crop availability charts; U-pick guides; community supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives; restaurants, caterers and retailers carrying local products; processors; farmers' markets; books, films and resource listings; children and youth programs; and a directory of food system or related organizations in the region. The guide could also act as a communication tool for the food system alliance which we propose would house this initiative. The guide could be offered in both print and searchable on-line formats and would look to partner with some of the more locally-specific guides already in production throughout the region (i.e. Creston Valley, Slocan Valley, West Kootenay Food Directory).

Annual food guides require dedicated and consistent oversight to make sure that the guide remains up to date. This phase would involve more in-depth research into best practices for producing a local food guide and gather the details on how to successfully publish and manage such a resource.

c) Consult with Tides Canada

Coordinating economic activity within our food system requires dedicated staff, strong governance and innovative models for community ownership of the initiative. Similar to the successful model employed by Sustain Ontario, we propose that this phase explore how a proposed regional food system alliance might become a project of Tides Canada. TC offers support to non-profit initiatives with financial management, human resources, accounting, risk management, collaboration and good governance. Such a relationship would offer a level of security in the organization's early years and instil greater confidence among potential funders.

“Each new non-profit organization reinvents the need for the same financial, legal and human resources services. With Tides Canada, projects leverage a single infrastructure, increasing efficiencies and amplifying the impact of donor dollars. We free you up to focus on your mission and program work while you rely on our support infrastructure.” - Tides Canada

Annual Business and Institutional Buy Local Guide

More and more businesses are interested in purchasing local food products. There is currently no consistently updated resource to help direct this interest and serve as a matchmaker between businesses and producers / processors / distributors. The Willamette Farm and Food Coalition offers a good model and has been able to glean data for the guide from its broader Locally Grown guide. A West Kootenay version could be distributed to all businesses and institutions in the region which sell food and would be available on-line. The resource could also help lay the foundation for more coordinated efforts to encourage and develop better regional food infrastructure (i.e. distribution, processing) and would contribute significantly to enhancing the culture of West Kootenay food.

Phase 2 – Using the recommendations generated through the market analysis, engage stakeholders and the community in a dialogue to help set the direction for an anticipated regional organization.

This phase would engage stakeholders and possible partners in conversations on the merits of the research and the implementation strategies developed through the market analysis. This process would seek to build momentum and community ownership of the initiative. Discussions throughout the region could bring together small groups of stakeholders to explore the economic development potential for the region's food system and how a food system

alliance might best stimulate these desired functions. With economic development interests involving a broad demographic of the population, ‘stakeholders’ are defined as those working both within and outside of the food system who maintain an interest in the initiative and who possess a depth of knowledge/skills to contribute to the process.

Phase 3 – Develop a regional food alliance, which, among other functions, would oversee the production of a regional local food guide and assist in carrying out and/or stimulating the implementation strategies of the food market analysis.

The *Towards a Regional Food System Alliance Development Strategy* report has generated a comprehensive overview of the many forms which food system organizations adopt (governance, staff, membership, funding, decision-making and communications, among other areas of focus). While this committee has identified what are likely more appropriate models than others, we support the completion of Phase 1 and 2 of this recommendation prior to determining what form a food system alliance might take.

Recommended Goals for the Development Phase

- Using the report, *Towards a Regional Food System Alliance Development Strategy for the West Kootenay* as a guide, establish the form which the alliance would adopt to best serve its desired function(s). Membership, governance, staffing, decision-making, meetings, communications and funding strategies are to all be developed.

Recommended Goals of a Food System Alliance

- Stimulate and/or partner on food system infrastructural development (i.e. food processing facilities; co-op development; food distribution; food storage; business consulting services; etc.)
- Produce an annual regional food guide and supplementary guide for businesses and institutions.
- Consider the development of a regional food charter which would offer a shared vision for the food system to be adopted by individuals, organizations, businesses, institutions and governments. On-line technologies would encourage the charter to become a living document whereby signatories would periodically update how they are working towards that shared vision. This would become a strong tool to communicate exactly what the food system is and who within the community is actively involved.
- Consider developing a network of communities throughout Canada and the United States who are working on similar regional food system economic development initiatives. Member communities of the network would inspire one another through the sharing of each other’s experiences.
- Communications; Education; Networking.
- Unified voice on issues of regional significance.

In Closing

The purpose of a food system is to build connections among producers and eaters, but as Ken Meter of the Minnesota based Crossroads Research Center reminds, those connections are “frustrated by the prevailing food industry, which separates farmers from eaters so significantly that supply and demand cannot balance.” As a result, the viability of our West Kootenay food producers remains precarious, but we do nevertheless enthusiastically anticipate that a regional food system alliance focused on economic development could become a leading

A regional food system alliance focused on economic development could become a leading catalyst for our regional community to achieve this critical balance and provide that necessary support to existing, emerging, and yet-to-be producers of food.

catalyst for our regional community to achieve this critical balance and provide that necessary support to existing, emerging and yet-to-be producers of food.

This preliminary stage in the process of developing a West Kootenay Food System Alliance has offered a strong foundation of research on how to develop and manage an inclusive and democratic regional food alliance. It has further supported our own process of recommending what we believe is the most impactful series of steps to achieve the proposed mission and vision for this initiative and propel all residents to proudly stand behind and support a vibrant and responsible food system and food culture.

In abundant food,

Your Advisory Committee - Proposed West Kootenay Food System Alliance



Corky Evans
Former MLA Nelson-Creston (Winlaw)



Mike Stolte
Center for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership CIEL (Nelson)



Sheila Dobie
Spencer Hill Orchard (Grand Forks)



Wayne Harris
Mountain Valley Farm / Kootenay Alpine Cheese / Creston Valley Agricultural Society (Lister)



Nadine Raynolds
Redfish School of Change / GreenLearning BC (New Denver)



Jocelyn Carver
Kootenay Country Store Co-operative (Nelson)



Carolee Colter
CDS Consulting Co-op (Nelson)



Jon Steinman - Coordinator
Deconstructing Dinner (Nelson)

Organizations Interviewed - Profiles

Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable

Type of Organization: 18-member roundtable staffed by regional health authority

Area served: Region of Waterloo, ON

Population: 534,900

Main urban centres: Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge

Founded: 2006

Interviewed: Marc Xuereb- staff support (Region of Waterloo Public Health)

www.wrfoodsystem.ca



Background

The Roundtable is a networking and policy-making group working on building a strong voice for a healthy food system in Waterloo Region. They are a group of eighteen representatives from key sectors and interests of the local food system who share the goal of a healthier food system in Waterloo Region. Representatives include local farmers, emergency food providers, food processing, distributing and retail, business and health professionals, and more.

History

The Region of Waterloo Public Health led a process in 2005 to develop a food system plan (“*Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region*”). The plan identified priority issues relating to the region’s food system. The community was then consulted via focus groups and a forum and was invited to comment on the plan and suggest strategies to address those priorities (about 80 participants in total). The decision to form a Roundtable to address those priorities came out of that forum. To assure widespread support for the development of a food system organization, a notable effort was put into inviting all food system stakeholders and the public to the forum. The 60 participants at the June 2006 forum were asked to vote on the identified priorities. Using the results of the vote and taking into consideration the level of interest among participants to engage with the priority areas, staff then put forward the six most common themes which became the Roundtable’s *Food System Priorities*. There were some people who disagreed with the process, in particular, believing there were already enough organizations in the region working to enhance the food system. The energy of the majority, however, believed there was not yet an organization taking a ‘birds-eye’ view of the food system. A start-up committee of 8 was formed and was made up of those who were most active at that forum. They went on to spend one year developing the Roundtable’s Terms of Reference. A call for applications was put out and the Committee reviewed the applications and decided on 18. A launch event was hosted to announce the Roundtable’s formation.

Mission

To champion a vibrant and healthy local food system.



Goals

To increase awareness of food systems issues and communicate with a common voice to promote action.

“I’d recommend to try and include as many people as possible and get someone skilled in facilitation and trusted by disparate partners to lead a process that’s seen as transparent and inclusive of people’s different opinions but yet is firm in trying to move the process forward with clear goals and clear values and who is able to say, “join us if you agree this is what we need”.”
- Marc Xuereb

Priorities

- Food Sovereignty – food democracy, food skills, food education.
- Food Policy – advocate for joined-up policies @ local, provincial and federal. Monitor their implementation.
- Urban Agriculture – encourage expansion of food grown or raised in urban areas & wild foods.
- Local Food Infrastructure – rebuild processing and distribution infrastructure required to make more local foods available. Farm-Institution programs.
- Farm Viability – advocate for policies/initiatives which return a larger portion of the food dollar to farmers.
- Access to Healthy Food – advocate for policies/initiatives which ensure everyone has access to enough nutritious food (adequate incomes, emergency food, walkable food, culturally appropriate foods).

The priorities were discussed by members of the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable for several months in 2009, and

were endorsed in a motion passed at its meeting in January 2010. In establishing these as priorities, the Roundtable looked at the priorities that had been previously identified by the Roundtable in past years, and assessed them based on what changes had occurred in the food system since then. They also took into account the Declaration of the Waterloo Region Food Summit held in November 2009, which involved over 140 people. The Summits (2009/2011) act as opportunities to reassess the organization's Food System Priorities.

Activities

The WRFSR identifies itself as carrying out five functions:

- Networking/education – build new partnerships
- Coordinate/analyze – identify and prioritize food system needs and support creation and implementation of initiatives
- Evaluation – establish benchmarks and targets for achievement of mission/goals
- Funding – lever community resources to support mission/goals
- Policy – identify policy changes which support goals and advocate for their implementation

Of the five functions above, the bulk of the Roundtable's attention is paid to networking/education. This is achieved via meetings, events (i.e. Healthy Food System lecture series), communication activities and food summits (2009/2011).

The Roundtable focuses considerable attention on reassessing and updating their food system priorities. The organization also works on supporting other organizations by writing letters of support to funders. Not much effort is currently put into the funding piece of the organization's stated activities. Since its inception the Roundtable has focused its attention on 3 policy issues.

Meetings

The Roundtable meets a minimum of five times per year.

- Half hour of business (requiring decisions)
- Half hour of updates from each of the 18 members
- Two hours of presentations and discussions on issues related to current priorities/campaigns
- Quorum is 6. Meetings usually have 12-13 in attendance

Public Input

- Suggestions for agenda items are invited and the Co-Chairs handle requests. It is recommended that suggested items also indicate requested time for presentation and discussion; relevance to Roundtable goals and food system priorities; and whether or not a decision is requested of Roundtable.
- At least one meeting per year is open to the public.
- Minutes of all meetings are available to the public upon approval by the Roundtable.
- Decisions by the Roundtable are by majority vote except on decisions related to the adoption of public policy positions, which require unanimous approval. Policy positions are restricted to focus largely on endorsing positions of member organizations where consensus exists.
- Task groups or Ad Hoc committees may be formed.

Membership / Governance

- Members of the Roundtable are recommended by a nomination committee appointed by the Roundtable with final decisions made by the Roundtable itself. Candidates are invited to apply and careful consideration is given to the food system sectors the candidates work within.
- Up to 18 members can be members at any one time.
- Members may, but are not expected to formally represent or speak for their organization but will be selected on the basis of their ability to speak to issues from the sector or key interest they come from.
- Identified Food System Sectors: farmers, emergency food, food manufacturers, urban ag. advocates, food distributors, academics/researchers, educators/teachers, food retailers, land-use planners, restaurants, institutional foodservice, purchasers, low-income consumers, ethnic food retailers/consumers, organic food advocates, economic development organizations, health professionals, food justice advocates, food marketing, public health.
- Members must endorse the mission, goals, and values of the Roundtable.
- The Roundtable's membership strives to reflect Waterloo Region's diverse population including but not limited to race, rural/urban residency, gender and socioeconomic status.
- 2-year terms w/half expiring in odd numbered years.
- Missing 3 meetings a year w/o prior discussion with a co-chair is deemed equivalent to a resignation. The Roundtable will appoint new interim members during the term as needed.
- At the beginning of each term, the Roundtable will elect 2 co-chairs. Duties of the co-chairs include proposing meeting agendas; inviting guests; chairing meetings; facilitating dialogue among members between meetings; liaising with Roundtable support staff; acting as spokespeople.

Steering Committee

Five Roundtable members sit on a Steering Committee which addresses some of the more administrative functions of the Roundtable. Their tasks include making agenda decisions, handling requests for information, authoring letters of support, etc. The Committee is not empowered to make decisions and instead brings recommendations to the Roundtable.

Staffing / Resources

The Region of Waterloo Public Health provides staff support to the Roundtable. Since the Roundtable's founding, Marc Xuereb has devoted half of his time as a Public Health Planner to the activities of the Roundtable. The Roundtable may enter into agreements with organizations to provide additional administrative and/or research support to the Roundtable or may directly hire staff (these options are currently not being utilized).

The organization has struggled to find volunteers to commit to taking on organizational tasks, so the bulk of time put into the Roundtable's activities is by the staff support and the volunteer Roundtable members.

Funding

The Roundtable does not operate with a budget as its primary expense (staff support) is provided by the Region of Waterloo Public Health (RWPH). The RWPH provides some direct funding each year to be put towards the web site and public events. Because the organization does not identify itself as a 'doer', funding to sustain the activities of the organization is not necessary.

Communication

Staff distribute a bi-weekly newsletter to over 400 people in the region ("[WRFoodNews](#)"). The newsletter offers summary information and links on items of local, national and global interest and includes upcoming events.

The web site for the WRFSR is one of the more comprehensive sites of the organizations interviewed for this report, and contains detailed information on the structure and activities of the Roundtable itself. The web site is also home to an RSS feed and a [Blog](#).

Greatest Success Story

Input into the Regional Official Plan for the Region of Waterloo. The document contains the planning policies needed to "direct growth and change in Waterloo Region over the next 20 years".

www.wrfoodsystem.ca/forum/viewthread/10274

Points of Interest

-Despite the organization operating like many food councils abroad, the term 'Roundtable' was chosen. Marc Xuereb does, nevertheless, support organizations using the term 'council' as it can help unite an organization with the many other food councils working to achieve similar goals.

- Discussions have taken place on introducing working groups to get non-Roundtable members involved in carrying out tasks, however, those discussions have also acted as a reminder to the organization that those seemingly needed tasks are not in line with the purpose of the organization and has reminded the WRFSR that it serves more of a 'big picture' function than that of a 'doer'.

- Since its inception, the Roundtable has not believed being housed within the Region of Waterloo Public Health has posed any barriers to its function. The relationship is such that the Roundtable's activities can be carried out quite independently from RWPH. The Roundtable has discussed the possibility of being independent of RWPH, but has never identified a secure enough source of funding to sustain the current role of the staff support which RWPH provides.



Words of Advice

Marc Xuereb refers to the wisdom of the former Coordinator of the Toronto Food Policy Council; "Don't focus on the things that divide you, focus on the things that you agree on... there's so much that needs change that everyone can probably agree on."

Documents of Interest

(available on WRFSR web site)

- [Towards a Healthy Community Food System - for Waterloo Region](#) (November 2005)
- [A Healthy Community Food System Plan](#) (April 2007)
- [Terms of Reference](#)
- [Waterloo Food System Roundtable Developmental Evaluation: Organizational History](#) (2011)

Food Matters Manitoba



Type of Organization: Registered charity
Area served: Province of Manitoba
Population: 1,232,654
Main urban centres: Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, Portage la Prairie
Founded: 2005
Interviewed: Paul Chorney, Community Liaison

www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca



Background

Food Matters Manitoba is a registered charity dedicated to healthy, sustainable food for all and home to the Manitoba Food Charter. The organization began as Manitoba Food Charter and changed its name to Food Matters Manitoba in 2009.

History

Food Matters Manitoba emerged out of a national food security conference held in 2004 in Winnipeg. Deeply inspired by the conference, Manitoba delegates asked the question, “what can we do to support all of this interest in local food systems?” The idea to develop a food charter for the whole of the province was proposed.

With funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, part-time staff were hired to facilitate 71 consultations throughout the province. The project was named the Manitoba Food Charter. Consultations were spread among urban, rural and northern areas with 2,300 people participating. Participants were asked; “What would a just and sustainable food system look like to you?” Developed out of those consultations was a one-page food charter later ratified in 2006. MFC intended for the food charter to be adopted by the Province but slow progress in getting the charter adopted led to MFC reaching out to community organizations. Organizations were asked if they support the food charter and what part they could play in bringing that vision into being. This one-year initiative led to what is now 55-60 organizations, institutions, and municipalities having signed on to the charter.

MFC became a registered charity and went on to change their name to Food Matters Manitoba in 2009. Today, FMM is viewed as the umbrella local food organization within the province.

Priorities

- Cultivates community food skills
- Provides public education
- Builds partnerships and networks

Mission

Food Matters Manitoba engages Manitobans toward healthy, fair, sustainable food for all.

Vision

Expressed in the Manitoba Food Charter (*see next page*)

Goals

- To educate Manitobans about food security and the sustainability of food systems in Manitoba
- To provide a common focus for action for food system stakeholders through the Manitoba Food Charter
- To raise public awareness about food security and the sustainability of our food systems
- To strengthen networks and partnerships to work together to address local food security issues
- To strengthen the capacity of the organization and to advance food security work across Manitoba

New Goals as Defined in 2009 Strategic Plan

- Fulfill the role of incubator by strengthening partner networks and building community food skills
- Further the engagement of Manitobans by developing a comprehensive communication strategy
- Strengthen the role of Food Matters Manitoba members through a membership development program
- Enhance the sustainability of Food Matters Manitoba by seeking long-term, diversified funding
- Deepen the engagement of the Board of Directors through board development and training achievements that the organization made in 2009-2010

Activities

Food Charter – Described in more detail in *History*. Set out to identify what Manitobans believe their food system should look like. Through more than 70 public consultations, the Manitoba Food Charter document was drafted. The Charter is a vision of how things should be and a goal to work towards. Paul Chorney believes the Food Charter acted as a great organizational development tool and received good media coverage.

Link of interest: [Video presenting Manitoba Food Charter](#).

Heifer Local Food Projects – [Heifer International](#) provides seed dollars to smaller initiatives. Now complete, this was a three-year project of supporting local food initiatives in communities across the province. To date, funding has supported 30 small-scale food production, nutrition education and food skills' projects that build community capacity. FMM recently commenced *Re-visioning the Manitoba Harvest* – a five-year project working with small-scale sustainable producers who want to direct market to eaters. The RVMH project will assist 52 farming families to improve their net incomes by increasing their access to local markets. The project will also enable 240 newcomer, Indigenous and northern families to restore food traditions by providing living resources and training. The project will increase local food consumption by engaging 200 urban families in gardening practices and food education. (\$500,000 budget)

More on FMM's Heifer Local Food Projects [here](#).

FMM Northern Healthy Foods Initiative - Worked with 13 northern and remote Manitoba communities on their food security issues and goals. FMM assisted them to develop local food projects in order to increase their access to healthy and nutritious foods. Examples of projects include Root Camp 2010 (over 50 teachers, elders and community leaders participated in a 2-day event offering gardening skills and resources to pass down to students and communities); School and community gardens.



The Manitoba Food Charter emerged from Manitobans' common vision for a just and sustainable food system. The Charter provides vision and principles that will guide and inform all levels of government, businesses, non-profit organizations, communities, families and individuals in planning, policy development, programs and practice in mutual effort toward food security and community development. It was drafted through broad public consultation and is to be endorsed by Manitoba food system stakeholders.

CURRENT SITUATION

Manitoba's food system has both strengths and weaknesses. Our province has a significant and diverse agricultural sector and many Manitobans can access the food that they want. However, agricultural communities are challenged by an increasingly urban and globalized economy. Many northern, inner-city, and low income women, children and men have difficulty accessing quality food. The nationally ratified Human Right to Adequate Food has not been realized. Rural, urban and northern communities are disconnected. Not all of our food is necessarily nutritious, not all information about our food is complete or accurate; and much of our food travels long distances. There has been a loss in food knowledge and skills and an increased reliance on fast and highly processed foods. There is growing interest in and widespread concern about Manitoba's food system and a desire for increased coordination and leadership on the issues facing it. The Manitoba Food Charter is testimony to Manitobans' willingness to collectively and constructively engage in meeting these challenges.

VISION

A just and sustainable food system in Manitoba is rooted in healthy communities, where no one is hungry and everyone has access to nutritious food. It is an economically viable, diverse and ecologically sustainable system to grow, harvest, process, transport, and distribute food while minimizing waste.

A just and sustainable food system in Manitoba means:

- ❖ Farmers, fishers, harvesters, processors and distributors can generate adequate incomes and use ecologically sustainable practices.
- ❖ Respect for the traditional hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and conservation practices of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples within sustainable limits;
- ❖ A sustainable balance between fair international agricultural trade and diverse vibrant production for the local market;
- ❖ Healthy relationships between producers and consumers in urban, rural and northern Manitoba communities;
- ❖ Province-wide availability of a variety of nutritious and affordable food through accessible retail outlets and food service operations and the economic means to obtain sufficient daily food for health and dignity;
- ❖ Well grounded confidence in the quality and safety of our food; and
- ❖ Easy access to understandable accurate information about nutrition, food composition, the ways food is grown, preserved, processed, purchased, and cooked, and how to minimize waste.

WE, THEREFORE, DECLARE our commitment and intent to work in partnership towards achieving a just and sustainable food system in the province of Manitoba. We recognize that this commitment has real implications for our policies, programs and practice. Our willingness to make this commitment indicates our sense of collective and personal responsibility for the present and future ecological, economic and social well-being of Manitoba.

Signature _____

<http://food.cimnet.ca>

Farm to Cafeteria - An ongoing, 15-month project that works to develop a network of rural producers, potential new farmers, food processors and food distributors to help institutions across Manitoba access local food.

Our Food, Our Health, Our Culture - *Achieving Healthier Weights in Saskatchewan and Manitoba*. The project will involve 300 families, 20 agencies, 2 schools and 7 retail stores in:

- Increasing access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods;
- Increasing access to food literacy; and
- Identifying government, school, agency, and household policies to reduce incidence of obesity.

The project emerged out of community-identified needs and is part of a one year obesity prevention strategy funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada and uses a participatory, population health approach.

Winnipeg Community Food Assessment - An opportunity to develop a participant-driven, evidence-based assessment of the food system in Winnipeg. This will identify what resources already exist in the community and will develop a strategic action plan to address food-related issues. To make this happen, FMM hopes to engage a diverse range of stakeholders. This includes community members, food organizations, community service organizations, policy decision makers, businesses, researchers, and others. The process will be guided by an advisory committee and the work will be carried out by an Assessment Coordinator along with volunteers and students.

Food Miles School Kits - The Manitoba Climate Change Action fund provided funding for *Manitoba Food Miles: A Local Food Public Education Initiative* on food and climate change. Twenty-nine workshops were delivered to over 1,100 students across the province on food miles, sustainable food systems, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change impacts.

Nurtures Working Groups – Winnipeg Food Policy Working Group, Manitoba Food Security Network, and the North End Food Security Network (the North End of Winnipeg is home to 40,000 people among which is a large aboriginal population and high levels of poverty).

Events

Golden Carrot Awards - Annual awards recognizing the tremendous work Manitobans are doing to create a healthy, sustainable food system.

Growing Local conference – Annual food security conference bringing people together from across the province.

Brown Bag Lunch Sessions - Chance to meet and swap ideas, knowledge and contact information with members of the community.

Localvore Iron Chef Cook-Off – Competition between teams of high-school students. FMM launched the competition to encourage young people to make healthy food choices and learn new food skills while strengthening partnerships between local food producers, schools and local chefs.

Grow North Conference - Engaging educators and community members by developing skills in boreal forest gardening and implementing gardening into schools and communities.

Northern Harvest forum (annual)

Partner Projects

Fruit Share - Volunteer organization that connects fruit owners with volunteer fruit pickers to harvest, share and enjoy fruit growing in backyards throughout Winnipeg. Fruit owners make their fruit available for picking, volunteers pick the fruit and then the fruit is shared equally - 1/3 to the homeowner, 1/3 to the volunteers and 1/3 to community organizations that are able to use the fruit.



Meetings

Beyond regular board meetings every two months, FMM hosts an annual meeting which the public is invited to. Approximately 100 people attend.

Membership

No official membership. Had discussed the possibility, and while it's unclear why that direction was never taken, the administrative burden is one reason identified. FMM still works with many groups who are informally referred to as 'partner organizations'.

Staff / Resources

4 core staff

- Executive Director
- Community Liaison
- Northern Liaison
- Office Assistant

Internships / Part-Time Staff

- Communications Coordinator
- Growing Local Conference Coordinator
- School Outreach Coordinator Intern
- Northern Assistant
- Accountant

Volunteers (5,000 hours)

Governance

Board Members (12+3)

Urban Board members (4)

Northern Board members (4)

Rural Board members (4)

Expert Advisory Seat (non-voting)

Federal Government Representative (non-voting)

Provincial Government Representative (non-voting)

Board meets every 2 months and acts as a governance board. The board is also involved in strategic planning.

Charitable Status

According to Paul Chorney, there are advantages and disadvantages to a food system organization maintaining charitable status. When funding for MFC/FMM ran out from the Public Health Agency of Canada, FMM had to start relying on diverse sources of funding and charitable status allowed them to go to foundations like the Winnipeg Foundation and others who are only able to offer grants to charities. Unlike many charities, FMM has not yet used its charitable status as a meaningful tool to attract individual donations. As a slight disadvantage, charitable status limits how much advocacy the organization can engage in.

Among FMM's projects, the only one which raises some concern in this area is the Winnipeg Food Policy Council Working Group, however, the group is set up as a separate entity from FMM and has its own identity. The WFPCWG also views their work as being educational and not one of 'advocacy'.

FMM has worked hard to maintain a very balanced approach to their activities and doesn't oppose the industrial food system. Instead, FMM hopes to build bridges between all sectors of the food system.

Communication

Social Media; e-newsletter; Blog

Funding

- Province of Manitoba (Department of Healthy Living)
- Canada Rural Secretariat
- Heifer International
- Foundations
- YMCA
- Donations

Greatest Success Stories

Paul Chorney identifies the Growing Local conference, the Golden Carrot Awards, the Winnipeg Food Policy Working Group and FMM's support for the North End Food Security Network in Winnipeg as being among the greatest successes of FMM.



What would you have done differently?

"I maybe would have made the network of organizations involved with FMM more formal... we might still do that."

"After attending the Food Policy conference in Portland, Oregon (2011), it seems a second step to the Food Charter might be to move from a one-pager to a comprehensive food action plan. "

"We might have done a better job following up on the Food Charter (perhaps one year later we might have hosted an update event and check-in with the organizations who made pledges)."

Government Relations

- FMM maintains positive relations with the Province and have produced valuable documents which government agencies continue to use.
- Through the work of the Winnipeg Food Policy Council Working Group, FMM is developing an ongoing relationship with the City of Winnipeg. The Mayor of Winnipeg has supported FMM's Golden Carrot Awards.
- Paul Chorney believes there is still a long way to go to receive support from the federal government and Members of Parliament in the province. FMM is a member of Food Secure Canada which helps advance the vision of FMM federally.

Youth Involvement

FMM involves youth in its activities through pockets of funding; Food Miles workshops in schools; FMM's school outreach coordinator offered workshops and initiated the Iron Chef Localvore contest for high-school teams of students; Partnered with other organizations on the Good Food Comic Book Hero project.

Words of Advice?

"Bring the mainstream into the dialogue."

Willamette Farm and Food Coalition

www.lanefood.org

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit

Area served: Lane County, OR

Population: 351,715

Main urban centres: Eugene, Springfield

Founded: 2000

Interviewed: Lynne Fessenden, Executive Director



Background

The Willamette Farm and Food Coalition is a community based non-profit committed to developing a secure and sustainable food system within Lane County, Oregon. Their projects and services seek to facilitate greater understanding of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of food choices and promote the purchase of locally grown and produced foods to keep area farms and food businesses viable and to strengthen the local economy. Their supporters are from a diversity of sectors within the food system; food processors, distributors, farmers' markets, retailers, restaurateurs, institutional food buyers, consumers, anti-hunger advocates, children's health advocates, faith communities, agricultural scientists, and sustainability educators.

History

Prior to its incorporation in 2000, Lane County residents had been organizing themselves around food for over 30 years. The earliest incarnation was the Edible City Resource Center. ECRC incorporated in 1979 with the broad mission of promoting urban gardening and increasing awareness of food related issues. For 18 years, ECRC activities supported the individual passions and work of members. ECRC volunteers published the Edible City Resource Manual, a guide demonstrating how to revitalize urban communities through sustainable development approaches.

In 1998, board members and volunteers, founders of Worm Digest magazine, farmers, educators and activists began to meet regularly to explore the history of ECRC and to take a critical look at the future of the organization. In 1999, the board reached out to the community to help identify community needs and build collaboration. In early 2000, volunteers and board members surveyed 40 Lane County producers, processors, retailers, restaurateurs, and other institutions and organizations in person and by telephone. They gathered their concerns, ideas and suggestions for developing a stronger local food and agriculture system that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable and responsible. In the summer of 2000, a more focused mission statement and updated by-laws were established. The organization then changed its name to Lane County Food Coalition and elected a new board with diverse members representing food system sectors. In 2005 the Coalition hired its first staff, and changed its name once again to the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition to better suit their geographic home and to diffuse any confusion that the organization was affiliated with the County.

Mission

The Willamette Farm and Food Coalition facilitates and supports the development of a secure and sustainable food system in Lane County, Oregon.



Vision

We envision a secure and sustainable food system as one in which our farms are economically viable, our agricultural lands are supporting a much larger percentage of Lane County's food needs, and all members of our community have access to fresh local foods. We believe that a strong local food system contributes to the integral health of our entire community and we work to facilitate greater understanding of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of our food choices.

WFFC promotes the purchase of locally grown and produced foods:

- to keep valuable agricultural land in production
- to ensure the economic viability of farms
- to benefit public and environmental health
- to strengthen our local economy

Food Policy Council Development (Lane County Food Policy Council)

With the WFFC not taking a focused approach to food policy, a process was initiated in 2003/2004 involving the Lane County Food Coalition (now the WFFC) alongside FOOD for Lane County and other partners who hosted a series of open meetings in 6 communities. Community members were encouraged to identify the strengths and challenges of their local food system and craft solutions which could not be addressed by citizens alone. In March 2004, a County-wide Food

Planning Summit was held bringing together 60 community and government leaders to discuss food issues and opportunities in the County. A food policy council was presented as a structure to address those concerns. A working group was formed to research and recommend the development of a food policy council. A Food Policy Design Team was tasked with recommending structure and function development, outreach, affiliation and preliminary fundraising strategies. The Lane County Food Policy Council was formally launched in January 2006.

The WFFC supported the LCFPC throughout its development stages with many of the founding board members being the same among the two organizations. The Council existed as a separate arm of the WFFC while existing under the WFFC umbrella but is now working on becoming their own registered non-profit.

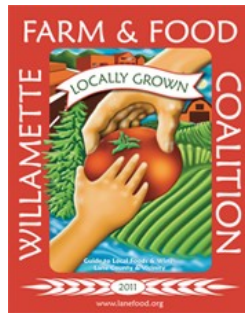
The LCFPC identifies the following activities it will use to carry out its goals:

- Assessing the Lane County food system to identify issues and opportunities. Utilize assessment information to develop community health indicators, including setting benchmarks and strategies for assessing improvements over time.
- Advising policy makers and the community on policies and actions that will support a strong Lane County food system.
- Educating and engaging community residents in discussing food issues and actions to strengthen the local food system.
- Catalyzing, initiating, and supporting projects and businesses designed to improve the local food economy and access to nutritious food.
- Strengthening connections between components of the food system in Lane County, and creating a structure for people with diverse perspectives to find common ground for vision and action.

www.fpclanecounty.org

Activities

- **Local Farms First Campaign** - Matchmaker between farmers/consumers & foodservice/retail. Outcome of campaign - *Locally Grown Guide*.
- **Locally Grown Guide** of foods and wines (into its 8th year) 30,000+ copies. Available at businesses, farm stands, libraries, chambers of commerce. Acts as a vehicle for local food-based advertising; an introduction to WFFC and other projects they're involved in; editorial content on timely food system issues; farm listings; seasonal crop availability charts; U-pick guides; community supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives; restaurant, catering, retailers and processors listings; farmers' markets; and books, films and resource listings. The guide also offers details on how the public can support the work of WFFC. WFFC also produces a resource [specifically for business and institutional buyers](#) who are looking to purchase local products.
- **Farm to School Program** - Increasing student knowledge of where their food comes from; Improving nutrition; Developing new markets for farmers by incorporating more local foods into meals served in schools; Supporting policies at the school district and at other levels of government that increase opportunities for farm to school programs.
- **Local Food for All** - Exploring ways to increase access to locally grown food in low-income neighbourhoods and to increase availability of subsidized CSA shares and Farmers' Market dollars for families.



Collaborative

- **Southern Willamette Valley [Bean and Grain Project](#)** - A loose consortium of partners seeking to enhance the production and availability of locally grown beans and grains. Currently involves 10 farms. Funding was acquired to install a grain mill at one farm (opened in April 2011). WFFC ran a booth at markets which sold products from several farms and ran a community bulk buying event which saw 5,000lbs of grain purchased by individuals from four area farms in just one afternoon.
- **That's My Farmer** - Partnership between 11 farmers and 13 faith communities that supports local farmers by encouraging congregation members to purchase CSA shares.
- **Oregon Solutions Lane County Food Distribution Project** - Series of roundtable discussions to bring farmers, distributors and institutional food buyers together to address some of the barriers to getting local foods into schools, colleges, and hospitals.
- **Farmland Preservation** - Partnership with Lane County Food Policy Council to conduct GIS mapping of high value agricultural land, document current production, estimate future food production, and create educational materials for policy-makers and planners.
- **Year-round Farmers' Market Discussion** - Multi-stakeholder discussions to explore the possibility of creating a permanent, open-air, year-round home for the Lane County Farmers' Market.
- **Eat Here Now** - w/Helios Resource Network co-hosted community local food potlucks as networking opportunities.

Other

- Go-to organization on local food questions (213 inquiries to the WFFC office recorded for 2008)
- Sales brokered between local farms and school cafeterias = 11 (2008). WFFC receives and brokers many inquiries from the public/stakeholders such as; “Where can I get persimmons?” or; “I have 300lbs of carrots... where can I sell them?”

Membership / Governance

Membership

Despite the organization being named a ‘Coalition’, it maintains no official membership, and instead loosely refers to the organizations, producers and businesses it promotes as ‘members’.

The possibility of introducing a more formal membership model is something being discussed as part of its 2011 strategic planning process. There is, however, already a ‘sustainable’ food business alliance for the Willamette Valley with paying members (Willamette Valley Sustainable Foods Alliance).

Governance

As a registered non-profit, the WFFC is governed by a 13-member board. The composition of the board strives to include one-quarter farmers, one-quarter food businesses and the remaining members offering skill-sets which can benefit the organization (i.e. lawyers, educators).

Board members serve 2-year terms with many members staying multiple terms. Since its inception as the ‘Willamette Food and Farming Coalition’ in 2005 the Board has transitioned from being an operational board to a governance board, with staff taking on the roles once carried out by board members.

Meetings

As a non-profit, the meeting structure of the organization is quite standard. Meetings are once a month among the Board.

Most public input into the organization’s activities is from food system stakeholders and is often conducted through formal processes (focus groups, roundtable discussions, forums, etc.). The WFFC does nevertheless act as a go-to organization for food system related inquiries from the public.

Staffing / Resources

2 full-time (Executive Director & Farm to School Program Coordinator)

Yearly part-time positions/internships with combined hours totalling the equivalent of one full-time position (i.e. 4-month editorial assistant for Locally Grown Guide)

40 volunteers currently supporting the organization’s activities. In 2008, recorded volunteer hours amounted to 383 hours

Funding

Current funding scheme

Grants: 35%
Locally Grown Guide: 20%
Donors: 20%
Events and Contract Work: 25%

Revenues

2008 Revenues (*available data*) = \$144,500 (Foundations: \$74,920; Contract Work \$29,400; Locally Grown \$15,860; Donors \$19,600; Events \$4,720)

Grants (examples)

Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) Healthy Farms Program, Trusts, Funds, Contracts (Ecotrust, EWEB, Oregon Research Institute)

Donors

Donors are divided into Sustaining Partner (\$10,000), Cultivating Partner (\$500-\$1000), Business Partner (\$250) Individual Donations (on-line options, membership: \$25 individual, \$50 family, \$10 limited income, \$100 sustaining member).

Expenses

2008 Expenses - \$101,970 (Personnel 60%; Overhead 9%; Programs & Events 31%)

By program: Local Farms First 12%; Farm to School 50%; Locally Grown Guide 18%; Admin. and Fundraising 20%

Notes

The WFFC has found it difficult to access funding from national programs and relies entirely on funding from within the State of Oregon. While there is an increasing availability of funding to organizations working on local food system development, there are just as many, if not more, potential candidates for those funds.

Developing a Revenue-Generating Arm

With the challenges accessing funds within the current funding climate as described above, the WFFC is considering developing a business arm of the organization which would generate revenues to support the organization’s *non* revenue-generating activities. The Locally Grown Guide is an example of how that might look, but the current interest is to enhance that function within the organization. Taking on an existing business or starting a new one are options being considered. An example of a possible business to take on is [Eugene Local Foods](#) – a successful on-line farmers’ market.

“With this focus now on pulling in the economic piece, I just feel like our region’s food hub should be less about coordinating all the food groups and more about coordinating all the various venues for sales.”

– Lynne Fessenden

Challenges

Beyond the more common challenges facing non-profits and grassroots food system initiatives, WFFC's Lynne Fessenden identifies an interesting challenge to the organization's activities which is likely shared by many similar North American food system organizations .

"There isn't necessarily a County-wide recognition of a 'food system' or a shared vision in Lane County. For us, our 'food-shed' is more the entire Willamette Valley".

"With the State of Oregon also being home to many similar organizations to the WFFC, identifying just what the 'food system' is among stakeholders and the public poses a challenge to identifying the role of the WFFC."

"Even though we have many people paying attention to local food, we're still a long ways from having a uniformly grasped concept of a food system and food security."

Looking Ahead – Focusing on the Food Economy

The WFFC conducted strategic planning in 2005 and 2007 but is currently in the midst of a much more comprehensive process involving in-depth interviews with 50 stakeholders throughout the region. The interviews have sought opinions on key concerns and opportunities within the local food system and what it is about the WFFC's current activities that stakeholders like and don't like.

The results of interviews were all over the board, but the "low-hanging fruit" has been the economic opportunities available in the region.

The process has further revealed a strong interest among staff and board to hone in on taking on one or a few priorities and doing them well instead of spreading themselves thin by taking on too many roles.

"We've decided it's necessary to back-up and pick one piece we want to make happen and how we can do it", says Lynne Fessenden.

"Really, we want to get people recognizing that food system work is economic development work"

Lynne Fessenden

"For us, what's really happened is that the local food movement has taken off enormously, and there are a lot of things happening in this County and it's very easy to get swept up by all of them. So we're trying to back up and figure out what is one piece that we want to make happen and how are we going to do it."

University of Oregon – 'Lane County Local Food Market Analysis'

The WFFC worked with the Community Service Center at the University of Oregon who published the comprehensive [Lane County Local Food Market Analysis](#) (Sep. 2010). The report has offered a wealth of valuable numbers now available to the WFFC to both reaffirm the importance of their current work and help support this new interest to focus on the economic opportunities in the County.

The report concluded that only 3% of the food consumed in Lane County is produced in Lane County with every 1% being worth \$11.7 million to the local economy.

Source: Lane County Local Food Market Analysis (2010),

Local Production and Demand for Selected Crops in Lane County (2007)

Crop	Production (lb)	Demand (lb)	Variance (lb) (Production-Demand)
Wheat	9,180,000	48,015,989	-38,835,989
Tomatoes	5,850,000	30,944,410	-25,094,410
Salad Greens	313,600	5,945,499	-5,631,899
Apples	5,304,000	17,349,731	-12,045,731
Winter Squash	450,000	1,836,673	-1,386,673

Source: "Commodity Data Sheets." *Oregon Agricultural Information Network*. Oregon State University, 2010. Web. 1 June, 2010. (supply of wheat, tomatoes and apples, sales per pound); "2007 Census of Agriculture: Oregon State and County Data." *2007 Census of Agriculture*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Dec. 2009. Web. 1 June 2010. (supply of winter squash and pumpkins and salad greens, sales per pound); "Food Availability (Per Capita) Data System – 2007 data." *Economic Research Service*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, 16 Feb. 2010. Web. 1 June 2010. (demand for all crops) ^{xvii,xviii}

Community Service Center, University of Oregon

Communication

Web Site, Social Media, Locally Grown Guide

Documents of Interest

- Lane County Local Food Market Analysis (*University of Oregon 2010*) - [Executive Summary](#) | [Full Version](#)
- [Sourcing Local Foods](#) - The Willamette Farm and Food Coalition has produced a resource specifically for business and institutional food buyers looking to purchase local products.
- [Lane County Food Policy Council](#) – Background information

Words of Advice

“We’re looking at our effectiveness... dealing with being understaffed with the amount of stuff we’re taking on. Because you [West Kootenay region] are at the place you’re at now... with all this awareness and interest... you really have the choice of focusing on what the purpose is of your organization. It’s not like you really have to address *all* things local food... like what I see my predecessors doing... you really have this option to think about wanting to be of service to build a stronger food system and how to do it and pay for the work that needs to be done. Whether you’re involved in a marketing piece or whether you get businesses and farms to pay you something because you’re promoting them, we’ve been this benevolent broker for some time, and I imagine, ‘what if we had \$5 for every transaction we’ve facilitated?’ So, I guess I would say in your first steps, you really think about that funding and staffing piece and initially taking on the pieces that are going to be paid for. In this particular climate there are options... think that way from the start. “

“The food system as economic development is the way to go (there are just more pools of money in that realm)” .

Lynne Fessenden

Sustain Ontario (The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming)

www.sustainontario.com

Type of Organization: Project of Tides Canada. Uses the Constellation Open Source Model.



Area served: Province of Ontario

Population: 13,210,667

Main urban centres: Greater Toronto area, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Kitchener-Waterloo

Founded: 2009

Interviewed: Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, Director



Background

Sustain Ontario is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance that promotes healthy food and farming. Sustain Ontario takes a collaborative approach to research, policy development and action by addressing the intersecting issues related to healthy food and local sustainable agriculture. Sustain Ontario is working towards a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable.

History

Sustain Ontario is the outcome of a two year process led by the Metcalf Foundation that brought together diverse groups and organizations working on food and agriculture issues in Southern Ontario. These groups represented health, community, farming, and environment sectors. The Foundation wanted to explore the appetite for cooperative, integrated work with the goal of transforming food and agriculture at a system-wide level. Through the process facilitated by the Foundation, participants identified the inherent difficulties for individual organizations to advocate for systemic change and a subsequent need for collaborative policy and advocacy work at the provincial level. [Food Connects Us All](#) was published, exploring opportunities for collaborative, cross-sectoral work related to food and agriculture. The result was a proposal to the Foundation requesting support for a provincial alliance that would research and develop policy proposals related to healthy food and local sustainable farming. In January 2009, Sustain Ontario hired its first director. SO is currently working to expand its member base and develop research, policy and action priorities. The Metcalf Foundation continues to advise SO as the alliance takes root.

FoodNet Ontario – At the same time Sustain Ontario was being formed, another province-wide initiative was also launched with a focus on networking across the food system and not the policy-driven approach of SO. foodnetontario.ca

Priorities

Sustain Ontario advocates for a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable by:

- Connecting members across the province
- Exploring and researching pressing issues in the food system
- Showcasing food system innovations and champions

A key focus for SO today is bridging the gap that has existed within advocacy between urban food access organizations and rural agricultural organizations.

Vision (Why Sustain Ontario?)

“The way we grow, market, process, manufacture, and distribute our food here in Ontario reveals connections across the global village. Ontario’s working landscapes, farms, rural communities, and cities are linked in a web of complex exchanges. But our food policies to date have usually ignored that web, dividing rather than connecting. If we are going to build a healthy and sustainable village, we have to make the connections.

Food is connected to every major problem we face as a society – declining farm incomes, the paving-over of farmland, wildlife protection, rising medical costs, poverty and hunger, urban sprawl, youth unemployment, and communities at risk. These problems will only be solved when we connect the dots.

Local farmers’ markets, community and school gardens, food co-ops, urban gardens, farmer training programs, Alternative Land Use Services, new certification regimes – all of these emerging possibilities support healthier, tastier food for all villagers. As this happens, everyone benefits and communities become stronger and more inclusive.

Provincial politics have become increasingly stuck in a frustrating gridlock. We have separate ministries for agriculture, health, economic development, community development, and the environment, as well as a multiplicity of non-governmental organizations, each focused on a single piece of the problem. We are at risk of missing many of the potential connections and the benefits they could generate.”

- Sustain Ontario

Activities

Working Groups / Initiatives

- Ontario's Good Food Ideas - [Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario](#): a report commissioned by the Metcalf Foundation as part of their Metcalf Food Solutions series. The report provides an integrated framework for farming and food that seeks to contribute to health and economic viability along the food chain.
- Good Food Ideas Kids – [website](#) designed to help shine a Light on Good Food Ideas that are transforming the places kids play, learn and live across Ontario. Offers information to help start a conversation about how to create healthier food environments for kids.
- Good Food Programs and Policies – in development to position Ontario as a leader in food and farming policy and program development.
- Meat Processing – supporting groups organizing to save small meat processing facilities.
- Farmers' Market Vouchers.
- Local Food Infrastructure – development of an action plan.
- Local Food Procurement – lobbying the Province to adopt a local food procurement policy.

Other

- Municipal Elections toolkit (2010)
- 2011 Provincial elections web site and Vote ON Food and Farming Campaign
- Bring Food Home annual conference
- 25 Great Food Ideas short film project (in development)

Membership (the Constellation model)

Membership is open to groups and organizations, food enterprises (businesses and farms), and the public sector. Members receive a short profile on the Sustain Ontario web site and can stay connected, sign on to campaigns and get involved in working groups. There are no obligations other than appearing on the website. There are over 200 members who have signed on. SO believes its loose membership model is currently quite vague and is working to entrench within its Terms of Reference the ability for members to have a governance role by being able to elect advisory council and steering committee members.

The Constellation Model

SO invites its membership to initiate working groups (or constellations) which SO will help facilitate. As a newly-formed organization, there is not yet a substantial body of evidence to adequately identify the pros and cons of this approach.

SO is working towards employing the Constellation model. As Tonya and Mark Surman write for Open Source Business Resource, "The constellation model was developed by and for the [Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment \(CPCHE\)](#). The model offers an innovative approach to organizing collaborative efforts in the social mission sector and shares various elements of the open source model. It emphasizes self-organizing and concrete action within a network of partner organizations working on a common issue." The Ontario Non-Profit Network also employs the model.

For SO, their interest in the model is based on the idea that there is often no need to create a whole new organization to address a shared interest but could instead be housed within the SO organization. As identified by Director Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, SO's application of the model is very much evolving and unclear at the time of this report.

The Constellation model encourages a governing body such as SO to facilitate the formation of constellations (groups coming together for useful purposes to undertake something together). As an example, a SO member recently identified meat processing regulations in the Province as being an important issue to address and SO responded by bringing other players also working on or concerned with the issue together by facilitating a conference call. While not an official constellation or working group of SO at the time of this report, this initial process offers insight into how a constellation might form.

Moving Beyond the Need for Consensus

The Constellation model offers SO members who share a common concern/interest to not require *all* SO members to sign on and endorse the effort. Each constellation can thereby come to its own agreements. Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker uses the example of the differing languages used within the local food movement whereby consensus is difficult to arrive at: With local food system advocates often maintaining different perspectives on the use of the words "local" or "local sustainable" or "local organic", the Constellation model permits SO members to not be required to unanimously agree on the language used by a constellation. Groups can instead forward all of these priorities but separately.

SO is still figuring out how the organization and its members can be assured that the work of an individual constellation won't be confused with the remaining members (i.e. a vegan café which is an SO member is not mistakenly lumped into the constellation advocating for enhanced meat-processing facilities in the province!).

SO needs to experiment with the model more to understand how it can best be incorporated into the organization's Terms of Reference. At this stage, Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker likes the model's flexibility but doesn't like that it's unclear.

Governance

Advisory Council (27 members)

The Advisory Council is made up of organizational and entrepreneurial leaders around food and farming and sets the mandate for the organization. The AC is the body which informs direction. The AC meets twice per year (not necessarily face-to-face).

Steering Committee (6 members which include 2 non-voting co-chairs)

The Steering Committee is a subset of the Advisory Council and is responsible for the administrative oversight of Sustain Ontario and is accountable to Tides Canada. The SC meets as needed (usually every month or two) and deals with budget reviews and hiring among other administrative tasks. Recently, SO has begun remunerating the SC's two co-chairs who have a voice but no vote. The co-chairs are asked to be public faces/voices of the organization (in addition to staff).

Staffing / Resources

- Director (FT) – accountable to the Steering Committee and Tides Canada
- Program Coordinator (FT)
- Francophone Outreach Intern (FT)
- Special Project Animator (4-day, 8-month work term)

According to Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, it appears the number of staff hours is sufficient to carry out the mandate of SO.

Tides Canada

Sustain Ontario is a non-profit project of Tides Canada. TC acts as an administrative body providing projects like SO with operations manuals, human resources support, bookkeeping, fundraising process assistance and ensures organizational accountability (feasibility of proposals, meeting funding outcomes). TC employs two project managers (one in British Columbia and another in Ontario) and employs specialists in operational areas.

Despite having only been with SO for 4 months at the time of this research, Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker is deeply impressed with the TC model and the TC-SO relationship. "It's

"There's no reason for me to spend my time engaging with the administrative tasks when I could actually be out there engaging with people doing the actual food system work."

– Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker on Sustain Ontario being a project of Tides Canada

all of the minutia that aren't around strategy, relationships and engagement which is really what the people who are good at that stuff ought to be doing."

TC has developed a strong set of systems it can offer non-profit projects.

"There's no reason for me to spend my time engaging with the administrative tasks when I could actually be out there engaging with people doing the actual food system work." – *Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker on Sustain Ontario being a project of Tides Canada*

Public Support/Input

There appears to be tremendous support among food system stakeholders across the Province for the work of Sustain Ontario. More seasoned farm organizations might view SO's work with mild scepticism, but SO is working to engage with all stakeholders.

In addition to its communication activities geared towards the public, SO has also produced resources for the public (i.e. [Be a Good Food Citizen](#) – a 10-point guide on how to support the 'good food movement').

SO is currently planning public engagement activities around the October 2011 provincial election (mostly through social media and some targeted events).

Funding

Primary Funder – [Metcalf Foundation](#) (traditional funder/non-profit relationship)

Other Funders - Ontario Trillium Foundation, Heart & Stroke Foundation, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

Communication

Web site, Blog, Social media, On-line Event calendar, News Submission tool, Newsletter, Attends events.

Sustain Ontario employs a communication company to handle some of its communication activities (i.e. social media training).

There is still much work the organization believes it needs to invest in its communication strategies.

Government Relationships

Not well established yet, but sees itself as a collaborative body and will support anyone within government to make sure these issues move forward (sees themselves at this juncture as allies and not adversaries).

Looking Ahead (Strategic Planning)

Strategic Planning is a big area of development and SO has yet to ‘articulate a theory of change’. There are a number of PhD students currently analysing food networks in Canada. SO believes the outcomes of that research will assist in its strategic planning.

SO does operate with a 3-year work plan but that plan is specific to the 3-year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Otherwise SO does not yet have a clear strategic direction.

The current strategic planning process is being carried out by the Director and future engagement will take place with the Advisory Council and membership.

Greatest Success Story

Report: [Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario](#). The paper has become a rallying point where people within the movement see themselves well-represented and everybody on the Advisory Council all agrees that it’s a document that they can all organize around and agree on. The report also led to the development of a policy document (i.e. to submit to political party platform development).

Non-Participatory

The development of Menu 2020 was quite *non-participatory* unlike the process employed by similar food system organizations producing broad-brush reports. Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker believes that the success achieved by the report despite the process having not involving stakeholders is a sign of the current strength and maturity of the movement to enhance local food systems.

Greatest Challenges

Timelines: “I was just at the food policy conference in Portland and had this insight that what we’re doing today, is actually building for 5-years from now (the next political cycle)... it’s going to take a while... we’re just now building relationships. I think these processes are long... so maintaining the resources and momentum is key to sustaining this work (particularly the hard-to-fund-not-really-on-the-ground stuff). What we [Sustain Ontario] have on our side is a real desire among the food community to have us be successful.”

Membership Model: “Loose membership model gives less legitimacy as to who we are.”

Words of Advice

- Engage in a “slow process” when building an organization addressing food system concerns/opportunities. Ensure everyone is being talked to throughout the process. The core of this work is building relationships.
- “This Alliance is only as strong as the relationships within it.”
- “Having some set of ideas that can be agreed upon is huge.” [*referring to Sustain Ontario’s Menu 2020 report*]
- “Having flexibility in the model from the get-go and allowing for ongoing development and experimentation and not trying to entrench things too quickly is proving really helpful because it’s allowing us to adapt and change and figure out what works. The old models of organizing often work but they often don’t.”

Halton Food Council

www.haltonfoodcouncil.ca

Type of Organization: Grassroots independent 12-member council supported by local health unit

Area served: Regional Municipality of Halton, ON

Population: 493,000

Main urban centres: Burlington, Oakville, Milton, Halton Hills

Founded: 2009

Interviewed: Lynn Garrison, Staff Support / Council Member (non-voting) / Public Health Nutritionist – Halton Region Health Department (Lynn was also involved in the initial research into the development of the Council).

Halton Food Council



Background

Existing in the shadows of the Greater Toronto area, the Halton region is made up of a mix of large urban centers, wild spaces and rural communities. With no organization in the area looking at the regional food system as a whole, the HFC is the only organization of residents seeking to take a systemic perspective on the region's food challenges and opportunities.

History

The first interest in a food council for the region was introduced by the Director of Community Health Services for the Halton Region Health Department who recognized a growing interest in the food system within the region but noticed this interest as being quite disjointed.

Lynn Garrison was tasked with researching how to go about developing a food council and began a similar process to this research for the West Kootenay region by interviewing well-established Canadian food councils (Toronto Food Policy Council, Vancouver Food Policy Council, Kamloops Food Policy Council, Ottawa Food Policy Council [*now Just Food*]). One of the overarching themes which arose out of those interviews was that a food council should be “community-driven” and “community-based”.

Lynn gathered people in the region who were identified as ‘key’ stakeholders in the food system and discussed the opportunity to work together via a food policy council (May 2008). A committee was formed calling itself the Halton Food Committee who continued to meet and developed a vision and mission. In seeking to reach out to the entire community, the Committee, with support from the Halton Region Health Department, hosted a Halton Food Forum in April 2009. Speakers at the food forum included the Co-Chair of the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable and the Acting Manager of the Toronto Food Policy Council who discussed food councils in their communities.

Forum participants were from a wide variety of backgrounds including school nutrition programs, prenatal nutrition programs, food and restaurant industry, food banks, good food box programs, multicultural council, children's aid, regional employees, students, women's institute, churches, farmers and others from the agricultural community. There were 138 people registered.

The need for a food council for Halton was affirmed at this meeting.

The Committee then developed a Terms of Reference for the Council and asked itself ‘who’ should be on the Council. Some on the Committee wanted to continue while others didn't. Information from forum participants was reviewed and the Committee selected candidates with the intention of gathering a diversity of

Mission

The mission of the Halton Food Council is to encourage and facilitate dialogue and collaboration among food related organizations, agencies, services, food producers and distributors, consumers, business and government to develop strategies for the promotion and facilitation of the vision and bring it to action.

Vision

The Halton Food Council envisions a Halton where:

- all residents have access to adequate, affordable, safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food;
- there is a fair and sustainable food system (e.g. local foods are available and promoted, local agricultural lands and farmers are protected and supported, urban agriculture is encouraged, and food has been produced and distributed in an environmentally acceptable way);
- food is an important part of our heritage and culture.

Goal

To increase awareness of food systems issues and opportunities in Halton region and communicate with a common voice to promote action.

members from many sectors of the food system. In November 2009, the Halton Food Council met for the first time and those first few meetings were open discussions.

Why Independence?

As food policy councils best operate when they are community based and community driven, remaining independent in its formative stages offer the Council the best opportunity to find its unique voice and to meaningfully connect with the community. It also allows the Council the freedom to take on issues that may entail lobbying or advocating local governments.

Priorities

- Networking/education – build new partnerships and enhance networking between existing food system stakeholders in Halton
- Coordinate/analyze – identify and prioritize food system needs in Halton and support creation and implementation of initiatives
- Evaluation – establish benchmarks and targets for achievement of mission/goals
- Funding – lever community resources to support mission/goals
- Policy – identify policy changes which support goals and advocate for their implementation

Activities

The HFC has not yet taken a very active project-oriented direction and is currently planning towards that possibility. To date, the HFC has developed a web site and a Food Charter. The Charter is both an internal guiding document and a communication tool and has engaged in a comprehensive Community Food Assessment which led to a second community food forum.

Halton Food Charter

The HFC began work on developing a Food Charter in February 2010. The purpose of the Food Charter is to share the Halton Food Council's vision for a food system in the region. The goal of the Food Charter is to increase awareness of food system issues and opportunities in the region and communicate with a common voice to promote action.

The charter has gone through a series of consultations with the public. It was emailed to the 2009 Food Forum Participants for feedback in April 2010. Comments were received up to August of 2010. The Charter has been modified as a result and is available to community members to use in their work to promote activities that will achieve the “expected outcomes” identified in the charter.

Expected Outcomes:

- Awareness of the community's food needs (e.g. completed Community Food Assessment).
- Access to nutritious food, with a focus on locally grown fresh produce for Halton residents.
- Increased use of locally grown food in restaurants, schools, regional and community facilities.
- Awareness of food grown and produced in Halton.
- Sustainable and strong local agricultural economy.
- Retention of valuable farmlands in Halton and increased use for sustainable agriculture and food production.
- Support for urban agriculture (e.g. community gardens, rooftop gardens).
- Establishment of a broad network of people interested in working together to advocate for a fair and sustainable food system.

Halton Community Food Assessment

The Halton Food Council completed a Community Food Assessment by conducting an environmental scan to describe demographic, economic, health, social, and cultural conditions in Halton region and collected food production, access, and distribution information. A second food forum was hosted in May 2011 where the Assessment was presented. A facilitator was hired to work with the group on narrowing in on priority areas. The Council is now discussing how to turn those priorities into a work plan.

Values

Members of the Halton Food Council are committed to the following values:

- *Right to Know* – People have a right to know what's in their food and where and how it was produced
- *Access* – All people should have physical and economic access to healthy, local food
- *Economic Viability* – Local food businesses should be valued, supported and vibrant
- *Sustainability* – All sectors of society share in the responsibility for creating and maintaining a local sustainable food system

Membership

- The Halton Food Council consists of up to 12 members at any one time. Members live or work in Halton Region and are representative of the key interests and sectors of the Halton food system. Members are recommended by a nomination committee appointed by the Council. Membership on the Council is reviewed annually.
- 2-non voting members: one staff support (Public Health Nutritionist, Halton Region Health Department) and another acting in an advisory capacity from the Regional Municipality of Halton, Legislative and Planning Services Department.
- Members must endorse the Vision, Mission, Goals, and Values of the Council and have skills or experience in at least one area of food system.
- Members may, but are not expected to, formally represent or speak for their organizations, but will be selected on the basis of their ability to speak to issues from the sector or key interest area they come from. The council may decide to have certain organizations formally represented on its membership: the specific organizations to have formal membership will be reviewed by the Nominations Committee annually.

Sectors Represented

The Council membership shall be representative of the key interests and sectors of the Halton food system. Key sectors and interests which could have representation include; local food businesses including farmers, food producers and manufacturers, food distributors, food marketing organizations, food retailers, institutional purchasers, restaurants, emergency food providers, community/neighbourhood-based food programs, urban agriculture advocates, local food and organic food advocates, health professionals, Boards of Education, Board of Health, educators/teachers, multicultural group representatives, low income support workers, food justice advocates, consumers, public health professionals, agricultural advisory groups, land use planners, economic development organizations/professionals, academics/researchers specializing in food system issues.

The Council's membership should reflect Halton Region's diverse population, including, but not limited to, ethno-racial, faith, gender, mental ability, physical ability, literacy/educational level, age, sexual orientation, rural/urban residency and socioeconomic circumstances.

Staff / Resources

One staff support from Halton Region Health Department. The HRHD appoints a staff person with knowledge of community food security to provide support and coordination to the HFC. The staff person is tasked with providing technical and advisory support to the Council and assist in achieving results for its chosen priorities (providing background information, resources, advice and support for implementation of priorities). The amount of time staff devotes to the HFC is at the discretion of the HRHD and based on the needs of the Council. The current staff support devotes 2 of 3 working days to the HFC. In the event

Term

Members will be appointed for two-year terms, with membership being reviewed at the end of the two year term. Missing three meetings a year without prior discussion with the Chair is deemed equivalent to a resignation. The Council will appoint new interim members during the term as needed.

Chair

The Chair shall be elected by the Council by a vote of members. Ideally, the chair will have served as Vice Chair for one year prior to becoming Chair. The Chair will serve a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years and where possible will remain for at least one year beyond their term as Past Chair. The Chair has knowledge of Halton food systems and good communication skills.

The duties of the Chair include:

- Preside over Council meetings.
- Propose meeting agendas and invite guests as required.
- Liaise with Council support staff.
- Facilitate communication among Council members between meetings.
- Act as the spokesperson for the Halton Food Council at events, meetings and for the media, as required.

Vice Chair

The Vice Chair shall be elected by the Council by a vote of members. The Vice Chair has knowledge of Halton food systems and good communication skills.

The duties of the Vice Chair include:

- Perform the duties of the Chair in the Chair's absence.
- Perform other duties delegated by the Chair or in consultation with the Council.
- Act as the spokesperson for the Halton Food Council at events, meetings and for the media, as required.
- Agrees to assume the role of Chair in the subsequent year.

Past Chair

- Functions in an advisory capacity to the Chair and the Council.
- Act as the spokesperson for the Halton Food Council at events, meetings and for the media, as required.

that the HFC decides to oppose a policy of the Region or the HRHD, staff support will be withdrawn for the duration of that challenge. The HFC may enter into agreements with other organizations for administrative and/or research support, or may directly hire staff. The support personnel is a non-voting member of the HFC.

Meetings

The Council meets a minimum of five times per year, at dates and times agreed upon by Council members. At least one meeting per year is to be open to the public. Minutes of all meetings are, upon Council approval, available to the public.

Decision Making

- Conflict of interest is declared and recorded in the minutes.
- Decisions of the Council are made by majority vote, except on decisions related to the adoption of public policy positions, which require unanimous approval of all Council members.
- Quorum for conducting regular business at a meeting is 1 partner greater than 50% of Council members attending. If a vote is tied, the Chair is to cast a vote to break the tie.
- The Chair uses their discretion to select policy issues for consideration by the Council, and supporting positions of member organizations where consensus exists.

Sub-committees and Workgroups

The Council may form *ad hoc* sub-committees or workgroups to undertake tasks that require in-depth work on behalf of the Council. Sub-committees and workgroups are encouraged to include participants who are not Council members.

Dissolution of the Halton Food Council

The Halton Food Council can be dissolved at the discretion of the Council.

Network

The Council may decide to form a larger network of interested individuals in the community to consult with and communicate about the activities of the HFC. This network can include a wide variety of individuals involved in the various food systems in Halton.

Review and Approval of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference shall be reviewed and approved by the Council every two years.

Communication

Web site; Email lists from two forums

Funding

No funding is yet needed for the Council's work other than the staff support which is financed by the health department.

Greatest Success Stories

- Commitment of the start-up committee, who, despite having any formal processes developed, met on many occasions to eventually develop the Council.
- Two food forums. In particular the first forum when 140 people were in attendance and the energy in the room was, as Lynn Garrison recounts, "palpable".

Greatest Threat

The HFC places considerable reliance on the staff support provided by the health department. This poses a risk to the ongoing sustainability of the group if the staff support is one day eliminated or reduced in hours.

While one option to alleviate this threat is to register the group as a formal body (society, charity, non-profit, etc.), no one has yet brought that up as a possible direction. Current discussions on forming a work plan might, however, introduce that option as necessary in order to carry out action on food system priorities.

Words of Advice

"Trust the process and trust the people involved."

Ten Rivers Food Web

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit

Area served: Linn, Benton & Lincoln Counties, OR

Population: 246,000

Main urban centres: Corvallis, Albany, Lebanon, Newport, Sweet Home, Lincoln City

Founded: 2006

Interviewed: Jen
Christion Myers,
Community Food
Organizer



Ten Rivers Food Web

www.tenriversfoodweb.org



Background

Ten Rivers Food Web provides strategic leadership to build a robust and resilient food system in the Mid-Willamette Valley. TRFW supports, educates and organizes farmers, processors, buyers, retailers and individuals to increase and diversify local food acreage, promote local food processing and expand access to affordable and nutritious foods. Their work encompasses an area from the Oregon Coast to the Cascades and includes Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties and is centered in the community of Corvallis – a university town surrounded by an active farming community. The intention of the TRFW is to be the overarching food system organization.

History

Ten Rivers Food Web emerged out of a 2004 food summit held in the City of Corvallis. The summit maintained a focus on hunger in the region but was the first major community discussion on the region's food system and shed light on the many gaps to accessing food among all income levels and the challenges facing small-scale farmers to access markets.

In its early days, TRFW relied on the [Corvallis Environmental Center](#) – a local non-profit, as its fiscal sponsor. In 2006, TRFW succeeded in becoming its own registered non-profit.

The organization developed three main program areas for its activities as listed in the column to the right under "Priorities". TRFW determined the geographic region it was to serve by ensuring the size of the region was one that maintained the potential to sustainably feed itself.

In 2010, the TRFW moved from being an all-volunteer organization to hiring staff and building more capacity for outreach to rural areas.

TRFW is currently in a real period of growth.

Needs Statement *(as identified in the TRFW [Strategic Plan](#))*

Since World War II, the U.S. has experienced a dramatic re-structuring of its agricultural landscape. The food system that has emerged is failing both consumers and producers. Even in an area as fertile and abundant as the Ten Rivers foodshed (encompassing Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties), people suffer from limited access to healthy food and farmers struggle to make a living growing food for their communities.

Individual consumers no longer know where their food comes from and often lack basic information about the importance of eating nutritious food. Cheap calories feed our poorest residents, resulting in obesity, heart disease, and record numbers of diabetic Americans. According to "Keeping Oregonians Healthy," a 2007 report by the Department of Health and Human Services, 37% of adults in the communities we serve were classified as overweight. That same year, an additional 16% of Benton County adults were classified as obese, as were 28% of Lincoln County and 31% of Linn County adults. While research shows that increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of obesity and chronic diseases, most residents of our foodshed are consuming low amounts of these nutrient-dense foods. Only 30% of adults in Benton County, 23% in Linn County, and 24% in Lincoln County consume the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Mission

Ten Rivers Food Web works with communities in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties to build resilient food systems which provide healthy food for all.

Vision

The Ten Rivers foodshed will be robust in the face of ecological and economic pressures. At least 30% of the food consumed in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties will be locally grown, processed, and distributed.

Priorities

- Food Literacy
- Improving Access to Local Food
- Community Food Organizing
- Food Producer Support

Food insecurity affects half a million Oregonians, according to the 2009 USDA Hunger Report. Many residents of the Ten Rivers foodshed depend on federal assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their food needs. In 2009, 23,294 (20.6%) Linn County residents relied on monthly SNAP benefits, along with 8,360 (11%) people in Benton County and 8,818 (19%) in Lincoln County. During this same period there were an additional 30,256 residents in the tri-county area that qualified for this assistance but were not receiving it. As vital as federal food assistance is, the benefits often fall short of making healthy food affordable. While SNAP benefits allot \$1.30 per meal per person, the average cost of a meal in our communities is much higher at \$2.34 in Linn County, \$2.84 in Lincoln County, and \$3.20 in Benton County.

An irony exists in a food system where people suffer from food insecurity and diet-related diseases while farmers struggle to make a living producing edible crops. An abundance of nutritious food is produced in the Ten Rivers region including fruit, vegetables, grains, beans, dairy, beef, poultry, lamb, pork, and seafood. While evidence suggests that the demand for local products is growing, consumers often lack the access to or knowledge about how to support local farmers. Furthermore, changing market conditions, dramatic fuel price fluctuations, and the recent crash of the grass seed market have destabilized economic conditions for farmers in the mid-Willamette Valley.

At one time, Linn County was the biggest supplier of wheat to the Willamette Valley and Corvallis was a trading center for the agricultural commodities and value-added products from our region. Flour mills, canneries, drying facilities, and other value-added processing made local fruits, vegetables, fish, and meats available throughout the year. The disappearance of food processing and distribution infrastructure reduced the number of edible crops available for rotation and many farmers were forced out of farming or forced to grow non-food products such as grass seed, nursery plants, or other specialty crops for export. Farmers are losing their land, leasing to larger farms, or expanding to compete in the global marketplace. Small farmers in our three-county region are seeking new approaches to survive under these unpredictable global conditions. Many are looking for opportunities to develop farming, processing, and distribution systems focusing on local markets as a hedge against political, climate, and economic instability around the globe.

Ten Rivers Food Web seeks to close the gaps in our food system by simultaneously increasing supply, demand and access to locally grown products. Our work returns farmers to the land, teaches people to recognize their ability to strengthen our local economy, and helps the people who are most oppressed by the global food system afford healthier food for their families. In 2011 we conducted a comprehensive tri-county Community Food Assessment which helped us identify specific needs in our food system and informs the goals of our Building a Sustainable Foodshed project outlined below. Forging the connections and building the relationships required for creating a stronger food system will improve the health, equity, environmental sustainability, and economic well-being of our tri-county community.

TRFW plans to launch a comprehensive project called Building a Sustainable Foodshed. The project will emphasize a systems approach to feeding ourselves across the region with the aim of maximizing the effectiveness of a broad range of organizations working to increase food security and strengthen our communities through food.

The three primary project goals are to: (1) improve low-income access to healthy food, (2) improve food literacy through community education programs, and (3) create economic opportunities for small farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs.

When we use the term “food web”, we are indexing the multiple networks that exist between producers, processors, and consumers of food. We attempt to knit together social relations through food, creating a fabric that is so dense that no one falls through. The primary way we work is through education. We inform ourselves and others about how the food system works and discuss how it could be improved for the well-being of all. Our focus is on the local level where we can be most effective. If one stands on the top of Mary’s Peak, one can almost see the ten rivers that feed our region stretching from the Cascades to the Pacific; an area capable of sustaining itself and others. While our web necessarily stretches beyond this area, our focus is on increasing the density of food relations with those closest to us. We are also a convening organization. We facilitate projects that increase the amount of food grown, processed and distributed locally.

Changes in the global economy have recently made export-based agriculture a more risky proposition. Tight credit and slumping home building and commercial real estate development have cut into markets for grass seed and nursery plants – two of the highest value agricultural sectors in the Willamette Valley. Many local farmers are turning to traditional food crops such as soft white wheat, which has a large export market but volatile international prices. Farms such as Stalford Seed Farms and Sunbow Farm are leading the way to local and regional markets – particularly for beans, edible seeds, and organic grains. The fertile soils of the Willamette Valley once supported a diversity of food crops, including grains and storage beans. Our role is to support the emerging growers’ network, as they rediscover old crops and harvest methods and develop new means to tap into local markets.

Case Statement *(as identified in the TRFW Strategic Plan)*

We cannot achieve our vision of an ecologically and economically resilient food system on our own. Some aspects of our vision will be targeted primarily by other organizations. There are several strong groups working on land use planning and agricultural issues that we can inform regarding food system relocalization goals. We partner with many excellent organizations who are hard at work to increase food availability to low-income people on a non-emergency and emergency basis. Our role is to foster an informed and educated network of farmers, processors, institutional buyers, restaurateurs and individuals to accelerate the process of local reinvestment in our three-county food system.

Ten Rivers Food Web seeks to accomplish its mission through targeted programs to:

- Educate and organize individual, community and institutional food buyers and promote grower-direct purchasing relationships
- Foster creative new investment in local food processing and distribution capacity, as well as land access for new and non-traditional farmers
- Continue to promote food literacy through periodic food summits and regular lectures, discussions, website and listserv
- Foster programs that increase access to fresh, local food by low-income people
- Connect farmer-innovators with one another and with other sources of expertise, and support their on-farm research

Activities

TRFW outlines its three main program areas, accompanying objectives, and operational tasks to carry out those objectives within its current Strategic Plan:

Food Literacy

Goal 1: Host events to increase public knowledge, skills & values to support a local food system.

Strategy

- Host seasonal food fairs across the 3 county region
- Host Chef's Show-off
- Host fall food series across the 3 county region (farm tours, dinners, community conversations, film screenings)

Goal 2: Coordinate community education classes related to food

Strategy

- Host nutrition education classes for low-income consumers
- Host local food cooking demonstrations at farmers' markets and food pantries

Increased Access to Local Food

Goal 1: Increase number of year-round venues for producers to direct market

Strategy

- Promote a year-round farmers' market in Lincoln County
- Expand "Fill Your Pantry" markets
- Develop an institutional purchasing program

Goal 2: Increase access to fresh local foods for low-income consumers

Strategy

- Expand "That's My Farmer SNAP Incentive" program (Bring TMF to more farmer's markets; Conduct outreach to enrol more eligible people in SNAP; Develop a farmers' market prescription program)
- Increase local food purchasing by free-meal sites and food pantries

Food Producer Support

Goal 1: Promote economic opportunities for small farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs

Strategy

- Improve access to micro-enterprise and small business development resources
- Promote access to microlending opportunities

Goal 2: Facilitate efforts to develop food production infrastructure

Strategy

- Develop networks and plans for the creation of the Mid-Willamette Valley Regional Food Center in Benton County
- Convene and facilitate community planning to develop fish processing in Toledo (Lincoln County)
- Convene and facilitate community planning to develop meat processing in Linn County

Events

- Annual Chefs' Show-Off – cooking competition featuring local chefs and local ingredients.
- Community Food FEASTs (Food Education Agriculture Solutions Together) - a series of workshops held in each of the region's communities and designed for residents and stakeholders to engage in informed and facilitated discussions about food, education, and agriculture in the community and work towards solutions together that will help build a healthier, more equitable and resilient local food system. (To be discontinued)
- Food Summit – 2011 Summit presented the findings from the Community Food Assessments and FEASTs.
- Fill Your Pantry Markets – farm-direct markets held in the fall where customers can purchase bulk storage items including flour, dried beans, canned fish, honey, and root crops.
- Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Program – A step by step strategy to rebuild the local food system by increasing the quantity and diversity of the food crops that are grown in the Willamette Valley. The Bean and Grain Project also seeks to evaluate deficiencies in the food system infrastructure, build buyer/seller relationships for locally grown food, and compile information on organic and sustainable agricultural practices specific to the region. The group has recently formed a company, Willamette Seed & Grain, LLC.
- Seasonal Food Fairs - featuring local farms

Reports

- [Ten Rivers Food Web Willamette Valley Local Food Processing Assessment](#) – This report evaluates the existing situation of food processing in the Willamette Valley and gathers recommendations from stakeholders (farmers, processors, crop scientists, local food advocates) regarding the potential for increased local food processing in the future. The study was funded by a Rural Business Enterprise grant and completed in December 2007.
- [Ten Rivers Food Web Local Foods Project](#) – This report discusses the feasibility of small- and large-scale primary processing for food crops such as beans and grains on Willamette Valley farms. The study was funded by a Rural Business Enterprise grant and completed in November 2008.
- Currently undertaking a tri-county **Community Food Assessment**, which involves meeting with all stakeholders throughout the region's food system. (*report available Fall 2011*)

Organizational Capacity Building *(as identified in the TRFW [Strategic Plan](#))*

In 2010-11 Ten Rivers Food Web hired its first staff member, three AmeriCorps members, and developed volunteer Chapter groups in Linn and Lincoln counties, dramatically increasing their organizational capacity. The Chapters are hosting Food Literacy events, facilitating the That's My Farmer SNAP Incentive program at local farmers' markets, and working to develop new regional market initiatives.

The Board of Directors invested in training facilitated by Rural Development Initiatives in 2011, developing a new 3-year Strategic Plan and Fundraising Plan.

Our internal goals include: TRFW has a clear branded identity, TRFW has marketing materials and educational materials in English and Spanish, TRFW has a full-time Executive Director by 2012; and a full-time community organizer in each of the three counties by 2013; and has developed its volunteer-base to meet programmatic goals.

Funding

Individual donors; Private foundations; Public sources. Oregon Food Bank is a significant funder. Currently developing a long-term fundraising plan.

Communication

- Social Media; Web Site
- Acts as a communication tool for other regional food-related events/activities not affiliated with TRFW
- On-Line News Feed / Resource Categories: In the Garden, In the Kitchen, In the Field, Food Security, Mark Your Calendar
- [Local Food Directory](#) on web site. Enables residents to search for particular foods and receive information on farms and locations to access those foods
- Comprehensive list of links to regional food organizations
- Web calendar
- 500-member listserv

Partner Programs

- **Corvallis Environmental Center Farm to School Initiative** - makes connections between the local food system, and the classroom. Farm to School staff partner with the [Corvallis School District Food and Nutrition Services](#) to identify local, sustainably produced foods for the District's meal program. The initiative supports the District's efforts to purchase fresh, local foods, by providing opportunities for students to learn about the foodshed. In past years, TRFW co-chaired the Farm to School Committee which hosts a community-based coalition of local organizations, agencies and individuals interested in implementing the Farm to School program. They now serve on their Neighbourhood Food Center Advisory Team. During the past year, the Corvallis Environmental Center has conducted a feasibility study for a Neighborhood Food Center in partnership with the Benton County Health Department, Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services, the South Corvallis Food Bank, and Ten Rivers Food Web.
- **Lincoln County Local Foods** – OSU's Lincoln County Extension Services operates Lincoln County Local Foods, which maintains a goal to connect farmers and producers with consumers and buyers and to help producers sell their products using free services.
- **OSU Emergency Food Pantry** - Aims to provide nutritious, culturally appropriate, local, seasonal, emergency food to all persons who fall within specified levels of income.
- **That's My Farmer** – A project TRFW took over in 2010 from the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns. The project coordinates a farmers' market SNAP* incentive program among congregations and small farms. The project operated regionally at five farmers' markets.



**Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (formerly known as Food Stamps)*

- **Willamette Valley Slow Food Initiatives** - Slow Food Corvallis is an informal chapter of Slow Food U.S.A. and part of the international Slow Food organization/movement. The Corvallis chapter seeks to “reconnect residents of Corvallis and surrounding towns with the people, traditions, animals and plants that produce our food”.

Other Partners

Food Share of Lincoln County; Linn-Benton Food Share; Lincoln County Small Farmers' Association; Newport Farmers' Market, Calapooia Food Alliance, Oregon Food Bank, Corvallis-Albany Farmers' Markets, Sweet Home Farmers' Market

Membership

Currently trying to figure out how membership with TRFW might look.

Success Stories

- **Growers Networks** – Bean and Grain Project in conjunction with the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition. The project has helped support the introduction of an Oregon-grown line of breads available in major supermarkets. www.naturebake.com/oregongrains.shtml
- **Food Literacy** has been a big strength – According to Jen Christian Myers, the TRFW can claim partial responsibility for the heightened awareness of local food in the community of Corvallis. The Chef Show-Off has been a highlight of their food literacy activities.
- **Low-Income Access** – Hosts/convenes a monthly group with churches, food banks, gleaners, and gardeners growing for the OSU Food Pantry.



Oregon Grains NatureBake bread is made entirely with local grains grown within 100 miles of its bakery. Pictured here is farmer Clint Lindsey of A2R Farms (source: NatureBake)

Challenges

One challenge unique to TRFW is the perception among some residents within the region that the organization is mostly focused on the community of Corvallis and formally a part of Oregon State University. Both are untrue.

Staff

- Jen Christian Myers is TRFW's Community Food Organizer and is the only staff. She works three-quarter time.
- TRFW has relied on AmeriCorps volunteers (*a national volunteer program*) - workers are full time and have worked on the food system assessment project. Their titles have included; Local Foods Coordinator, Benton County; Community Food Assessment Coordinator, Linn County; Community Food Assessment Coordinator, Lincoln County.

Governance

TRFW has 13 board members who are elected through a nomination process (usually nominated by former board members). Applications are received annually. The organization works to ensure there is diversity on the board and includes regional representation.

Government Relations

No formal relationship with local governments but always tries to provide information when necessary.

Neighbouring Willamette Farm and Food Coalition

Also profiled as part of this report is the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition. The two organizations maintain similar missions and goals and offer a good example of how two neighbouring regional food system organizations can support and work with one another. TRFW and WFFC have applied for funding together for several projects. Both of their respective geographic areas maintain distinct communities.

Words of Advice

- “I think clarity of mission and goals is really important. Food system work is so broad and that’s what makes it exciting but that also makes it easily overwhelming and encourages going in lots of different directions if it’s not clear what your particular strengths are. That’s what we’ve been seeking to define for ourselves too.”
- “In our experience, there are so many organizations trying to tackle one corner of food system work and we really think that communication between groups is an essential piece... making sure people are talking to each other and collaborating and knowing how not to step on each others toes.”

The Center for an Agricultural Economy

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit

Area served: Town of Hardwick and the Northeast Kingdom, VT (Essex, Caledonia, Orleans Counties)

Population: 62,438

Main urban centres: Newport (5,000+)

Founded: 2004 (staffed in 2009)

Interviewed: Erica Campbell, Regional Food Systems Project Manager

www.hardwickagriculture.org



Background

The Center for an Agricultural Economy is a non-profit organization founded in 2004 by Andrew Meyer, owner of Vermont Natural Coatings, a whey-based varnish company, and Vermont Soy, an organic soy drink and tofu company.

As the weaknesses of the global industrial food system are revealed, the Hardwick region and the State of Vermont have rediscovered the possibility of remaking the state's own food system. In 2004, the CAE adopted a unique, entrepreneurial driven-approach to supporting sustainable agriculture, reinforced by the innovative opportunities community leaders in the region were already creating.

History

As the son of a local dairy farmer, Andrew Meyer saw first hand the need for an organization to bring resources into the Hardwick, VT area to support the region's

interest in promoting the development of value-added food products to enhance economic conditions.

CAE was birthed as an idea to synergize the collaboration that was already happening between food businesses (i.e. farmers, value-added, seed, agricultural inputs, retail).

“It made logical sense to go to the next level... let's take the socially responsible missions of these already established efforts and figure out how to congeal these synergies to further develop the food system and increase the economic vitality of the area and increase the amount of local food consumed.”

- Erica Campbell on the history of CAE

Between 2004-2009 the organization existed as a very grassroots initiative until it hired its first staff in 2009.

Why a Value-Added Focus?

CAE recognizes the positive ripple effects which a value-added focus has on a food system. In turn, CAE focuses its attention on supporting both already-established and start-up value-added businesses.

The Northeast Kingdom is also the poorest area of Vermont and food manufacturing is seen as one way to move the region towards becoming more economically vibrant.

Much of the focus on value-added has come from the area's dairy farmers who have been struggling with the increasing cost of inputs. As is the case for farmers of all sizes and sectors, economic conditions have left dairy farmers in the region to become price-takers instead of price-makers.

Despite the value-added focus, involvement and interest in CAE comes from all sectors of the food system.

Hardwick, Vermont

With a population of only 3,174, the town of Hardwick has nevertheless managed to become a beacon of light to local food system advocates throughout North America as a result of food being used to enhance the economic health and sustainability of the community. The town has become the subject of a book, *“The Town that Food Saved – How one Community Found Vitality in Local Food”* (2010).

The Hardwick area is home to (among other food businesses):

- High Mowing Organic Seeds
- Vermont Soy
- Vermont Food Venture Center
- Vermont Natural Coatings
- Claire's Restaurant (CSA restaurant)
- Buffalo Mountain Food Co-op and Café
- Pete's Greens
- Jasper Hill Farm (cheese)
- Cellars at Jasper Hill (shared cheese cellars for 6 cheesemakers)
- North Hardwick Dairy

Mission

To bring together the community resources and programs needed to develop a locally-based, sustainable, healthy and regional food system.

Vision

To support the desire of rural communities to rebuild their economic and ecological health by building upon local tradition and innovative, thoughtful opportunities.

Activities

General Programs

Tours and Outreach - Monthly guided tours of the area's farms and agri-business (\$50/person, up to 25 people)

Atkins Field at Cooper Brook – Sustainable agriculture educational and resource center in Hardwick. CAE's vision for Atkins Field at Cooper Brook, is to build an agricultural center that encourages and inspires community members to engage in the local food system as well as to increase agricultural capacity in the immediate area, with the result being a strengthening of the community, local economy and food security (possible uses: community gardens, indoor year-round farmers' market; nature trails, community space for workshops, food preservation and cooking classes, outdoor art, skate park, amphitheatre, outdoor classrooms).

Hardwick Community Gardens – started in 2004 and has been an ongoing presence in the town, with gardeners of all ages participating every year. Two local school programs, REACH OSSU from Hardwick Elementary and the students from Buffalo Mountain School have garden plots for food production and educational purposes. The Community Garden is located on land owned and maintained by the Town of Hardwick and managed by the CAE. Annually, the Town Manager evaluates and gives the CAE permission to use the land for the upcoming season. At some point there is the possibility that the gardens will be expanded to the Atkins Field site.

Vermont Food Venture Center – shared-use kitchen incubator for value-added and specialty food producers who can rent the kitchen on an hourly basis or arrange for co-packing at the facility. Staff provide a wide array of food and agricultural business consulting services to aspiring entrepreneurs, existing food businesses and organizations looking to promote food businesses as an economic development tool.

Food Access and Security – raising awareness on hunger in Vermont by providing support to existing organizations, hosting/sponsoring benefit events and raising money for the Food Access Fund and Vermont Farm Fund

Funds

- Food Access Fund - The Food Access Fund was established in December 2008 by CAE in order to provide better availability of locally grown and produced food to the Hardwick Area Food Pantry as well as provide support to CAE's other food access and security programs.

Project Programs

Tracking the Food System – The CAE has begun to collect baseline data on the local and regional food system. This data will be used to track trends in the food system over time, including the productions and consumption of local food, as well as indicators on land conservation, environmental impact, economic development, and food security. For the development of the Regional Food System Plan for Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, CAE developed goals and strategies in a participatory process involving dozens of area residents. To track how well the region is meeting these goals, a set of indicators and measures were developed. While production data is fairly robust, just how much local food is being consumed is still largely unknown, and until CAE devises a state-wide tracking system for retail establishments (e.g., food co-ops), they will continue to have to guess how much local food is actually being consumed in the region. The CAE is working closely with the Farm to Plate Initiative to implement the state-wide strategies, and ultimately, devise a coordinated tracking system to measure progress. Further, the CAE is developing a baseline for the greater Hardwick area to gauge the success of the CAE's locally-based programs, including the Vermont Food Venture Center.

Northeast Kingdom Regional Food Systems - CAE has been conducting research to develop a comprehensive local food system strategic plan to support agriculturally-based economic development strategies in the three counties comprising the Northeast Kingdom (NEK) region of Vermont. The plan was completed in June 2011 and developed for the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (regional planning commission) and is funded by the U.S. Department of Labour. The plan is founded upon the notion that food system development is economic development. CAE is positioned to be very involved in the follow-up dialogue and implementation of strategies once the plan is complete. [LINK](#)

Small Business Agricultural Advising - The Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE), in conjunction with the Vermont Small Business Development Center (VtSBDC), has hired Heidi Krantz to be an Agricultural Business Advisor from 2010 to 2012.

Heidi is tasked with providing regional support, counselling, training, and resource networking services to small food and agriculture-based businesses owners and prospective business owners within the NEK region. Heidi's work will also be connected with the Vermont Food Venture Center (VFVC).

The main responsibility of the Food Access Fund is to reimburse the Pantry for products purchased from local agricultural businesses (such as bread, eggs, meat and vegetables).

- Vermont Farm Fund - The purpose of this fund, which is primarily sponsored through Pete's Greens and administered by the CAE, is to assist Vermont farmers with the establishment of new enterprises that will increase the supply of local food. The fund is for farmers that have a good idea and clear plan but lack the necessary financial resources required to be eligible for a loan from traditional lenders.

Why a Non-Profit and not a Food Council?

While the focus of CAE is quite specific to the economic opportunities found within value-added food products, it's Mission, Vision and programs are very much driven by a broad food system approach, which, for many cities, towns and regions has been the work of food councils.

The question was posed, "Why the non-profit model and not a food council model?"

"A council probably wouldn't have served the interests of those who were first involved with CAE... but with that said, a food council likely would have served the same purposes that CAE has served."

"The strengths of the non-profit approach versus the traditional models of food policy councils being of a local or regional government, is the ability to access funding from a diversity of sources. For CAE, it's also offered a good venue for an entrepreneurial approach to food systems work (i.e. food venture centre, infrastructure development, food hub role)... which is something FPCs don't usually get into."

"There isn't much food policy council work in Vermont, not even a State FPC and there could be more of an effort to coordinate players in the Northeast Kingdom. The lack of this type of activity is probably because so much local food system work is already underway. The NEK food system plan will be a good opportunity to pull resources together and coordinate activities in the region."

Governance

- 9-person Board of Directors who is very involved in the organization but provides a 'complementary' role to the staff and does not micro-manage.
- Board works with staff on strategic planning but more planning around these roles is needed as the organization is still young.

Resources/Staffing

5 full-time and 2 part-time

- Executive Director
- Program Director and Education/Community Outreach
- Small Business Agriculture Advisor
- Regional Food Systems Project Manager
- Graduate Research Fellow
- Vermont Food Venture Center Interim Project Manager
- Vermont Food Venture Center Operations Manager
- Administrative Assistant

- Volunteers
- Internships

Funding

CAE's budget for operations and programs are funded by a combination of private foundations and public grants. Public Agency grants include U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Labor, as well as state legislated funds appropriated through the Vermont Farm to Plate Strategic Plan implementation grants.

CAE also accepts donations from individuals, businesses and organizations. Donors become ‘members’. Members receive; a seasonal e-newsletter, including updates on the Center’s progress to meet its goals; special invitations to sustainable agriculture tours, speaker visits, farm-to-table food events, and news about key Center-sponsored programs in partnership with others like-minded organizations, and; an invitation to the Annual Meeting, which features a special food event celebrating local food production and preparation.

Communication

e-Newsletter; Blog; Social Media; On-line event calendar

Academic Partnerships

CAE maintains very active relationships with academic institutions in the area including memorandums of understanding with the University of Vermont and Sterling College. About a dozen research projects have been completed between CAE and UVM (i.e. engineering students assisting The Cellars at Jasper Hill with developing ventilation systems for the cheese cellars; organic compost development projects, and; social sciences projects). Sterling College maintains a sustainable agriculture program. CAE is also developing a relationship with Lyndon State College that is looking to build an entrepreneurship program on food value-added processing.

Partners

CAE works with a wide variety of partners including: Northern Vermont Development Association, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Green Mountain Farm-to-School, Vermont Small Business Development Center, Vermont Land Trust, local schools and colleges and numerous private farms and businesses.

Hardwick-Centric or Northeast Kingdom-Centric?

With Hardwick maintaining celebrity-like status among the ‘food movement’ throughout Canada and the U.S., Erica Campbell was asked about the local perception of CAE and its role within Hardwick and the Northeast Kingdom:

“There is a fear both here and throughout the State that ‘local’ will be co-opted (Ben & Jerry’s as an example of a local business now owned by a multinational), so there is a lot of fear of any effort to scale-up or what might be perceived as a ‘capitalist’ approach to enhancing the local food system.”

“I had heard from some that CAE is only focused on itself and not the Northeast Kingdom.”

“The efforts in Hardwick have been perceived by some as being led by ‘self-interested businesses’. The most prevalent perception though is that what’s happening in Hardwick is exceptional and there is a lot of the ‘we want some of that... our town will be saved too’ going around’.”

“Most of what I’ve heard from people about CAE and Hardwick is positive, especially with how these efforts have supported land conservation, health and food security.”

“The NEK plan which CAE is now engaged in is a regional effort and a food system plan is inevitably one that also ties in local food producers to low-income access issues and farm-to-school programs (which there are many in VT) among other important pieces of the food system.”

Ag Innovations Network – The Alliance Project (Food System Alliances)

www.aginnovations.org/alliances

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit administering and facilitating 7 food system alliances

Area served: 7 counties in the State of California (based in Sebastopol, CA)

Population: N/A

Main urban centres: N/A

Founded: 2006 (first food system alliance founded)

Interviewed: Helen McGrath, Alliance Program Assistant

Background

Ag Innovations Network (AIN) is a non-profit corporation founded in 2000 that works across California and across the United States to bring together ‘unusual partners’ to support change in the food system.

AIN’s Alliance Project sponsors and facilitates county-based collaborations among food system leaders in a community. The Alliance network includes both Food System Alliances (FSAs) and Ag Futures Alliances (AFAs), and are currently functioning in 7 California counties.



History of the Alliance Project

The first Alliance was started in 2000 in Ventura County, California when leaders in the farming community decided to engage farming critics in the process of sharing views, trust-building, and ultimately identifying common ground. In the years since the founding of the movement, new alliances have been formed in Ventura, Santa Barbara, Yolo, San Mateo, Sonoma, Santa Clara, and Fresno Counties.

The Ag Futures Alliances are multi-stakeholder collaborations between farmers, ranchers, farm-workers, conservationists, and civic leaders in the

“We are trying to bring democracy and democratic tools back to these communities and re-ignite and re-engage them because it’s very much needed especially in the agriculture sector” - Helen McGrath

county who share a desire to build a vibrant, healthy, and durable food system. Two of the seven Alliances are AFAs.

In 2006, the Alliance concept expanded to include public health, food security advocates, chefs, school garden programs, and consumers, becoming the Food System Alliances. Four of the seven Alliances are FSAs and one Alliance is an Ag and Food Alliance.

How a Food System Alliance Forms

The first step suggested by AIN is for the community to be ready and have enough incentive among multiple stakeholders to actually want to sit down at the table together and engage.

Ventura County

The first Alliance was for Ventura County and it began because of a contentious issue whereby a school was next door to a farmer spraying pesticides. It enraged parents and the community and the rural-urban relationship became filled with tension. Joseph McIntyre (AIN) and Michael Dimock (Roots of Change) stepped in to bring people from all sectors together and an Alliance was formed. Joseph and Michael worked with the Alliance to develop a charter, constitution, consensus

Mission

The mission of Ag Innovations Network is to help create a food system that works better for everyone. They create forums for diverse stakeholders to come together and solve problems. They focus on bringing deep knowledge about food system issues coupled with cutting-edge process design and facilitation to create democratically driven change.

Vision

AIN’s vision is a world where the critical challenges facing the food system are being met head on by diverse stakeholders who have the skills and desire to solve problems collaboratively. It is a place where the public interest and the interests of the future are held in balance with our current needs and concerns. It is a place where our basic assumptions about food, farming, growth, and change can be challenged and examined so that creative solutions can flower.

Goals

- To have every county in California have a Food System Alliance or its equivalent and to link all of these Alliances into a powerful network that impacts both their local communities and state and federal policy.
- To expand their Roundtable project to cover more issues impacting the food system and to include more stakeholders.
- To create and disseminate tools for new and current leaders on how to facilitate democratic change.
- To expand their programmatic offering nationally and globally where they can be of service to others.

decision-making processes among other founding documents. The Alliance went on to successfully draft a law which was passed State-wide that outlawed pesticide spraying near schools during certain times of the day during the year.

Fresno County

The Alliance in Fresno did not form around a particular issue as Ventura did and instead began with a clean slate. AIN spent 8-10 months identifying partners and developing an initial list of 150 stakeholders before a formal meeting was even held. That number was narrowed to 30-40 members and is expected to continue to shrink.

Santa Clara

Santa Clara's Alliance is an example of one which was initiated by an already-organized group who approached AIN to help expand their stakeholder base and facilitate and provide methodology and structure to their work.

Membership

AIN works with local farm bureaus, County agriculture commissioner offices and public health departments to help identify stakeholders. AIN initially 'casts a big net' and numbers tend to boil down over the course of meetings. Members are required to commit to 10 meetings per year and be able to work well within a group.

Once an initial membership is arrived at, AIN works with the Alliance to develop a constitution as to how members will be nominated/appointed in the future. An Alliance generally reviews membership annually and identifies gaps within the membership.

Members are often representing their organizations, sectors or groups of stakeholders.

Membership always includes:

- Civic
- Education
- Public health
- Producers
- Local resource conservation districts
- Dept. of Environmental Health
- Agricultural and urban agriculture education (*new*)

Activities

Food System Alliances identify two to four problems per year to tackle. Using a simple policy development template, they characterize the problem, explain why it matters, and offer solutions. These "citizen" white papers, which are no longer than four pages, are then released to elected officials and the public as a call to action.

Issues Identification

The process of Issues Identification often takes several meetings, and requires some "framing" from AIN staff facilitators. There are some general considerations that staff suggest the group keep in mind when going through this process such as (and in no particular order):

1. Significant impact. The issue has potential to significantly impact the food system and the health of our people, environment, and economy.
2. Achievable: Realistic scope and scale. The scope and scale of the issue offer opportunities for feasible and effective local solutions. There is reasonable access to resources needed.
3. Mobilizes community resources. Working on this issue can leverage strategic opportunities and align community resources for action.
4. Significant alignment across stakeholders. Stakeholders can work to achieve common recommendations and approach on this issue, as well as cultivate partnerships with relevant organizations.
5. Community commitment to system change. This issue generates and/or builds on a high level of community interest, receptivity, engagement, and commitment to create lasting, systemic change.
6. Policy impact. This issue creates opportunities for local, statewide, or national advocacy for policy and systems change to support a vibrant and resilient local food system.

It is up to each group to distill, adapt or clarify these general considerations.

Is a Food System Alliance an Independent Organization?

The individual Alliances are projects of AIN. There have been certain cases, i.e. Ventura County, where a project has spun out of the Alliance and become its own entity. In the case of Ventura County it was *Farm Worker Housing Now!* initiative which became its own independent project with its own staff, etc. There is a transition plan, however, that AIN would like to develop in the future that would entail training and leadership development of Alliance members and/or local individuals who could be positioned to take over the Alliances in the future.

http://aginnovations.org/actions/santa_barbara_action/
<http://aginnovations.org/alliances/ventura/action/>

AIN has no agenda and rarely has funding agendas they need to meet. Individual Alliances are in charge of setting the direction they would like to take. The intention of an Alliance is not necessarily to become an overarching food system umbrella organization but to ensure that the entire spectrum of the food system is represented within a community. Some of the Alliances are certainly seen as umbrella organizations.

Commonalities

Among the Alliances, some common themes have emerged:

- Farm to institution work
- Aggregation/distribution/processing centres for various commodities (produce, wheat, meat processing, etc.)

Staff

Each individual Alliance is supported by an AIN facilitator who is both knowledgeable about agricultural, environmental, and public health issues and skilled in working with diverse groups. The facilitator's job is to help the Alliance achieve its goals. Facilitators are neutral about what principles are established or what projects are undertaken, but are very active in protecting the Alliance process and helping the group move forward.

Funding

Generally \$30,000 is needed to be raised to launch an Alliance. AIN works with the community to raise half of that locally and the other half raised by AIN itself. In some cases, members have donated a little each year. Some Alliances access either financial or staff support from public health departments. A few Alliances rely on multiple agencies coming up with funding (often from private foundations). AIN accesses their funding from local/state/federal government grants and private foundations and generates its own revenues through fee-for-service services.

Public Input

Non-members can participate on committees. Forums are becoming commonplace. In some cases, the public is allowed at meetings, but generally meetings are closed and notes are not available to the public. The interest to maintain meetings and minutes as confidential is to foster a safe environment for stakeholders who might not want to go on the record and be more candid in exploring issues further.

Every Alliance has individuals who don't necessarily represent a food organization.

San Mateo Food System Alliance *(an example of a Food System Alliance)*

The San Mateo County Food System Alliance formed in November 2006. As the first Food System Alliance in California, the group has sought to bring together all parts of the San Mateo County food system into a cohesive group capable of creating a healthier and more vibrant local food economy.

Throughout 2007 the group worked hard to hear and understand the very different perspectives on food and farming in the County from the views of "coast-side" farmers and fishermen to "bay-side" community service workers struggling against poverty and obesity. This is the first Alliance in California to seat both the County's Agricultural Commissioner and its Public Health Officer, creating an unprecedented opportunity to link local food production to healthy citizens.

In its first year of operation the group developed its constitution and implemented an effort to get San Mateo County's Mayor to sign-on to an appeal for US Farm Bill Reform.

The Alliance has set three areas where it wants to focus its efforts:

- Promoting integrated health and nutrition education programs at all local elementary schools.
- Enhancing the connection between local producers and large institutional buyers of food.
- Encouraging increased local food production by looking at land use patterns in the County.



Purpose

To support, enhance, and maintain an enduring and interdependent food system that is economically viable, environmentally sound and socially equitable that connects people to agriculture and enhances the health of all residents of San Mateo County.

Convening Statement

SMFSA recognizes that there are broken links of the food systems, and the Alliance is committed to finding and working on those broken links.

Principles of Practice – Core Values

“Recognizing that we will need to periodically remind ourselves of our core beliefs, that the actions of the SMFSA must be consistently implemented over the long-term, and that the community’s consent is needed to achieve our purpose, we have set forth the following principles to guide implementation of our programming.”

1. We believe that all parts of the food system are interrelated and that a change in one area may impact others.
2. We believe in the power of collective wisdom, where the wisdom of us as a whole is more powerful than each of us working alone.
3. We believe we need to be adequately informed to be able to be effective.
4. We believe in the effectiveness of bridging and making connections across communities within and outside of our food system.
5. We believe a healthy and sustainable food system is necessary for healthy communities, a healthy planet and a healthy future.
6. We believe in and will advocate for a healthy food system where all San Mateo County residents have access to San Mateo County products.
7. We believe in celebrating local agricultural history and tradition, the viability of San Mateo County’s agricultural economy and the people dependent on it, and the conservation of our natural resources.
8. We believe it is a basic human right that all people have access to affordable, healthy food.
9. We believe everyone should understand the fundamental origin of their food: where it is harvested, how it is produced, processed and transported.
10. We recognize the connectedness of life on earth and will seek solutions that consider all parts of the ecosystem.
11. We believe that an informed population will help restore the food system to a more balanced state.
12. We are aware that both locally and globally people are malnourished and we will work to improve the food system with those people in mind.
13. We believe that all people, across generations, are linked to each other and interdependent through our social, ecological, and economic systems.
14. We believe that a healthy and ecologically sound environment is possible and should be available for all members of our community.
15. We believe that we are accountable for the effects of our decisions on each other, the planet, and on future generations.
16. We recognize that special consideration must be given to those community members who are vulnerable and voiceless.
17. We believe in working proactively in our community to build alliances and avoid conflict.
18. We believe all arable land in the county, especially the most productive, should be put into production.
19. We believe all agricultural land should preferentially grow items that directly benefit the local area if such production is economically viable.
20. We believe economic and policy support for new farmers should be developed.
21. We believe people will be more healthy if they are more connected to the land that sustains them and can have direct access to local and fresh food.
22. We believe it is important to connect large institutional consumers, such as schools and hospitals, directly to local farms and farmers.
23. We believe every school should have a school garden program to help tie kids to agriculture.
24. We believe every resident should have access to community gardens within a half of a mile of where they live.

Principles of Organization

Recognizing that mutual trust and a common purpose are the basis for reaching consensus, the SMFSA has set forth the following principles to guide behavior of the organization’s members as they work to set goals and define activities. We recognize that the current process is merely the first step in a series of continuous steps that are needed to achieve our common purpose.

1. In order to develop mutual trust, we respect the right of each individual to have viewpoints, beliefs and values. We strive to find the most effective, honest, and respectful way to understanding others' perspectives and concerns.
2. In order to be effective our group must be truly representative of all parts of the food system and therefore maintain a diverse membership.
3. We are open to innovation and encourage creativity of form and roles. We do not limit ourselves. We are open to new ways of understanding.
4. We are honest with each other and make all attempts to be clear in how we communicate.
5. We look for long range, holistic solutions, not temporary fixes.
6. We will work from the spirit of "never give up" working hard to bring optimism to the situations at hand.
7. We work with the assumption that we are not a temporary group, but one that will continue to grow and develop into the future.
8. Our primary focus is on our local food system in San Mateo County.
9. What we decide to work on includes follow-through and is something that makes a difference for our community.
10. The more clearly we can communicate who we are and what we are doing the more effective we will be. To reach that clarity we will work to turn our ideas into tools/documents as needed.
11. We recognize that there is no better way to understand all sides of an issue than to listen deeply to every member of the group and our guests.
12. In order to make wise decisions we will strive to learn from each other and seek additional and external resources when more knowledge is needed on any relevant subject.
13. We will utilize our organizations and networks as resources.
14. By being part of the SMFSA as individuals rather than our organizations we are quicker, more nimble, and may be more powerful.
15. We value tolerance for all view points and will seek common values in order to pursue fair solutions.
16. We use simple, honest dialogue to achieve consensus in making decisions. 17. Consensus is defined as a mutually accepted group position or an agreement good enough for all members to move ahead. "Good enough" means that there is no strong objection by any one or more group members and those who are not in full accord give their consent to the consensus position established by the balance of the group.
17. Consensus is the ideal. If for some reason an individual member cannot support a position or statement otherwise accepted by consensus of the group, that individual may decline to endorse said position.
18. Members can participate fully in all dialogue and decision making processes even when they are administratively unable to endorse a statement or action taken by the group.
19. We will keep our statements as brief and clear as possible and no one person or subgroup will dominate the exchange.

Activities

Garden-Based Learning - 2010 The San Mateo FSA recently published a Garden-Based Learning Call-to-Action urging their community to join them in their goal to establish a garden in every school. Garden-based learning (GBL) uses the garden as an outdoor classroom to provide integrated learning experiences, in and across disciplines, through active, engaging real-world experiences that bring abstract concepts to life.

Meetings

Monthly. AIN helps coordinate and facilitate meetings working with local partners (setting agendas, taking minutes, etc.).

Committees

FarmtoInstitution:

Purpose: promoting nutrition education in elementary schools, the creation of gardens in every school, connecting producers with institutional buyers, i.e. schools, hospitals, prisons, etc.

Current work:

- Gardenbased Education: created a brochure rather than a white paper, a call to action to create a garden in every school. Trying to distribute thoroughly.
- Farm-toSchool: Received funding to get local food into school districts. Surveys were conducted of local food managers. Two districts were selected as pilots to see if model will work. Covers elementary and high school, as well as, schools who contract out for food.

- **FarmtoHospital:** Interviews were conducted with food managers, how much is local and how much is fresh, etc. Two hospitals were identified and asked if they would be interested in pilot program. Waiting for response from both hospitals and their food directors. Funding request is out to conduct a feasibility study to see how these programs could be successful.

Food Security Committee:

Purpose: SMC is lowest participant in the food stamp program in the State, despite a large number of residents being eligible.

Land Use Committee

Purpose: To look at obstacles for farming to continue in the county, either by maintaining acreage in production or increasing acreage. There was a thorough review of regulations, price of land, water issues, and what the committee should be focused on.

Current Work: Water Issues, Succession

Membership

29 members

How and when does an Alliance engage with local government?

Every Alliance, including the newly formed Alliances in Fresno and Santa Clara Counties, engage with the County Board of Supervisors. The Alliance program is specifically designed as a county by county project because of the local government structure, local regulations, etc.

Managing farmer involvement in light of the busy and over-extended nature of their work?

“This is a challenge in every community, with different approaches. I would suggest polling farmers ahead of time about the timing of meetings, consider initiating groups during slower winter growing seasons, and create a mechanism for engaging with farmers outside of meetings, especially during busy times of the year. Overall, take advantage of the initial feedback you get from farmers and work around that so you can encourage their buy-in from the beginning.”

Key Challenge

“A real challenge is our capacity - a desire to do more and be more involved, while balancing the need for Alliance members to take responsibility and ownership of the work. We provide key, backbone support for the groups and work to empower them to do the ground work in their own communities.”

“Is Ag Innovations able to support the start-up of a Canadian regional food alliance?”

“There is a variety of ways that Ag Innovations can support this effort remotely, and in person. We provide a range of facilitation and consulting services from one-offs, straight forward projects or processes, as well as more long-term support.”

Words of Advice

“Identify several strong entities within the region that might not necessarily converse or have traditionally worked together (maybe even an antagonistic history) and engage with them independently and explore the idea of an alliance with them. Find out what they would need in order to participate and how they can support the formation of an alliance. Spend a lot of time on this and then bring everyone together into the same room.”

“Within your communications, really identify the need for an alliance (pointing out the silos within the food system and the gaps that need to be filled and the coordination necessary to fill those gaps).

“Be aware of local dynamics.”

Documents of Interest

- [Constitution of the San Mateo County Food System Alliance](#) (Adopted March 25, 2008)

Toronto Food Policy Council

www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc_index.htm

Type of Organization: 30-member council responsible to and staffed by the City of Toronto's Board of Health

Area served: City of Toronto, ON

Population: 2,503,281

Main urban centres: Toronto

Founded: 1991

Interviewed: Wayne Roberts, past-Coordinator (2000-2010)

Background

Formed in 1991, the 30-member TFPC supports scores of programs with the shared goal of ensuring equitable access to food, nutrition, community development and environmental health, acting as professional lobbyist for the people on food and related issues.



The TFPC is free to make its own decisions on food policy issues. Staff working with the TFPC are employed by, and responsible to, the City of Toronto Board of Health. This arrangement has gained interest from public health, community, food security and sustainable agriculture organizations around the world. The TFPC is now under the leadership of Lauren Baker. Previous TFPC staff include Rod MacRae and Wayne Roberts.

History

At the time the Toronto Food Policy Council was formed in 1991, the Chair of the Toronto Board of Health was the then city councillor and now leader of the federal New Democratic Party (NDP), Jack Layton. In those days Toronto was a much smaller city and had not yet amalgamated with the surrounding municipalities.

The City of Toronto became the first city in the world to support the World Health Organization's [Healthy Cities](#) Charter and it was recognized at the time by the City that the next leap in health improvement was not medicine or healthcare but social policy.

The City set up two offices: the Healthy Cities Office (eventually cancelled) and a Food Policy Council.

Since its inception, the TFPC has always relied on unanimous support and according to past Coordinator Wayne Roberts, has always conducted itself in a way for everyone in the city to see its value.

Rod McCrae (now at York University) was the TFPC's first Coordinator and helped pull the first council members together. McCrae left that position in 2000 when Wayne Roberts took over. Roberts retired in 2010 and the position is now filled by Lauren Baker – formerly of Sustain Ontario.

The TFPC works towards helping the City carry out the vision of the Toronto Food Charter. This Charter, adopted unanimously by City Council in 2001, enjoins the City to engage in a range of activities pertaining to local food – including community gardening, government purchasing policies, culturally-acceptable foods and food security.

Mission

The Toronto Food Policy Council partners with business and community groups to develop policies and programs promoting food security. Our aim is a food system that fosters equitable food access, nutrition, community development and environmental health.

Priorities

The TFPC operates as a sub-committee of the Toronto Board of Health. Members include City Councillors, and volunteer representatives from consumer, business, farm, labour, multicultural, anti-hunger advocacy, faith, and community development groups. As one of the few urban-rural policy development bodies in Canada, they try to bridge the gap between producers and consumers.

Together, staff and council members serve as catalysts and brokers bringing people from different organisations together to help them find new ways to solve old problems. The Council is a forum for discussing and integrating policy issues that often fall between the cracks of established departments and research specialities.

Council staff collect hard-to-get information and make it available to students, researchers and community developers. Staff and council members increase public awareness of food policy issues through public lectures and workshops. Staff and members advocate for policy change at the municipal, provincial and federal level.

Activities

- Food and Hunger Action
- Health
- Agricultural Land Preservation and Urban Planning
- Economic Development
- Urban Agriculture & Food Waste Recovery
- Community Gardens
- Communications, Capacity Building & Public Education

http://www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc_index.htm

Membership

The TFPC maintains a membership of 30. Of these, two are members of the Toronto Board of Health, two are members of Toronto City Council, two are members of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council, and up to 24 are residents of Toronto who bring knowledge and experience from a range of communities within the city. The Coordinator proposes a slate of candidates to the Board of Health every three years.

Membership with the TFPC is quite different from most food councils which strive to achieve representation from every sector of the food system. The TFPC doesn't necessarily aim to bring all sectors together, because, as Wayne Roberts describes, "consensus becomes really difficult." People are instead there as individuals to serve the public interest, not their organizations.

With a 30-member council being larger than most councils in N.A., Wayne Roberts never found the number to pose any difficulty and sees it instead as an asset. "We always had a lot of consensus and we never took a decision when we didn't have consensus," says Roberts.

Meetings / Public Input

The TFPC meets once a month with quorum being two-thirds.

All meetings are public. Most TFPC meetings have 22 Council members present and anywhere between 40-100 members of the public. Minutes are posted on the City web site.

Meetings tend to not have many rules and they seek to accommodate anyone who has something to share (both members and non-members).

Roberts describes the "consent agenda" which the TFPC uses: "At the top of the meeting, the Chair proposes a consent agenda and everyone has been given the rationale for each item on the agenda ahead of time (including any items added by non-members). If a Council member doesn't think it should be on the agenda, they can state that they don't consent. The process usually takes all of 30 seconds."

Every public meeting includes one 50 minute educational and one 20-25 minute educational with ample time for public input. The first 50 minute educational is usually a talk on something broad and the shorter one on something more localized.

The TFPC usually has two meetings every second month where the second meeting is used to work out things that are more 'rough' and detailed and not requiring public involvement (ex. how to deal with rats if you allow chickens to be raised in the City).

When Roberts was Coordinator, he had a motion passed which stated that in order to bring up a motion, you had to give notice 3-days in advance and send it to all members.

Staff / Resources

The Toronto Food Policy Council has a small staff and modest budget. It has no authority to pass or enforce laws.

The Council is free to make its own decisions on food policy issues. Staff working with the TFPC are employed by, and responsible to the City of Toronto Board of Health.

"I was able to justify my position just based on the urban benefit (as opposed to rural). I was able to demonstrate that for every \$1 the City spends buying local food from within a few hundred kms from Toronto, it created \$5 worth of employment in the city of Toronto." - Wayne Roberts

A coordinator and secretary are employed to manage the TFPC.

The Coordinator reports to the Medical Officer of Health, the Board of Health and the Food Policy Council itself.

As the Coordinator, Roberts says he only ever took the position of the Council (not his own), so the TFPC usually has a council member (Chair) speak on issues publically or to City departments.

The Coordinator has considerable rights of free speech, which Roberts says is key if you're to be speaking on behalf of citizens.

Why a Food Council within a Government Agency?

- “Huge advantages... if someone from Planning had a report which mentioned anything about food, I had to receive a draft on it to see if I was ok with it.”
- “What’s driving people to build FPCs is that they think that their ideas have hit a critical mass to the point where they can make serious progress and to make serious progress you have to have the weight of the law behind you.”
- “We have one foot in government and one foot out.”

Why Not?

- “I do think there needs to be a group that just speaks of food in general and is not hampered by government dialogue.”

Funding

Beyond the staffing of the TFPC provided by the Toronto Board of Health (approx. \$200,000 for coordinator, secretary and office space), the TFPC operates with a \$15,000 budget.

Funding for the TFPC is unique in that three-quarters of the coordinator’s salary is covered by the Province of Ontario because the TFPC’s function is identified as fulfilling a mandate which cities are required to fulfill under provincial legislation.

Food Councils as Revenue and *not* Expenditures

Wayne Roberts advocates for the City to not look at the cost of the FPC as an expense, but as a revenue item. “If the FPC costs under \$200,000, that’s about 20 small restaurants we’ve brought to town or kept alive and they’re each paying \$10,000 year in taxes.”

“I’ve also brought \$7-10million in foundation grants into the city which wouldn’t have come without the FPC... and added millions to the revenues of post-secondary education with new courses on food.”

The Importance of Government Funding

“One of my jobs was to make non-profits and charities more effective in the work they did. And if I was going after the same funds that they’re going after... it just doesn’t work. If you don’t fund a food policy council through the government, you place a food policy council in direct competition with the very groups it’s designed to help.”

As Roberts suggests, the fundamental function of a FPC is to “help the city use resources properly so it can deal with food properly and save a lot of money and gain a lot of revenue.”

Toronto Youth Food Policy Council

When it became clear that everyone attending TFPC meetings were in their 20s and everyone on the Council were in their 40s, the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council was formed as a totally autonomous collective of youth.

The TYFPC is said to be the world’s *first* youth-run Food Policy Council, the TYFPC seeks to mobilize and engage youth to make change by building a just food system. The TYFPC provides youth with a space to network, share opportunities and learn from one another and to become Toronto’s leading youth voice in sustainable municipal food policy change.

Youth can become members of the TYFPC as Council Members, Community Members or Committee Members.

Two members of the TYFPC automatically have membership on the TFPC. Every person on the FPC agrees to mentor at least one person on the TYFPC. www.tyfpc.ca

Words of Advice

- “If you have a good agricultural plan in the region, the logical thing is to say ‘well let’s follow it up with a good *urban* plan that takes advantage of it.’”
- “A big problem FPCs have is being driven by ‘big-P’ policy... they think they’re going to change the world and lead to a real reconfiguration of how agriculture works. Instead, it’s best to intervene as the government’s own processes evolve on their own.”

Vancouver Food Policy Council

Type of Organization: 21-member Council housed within the City of Vancouver's Social Planning department

Area served: City of Vancouver, BC

Population: 578,041

Main urban centres: Vancouver

Founded: 2003

Interviewed: Herb Barbolet, council member (helped establish the council); co-founded and directed FarmFolk/CityFolk; Associate with the Centre for Sustainable Community Development at Simon Fraser University



www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy



Background

The VFPC is comprised of individuals from all sectors of the local food system, including; food production, processing, access, distribution, consumption and waste management.

Membership includes people with a variety of different backgrounds such as, nutritionists, food wholesalers and distributors, food retailers and grocers, managers of non profit organizations and academics engaged in the food system. This multi-disciplinary group creates an innovative forum for discussion and action towards building a food system that is ecologically sustainable, economically viable and socially just. It is built upon collaboration between citizens and government officials who come together to work on food policy initiatives.

History

The Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC) was established by Vancouver City Council at the Standing Committee of City Services and Budgets on December 11, 2003.

Herb Barbolet was very involved in the formation of the VFPC and had already been involved in many organizational start-ups such as FarmFolk/CityFolk. Upon asking the same questions posed for the research which led to this report, he and others came to the conclusion that the models that work best are those housed within municipalities.

A small group worked with the City on how a Council might be formed. When a change in Council brought in favourable allies to the idea, the Toronto Food Policy Council's Wayne Roberts was invited to talk to City Council about his work there. His talk excited City staff and councillors and they were in favour of the City of Vancouver following in Toronto's footsteps.

A task force was set up and was comprised of 120 people from 80 different organizations. Over the course of three "very successful" meetings, the task force agreed that a FPC was an ideal option for the City of Vancouver. The City hired Barbolet to coordinate the development of the FPC and worked with staff in Social Planning for 8 months, delving through reports and looking at structure, function, and how the FPC would operate. City council then passed a motion to set up the FPC.

Food system sectors from which to invite potential candidates were determined and a nomination/election process was formed.

The day the FPC was officially formed, it had two full-time staff paid for by the City (one permanent and another on a one-year contract). At the time, it was said to be North America's largest staff of any FPC!

Initial committees of the FPC were very task-oriented and not very policy-driven (i.e. '2010 Gardens by 2010' committee).

According to Barbolet, the VFPC really took off four years ago.

Mission/Vision

The Vancouver Food Policy Council will support the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver that fosters sustainable equitable food production, distribution and consumption; nutrition; community development and environmental health.

Goal

The primary goal of the Food Policy Council is to examine the operation of a local food system and provide ideas and policy recommendations for how it can be improved.

The Power of the Food System to Stimulate Change

Barbolet believes the secret to success was the task force. “When we came to the City, we were more powerful than City Council. They saw that if they didn’t do anything or were seen to be unsupportive or helpful, it would reflect badly on them. They tried to pressure systems onto us but we ignored it and made sure we maintained connection to the community. It’s always been perceived by the City that they’re dealing with an entity that if the City clamped down too hard, we could go outside and incorporate as a non-profit which they don’t want.”

Priorities (“Mandate”)

Support the development of a food system where food is:

1. Safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate
2. Affordable, available and accessible to all
3. Produced, processed, marketed, consumed, and waste products reused or managed in a manner that is financially viable, protects the health and dignity of people and has minimum impact on the environment

Selection of Priorities from Terms of Reference

- Engages in outreach and public awareness activities to communities in Vancouver on matters related to the food system
- Acts as a conduit for feedback from community groups, organizations, other government bodies, and businesses on matters related to the food system in Vancouver
- Supports groups endeavouring to initiate and develop projects to enhance the food system in Vancouver
- Produces an annual work plan and budget with specific objectives each year, in consultation with its Council and Staff Liaison

Activities

Expanded Street Food Options - City staff are working to expand the type and availability of street food in Vancouver. A pilot project was recently initiated that will bring 17 new vendors to locations around the city... and additional street food plans are currently being investigated.

Backyard Hens - In March 2009 City Council directed staff to prepare draft guidelines and recommendations that would enable residents to keep backyard hens.

Vancouver Food Charter - On February 15, 2007, Mayor and Council unanimously adopted the Vancouver Food Charter. This is an important step forward on the path to a just and sustainable food system for the city and its residents. The Charter is an ambitious, forward-thinking document that promotes education, celebration and real projects for a healthy economy, a healthy ecology, and a healthy society.

Herb Barbolet on the Vancouver Food Charter and the Importance of Food Policy

“Without a policy-framework you have one-offs. Nevertheless, when the idea of a food charter first came up, I had absolutely no interest... I didn’t participate really and was passive during the campaign. When it was passed, I was still quite sceptical... Now, I’m just AMAZED at how powerful a tool it is. It just works!

Once you have a food charter and food policies in place, it’s not necessary to come begging anymore for projects because all programs are being looked at through a new lens (a charter and accompanying food policies). Once that framework is established, everything else falls into place.

Gardens, Gardens and More Gardens - Vancouver has many community gardens located throughout the city - and more are being created each year. There are 74 gardens with approximately 3,260 garden plots total. This includes gardens located on City, Parks, School and private lands.

Hobby Beekeeping (Urban Apiculture) in Vancouver - Urban hobby beekeeping provides increased biodiversity and pollination for plants in backyard, community and public gardens. Cities in Europe and North America (including several municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District) support hobby beekeeping of honeybees within city limits. Through

good management practices, hobby beekeeping is a safe and suitable activity for residential areas. Beekeepers in Vancouver must register with the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

Grow a Row, Share a Row - The **Grow a Row, Share a Row** program invites local gardeners to grow an extra row of vegetables for the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society and Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver. When you share your harvest through **Grow a Row, Share a Row**, you can support local programs, and help strengthen your community.

Food Secure Vancouver: Baseline Report – A 3-year study that attempts to answer key questions around food security. How sustainable is the global food system in the face of global stresses caused by, among other factors, increasing population, climate change, higher energy costs, health concerns, and changing consumer preferences? What role does the local food system play in this and what are the implications for food. [LINK](#)

Meetings

- Council meets 10 times per year and meetings are open to the public
- Four public forums per year
- Committee meetings are well attended
- Agendas are set and organized by co-chairs.

Membership

The VFPC may have up to 21 members. Membership consists of the following:

- 14 members: 2 from each of the following food system areas a)food production; b)processing; c)access; d)distribution; e)consumption; f)waste management; and g) system-wide
- 7 seats for members-at-large

Upon recommendation from the VFPC, all members are appointed by City Council for a maximum of 3 years. All terms expire on the date that falls immediately before the first Monday after December 1 in the year of a civic election. A member may serve a maximum of 2 terms.

A new membership committee is reviewing the composition of the Council.

Working Groups

The VFPC performs much of its work outside of monthly meetings via its working groups. It's working groups consist of; Food Waste; Research; Neighbourhood Level Food Security; Food Resiliency; Institutional Procurement; Youth Engagement; and Urban Farming.

Staff

There is a team of 3-4 staff in the City's Social Planning department working on the activities and operations of the VFPC.

Planning

Strategic Planning takes place every two years and usually involves afternoon and evening visioning sessions and then follow-up discussions at regular Council meetings.

According to Barbolet, the Council operates more as an 'ad-hocracy' than one relying on rigorous planning.

Funding

Beyond the staff requirements within the Social Planning department of the City, the VFPC works with a \$15,000 budget. Discussion on how to spend it appears to take up a lot of time.

Have done fundraising for more substantial funds to produce reports.

Words of Advice

"The single most important thing that the VFPC did in its developmental stage (prior to the task force) was when the City said "we don't have a mandate for food and see no reason to be involved in an FPC." We said, "but you are already involved in food... zoning, health, licensing, engineering, gardens, etc." They said, "oh ya." So we encouraged them to do an inventory and they came to us with 7 large landscape-style sheets outlining every department in the City which in some way is involved in food. They said, "Wow... we really missed it... and we see we're not coordinating. We could save a lot of money by coordinating.""

"Key people are community nutritionists. Work with the health authority as much as possible. Local governments listen to them."

Burlington Food Council

Type of Organization: Grassroots (un-registered); currently staffed by local food co-operative

Area served: Burlington, VT

Population: 42,417

Main urban centres: Burlington

Founded: 2003

Interviewed: Meg Klepack, staff support; works with City Market (Onion River Co-op)



www.burlingtonfoodcouncil.org



Background

In 2003, the Burlington Food Council was formed as a public group designed to provide the connective tissue between disparate non-profit organizations, volunteers and government agencies working toward environmental, social and economic food system goals. As a food council within a city, the BFC maintains an almost exclusively urban focus.

History

In the winter of 2002, the [Burlington Legacy Project's](#) steering committee held a town meeting to gauge the public's sustainability priorities. The BLP is a partnership effort aimed to bring the Legacy Action Plan, Burlington's vision for sustainability in 2030, to life.

Citizens who attended that meeting voiced strong support for more local, fresh and healthy foods at public schools and wanted to be able to access more local food in their communities. They looked to Burlington's food system – and school food system in particular – as one area for improvement where it is possible to make connections between environmental, social and economic goals.

After this meeting, a group of volunteers and non-profit leaders collaborated with Shelburne Farms to secure a USDA Community Food Project grant, called "Growing Farms, Growing Minds," that sought to encourage healthier food choices, build capacity within the Burlington community to meet healthy food needs, engage the community and diverse groups in these efforts and partner with the Burlington School District Food Service to improve school meals.

Activities

There are many active food security and food system initiatives in Vermont and Burlington. Because of the concern that yet another organization such as a food council would inevitably compete for a limited pool of funding, it was decided that the council would exist primarily as a network for collaboration and avoid engaging in projects.

Past Activities

- The Council's first task was to complete a **Community Food Assessment**, which, became the organization's guiding document. As an active group with substantial community involvement and support, members of the Council reported an increased knowledge of local food systems, and many became empowered to make notable differences in the community. They helped create a **food action plan for the Burlington School District**, held public meetings to report on the findings of the food assessment and were instrumental in the development of **school food committees, school gardens and wellness plans**. They also provided a home for the establishment of the **Burlington School Food Project**, now a model

Mission

The Burlington Food Council is an open community group exploring ways to ensure that Burlington creates and nurtures a healthy, equitable and sustainable food system for all members of the community.

Goals

- To build food knowledge and experience
- To build food appreciation and access
- To build local food systems (including gardeners – and school age youth, their families and other community members)

Approach

To accomplish this mission the Burlington Food Council provides networking, partnership building and educational opportunities around food issues, and provides strategic recommendations for decision makers. The Food Council also works to serve as a model, resource and source of innovation for the many groups involved in creating and nurturing a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system for the City of Burlington and surrounding communities.

[Farm2School](#) program with a mission to “connect students and their families with whole, fresh and local foods to improve their health and the health of the community”.

- In 2005 and 2006, the Burlington Food Council began engaging local businesses to nurture new ideas, such as [Junior Iron Chef](#) - a statewide competition now into its 4th year that gives students an opportunity to gain hands-on experience preparing and cooking nutritious, farm-fresh foods.
- In 2008, the [Burlington School Food Project](#) formally spun off from the Council, allowing members to refocus on networking and collaboration and incubate new projects that extend beyond the school day. The Council continues to assist its members in developing new projects and leverages significant volunteer support.
- **Mobile Vegetable Farm Stands** (partnership with Association of Africans Living in Vermont – New Farms for New Americans program)
- **City’s Climate Action Plan**
- **Fruit Trees** (action plan: mapping, planting, maintenance)



Current

- **Urban Food Production** - The BFC is currently focusing most of its attention on urban food production which includes a focus on urban hens. Through the Urban Agriculture Policy Task Force, the Council researches and provides recommendations to city council/staff on how urban food production can be supported within the city (livestock, composting, urban gardening, and more). Every quarter, the BFC submits a report to city council and maintains a designated representative between city council and the food council.
- **Farm to Plate** – Event host for the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund’s [ten-year plan for local food](#) in Vermont.

Membership

While there is no formal membership of the Burlington Food Council, over 100 members have signed on in support of the organization.

Staff / Governance / Resources

- *Strategic Planning Committee* – 6-8 core members help work on administrative tasks and set the direction for the Council.
- *Administrative management* of the Council is passed between several organizations. Between 2006-2010, the City of Burlington’s Legacy Project provided a home for Council management. In 2010-2011, the Local Food Coordinator for City Market (Onion River Co-op), Meg Klepack, is filling this role. City Market’s Local Food Coordinator is responsible for supporting local food and farm development, which, aligns perfectly with the goals of the BFC. Meg spends a few hours per month taking on the role of facilitating and convening the BFC. The Intervale Center, which is a Burlington-based center for sustainable agriculture, has also taken on the role of administrative management of the BFC in the past.

Meetings

The Council holds meetings six times per year. The goals of the meetings are to:

- Help members to network, communicate and collaborate with other like-minded organizations and individuals.
- Provide a forum for skills-sharing and enable participants to take concrete ideas back to their organizations to carry out purposeful activities.
- Provide educational and professional development opportunities.
- Create awareness among local businesses and individuals who are willing to support food, farming and nutrition education through volunteering and fundraising.

Meetings are open to the public and people are invited to participate in any way they would like to.

Meg Klepack identifies that there is work needed in this area in order for the Council to be as accessible to the community as possible. Meetings are currently held at 9am Monday mornings making it difficult for many members of the community to attend. Current members of the council do, however, support the meetings being held during the workday to enable them to attend as part of their work with food and farming related organizations and businesses.

Members do attend as representatives of their organizations but most of them wear more than one hat.

A “good” meeting has 10 people.

Funding

There is no ongoing funding for the BFC and the organization maintains no bank account. Being primarily a networking organization with administrative support provided by member organizations, no funding is necessary. The BFC does, however, accept donations.

Communication

- On-Line calendar of food related activities
- List of volunteer food-related opportunities in the City
- Blog (currently not well used)
- Listserv

Partners

The BFC identifies a list of Partners who include:

- [Association of Africans Living in Vermont - New Farms for New Americans](#)
- [Burlington School Food Project](#)
- [Burlington Legacy Project](#)
- [Burlington Parks and Recreation](#)
- [Burlington Permaculture](#)
- [The Campus Kitchen at the University of Vermont](#)
- [Center for Rural Studies \(University of Vermont\)](#)
- [Center for Sustainable Agriculture \(University of Vermont\)](#)
- [City Market, Onion River Co-op](#)
- [Fletcher Allen Health Care](#)
- [Friends of Burlington Gardens](#)
- [Grow Team ONE](#)
- [Intervale Center](#)
- [Local Motion](#)
- [NOFA-VT](#) (Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. of Vermont)
- Pop-cycle
- [Shelburne Farms](#)
- [The Skinny Pancake](#)
- [Vermont Department of Health](#)
- [Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger](#)
- [VT FEED](#) (Food Education Everyday)

Words of Advice

“It’s a challenge for an organization like a food council to only focus on networking as it’s hard to maintain energy and momentum. Having a focal point is key.”

“It’s hard to sustain an organization without a common purpose... but for us, the urban agriculture piece looks like a possible fit to act as the glue and momentum for our work. Everyone on the Council can lend expertise to this area of focus.”

Government Relations

The BFC maintains a close relationship with the City of Burlington, reporting to them on urban food production research and recommendations every quarter.

The City’s planning department attends meetings to present any work they’re engaged in that is food related.

Can a Food Council be Credible Without Being a Registered Organization or an Official Body of a Government Agency?

According to Meg Klepack, Burlington is small enough (pop. 42,417) that the food council maintains solid credibility in the community and with the City and doesn’t require any formal recognition.

Points of Interest

- Being an urban-focused food council, the BFC does not maintain any rural connections but does maintain ongoing involvement with the [Intervale Center](#) – a sustainable agriculture center located within the City of Burlington.
- Meg Klepack describes a unique circumstance in Vermont; “Food councils often start up because no one else is paying attention to food, but in Vermont, that’s not the case, where there is an active interest in the food system among NGOs, for-profit businesses, educational institutions and government.”
- Although there is currently very active participation with the BFC, there is no formal commitment required by council members, nor the requirements often associated with a registered non-profit. This leaves the sustainability of the Council being ultimately dependent upon those who volunteer their time and attend meetings.
- The BFC would like to put more energy into extending more invites to food system stakeholders who are not yet participating on the Council.

Kamloops Food Policy Council

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit with staff support from regional health authority

Area served: City of Kamloops, BC

Population: 86,376

Main urban centres: Kamloops

Founded: 1995

Interviewed: Laura Kalina, Chair

www.kamloopsfoodpolicycouncil.com



Background

The Kamloops Food Policy Council (KFPC), established in 1995, has emphasized public education on food security issues as well as concrete food system projects such as the very successful Community Gardens which were initiated with the help of land provided by the City of Kamloops and donations from service clubs and private citizens. The KFPC acts as an umbrella organization, providing an opportunity for project and advocacy groups to co-ordinate their work. The KFPC is a registered non-profit and acts primarily as a networking group.

History

The KFPC is one of the longest standing Food Policy Councils in Canada. Laura Kalina was instrumental in the formation of the organization. Throughout her time working with the KFPC to date, Laura has been a Community Nutritionist with the regional health authority, Interior Health.

The KFPC began as a response to issues of hunger in the community and an interest to enhance the services available to community members beyond just the services of a food bank. A community kitchen was proposed and this led to a much broader discussion on what services might support food security for *all* Kamloops residents. A food security workshop/forum was hosted and the Mayor of Kamloops at the time supported the formation of a FPC. All of this was happening at a time when the concept of food security was moving beyond being defined as the availability of food and towards a greater attention being paid to the quality of food available, food system capacity building and food policy work.

At that time, Laura Kalina was also completing her Masters in Community Development and was able to contribute her research to the emergence of the FPC.

In its early stages, the KFPC spent more time working on projects rather than policy work. “When people come to the table, they don’t necessarily want to do policy work right away so we began with projects and continue to be driven by projects,” says Laura.

Another food forum was later held, leading to the creation of the [Kamloops Food Action Plan](#) in 2006. The Plan acts as a guiding document for the KFPC to date. Both the Kamloops Food Action Initiative and Food Action Plan were developed within the context of the Kamloops Food Charter - a framework developed in the late 1990’s and established as City policy through amendments to the Kamloops Social Plan in 2002.

Objectives

- Encourage systems of production, processing, distribution, consumption and recycling that protect our natural resources.
- Support local and regional agriculture and food production systems which supply wholesome food to the region’s residents on a sustainable basis, balancing fair international agricultural trade and diverse vibrant production for the local market.
- Provide safe, sufficient, culturally acceptable and nutritious food to all residents.
- Respect food as a basic human right where access to safe and nutritious food is not limited by economic status, location or other factors beyond a resident’s control.
- Ensure all residents have the information and skills necessary to achieve nutritional well-being.

Why not a Food Policy Council housed within the City Government?

The KFPC wanted flexibility to advocate and be more political. There was, however, a fear early on that a FPC which was *not* housed within a government agency might lead to burn-out among FPC volunteers. That has not happened, in part because of the many partner organizations having assumed the responsibility of taking on projects over the course of the KFPC’s evolution.

Activities / Partners

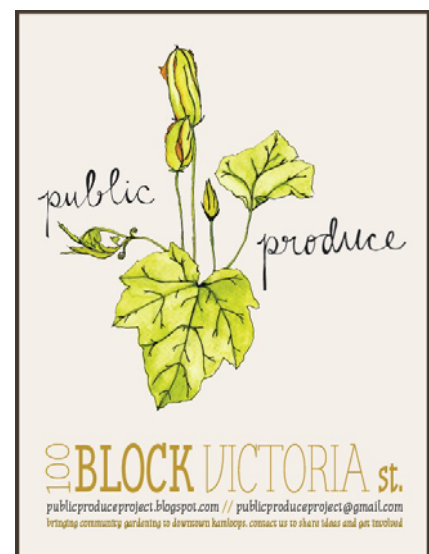
Partners

Except for the Kamloops Farmers Market, the KFPC was involved in the formation of all of the following organizations. The KFPC further acts as a forum where the experiences and insights derived from these projects can be framed as policies for adoption by agencies, institutions and governments

- **Gardengate** - The Gardengate Training Centre is a horticulture project that aims to promote healthy eating and active living for persons with mental health issues. Gardengate provides rehabilitation, skills, training and vocational training for participants, while providing volunteer opportunities for members of the community. Structured and less structured programs take place on a 2.8-acre site which includes a greenhouse, vegetable garden and kitchen/classroom. All produce grown on site is certified organic. Gardengate is funded by Interior Health and managed through Open Door Group in cooperation with the KFPC.
- **Heartland Quality Foods** - HQF started life in Kamloops as a co-operative when 12 farm producers wanted a better way of distributing their products. After a short time, HQF progressed into a box scheme for residents to get their produce from local suppliers. The available products soon expanded to include cheese, meats and milk. Heartland evolved once more when a storefront was secured on a shared space with the First Nations Agriculture Authority who are producers and owners of Black Creek Ranch.
- **Kamloops Community Gardens** - There are four City-owned gardens and a number of community gardens managed by Interior Community Services.
- **Interior Community Services (ICS) Community Kitchens** – Community Kitchens is available to anyone and everyone in the community. It provides a way for participants to learn more about cooking, baking, canning or freezing, and to take some of the food home for themselves. Produce used is often donated to the program, so cost is low for participants. CK is supported through the RBC Foundation.
- **Kamloops Food Share** – A project of the Kamloops Food Bank, the Food Share program works with major grocery stores, bakeries and other food outlets who donate their close dated, perishable food to the Food Share Program. The food is picked up seven days-a-week using a three tonne refrigerated truck by a staff driver and volunteer when available. The food is returned to the Food Bank, where it is sorted, cleaned and placed in cold storage for distribution as soon as possible.
- **Kamloops Farmers Market** – Operates an open-air Wednesday and Saturday market between April and October.

Other Activities

- **Project Host** - The KFPC acts as a host for many projects such as the 2011 Seedy Saturday event which required a home for \$5,000 of funding from a local bank.
- **Best Practices in Urban Agriculture** – Produced in 2007, the [Best Practices in Urban Agriculture report](#) is a guiding document for projects in the City of Kamloops.
- **Public Produce Plan** – Pilot project that is building a public produce garden in downtown Kamloops. Project organizers are working with the KFPC and the Thompson-Shuswap Master Gardeners - as well as several other community groups.
- **City of Kamloops Social Plan (2009) and Sustainability Plan (2010)** – Works with the City of Kamloops on key guiding documents for the City.
- **Sells materials on their website to the public** - Print resources; DVDs; Cookbooks.



Membership / Governance / Meetings

Governance

The KFPC maintains an 8-person consensus board, however, board members maintain equal decision-making power as council members leaving the whole of the council to make decisions. Decisions are made by whichever council members are in attendance at any given meeting.

Leadership of the Council is shared by the two co-chairs, of which, Laura Kalina is one, and the other - a farmer from the Shuswap Thompson Organic Producers Association. Chairs are elected to their positions by council members but without much interest among members in taking on those leadership roles, Chairs are usually appointed by acclamation.

Membership

Membership is open to anyone in the community by paying \$1-\$2 for membership. The KFPC currently maintains about 50 members. According to Laura Kalina, the informal nature of membership and decision-making works well as the Council does not need to make many decisions.

Meetings

The KFPC meets every six weeks with 15-20 members, among which, about 10 core organizations are represented.

Staff / Resources

The bulk of the work put into the Council outside of meetings is done by co-chair Laura Kalina who is a Community Nutritionist with [Interior Health](#) (the regional health authority). At least 7 hours per week was devoted to the Council's activities in its early years but that has increased over time. When speaking publically, Laura speaks on behalf of the FPC and not on behalf of IH.

Working groups also take on activities of the Council including seeking funding. With the lack of formal processes making up the work of the KFPC (as compared to other FPCs abroad), Laura Kalina believes that by not having just one single person taking on all of the work, that this encourages everyone to make some effort to advance the work of the council.

Food Action Plan

The KFPC uses the [Kamloops Food Action Plan](#) (2006) as a guiding document for their work. The plan was produced by the regional health authority - Interior Health, in partnership with the KFPC and the City of Kamloops.

Priority Actions identified in the Food Action Plan include:

- Enhanced Food Distribution Structure
- Develop Policies to Enhance Healthy Eating
- Support Local Farming and Food Production
- Address the Underlying Causes of Food Insecurity

The Food Action Plan goes on to identify strategies for achieving the above goals and the organizations and partners who can carry out those strategies over time. The Plan also makes recommendations for the City of Kamloops, Interior Health and the local School District on how they can play a part in addressing the Plan's priority areas.

Funding

Funds are required on a project by project basis with 10% of project funds being directed towards the administration of the Council.

Government Relations

A staff member of the City of Kamloops Social Planning Council sits as a Board Director of the KFPC which in turn also supports the SPC's work on their Sustainable Kamloops Plan and its inclusion of food security themes.

The KFPC has also worked closely on City plans including the [Kamloops Social Plan 2009](#), which consists of the following recommendation:

Recommendation

Continue to support the Kamloops Food Policy Council (KFPC) as the lead agency in the development of food policies in consultation with the local health authority.

Actions to support the KFPC could include:

- *Provide space necessary for regular meetings of KFPC.*
- *Provide staff support at KFPC meetings, particularly where there is potential for liaison between KFPC initiatives and city programs and services (e.g. community gardens, healthy recreation programs, community kitchens).*
- *Facilitate opportunities for partnerships with the KFPC and other agencies working on community food issues (e.g. Interior Health Authority, Venture Kamloops, and Ministry of Agriculture).*
- *Support initiatives to raise awareness of safe and nutritional food and food security issues.*

Greatest Success Story

The KFPC spends considerable time helping to shepherd projects onto their feet and later stepping away. To date, all of the projects it has fostered are still in operation and very successful.

Greatest Challenges

- “I do worry that if I move away from the leadership role with the KFPC, that there wouldn’t be someone to replace me,” says Laura Kalina. While there is no fear that the KFPC would cease to exist without her, the FPC would likely not be as proactive without the amount of time which Laura has been able to invest into the Council through her work with Interior Health.
- The KFPC did once ‘get in over their head’ in launching Heartland Quality Foods – a food co-op project. When the project developed a storefront for its products, the KFPC lost money in the process.

Words of Advice

- “I do think this type of work needs to be framed within a health authority.”
- “Organize around a project! It builds trust and momentum.”

Community Food Security Coalition – Food Policy Council Program

www.foodsecurity.org/FPC

Type of Organization: Registered non-profit made up of 300 members from across North America

Interviewed: Mark Winne, Food Policy Council Program Director

Background

The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) is a North American coalition of diverse people and organizations working from the local to international levels to build community food security. The CFSC has a diverse membership with almost 300 organizations from social and economic justice, anti-hunger, environmental, community development, sustainable agriculture, community gardening and other fields. They are dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to all people at all times. They seek to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, making available, and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy, and sustainability.

The CFSC achieves its goals through a comprehensive blend of training, networking, and advocacy to further the efforts of grassroots groups to create effective solutions from the ground up. A variety of training and technical assistance programs for community food projects is provided; supporting the development of farm to school and farm to college initiatives; advocating for federal policies to support community food security initiatives; and providing networking and educational resources.

North American Food Policy Council Program

The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC)'s national Food Policy Council (FPC) Program is designed to support, free of charge, the development and operation of current and emerging Food Policy Councils. The Program provides:

- Information about food policy councils in the U.S., via their website and in response to specific inquiries;
- Individualized assistance to food policy councils to help them strategize, problem-solve, and plan (mostly via phone and email, but occasionally including site visits);
- Bimonthly conference calls on topics of interest to food policy council organizers, such as conducting food assessments, organizing policy campaigns, and raising funds;
- Regional networking meetings to bring together food policy council organizers to network and share information;

This program also facilitates linkages between FPCs and local farmers and ranchers, especially those who are women, people of color, of limited resources, and from other traditionally underserved groups. CFSC has developed a report that gives examples of policy approaches that support these producers.

An Interview with Mark Winne – Food Policy Council Program Director

In a brief interview with Mark Winne who has been observing the evolution of food policy councils for many years, some broader questions were posed.

What is the state of food policy councils in North America?

Interest in FPC is growing rapidly. I estimate there are about 150 FPCs in N.A. right now.

From your experience, what have been the most successful first steps communities have employed when building a food council?

The first step is to achieve some sort of common identity in that you all want to assume that you all operate within a regional food system and share certain interests in that food system.

I think it's important to help people understand that there is this thing called a food system and what it is we mean by that and how complicated it is but also how inter-related it is. The point of coming together is to connect those dots and that becomes a value and benefit for everyone.

Doing a bit of research on what the issues are in the community is an important and common first step followed by the development of a common vision and action plan.

Any kind of food council should be diversified and represent the community and be inclusive of most if not all major food system stakeholder interests.

What are your thoughts about the approach to not necessarily focus on policy as the foundation of a proposed council?

It's a bit short-sighted to think a council shouldn't be policy-focused. You have to recognize that the actions of city, regional, provincial/state and federal governments all have a bearing on your food system. There are a lot of things you'll be able to do and can't do based on how governments act. And as a citizen, I think it's essential that you begin to develop your capacity on food policy matters. It's important to differentiate between being a good food consumer and being a good food citizen.

What do you see as the pros/cons of food councils being housed within a government body?

The idealistic response: the closer you are to power the better. The practical response: maybe government isn't going to be receptive or their effectiveness is mediocre or maybe even hostile.

If being independent is decided as the approach to take, the best way to be independent is to affiliate with an existing non-profit (find an umbrella organization, maybe a fiscal sponsor). This gives you more resources to draw on. But it's still important to develop relationships with government so certain agencies will participate in your work.

Best practices for selecting council members?

A core group of people can identify various sectors that they want to see represented on the council. The next step is to solicit people. I tend to feel the size ought to be workable (15-25 members is good for a core governing group of voting members).

Another option is to open the council up to everyone and to develop a membership who is then able to select the governing body of the food council.

With government-led councils, a core group often submits a slate of candidates and the government body chooses the members of the FPC.

With most food councils being policy-oriented as opposed to task-oriented, what are your thoughts on a food council generating revenues (via projects, businesses, events, workshops, etc.)?

Haven't really seen that yet among food policy councils. I'd probably argue against it (but still food councils are still at a stage where anything's possible and there are no rules).

I don't think food councils should be out there engaged in projects trying to make money. I ultimately think it could become a distraction.

Using community gardens as an example; should a food council be digging the soil or working to make policies favour their presence?

If a revenue-generating model was chosen, it should be asked, "does this add value or is it duplicating or replicating what others are or could be doing?"

I recommend identifying the need for a project and then helping mobilize others to try and undertake the project.

Point of Interest Among Organizations not Interviewed

The information contained within this section does not include complete organizational profiles but instead represents unique points of interest which are deemed of value to the purpose of this report.

CR-FAIR (Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable)

www.communitycouncil.ca/initiatives/crfair/index.html



Location: Capital Regional District, Vancouver Island, British Columbia (*CRD is a federation of 13 municipalities and 3 electoral areas*)

Background:

CR-FAIR, formed in 1997, is a coalition of organizations and individuals involved in the local food system, with a secretariat provided by the [Community Council](#)*.

**(The Community Social Planning Council has been in existence since 1936 as a non-profit, non-partisan and charitable social planning society. The Community Social Planning Council contributes to the vision of a socially sustainable region by undertaking relevant research, insightful analysis and solution-oriented engagement. A key function of the Community Social Planning Council is to be a conduit for connecting the region to quality, reliable information and insightful analysis on topics that can build connections among people and communities.)*

Mission

Increase knowledge of and bring about positive change in the food and agriculture system within the Capital Region.

This includes:

- increasing the viability of farming reducing hunger
- increasing the supply, consumption and diversity of locally produced processed food
- increasing our community's knowledge and involvement with food and agriculture issues

Activities

- Communication
- Research/Reports (CR Food and Health Action Plan, Food and Farm Initiatives – A Year in Review 2009-2010)
- Annual Food Forum
- CR Food Charter
- CR Food Resources Directory
- CR-FAIR Food Access Information Exchange
- Events Calendar (Google Calendar)
- Farmer to Farmer Forum

Points of Interest

Food Policy Working Group

Of interest to this report are the efforts of CR-FAIR to establish a regional food council housed within the Capital Regional District government. In its early stages, these efforts encountered barriers worth noting as they are similar to the challenges start-up food councils face when seeking to engage governments and government agencies.

Also of interest are the Terms of Reference for the working group's meetings and its Member Qualifications.

Background

CR-Fair brings diverse expertise from community, government, and private sector together as a stakeholder roundtable concerned with food, health, agriculture and sustainability in the Capital Region. Over the past 15 years, this body has undertaken considerable public education, information sharing, communications and networking activities, supported joint initiatives around health promotion, food access and redistribution, sustainable agriculture, and been involved in municipal and regional food system based planning and policy development.

Due to a significant increase in public awareness around food issues, and local governments recognition of the need and opportunity for planning and policy development related to sustainability and food, the concept of a Food Policy Council to support and better coordinate efforts in the region gained footing. After completing considerable background research and

exploring the concept with both local and regional governments and a range of groups and individuals, a plan emerged to establish a Food Policy Working Group for the Capital Region.

Mandate

In its early stages, the FPWG proposes that a FPC for the Region would support the CRD's Regional Growth Strategy and its commitment to undertake a five-year review "of long term strategic resource needs, including food (with special attention to local food production)".

Terms of Reference - Working Group Member ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Members will contribute expertise to different food system issues that are needed to facilitate policy and planning around the development of a regional "just and sustainable food system".
2. Participation implies the desire of each participant to actively contribute towards the success of reaching the goals and activities. As such, all members are expected to take an active role in setting out the yearly objectives of the Working Group, and shaping of policy documents and reports, and activities undertaken.
3. Two Co-Chairs will be appointed by the members for a one-year term. The CR-FAIR Coordinator will attend and support the Co-Chairs and will report to the CR-FAIR Steering Committee.
4. Working Group members will be appointed on the strength of their personal qualifications as well as their ability to bring a perspective from their sector or from their local government position.
5. Communication among members will be based on principles of openness and equity.
6. The FPWG is an initiative of CR-FAIR and reports to the CR-FAIR Steering Committee in terms of the planning and implementation of the FPWG. The CR-FAIR Steering Committee is accountable to the Community Council Board of Directors, its legal sponsor, and adheres to the working principles and policies of the Community Council.

Food Policy Working Group - MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS

The Regional Food Policy Working Group will consist of members who:

1. Are able to attend quarterly Working Group meetings.
2. Possess experience in a network, agency or association- or equivalent life experience- dealing with at least one of the following issues: healthy communities, nutrition, consumer information systems, agro-ecosystem issues, waste management, hunger, food access, community nutrition, school meals, food policy research, education, agriculture, agricultural land protection, farmers' markets, urban agriculture and community gardening, community economic development, social policy, environmental protection, gender and ethno-cultural access and equity, youth, aging as related to food security.
3. Have a general understanding of food systems, food security, and regional food self-reliance, and public policy for healthy communities.
4. Possess excellent communication skills and the ability to work collaboratively. Also desirable are skills such as group and meeting facilitation, report writing, outreach, research, strategic planning and/or policy analysis.

The Resource Group

A Resource Group advising the Working Group is proposed as consisting of groups and individuals that could review and respond to specific issues. These groups would be formerly invited and accessed on a case by case basis:

- Farmers organizations and production specialist: Direct Farm Marketers Association, Island Farm Alliance, BC Fruit Testers, Canadian Organic Growers Vancouver Island
- Disaster and Emergency Food specialists and organizations (Mustard Seed, St. Vincent DePaul, Open Door)
- Urban Agriculture specialists: Tillicum Urban Farmers, LifeCycles
- Composting-waste management advisories, Compost Education Center
- Local food production sector organizations: Capital City Beekeepers
- Indigenous Foods organizers and ethnobotanists
- Health practitioners (community nutritionists etc.)
- University Student Researchers and Groups
- Others

Outcomes of efforts to establish a Capital Regional District Food Policy Council

Excerpts from a staff report to CRD Transportation and Planning Committee – June 2009

The CR-FAIR has proposed the idea of a FPC as a means to address food security issues and establish a more formal connection to the region's decision makers.

Many of the recently developed municipal Official Community Plans (OCPs) contain policy direction on improving access to locally grown food and improving food security. This issue has taken on increasing importance due to concerns around climate change, the health implications of imported and processed foods, and the increasing cost of fuel to transport foods long distances.

The dedication of staff and financial resources to either a dedicated food policy council or existing CRD departments could provide value to the member municipalities and electoral areas if there was a shared commitment to address food security issues throughout the region. However, there are significant ongoing financial implications associated with the establishment of a new service, or providing additional staff positions that may not be possible to consider at this time due to financial constraints. As such, the opportunities to address food security issues using existing channels and CRD resources should be pursued before a dedicated food policy council is established. Prior to establishing a food policy council, a report should be commissioned from an impartial consultant to document the agencies and organisations involved in food policy issues and to identify any gaps that exist.

Recommendation

That the Planning and Transportation Committee recommends to the CRD Board: Not to establish a regional food policy council at this time, but address food policy issues through the existing services, committees and the Round Table on the Environment.

Communication

CR-FAIR maintains an excellent and comprehensive e-newsletter called Making Food Matter – a quarterly publication in collaboration with the Environment Food and Agriculture Subcommittee of the Capital Regional District Roundtable.

Issue 13, Fall 2010

This Issue:

- [Welcome](#)
- Planning for food security in BC's Capital Region
 - [Eating locally over the winter](#)
 - [Hot Topics from the Region](#)
 - [Quarterly Update on the Activities of CR-FAIR](#)
 - [Communications and Networking](#)
 - [Food Policy and Planning](#)
 - [Emergency Food Provision - Increasing Food Flow](#)
 - [Access to Farmland and Farm Viability Working Group](#)
 - [CR-FAIR Steering Committee and Roundtable Membership Planning Annual Roundtable and Advisors Meeting](#)
 - [Building Networks and Linkages](#)
- Community Announcements and Submissions
 - [The Local Food Puzzle](#)
 - [What is a Community Kitchen Anyway?](#)
 - [Food Security and "Growing Young Farmers"](#)
 - [Food Security Action on Salt Spring Island](#)
 - [SSPPA Wants Fair and Equitable Treatment](#)
 - [Haliburton Community Organic Farm business opportunities](#)
 - [Trees and Bushes for Bees](#)
 - [Help Make Victoria into a Permaculture City!](#)
 - [Fernwood Urban Village - Making Community Matter!](#)
 - [Creative Volunteer Opportunity](#)
 - [Navigating the Geographies of Food](#)
 - [People's Food Policy - Survey](#)
 - [New Book: American Wasteland](#)
 - [JAF SCD Seeks Authors and Peer Reviewers](#)
- Island Updates
 - [VIFN Network Launch](#)
 - [Great Vancouver Island Links](#)
- Food Security Articles
 - [Food Empires Creating Agriculture Crisis](#)
 - [San Francisco Bans the Happy Meal](#)
 - [Wal-Mart to Buy More Local Produce](#)
 - [Sobey's to Build \\$31-million grocery distribution centre](#)
- [Regional Food Events calendar](#)
- [Local Foods Recipes: Sweetie Pies](#)

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and connect people in BC's Capital Region who are working on, or have an interest in local food security issues.

For more information and to keep up on events as you're planning yours, have a look at the [CR-FAIR Calendar](#) or to have your food-related event, course, workshop or market added to the calendar, email makingfoodmatter@gmail.com

This eNewsletter is brought to you by CR-FAIR

**COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL
research-insights-solutions**

The Community Social Planning Council is the legal sponsor of Capital Region-Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR)

Visit the [CR-FAIR website](#)

Community Stories

[Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers](#) win [Saanich Environmental award](#) for Sustainability

[Feasting for Change](#)

Get your updates on Indigenous food issues from Feasting for Change

Watch the [Digital Harvest](#) Stories gathered at the April Conference on the Traditional Food of Vancouver Island First Nations

Read more Community Stories in [past issues](#) of Making Food Matter

Resources

[NDP Food Policy Food for Thought](#)

Click title for full report

Click [here](#) for Executive Summary

[Feeding the City Series](#)

A series of articles from looking at farms, businesses and activists reinventing urban food systems



Location: City of Ottawa, Ontario

Background:

Just Food is a grassroots, non-profit organization founded in 2003 as the Ottawa Food Policy Council. Just Food is currently undergoing a significant transition into becoming an independent organization. Currently, Just Food is sponsored by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa. The organization has solicited feedback from its members through a monthly e-newsletter and members have been invited to meet formally once a year and provide feedback into the work of Just Food. Overall direction has come from the Steering Committee and staff. The SPC has subsidized Just Food's overall infrastructure, and provides research and project support.

Mission

To ensure that Ottawa is food secure.

Goals

- Increase sustainable access to nutritious food, with a focus on fresh produce, for all eaters in Ottawa, and in particular, for low-income community members.
- Strengthen the local agricultural economy and increase access to locally grown food for all.
- Develop, link and support food initiatives in Ottawa.
- Produce and promote public information and educational materials on urban and rural food issues, services and opportunities.
- Act as a hub for food-related information, resources and volunteer opportunities and engage individuals and communities in working towards their own food security.
- Engage broader community and decision-makers in food issues related to achieving food security, and in particular, related to farmers and low-income communities.
- With a priority on growers and eaters, work to promote linkages between all partners in the food chain, from field to table, to ensure a sustainable and just food system.

Points of Interest

Activities

- Develop projects, programs and services to meet gaps that are identified by our partners and community.
- Organize and advertise food networking events/activities/food events.
- Organize and deliver participatory workshops on food-related topics.
- Build capacity and skills at the individual, community and organizational levels to tackle food security issues.
- Collaborate on food-related research and policy analysis.
- Build a broader network of people interested in working together to advocate for a just and sustainable food system.

Projects

- **Community Gardening Network of Ottawa** – information and resource-sharing network that supports the development of community gardens in the city.
- **Community Garden Development Fund** – established in 2009; collaboration between Just Food, City of Ottawa and the Community Gardening Network; annual fund of \$75,000 to be used to start new community gardens in the city and to expand and enhance existing gardens.
- **Annual Gardening/Food Workshops** (vegetable gardening, pest control, seed saving, food preservation)
- **Food for All** – partnership between individuals, community groups, agencies and Universities in Ottawa that are working together with the City of Ottawa, the National Capital Commission and the school boards to make sure that food in Ottawa is for everyone. 2-year project to develop a food action plan and community food assessment toolkit.
- **Buy Local Food Guide**
- **CSA link**
- **Member of FarmON Alliance** (farmer training)
- **Farmer Training Workshops**
- **Savour Ottawa** – local branding and verification initiative for producers, restaurants and foodservice
- **Food Link Directory** – directory of community programs and services promoting access to food in Ottawa
- **Students for Farming**

Membership

While Just Food's membership might change through this process of transition, up until this juncture it has been free and open to everyone interested in working towards a just and sustainable food system in Ottawa. Members from all parts of the food system have been encouraged to join, including farmers, restaurateurs, food processors, chefs, food retailers, nutritionists, community centres, community service organizations, emergency food providers, home and community gardeners, schools, university research institutions, students and eaters! An on-line membership form was made available.

All members and volunteers:

- Received a monthly E-newsletter of things going on in Ottawa related to food and food security. (Members could also promote their own food-related events, projects or issues in the newsletter).
- Were invited to assemble once per year to share expertise, ideas and vision for food security work in Ottawa.
- Were informed about and invited to participate in projects that correspond with members' interests or area of expertise.

Development Notes

A summary example of the formative steps of a food council.

Summer 1999 - Community members concerned about food security begin talks with staff from several departments of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (RMOC) on the role that local food alternatives such as community gardens and community economic development can play in a greener more inclusive city. (RMOC was the regional governing body before the amalgamation of the new City of Ottawa)

March 2000 - The final report of the "*Task Force on Poverty, People First: Removing the Barriers through Action*" is released. Recommendation 18 calls for the Region to develop a Food Security Policy in collaboration with community partners. The RMOC Council ratifies the recommendations of the task force.

October 2000 - The Ottawa Food Security Group (OFSG) receives funding from the Health Department of RMOC to conduct an inventory of food programs in the region.

March 2001 - The publication "[*Food Security in Ottawa: A Community Profile*](#)" is jointly released by the OFSG and new City of Ottawa People Services Department.

June 2001 - The Ottawa Food Security Group hosts "*Food Connections - Let's Talk*." Speakers from Toronto and Waterloo discuss food security structures and next steps. A key message that emerges is that food security is more than a hunger issue; a poorly functioning food system affects everyone. Participants say that Ottawa needs a multi-sectoral Food Council.

October 2001 - The OFSG coordinates a consultation to engage stakeholders in dialogue about a food council; in particular its relationship with the City of Ottawa. Various food projects that could be undertaken in Ottawa also form part of this consultation.

Fall 2002 - The OFSG releases "[*Community Consultations*](#)," summarizing the consultations that took place over the previous months. Stakeholders suggest an Ottawa Food Security Council that is a Community-City partnership.

November 2002 - "*A Proposal for an Ottawa Food Security Council*" is launched. Volunteers and one part-time staff initiate talks with City Councillors and staff on City participation in the Food Security Council.

January 2003 - Meetings begin with community members who will play some role with the Council.

February 6, 2003 - The Health, Recreation and Social Services Committee of City Council recommends that Council endorse the Ottawa Food Security Council, with funding. In addition, they endorse having a City Councillor and City staff serve on the Ottawa Food Security Council and that City staff be directed to nominate appropriate officials to the Council and determine an appropriate level of support for the Ottawa Food Security Council.

February 26, 2003 - City Council approves the recommendation of the HRSS Committee.

March 25, 2003 - The Ottawa Food Security Council holds its inaugural meeting.

April 1, 2003 - First Coordinator of the Ottawa Food Security Council hired and begins work.

June 19, 2006 - Ottawa Food Security Council officially changes its name to Just Food, and launches this website, the second version of the Ottawa Buy Local Food Guide and the first collaborative version of Food Link with the City Health Department.

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