

## LifCycles is Sharing Backyards

Just how much land does a person need in order to be self sufficient year round? Does it take half an acre, or more than an acre for an urban apartment dweller to produce a viable portion of their food supply?

In Greater Victoria, the answer might come from an organization such as the Lifecycles Project Society.

“Local food is such a hot topic right now,” said Christopher Hawkins, project leader for the Lifecycles’ Sharing Backyards initiative. “The local food movement is growing and we’re providing the tools to do it,” he said.

“Everybody needs to eat and they’re

seeing prices go up and jobs go down and are wondering how to make use of local resources.”

In order to connect people who love getting their hands into the soil with those who have available land, the organization set up the website [www.sharingbackyards.com](http://www.sharingbackyards.com).

Since going online two years ago, the site went from 121 visits between the original two programs (one and another in Vancouver) to 19,777 visits for 22 programs across Canada and U.S. in the first six months of 2009.

The concept is as simple as the name. The Sharing Backyards website has a Google map

that displays a pair of binoculars indicating the location of a gardener without a plot. For house owners gracious enough to share their land, there’s an icon of a bushy tree identifying their location.

Once a connection is made, owners and gardeners negotiate their own agreement, usually awarding the owner a share in the harvest.

To find the rest of the article, visit: [www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver\\_island\\_south/oakbaynews/news/52462142.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_south/oakbaynews/news/52462142.html). Written by Travis Peterson, published in Oak Bay News August 5, 2009.

## Fresh, local produce comes to Toronto with FoodShare

With summer comes the bounty of fruit and vegetables that appear in colourful waves at farmers’ markets and supermarkets in the city as farmers in central and southwestern Ontario bring the efforts of their spring labour to market. And with more people interested in becoming locavores – by eating local produce – the idea of growing your own vegetables or at least knowing more about where they came from has become more popular.

But sometimes the cost of farmers’ markets or organically produced food is out of reach for some budgets.

“Food is always the first thing to go because you think about paying rent first,” says Adrienne De Francesco, communications manager with FoodShare in Toronto. The non-

profit organization advocates a community-based approach to food supply and security. The organization runs a number of programs including the Good Food Box and Good Food Markets across the city, with a focus on affordability and quality.

“We want to make sure the price point is accessible,” says De Francesco.

While there are several ways to access locally grown food, including joining Community Shared Agriculture in which you buy a share in a farmer’s operation and receive produce back over the course of a season, for many that model may also be cost-prohibitive.

To help address this problem, FoodShare has been trying to give city dwellers more opportunities to access fresh food “from

farm to table.” In fact, the organization celebrated its 25th anniversary on June 20, and demonstrated various initiatives at open house, including Community Gardens and its popular Good Food Box program.

FoodShare is funded in part by the United Way, and buys fresh fruit and vegetables directly from farmers and from the Ontario Food Terminal. Volunteers pack it into green reusable boxes at its warehouse. They are then sold for about \$17 (family size), which represents a \$3 to \$8 savings off retail cost.

To find the rest of the article, please visit: [www.foodshare.net/media\\_archive81.htm](http://www.foodshare.net/media_archive81.htm). Written by Jennifer Brown, and published in the Sun on Jun 06, 2009.

### Regional Research Centres

Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network  
[www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic](http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic)

L’Alliance de recherche universités-communautés en économie sociale (ARUC-ÉS) et le Réseau québécois de recherche partenariale en économie sociale (RQRP-ÉS)  
[www.aruc-es.ca](http://www.aruc-es.ca)

Social Economy Centre  
[sec.oise.utoronto.ca](http://sec.oise.utoronto.ca)

Linking, Learning, Leveraging: Social Enterprises, Knowledgeable Economies and Sustainable Communities  
[www.usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy](http://www.usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy)

Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada  
[dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/sernnoca](http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/sernnoca)  
BC-Alberta Research Alliance on the Social Economy  
[www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca](http://www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca)

### The Canadian Social Economy Hub [www.socialeconomyhub.ca](http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca)

The Canadian Social Economy Hub (CSEHub) is located at the University of Victoria and is co-directed by Ian MacPherson and Rupert Downing. CSEHub undertakes research in order to understand and promote the Social Economy tradition within Canada and as a subject of academic enquiry within universities.

CSEHub is a Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) between the University of Victoria, represented by its principal investigator, and the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet), represented by the designated co-director. CSEHub is directed by the two organizations and their representatives, with the advice and input of a board of representatives of regional nodes and national partners of the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP).

### Questions? Please Contact Us!

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# The Social Economy in Canada: Food Security

[WWW.SOCIALECONOMYHUB.CA](http://WWW.SOCIALECONOMYHUB.CA)

### What is the Social Economy?

There are many definitions used by practitioners and others interested in the Social Economy. The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) National Policy Council has the following definition:

“The Social Economy consists of association-based economic initiatives founded on values of:

- Service to members of community rather than generating profits
- Autonomous management (not government or market controlled)
- Democratic decision making
- Primacy of persons and work over capital
- Based on principles of participation, empowerment.

The Social Economy includes: social assets (housing, childcare, etc), social enterprises including co-operatives, credit unions, equity and debt capital for community investment, social purpose businesses, community training and skills development, integrated social and economic planning, and capacity building and community empowerment. The Social Economy is a continuum that goes from one end of totally voluntary organizations to the other end, where the economic activity (social enterprise) blurs the line with the private sector.”

To provide a context for studying the Social Economy, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada introduces the Social Economy as follows:

“In recent years, in both North America and Europe, there has been increasing interest in what is known as the ‘Social Economy,’ for which some authorities use the term ‘community economic development.’

The social economy refers to those enterprises and organizations which use the tools and some of the methods of business, on a not-for-profit basis, to provide social, cultural, economic and health services to communities that need them. The social economy is characterized by cooperative enterprises, based on principles of community solidarity that respond to new needs in social and health services, typically at the community or regional level.

Social economy enterprises exhibit distinctive forms of organization and governance such as worker co-operatives and non-profit organizations. Such organizations produce goods for and deliver services to the public.”

The organizations and stories featured in this publication all share in common an understanding of how a Social Economy organization has both social and economic goals.

Since the World Food Summit in 1996 communities around the world have become more concerned about food security. Though in Canada we often consider ourselves fortunate to have a great and varied food supply there are many reasons for us to be concerned. For example, many farmers are struggling to make a living wage, local food production is not enough to supply demand for local food, food-borne illnesses have been making national news, and monoculture is making our farms ever more reliant on pesticides and fertilizers. These are just a few of the reasons for concern.

While some are waiting for government policies to address these concerns (we’re one of the only ‘developed’ nations not to have a national food policy) and for corporations to start changing their practices, others have already started developing alternatives to our conventional food system. There are municipal food charters, farmers markets, Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) projects, co-operative food stores, community gardens, Fair Trade organizations, and food security networks. All of these groups are founded on principles of engagement, empowerment, solidarity and mutual self-help – in other words the values embodied by the Social Economy. Social Economy organizations are providing a model for food production, processing, and distribution and are proving that our communities can truly be sustainable.

Through the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP) researchers and practitioners across Canada are investigating how the Social Economy is addressing food security and how it can be doing more. Now CSERP is engaging with producers, communities and other stakeholders to use the research to identify next steps in creating a sustainable food and agriculture policy and system for Canada. Seeking input on this will be the next stage in our work and we welcome your involvement.  
*By Rupert Downing and Matthew Thompson*

## Redesigning Canada’s Food System: The role of the social economy in rebuilding community food security.

The media is full of stories about global food crises. There are concerns about poverty and hunger, food safety and food-borne illness, and the effect of increasing energy prices on food costs; the security of our food systems has fallen into question. Each of these food crises can be examined through different lenses, and each lens brings into focus different solutions with their own necessary changes in policy.

From one perspective, the solution is to “overhaul our economic paradigm.” Others call for equitable international trade policies, a National Food Policy, or progressive social policy in Canada. Yet another solution is to buy local and organic food. The diversity of possible solutions demonstrates one of the greatest challenges to food security – the complexity of the issue.

To resolve such a complex issue requires action be taken to address all the determinants of food security, including those related to food supply and food access. It also requires that policy change happen at multiple levels all the way from personal, to organizational, to public policy. Clearly no magic bullet will fix our food system for us. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Working out of Mount Saint Vincent University (Halifax), members of the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network partnered with CSERP’s National Hub in 2007-2008 to complete a National Scan and inventory of over 25 CSERP projects involving food security issues. Based on this Scan, they asked two questions:

1. What does CSERP research reveal about key strategies being used to move from short-term towards medium- and long-term solutions to food security?
2. How is Canada’s social economy helping to bring about policy change and system redesign for food security?

The answers to these questions, and the complete article can be found in *Making Waves* 19:3, and at: [www.socialeconomyhub.ca/hub/?p=1243](http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca/hub/?p=1243).

Redesigning Canada's Food System

The role of the social economy in rebuilding community food security

Edited by Rupert Downing and Matthew Thompson

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## University Campus’ Serve-up Socially and Environmentally Responsible Meals



Choosing what food you eat is one of the most routine elements of our days, but often as a captive audience it can be hard to choose a socially and environmentally responsible meal – being on campus is a prime example. Thousands of students across the country flock to university campus cafeterias for a quick sandwich or snack between classes. These food items often travel from across the globe to land on our plates, but certain universities in Canada have taken steps to demonstrate that their cafeterias can dish more than the typical fried feasts and well-traveled produce.

Looking to central Canada, the University of Winnipeg provides a unique and inspiring recipe for a campus food plan that mixes jobs for dozens of inner-city residents, support for local farmers, and space for multicultural food. This new concept was designed by Winnipeg based non-profit organizations: The University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corporation (UWCRC) and Supporting Employment and Economic Development (SEED) Winnipeg. They have partnered to create a joint venture called Diversity Food Services that will provide food for the entire campus, and will employ approximately 25 people including immigrants and Aborigines.

SEED Winnipeg works to overcome poverty in the inner city of multicultural Winnipeg, and employee Terri Proulx explained that Diversity Foods is another example of how SEED will help newcomers gain employment skills and make money in a culturally safe way. This summer, the new employees will have intensive cultural, culinary and business training to prepare them for the September start.

Proulx said that she is “excited too, because we can transition our 48% share of Diversity Foods over to worker ownership or a worker co-operative model.”

At the forefront of the venture is Executive Chef Ben Kramer, second place winner of the Manitoba Iron Chef competition, and owner of Dandelion Eatery – listed as one of the 10 healthiest places to eat in Canada. “We will create authentic cultural food that is prepared from scratch using authentic ingredients and recipes,” said chef Kramer.

Proulx also added that, “the local food movement is huge here, and Diversity Foods is a testament to U of W that they’re walking their walk.”

The University of Winnipeg is providing more environmentally and socially conscious food items for students and staff through their purchasing and partnership policies. By supporting local food systems, and community economic development the university is showing that they are committed to enhancing the Social Economy of their campus and their greater community.

By Ashley Hamilton-MacQuarrie. For the full article, visit: [www.martlet.ca/article/19472-campus-serve-up-socially-responsible-meals](http://www.martlet.ca/article/19472-campus-serve-up-socially-responsible-meals). For more information about SEED, [www.seedwinnipeg.ca](http://www.seedwinnipeg.ca); UWCRC, [www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/crc-index](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/crc-index).

## New Approaches to the Health Promoting School: Participation in Sustainable Food Systems

Both Dietitians of Canada (DC) and the American Dietetic Association (ADA) are supportive of building Community Food Security (CFS) and sustainable food systems (SFS) that include public school participation. Dietitians of Canada encourages dietetic professionals to help build CFS by, among many strategies, facilitating the development of school garden and hydroponics projects, creating multisector partnerships and networks that work toward community food security, working with governments, organizations, and communities to develop policies for increasing community food self reliance, and advocating for adequate budgets for institutions. The American Dietetic Association urges professionals to help build SFS by working to improve access to and consumption of locally produced foods, encouraging connections between local producers and institutions and supporting government policies that encourage farm to school programs and school gardens. While the body of research around public school participation in SFS supporting these position statements is growing, there is still a need to better understand the specific health, environmental, social, and economic advantages and disadvantages.

The purpose of this review is to synthesize research on three public school sustainable food procurement models used by public schools: school food gardens, farm-to-school programs, and sustainable procurement policies and their contribution to CFS and SFS in the Canadian and American context. It is the authors’ hope that this review will help nutrition professionals, those working with public schools, as well as those interested in SFS, in understanding sustainable food procurement issues in the public school context.

This review will contribute to our understanding and knowledge of sustainable food procurement in schools by situating each of the three strategies within the evolving literature on CFS in an effort to clarify the role and value of school participation in SFS. While recognizing that each individual school community is unique and, as a result, the positive and challenging experiences with each project, program, or policy are equally unique, there are common themes that warrant exploration. Finally, several options for research, advocacy and policy, education and awareness, coordination and action are presented.

**Concepts of Food Security and Community Food Security: A Brief Overview**  
Food security is a broad, multifaceted concept that can be described at the global, national, community, household, individual, or cultural level and can be approached from both SFS and anti-poverty perspectives. Health Canada recently reported that over 10% of Canadian households with children experienced moderate or severe income-related food insecurity in 2004; 5.2% of these families experienced food insecurity at the child level. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that in 2006, while 15.6% of families with children experienced household-level income-related food insecurity, only 0.6% of these

same households reported this at the child level. Measurement of household food security differs in Canada and the United States, so direct comparison is not possible; however, these statistics indicate that in both Canada and the United States, children are experiencing food insecurity. Currently, there is no national monitoring system in either country that measures the extent of food security at the community level, from an SFS perspective—referred to as community food security (CFS). Despite the lack of prevalence data, in 2007, the Dietitians of Canada (DC) released a public policy statement on CFS1 acknowledging its conceptual importance. Although this statement accepts Hamm and Bellows’ definition of CFS as a situation in which “all community residents obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone”, Hamm and Bellows also point out a lack consensus of what the field of CFS encompasses; a theoretical framework, defined “community” boundaries, and parameters around how to measure CFS. A measurement system for CFS is important to evaluate if and how strategies recommended by the DC and ADA examined in this article are contributing to CFS.

**Three-Stage Continuum of Evidence-Based Strategies**  
McCullum proposes a framework based on a three-stage continuum of evidence-based strategies for community food security where each stage of food systems change is recognized as part of a dynamic, comprehensive transition of our food system towards sustainability. The first stage encompasses short-term strategies that initiate food systems change. School projects include classroom-based education or school gardens used as educational demonstration sites for nutrition and ecological studies. The second stage, food systems in transition, involves medium-term strategies such as creating networks and partnerships between local food producers and school cafeterias or school gardens that produce food for the cafeteria. The third stage, food systems redesign for sustainability, usually takes the form of sustainable procurement policies at the school, catering company, or school board level. These might include local purchasing but extend to include environmentally and socially responsible procurement policies such as buying organic and Fair Trade products. Here we borrow McCullum’s continuum to frame CFS. The particular setting, or community, considered here, is the school community—all those in direct contact with the school, including students, staff, administration, parents, volunteers, food service providers and managers, distributors, producers, and growers.

Written by Liesel Carlsson and Patricia L. Williams from the Department of Applied Human Nutrition, Participatory Action Research and Training Centre on Food Security, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS. The full version of this article can be found in the Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition: [www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all?content=10.1080/19320240802529243](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all?content=10.1080/19320240802529243)



## The Lay of the Land: Local Food Initiatives in Canada

The Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) has recently released a research report, The Lay of the Land: Local Food Initiatives in Canada, which provides an initial overview of local food initiatives in this country. The report charts the geographical distribution and types of activities that make up Canada’s local food movement, including co-operatives and umbrella organizations. The research was conducted between September 2008 and January 2009 by a CCA intern, Adrian Egbers and overseen by Lynne Markell,

CCA Government Affairs and Public Policy advisor. The research shows that Canada is home to a vibrant local food movement, with local food initiatives in every province. The report documents over 2,300 local food initiatives in Canada, with 227 of them (10 per cent) organized as co-operatives. There are 24 umbrella organizations that work to organize and strengthen Canada’s local food initiatives. The driving factor behind the undertaking of

this research was to document the breadth of the local food movement in Canada and educate the people who could help support it. By their very nature local food activities are mostly known to local people, local media and local government. “We have taken a snapshot of what existed across Canada in late 2008 and put it one report. We think we are the first to do it.” said Markell. She also explained that the report follows an initial policy document that was directed towards Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

as part on their consultation process for Growing Forward, the new agricultural policy framework. Lay of the Land is an extensive resource for people looking for a national perspective on food initiatives, and is also helpful for individuals who are looking for a place within the Canadian movement. For the full report , visit: [www.coopscanada.coop/en/info\\_resources/Research](http://www.coopscanada.coop/en/info_resources/Research). For additional information, contact: lynne.markell@coopscanada.coop or (613) 238-6711 ext 204.

## Resources

**Bits and Bytes**  
<http://www.bitsandbytes.ca/index.php>

**City Farmer**  
<http://www.cityfarmer.info>

**CCIC: Canadian Food Security Policy Group**  
<http://www.ccic.ca/e/003/food.shtml>

**Ryerson University Food Studies**  
<http://www.ryerson.ca/foodsecurity>

**Canadian Association of Food Studies**  
<http://www.foodstudies.ca>

**Food Secure Canada**  
<http://foodsecurecanada.org/index.php>

**City Farm Boy**  
<http://www.cityfarmboy.com>

**Food Share**  
<http://www.foodshare.ca/index.htm>

**LUNCHBOX SPEAKERS’ SERIES – April , 2009**  
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) Social Economy Centre:

**Food Security** – with Debbie Field from Food Share, Michael Oliphant from Daily Bread Food Bank and Lorie Stahlbrand from Local Plus

“With world hunger growing, there is a need to look at the ways governments and communities can work together to ensure sustainable and affordable access to food - for everyone. Debbie Field (Food Share) explored a variety of food security options. Michael Oliphant (Daily Bread Food Bank) spoke to the efforts Daily Bread Food Bank has made to address the underlying cause of hunger, poverty, through public policy and political advocacy. Lorie Stahlbrand (Local Plus) discussed how growing local sustainable food systems which preserve agricultural land and ensure that farmers can make a decent living, is key to food security.”

**Listen and watch this presentation here:**  
[sec.oise.utoronto.ca/english/webcast.php](http://sec.oise.utoronto.ca/english/webcast.php)

**CSEHub TELELEARNING SESSION THREE: Food Security and the Social Economy**

What is meant by the term “Food Security”? How does it relate to the Social Economy? These questions were discussed by Dr. Heather Myers, from the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George, and Debbie Field, Executive Director of FoodShare in Toronto, in an engaging telelearning session.

**To find background readings, and the podcast:**  
[www.socialeconomyhub.ca/hub/?p=646](http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca/hub/?p=646)