



Community Food Security in Canada

Toward a National Food Policy for All

Want Amid Plenty

Here's a conundrum: Producers in the Canadian agri-food system are supplying more food than ever before to international markets, but a greater number of our citizens are becoming food insecure or going hungry inside Canada's borders.

Five years ago, about eight percent of Canada's total population was classified as food insecure. Food security is considered to exist in a household when, as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization puts it, "all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for an active and healthy life." Food insecurity occurs when "food quantity and/or quality are compromised, which is typically associated with limited financial resources," says Statistics Canada.

And here's the conundrum from another angle: Canada ranks 6th on the UN Human Development Index, an enviable position. However, with the combined effects of rising poverty and income inequality, there are now more than one million food insecure households across our country.

Another indicator—and it is a big one—of the seriousness of our problem is that there is no comprehensive national food strategy for the country that is based on ethical and sustainable ways of growing, processing and distributing food and that supports the health of all our citizens while protecting the environment.

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A national food policy for all—is this simply wishful thinking?

Actually, no, it isn't. In fact, there are practical and financially prudent steps that can be taken to embed exactly that kind of national food policy into the DNA of the country. In particular, Food Secure Canada, a broad-based coalition, along with a network of university student groups, propose that the federal government enact laws, policies and programs that:

- » Ensure that **food is eaten as close as possible to where it is produced**, by providing incentives for domestic and regional purchasing policies for large retailers, support to community agriculture, local farmers' markets and better campus food procurement systems.
- » Support food providers that shift to **ecologically sensitive production practices** in both urban and rural settings, including organic agriculture, community fisheries and indigenous food systems).
- » Train and provide financing to **a new generation of farmers and farm workers** in sustainable and healthy food production and distribution.
- » **Prevent and reduce poverty**, with measurable targets and timelines, to enable all Canadians to have better access to affordable food.
- » Establish a **federally funded children and food strategy**, including school meal programs, school and community permaculture gardens and food literacy programs, to permit all children to access the food they need for healthy lives.
- » Finance food programs to meet the **immediate needs of food-insecure populations** in both urban and rural and remote communities.
- » Designate adequate tracts of land within public parks and crown lands for the **exclusive use by indigenous nations** for hunting, fishing and gathering.
- » Facilitate **full participation by the public**, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, in actively studying and making decisions that affect the food system as a whole.

Further Reading

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<http://www.fernwoodpublishing.ca/Food-Sovereignty-in-Canada/>

Useful Websites

Food Secure Canada

www.foodsecurecanada.org

Campus Food Systems Project

www.studentfood.ca