



# Growing Hope

Canadian Agriculture  
and Agri-Food Policy  
Recommendations from  
the Community Voice

**March 2007**



Agriculture and  
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et  
Agroalimentaire Canada



The Canadian **CED** Network

Le Réseau canadien de **DÉC**

Strengthening Canada's Communities

Des communautés plus fortes au Canada



Sponsored by: The Canadian Community Economic Development Network  
Prepared by: Edible Strategies Ent. Ltd.



**Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada** is pleased to participate in the production of this publication. AAFC is committed to working with our industry partners to increase public awareness of the importance of the agriculture and agri-food industry to Canada. Opinions expressed in this document are not necessarily those of AAFC.

**Published by:**

© 2007 The Canadian CED Network  
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# Background

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The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) is a national member-based, democratic organization registered as a charity. The membership of CCEDNet consists of over 650 organizations and individual practitioners from every region of Canada. CCEDNet members bring urban, rural and northern experience and a diverse range of community economic development expertise to the work of CCEDNet. The CCEDNet mission is to promote and support community economic development for the social, economic and environmental betterment of communities within Canada.

Through work of our members, CCEDNet recognized that community and civil society organizations and small and medium enterprises across Canada are intervening in the food economy in order to address concerns and issues that manifest at the community level. CCEDNet, in partnership with a member organization, Edible Strategies Enterprises Ltd., determined that there was a need to analyze this community level action and to create a policy position informed by members in order to facilitate their voice in the consultations for a renewed Agriculture Policy Framework in Canada. A multi-dimensional project entitled “Growing Hope” was launched in 2006 as the vehicle to bring this voice forward.

The Agriculture Policy Framework guides the development of bilateral agreements between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments. This framework currently contains 5 pillars: business risk management, food safety and quality, science and innovation, environment and renewal. The federal/provincial agreements are set to expire in 2008 so the federal government is conducting public consultations in early 2007. The purpose of the consultations is to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to give input for consideration in the development of a renewed Agriculture Policy Framework.

# Community Voice Agriculture Policy Initiative

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This paper examines agriculture and agri-food policy from the unique perspective of impacts and issues that are felt at the community level. Moreover, the paper gives voice to local and regional efforts currently intervening in the agriculture and agri-food sector. We call this phenomenon the “Community Voice” for Agriculture Policy.

The Community Voice comes from three distinct sources as was documented through research and dialogue with community organizations in 2006 through the Growing Hope project. They are:

- Charitable organizations that are working to redress food system issues such as hunger and malnutrition.
- Community organizations that are developing capacity to produce and distribute food on a local/regional basis.
- Locally owned, small and medium ethical food enterprises.

These initiatives reflect values that favour development that contributes to social, cultural, ecological and economic sustainability. These values accord with growing consumer demand for food products that is local, organically grown, GMO-free and produced ethically.<sup>1</sup>

## The Policy Development Process

The Growing Hope draft policy model was developed using the following methods:

- A comprehensive bibliography was gathered to present a broad view of agriculture and agri-food issues and responses that community level organizations are pursuing in Canada, the USA and Europe. The bibliography is in Appendix 4.
- An issue of the Community Economic Development (CED) Quarterly “Making Waves” was developed and published in September 2006. The issue was titled *Growing Hope* and was circulated to over five thousand people and organizations including all Members of Parliament and CCEDNet members. The magazine’s articles provide a theoretical framework for a sustainable food system and agriculture as well as best practices for community responses to food system issues. The magazine stimulated thinking and dialogue between CCEDNet members and associational partners<sup>2</sup>.
- Evidence was gathered through online discussions.<sup>3</sup>
- A review was conducted of four national organisations’ policy papers and initiatives

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<sup>1</sup> Dec, 2006; Ipsos Reid, Survey on consumer attitude to locally produced food

<sup>2</sup> All Growing Hope Making Waves articles are available at [http://www.cedworks.com/mw1702e\\_02.html](http://www.cedworks.com/mw1702e_02.html)

<sup>3</sup> A web board is at <http://www.bulletinboards.com/message.cfm?comcode=MakeWave>

including the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the National Farmers Union, Status of Women Canada’s “The Farm Women and Canadian Agriculture” and the Réseau Canadian Environmental Network’s (RCEN) Green Paper on Agriculture and the Environment. (See Appendix 2)

- A survey was sent to CCEDNet members and from this A CCEDNet agriculture and food policy committee is emerging. (See Appendix 5)

## Agriculture Policy Framework Renewal Process

The current Agriculture and Agri-food Policy Framework is being reviewed in 2007 to be updated in 2008. To facilitate this process, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada developed a series of consultation materials including a discussion paper, a principles paper, economic backgrounders and six thematic papers.

These APF principles are presented with an analysis of the principles from the community perspective as represented by those that participated in the Growing Hope project.

APF PRINCIPLES	COMMUNITY VOICE PERSPECTIVE
Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments will support an agriculture and agri-food sector that is profitable, market-driven, innovative and efficient, and enable the sector to seize opportunities across the supply chain and strengthen Canada's position in the global marketplace by:	Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments will support and agriculture and agri-food sector that is ensures a safe, nutritious, ethically and ecologically produced food supply for Canadians by Canadian farmers making liveable incomes through value chains. The Community Voice intent is to:
<b>Promoting</b> a competitive and profitable agriculture and agri-food sector that responds quickly to market opportunities both in the domestic sphere and the global marketplace	<b>...promote</b> a sustainable agriculture and agri-food sector that responds effectively to market opportunities primarily in the domestic market but supporting development of “regional indicators” to facilitate participation in the global food market.
<b>Enabling</b> industry to develop and adopt new technologies and best practices so that Canada can be at the forefront of agri-products development	<b>...enable</b> development of appropriate technology, product development support and best practices for the local/regional food producers to assist them to capture more profit margin in the value chain.
<b>Fostering</b> a business and regulatory climate that makes Canada a world leader in innovation and prosperity	<b>...foster</b> a business and regulatory climate that supports community and entrepreneurial re-generation of a local/regional food systems.
<b>Encouraging</b> the sector to profit from market opportunities by meeting evolving consumer and citizen demands in areas such as food safety and quality, health and wellness, the	<b>...encourage</b> Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI's) that indicate economic returns through meeting consumer demands for food safety and quality, health and wellness, and protection of

environment, and renewable resources	the environment and ensuring farmers and farm labourers' liveable wages.
<i>Advocating</i> for greater market access and clearer trading rules internationally, while acting in accordance with our international obligations to minimize our exposure to countervail action, and reaping the full benefits of Canada's international trading rights.	<i>...advocate</i> that Canadian trade practices do not harm local producers in Canada or in other countries by treating local food production and consumption separately from issues related to commodity production.

To summarize, attending to the concerns expressed through the Community Voice will mean a shift in agricultural policy in Canada to one that supports action to feed our people good food, ethically and sustainably.

## Community Responses to Food System issues in Canada

The intent of this paper is to highlight the Community Voice showing how this approach can contribute to a strengthened agricultural and food system in Canada in the future.

The major intent of this paper is to provide an argument for ensuring that the urgent concerns evident at the community level can be addressed in a new Agricultural policy in Canada. And importantly, we wish to ensure that innovations emerging from the community level will be recognized and supported in the new policy and its programs.

The Growing Hope project identified a wide range of community responses to food system issues. These responses result from attempts by community groups to mitigate the effects of a food system that does not meet all of the food and nutritional needs of the population. The responses are organized in the chart attached as an appendix and at the web page <http://www.cedworks.com/files/pdf/free/MW170226.pdf>.

Responses come through charitable organizations, community and regional development organizations, social enterprises, and small and medium enterprises. Most of the efforts require government or foundation funding and a great deal of volunteer sweat equity. Market activities by social enterprises and small and medium enterprises get support from foundations, alternative investment bodies, family and friends and small business development service organizations operated in the community. These small and medium business owners recognize the shift in consumer preferences and are entering the market, often as allies of community organizations. Taken together, these developments are the indication of change that will, over time, have system level impacts. In the meantime, facilitating and supporting these approaches will ensure that the desire of Canadians--through their community level efforts--is recognized as providing impetus for new approaches in agriculture and agri-food policy.



# Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this paper is based on the work of Drs. Lang and Heasman.<sup>4</sup> Lang and Heasman propose that agriculture and food policy can be understood according to three competing perspectives. Looking at food policy this way facilitates understanding of why communities are experiencing the problems listed in the Community Responses chart. Lang and Heasman describe three paradigms. The dominant paradigm--the Productionist paradigm—at its core promotes production almost at all costs. This is now giving way before two new agendas. One is premised on integrating the life sciences into food policy--the Life Sciences Integrated Paradigm. From this we see increasing emphasis on “scientific” solutions such as genetically modified foods, and development of nutraceuticals and functional foods. The third paradigm—the Ecologically Integrated Paradigm (EIP)—roots food supply in social and ecological needs.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 2: Characteristics of each paradigm<sup>6</sup>

Features	Productionist paradigm	Life Sciences paradigm	Ecologically Integrated paradigm
<b>Drivers</b>	Commitment to raise output; immediate gains sought through intensification	Science-led integration of food supply chain; tight managerial control	Environmental; energy/waste reduction; diversity ‘ground upwards’; reduction of certain inputs; aims for diversity on and off the field; risk minimization by building diversity
<b>Key Food Sector</b>	Commodity markets; high-input agriculture; mass processing for mass markets	Capital-intensive use of Life Sciences (agri-food); food retailers dominate supply chain; reliance on intensive agriculture for economies of scale	Integration of all; but emphasis on whole-farm systems approach (land and watersheds); biodiversity enhancement to stabilize and maximize yields over the long term
<b>Industry approach</b>	Homogeneous products; pursuit of quantity and productivity (throughput) over quality	Aims for industrial-scale application of biotechnology primarily in agriculture but increasingly in manufacturing (enzymes not just GM); uses a mixture of chemical and biological inputs	Aims to move organic foods from marginal to mainstream; nervous about increasing the scale of production and capacity of quality controls; select use of biotechnology (fermentation, not GM)
<b>Scientific focus</b>	Chemistry + pharmaceuticals	Links genetics, biology, engineering, nutrition; control from laboratory to field and factory; science presented as neutral but tailored by industry-led/oriented funding	Biology; ecology; multidisciplinary; agro-ecological technology instead of chemicals
<b>Policy framework</b>	Largely set by agriculture ministries;	Top-down, expert-led; backed by trade and finance ministries;	Partnership of ministries; collaborative institutional structures

<sup>4</sup> 2004. Timothy Lang and Dr Michael Heasman *Food Wars: The Global Battle for Mouths, Minds and Markets*  
 Note: Dr. M. Heasman is now an associate with the Dept of Agriculture and Rural Communities at the University of Alberta

<sup>5</sup> 2006. Heasman, M. *Growing Hope. Plotting the Future of Food*. Making Waves p 13.

<sup>6</sup> reprinted with permission from Tim Lang and Michael Heasman. *Food Wars: The Global Battle for Mouths, Minds and Markets*.

	reliance on subsidies	challenges regulatory, industry, policy and public boundaries	needed; promotes advantages of decentralization and team-work
<b>Consumer focus</b>	Cheapness; appearance of food; homogeneous products; convenience for women; assumes safety of foods	Production of ‘champion’ products (eg functional foods to appeal to individual choice); structured choice; food features can be designed to appeal to market-derived characteristics	Citizens not consumers; improved links between the land and consumption; greater transparency
<b>Market focus</b>	National markets; emergence of consumer choice; shift to branding	Global ambitions; large companies dominate; ‘Life Science’ fix is the only mainstream business model	Regional and local focus—‘bio-regionalism’; nervous about export-led agriculture; favours smaller companies but increasingly adopted by larger ones
<b>Environmental assumptions</b>	Cheap energy for inputs and transport; limitless natural resources; monoculture; externalization of waste/pollution	Intensive use of biological inputs; claims to deliver environmental health benefits	Resources are finite; need to move away from extensive monoculture and reliance on fossil fuels; need to integrate environmental, nature and conservation policy with industrial and social policy
<b>Political support</b>	Historically strong but declining, as reflected in policy battle over subsidies	Fast-developing; divisions among both rich and poor countries about how to interpret Life Sciences paradigm	Weak, but low base strengthening in many countries; some merging of fragmented ‘movements’ claiming high ground
<b>Role of knowledge</b>	Agro-economists as important as scientists	Top-down; expert-led hi-tech skills; laboratory science base	Knowledge-intensive, rather than input-intensive; skills needed across whole supply chain; knowledge as empowerment
<b>Health approach</b>	Marginal interest; assumes that health gains follow from sufficiency of supply	Relies on novel but unproven impact; argues that health can be fixed technically by new combination of screening on an individual basis; seeks to improve beneficial traits of crops for human health	Presents itself as ‘healthy’ alternative but as yet on a weak evidence base; promotes diet diversity

The ecologically integrated paradigm aligns with community economic development principles and practice and speaks to the concerns in evidence at the community level across Canada.

# Summary of Critiques of the APF

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This section summarises the main themes arising from four papers from other Canadian groups from civil society echoing the concerns arising from the community. Appendix 4 contains a complete listing of all the recommendations to APF contained in the four papers. The key themes arising from these papers are as follows:

- lack of policy for domestic supply,
- farming communities at risk of disappearance,
- and increased awareness from the Canadian public about the vulnerability of our food system.

The current APF outcomes are focused primarily on export infrastructure with little recognition or support for a systematic approach for quality domestic production. The current policy does not ensure that all Canadians have access to a healthy and sustainable food supply. Many regions, even those known for agricultural production, are not producing food eaten in Canada (for example the rising incidence of Food Bank usage from prairie farmers underlines this anomaly). Food producing regions are importing food even though it is possible to grow those same food products locally. This process of “trade redundancy” is of great concern in local communities.<sup>7</sup> Farmers are leaving the land due to the farm income crisis. Farming communities are struggling to survive. This is made worse because youth are not entering into agricultural professions and the infrastructure for regional food manufacturing was “hollowed out” in the 1980’s and has not recovered.

Threats from increasing energy costs as oil reserves peak, climate change, food safety crises and natural disasters have alerted Canadian citizens to the vulnerability of our food system. Community organizations (Co’s) are arising across the country calling for increased “food security” and “food sovereignty.” Co’s are calling for a return to a more sustainable agricultural system in order that the security and integrity of a healthy food system for Canadians and a viable food economy is once again possible. Co’s wish to see Canadian producers and processors able to thrive in the local/regional market place. Rural Co’s are battling to find alternative economic futures as family farming declines at an alarming pace. Rural Co’s are scrambling to provide social support to farmers crushed by the farm income crisis and trying to find ways to bring youth back to the land. Community organizations are promoting good health and healthy eating. The importance of a healthy diet to prevent and mitigate disease is top of mind in the public consciousness. Citizen led campaigns to remove junk food from schools and to remove trans-fats from foods and to promote “buy local” are some examples of the powerful outcomes of community led action.

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<sup>7</sup> *A Study of Redundant Trade in Waterloo Region* Judy Maan Miedema, Public Health Planner Region of Waterloo Public Health February 2006 Retrieved March 11, 2007 at [http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/region.nsf/97dfc347666efede85256e590071a3d4/BC5A659B6394CB718525722D006E344E/\\$file/Redundant%20Trade%20Report.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/region.nsf/97dfc347666efede85256e590071a3d4/BC5A659B6394CB718525722D006E344E/$file/Redundant%20Trade%20Report.pdf?OpenElement)

# Situational Analysis of Agriculture in Canada

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The following discussion is a brief, yet important acknowledgement of both global and local factors that affect communities but are beyond community control. This is an informal situational analysis of agriculture in Canada.

## **World Trade and agriculture policy in Canada**

The problems resulting from unfair subsidies of agricultural products by the USA and the impact on agricultural trade has is subject of a great deal of conflict at international trade negotiations. The Doha round of trade talks came to an impasse recently as many southern countries decided not to go along with a trade regime that was destroying their own food systems. Citizen's organizations from many countries are calling for protection of their domestic food markets since problems of hunger and food poverty are proliferating around the world under current trade policies. The United States maintains high subsidy levels and this skews prices so that Canadian products end up priced higher than imports. This price war is at the root of the farm-income crisis in Canada. The basic argument from the community voice is that food is a basic social requirement everywhere and all people should be assured of viable local food systems.

The tradition of supply management (such as the Canadian Wheat Board, the Milk Marketing Board etc.) in Canada has ensured that some farmers are able to make a decent living; however, supply management is also criticized from those who promote free trade. The result has been an attack on the Canadian Supply Managed system by negotiators from other countries. Canadian farmers prefer their supply management systems but recognize that this does not always respond to local demand. The voice from the community is calling for protection of the supply management system but also calling for its reform in order to facilitate local production for local consumption and in order to respond more flexibly to meet consumer demand for special attribute products such as organics and 'pasture-raised' chicken/hogs, etc.

## **Peak oil and climate change**

Peak oil and climate change are of great concern to Canadians. The majority of food consumes a lot of oil before it gets to our table. Food travels an average of 2500 kilometres from field to table all the while using large amounts of fuel and causing pollution of the atmosphere. Consumers and community organizations are using these facts to encourage consumption of locally produced food. Popularity of the 100 Mile Diet and increasing interest on local food systems by civic organizations demonstrates consumers' readiness to shift towards a sustainable food system.

## **The great food swap**

Some communities are tracking trade redundancy. Trade redundancy is a measurement tool that tracks imports and exports of similar food products. Local produce is exported and the same type of produce is imported to that region. In other words, cheap imports of tomatoes will trump locally grown tomatoes in the market place. If we continue to rely primarily on imports for our food, we are vulnerable to outside manipulation and very vulnerable when emergencies strike. This food swap also contributes to the artificial “cheapness” of food. Canadians enjoy the second cheapest prices for food in the world.<sup>8</sup> Cheap food to the consumer however, also represents a toll on the environment and an exploitation of labour in southern countries where standards are lower.

## **Market trends: The emergence of the conscious consumer**

“Canadian consumers are becoming more discerning and concerned about the food they eat. Currently, seven major new trends in consumer food preferences can be identified.”<sup>9</sup> The trends are 1) buy local, 2) buy convenience, 3) buy specialty, 4) buy healthy, 5) buy organic, 6) buy safety, and 7) buy environmental.”

The conscious consumer’s behaviour is not only providing new market opportunities for local enterprise, but also gaining credibility and importance as a major market driver.

## **Consumer demand for local food**

There is increasing interest and demand for local food. As well, there is evidence that the consumer demand for Canadian and locally branded, high quality, safe, nutritious food is not being filled. Food distributors and retailers are interested in meeting this demand and selling locally produced food, but there is little to no capacity to produce food locally for local food markets in most of Canada’s regions. Local food systems need substantial investment to rebuild. A recent poll by Ipsos Reid documents this trend. (for summary, see Appendix 7). Food trade magazines are calling “local food” the fastest rising trend in the global and regional food markets.

## **Demand for safe and nutritious food**

Consumers and producers alike are concerned with food safety. However, small operators point out that some food safety regulations favour trans-national corporations but create major cost factors for local or regional producers with arguably few improvements for food safety for consumers. New Meat regulations in BC are a good example where standards for ‘factory farms’ are being imposed on small producers and processing plants—the result is that a lot of processors are going out of business as they cannot afford the high costs of building new processing plants to specifications that will not be recoverable in their economic cycle. Implementation of these standards is well under way and many small producers have been forced out of business. Because these standards are required in the international context, technical

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<sup>8</sup> See the Growing Hope article “Food Facts” at <http://www.cedworks.com/files/pdf/free/MW170208.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> 2006, Sandra Mark and Frank Moreland, “*Conscious Consumers*” in Making Waves, p \_)

assistance and financial assistance is needed to assist local/regional producers to comply with regulations, or standards for local food production that have served us well for a long time should be recognized.

## **Access to reliable information about our food supply**

Statistics Canada collects information about agriculture and food. Unfortunately, statistics for food is combined with other agricultural products such as flowers, tobacco, and nursery products, to name a few. This makes it very difficult to use existing statistics in market studies and land use planning. Small entrepreneurs, city planners and policy makers need access to reliable information that tracks trends in specific ways, and also at a local level. In particular, gauging the amount of food that is produced and consumed locally is very difficult. Where this has been done<sup>10</sup> the results show that the level of “food self-sufficiency” is very low.

## **Organic**

There is increasing evidence that suggests organic food is the best to eat and that local food has more nutrition than food imported from far away. Research is piling up that demonstrates these benefits in scientific terms.<sup>11</sup> However, certification standards for organics currently do not include measures that ensure social justice or “food miles” considerations. The “beyond organic” movement seeks to redress these facts and calls for inclusion of labour standards and “food miles” rather than simply certification of a method of production.

## **Seeds**

Community organizations and farmers promote seed saving and advocate that the diversity of our genetic heritage must be preserved. Seed varietals registration protocols threaten farmers by no longer allowing them to save their seed and forcing them to buy seed thus adding to their costs. As well, consumers and community organizations are mobilizing to prevent “terminator seed technology” and to call for a ban on genetic modification. Since Canada has been a leader in the world arena promoting genetically modified products, the community effort has now shifted to a demand that all foods that use genetic modification should be labelled so that consumers can be informed and thus able to vote with their dollars.

## **Non-tariff trade barriers**

The BSE crisis inspired Canadian meat producers to once again think about slaughtering meat domestically for the domestic market. While there exists demand for locally produced meat, and value-added production would improve rural economies, the reality is that local infrastructure (small slaughterhouses) have to be re-built. The capital requirements are onerous for small producers. Some producers are creating co-operatives in order to pool resources. These efforts require capital and technical assistance to succeed.

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<sup>10</sup> A BC study is in draft and yet to be officially released by the BC government that tries to focus on the Canadian Food Guide needs of the consumer and measures “that food” that BC citizens consume, and how much of “that food” BC grows and manufactures. The draft report acknowledges BC does manufacture “other” food products that are not included in the daily recommendations for the Canadian Food Guide, and explains this food should not be considered when calculating food self sufficiency.

<sup>11</sup> See *Vital for Life: Impacts of eating fruits and vegetables* at [http://www.ediblestrategies.com/fsd/gfb\\_2006\\_Vital\\_for\\_Life.pdf](http://www.ediblestrategies.com/fsd/gfb_2006_Vital_for_Life.pdf)

## Community based manufacturing

Much of our food is processed off-shore as a result of the consolidation of the food system into the hands of a few large companies. The food costs to the consumer are low. This situation is referred to as “the race to the bottom” and “cheap food policy” since low cost often reflects exploitation of labour, of communities and of the environment... The Growing Hope article *The High Road to Food Security* by Matt Hancock explores this situation and community solutions that have been developed in response, see <http://www.cedworks.com/files/pdf/free/MW170237.pdf> .

Creating manufacturing capacity locally or regionally is a priority for a re-localized food system development. The trend is for government to invest in one large and highly technical and knowledge based centre but what is needed from the community perspective is access to finance and technical assistance for smaller regional centres to provide facilities and technical assistance.

## Farm income crisis

The National Farmers' Union documented that Canadian farmers have increasingly large cash flows, and yet their incomes are negative those same years.<sup>12</sup> This situation has led to a rapid decrease in farms and farmers over the past 20 years. The National Farmers' Union has developed a 16-point strategy to reverse the income crisis trend.<sup>13</sup> We support their position. The loss of farms and loss of farm-land to urban development is raising concern across the country. If farmers cannot make living wages, the trend to lose farmers and to lose farmland cannot be stopped. If farmers cannot transfer land to younger people who can see real hope for a viable career in farming, the trend to loss of youth in farming will not be stopped.

Farmers are working very hard to diversify their operations taking on community-shared agriculture programs, agri-tourism programs and engaging in value-added product development and enterprises. More support for these initiatives are urgently needed.

## Food and culture

The trend to highlight the benefits of local food is led by chefs and farmers who understand the benefits of cultural tourism focusing upon food. “Culinary tourism” and Agri-tourism are growing sectors and can only thrive when local food specialities can be produced in commercial volumes.

As well, the ethnic food market is growing rapidly adding richness to the cultural experience in each region of the country. Supporting and celebrating this richness requires support to create production infrastructure in each location.

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<sup>12</sup> In 2004, Canadian farmers' Realized Net Income from the markets (Market Net Income)—a measure that subtracts out government payments—fell to negative \$10,000 per farm. The only year worse than 2004 was 2003, when per-farm Market Net Income was negative \$16,000. Retrieved March 11, 2007 from [http://www.nfu.ca/briefs/2005/corporate\\_profits.pdf](http://www.nfu.ca/briefs/2005/corporate_profits.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved March 11, 2007 [http://www.nfu.ca/briefs/2005/Ten\\_point\\_plan\\_to\\_end\\_farm\\_crisis\\_EIGHTEEN\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nfu.ca/briefs/2005/Ten_point_plan_to_end_farm_crisis_EIGHTEEN_FINAL.pdf)

## **Emergency response**

What can we learn from the Tsunami in Asia or the Hurricane in New Orleans? It was clear that centralized transportation and distribution systems could not deliver food in these situations. Vulnerability during emergencies is intensified if we are reliant on food imports. Current “Just-In-Time” inventory practices mean that food products for only a few days may be on hand. The Vancouver Food System Assessment<sup>14</sup> studied the emergency food system in Vancouver. It found that there is only enough food for emergency response staff and volunteers in the case of a serious emergency. A localized, networked food system with infrastructure and capacity would add resiliency to the economy and be more responsive to emergency situations. Local warehousing, freezer, cooler and controlled atmosphere storage facilities are needed in every region that could operate on a 2 month staples inventory as a First-In-First-Out (FIFO) process to provide local food security to all citizens.

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<sup>14</sup> Vancouver Food System Report retrieved March 11, 2007 from [http://www.ediblestrategies.com/fsd/2005\\_Vancouver\\_Food\\_Assessment.pdf](http://www.ediblestrategies.com/fsd/2005_Vancouver_Food_Assessment.pdf)



# Community Level Innovation

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People and organizations at the community level are expressing many worries about our current food system. However, they are also taking matters into their own hands and finding new and exciting ways to contend with these problems. Innovation at the community level includes experimentation with new forms of business, new products and services and new initiatives in public education and community organizing. The contribution of community organizations is building an increasing awareness on food issues that will facilitate local level problem solving. Community level innovation will be fostered thus leveraging new sources of investment.

Our argument for including community perspectives in redesigning agriculture policy in Canada are based not only upon critique of the current situation but also upon the high level of evident engagement and commitment in civil society to devise new ways of doing the business of food.

## Innovations in business forms: Value chain or flexible marketing network

New business forms have been devised in Europe and North America as small farmers consider their options for survival. These strategies are effectively saving farms, and allowing small businesses to work together to attain the benefits of large-scale operations without sacrificing the benefits to local people of the small and quality-scale operations. One business strategy is termed a "Flexible Production/ Marketing Network (FMN)." In a FMN, small enterprises are linked together to gain efficiencies in production and marketing, but they are able to maintain their own identity and small/quality-scale local roots. FMN's are varied in purpose and size, but typically a number of small firms will co-operate in order to complete a contract. For example, a broker may negotiate a contract for several thousands tonnes of produce, and the supply will be met by many small firms.

Another example of an FMN is an 'assembly line' of production between firms where one firm will complete an initial stage of production and a different firm will complete the next stage of production. FMN's link several firms so that one firm's weakness is remedied by another's strengths. The most interesting example of this approach is in northern Italy.

*Local cooperation and the ability to produce for highly competitive international markets needn't be mutually exclusive -- the two can blend like oil and vinegar. There are more than 60,000 workers employed in some 1,800 "red" Emilian co-ops. But co-ops haven't prevented the region from increasing its share of international exports. Emilia-Romagna's small and medium-sized companies -- both craft-based and high-tech -- compete internationally, and work cooperatively within industrial districts that have produced the fastest growth of any region in the country... Emilia-Romagna was once a desperately impoverished agricultural area. Now the region ranks second among Italy's twenty regions in median per capita income. And it stands tenth among the 122 regions in the entire European Community.<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> 1996. Fitch, Robert. *The cooperative economics of Italy's Emilia-Romagna holds a lesson for the U.S. In Bologna, Small Is Beautiful; The Nation.*

## **Innovation in business forms: New generation co-operatives**

New Generation Co-operatives (NGC's) are an excellent example of community-led innovation. A NGC creates infrastructure to respond to rapid changes in agriculture. In particular, three factors have led to the creation of NGC's. The vertical integration of agriculture markets (where products are gathered, mixed and distributed to food processors), consumer demand for speciality food products and knowledge of food sources, and finally (in Canada) the elimination of the 'Crow' subsidy (which means farmers now pay the full cost of transporting their product to ports) together created the conditions for NGC's. NGC's are essentially processing facilities owned by farmers. They are considered new because of their unique share structure that retains the co-operative principle "one member-one vote" but also enables the sale of investment shares to both farmers and external investors.

Technical support and access to finance are needed in order for NGC's and other new forms of enterprise to develop.

## **Innovation in business forms: The social enterprise**

Community organizations and small enterprises are creating new forms of business to overcome food system challenges at the same time as enshrining community and business values. The role of the social enterprise as a mechanism to facilitate local food system development needs examination.<sup>16</sup> A social enterprise is a business that incorporates social and environmental goals and may include non-profit activities carried out by community volunteers. Since the consumer and the community are driving change because of increased knowledge of problems in the current food system, facilitating this energy in community-led business and cooperative ventures is a good investment. The recent investment in the Social Economy in Quebec has left the rest of the country awaiting its opportunity for similar support.

## **Innovative products**

Micro<sup>17</sup> and small-scale<sup>18</sup> food businesses are proliferating in Canada. These businesses may arise on farm as farmers seek to diversify their product line or individuals or groups that see a niche in the marketplace may create them. These businesses often produce very high quality and unusual products that would merit commercializing however, facilities and services to support this are lacking. As well, the food processing industry often sees these as marginal businesses and do not support their development, however, other jurisdictions such as several American states, see these businesses as the source for many new products especially products that reflect locality. These producers need a supportive infrastructure and would benefit from a strategy of community supported manufacturing as noted below.

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<sup>16</sup> For a preliminary examination of the role of social enterprise in local food production see 2005 Mark, Sandra. *Frank Moreland Food System Assessment for the City of Vancouver Section 3: Food-Related Social Economy for Vancouver Pages 79-102* retrieved March 11, 2007 from [http://www.ediblestrategies.com/fsd/2005\\_Vancouver\\_Food\\_Assessment.pdf](http://www.ediblestrategies.com/fsd/2005_Vancouver_Food_Assessment.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Micro businesses—have less than 5 workers involved—and most are 1 person operations.

<sup>18</sup> The Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA) defines 'small -scale' businesses as having less than 25 full time equivalent workers.

## **Community supported manufacturing (CSM)**

Community Supported Manufacturing is based on the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model. Local production is extended from the farm to the workshop. CSM production systems have multiple owners such as municipalities, co-operatives, family businesses and local firms. The primary focus of CSM is to re-localize production and manufacturing<sup>19</sup> in order to reduce the environmental damage and cultural erosion resulting from our reliance on a cheap energy source that may soon no longer be available. Regional food manufacturing facilities and technical assistance to facilitate product development are needed as critical components of a re-localized food system.

Currently small-scale food processors are developing many unique products but without the needed infrastructure, these products are available only at small local markets. A wealth of new and exciting food products and food businesses await a supportive policy structure that will facilitate their growth.

## **Authentic quality branding**

Enterprises that root food supply in social and ecological needs are employing certified organic and other certification programs that have a technical quality assurance scheme and provide third party verification. These certification and branding strategies require technical support to make the branding a value the producer or processor can afford. The Vintner's Quality Assurance (VQA) program for wine in Ontario and BC is a good example. Under the VQA, vintners concentrate on quality as opposed to quantity. The VQA label generates a premium sale price and this allows relatively small-scale producers to compete in the marketplace. Innovative quality assurance projects are under way in many food sectors supporting local food initiatives across the country. These approaches require planning, investment and coordination but bode well as supports to local food product development.

## **Geographical indicators**

Geographical Indicators protect locally produced products that show very specific local origin. The use of Geographical Indicators (GI) in the European food system has been very successful. Characteristics of particular food products are defined in law and can only to be produced legally in a particular region. This approach not only ensures that local producers can succeed; it also creates named products that gain an export market identity. The Government of Quebec has enacted a bill to establish geographical indicators but the use of the system is limited to date. Support for a geographical indicator development program is needed.

## **Ethno-cultural groups and emerging specialty markets**

Some ethno-cultural groups and different age and income cohorts create specialty markets that provide leadership for food system development. This builds upon local cultural values and can

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<sup>19</sup> Retrieved Dec 19, 2006 Post Carbon Institute <http://postcarbon.org/relocalize/manufacturing>

generate extended economic benefits. Canada's food system is only beginning to realise the opportunity for niche product development by engaging Aboriginal peoples, immigrants and refugees and ethno-cultural groups as a source of innovation.

## **Patient and friendly financing**

Capital investment is difficult to secure for the agri-food sector because of its recent dismal performance. Financing is especially difficult to secure for new business forms and new products in this sector. Farmers are facing huge debt loads and have been collapsing equity in their land in a bid to save their farms thus there is little equity available in the agricultural private market to leverage investment for new initiatives. Equity, or 'patient and friendly capital' is urgently needed to help reinvigorate an investment cycle in the food industry. Patient capital refers to money that can be used to capitalize a business that has affordable and long-term repayment terms and conditions. For example, a business may make interest-only payments for the first five years of operation.

Funders for Sustainable Food Systems (FSFS) is a California-based group of public and private grant makers whose mission is to promote sustainable food systems in California that:

- Protect the environment, human health, and the welfare of animals
- Support all parts of an economically viable food sector and provide just conditions and fair compensation for farmers, fishers, and workers
- Provide all people with locally-produced, affordable, and healthy food
- Contribute to the vitality of rural and urban communities and the links between them.

Replication of such a program will be important in finding and leveraging investment into the new local food economy. The rationale for creating programs to assist in the financing of ecological food and food product businesses is that these programs provide direct investment into rural communities, many of which have collapsed or are waning as farms either get very big or as they sell out to other interests.

## **Urban agriculture**

A growing interest in urban agriculture is emerging. In countries where food shortages have reached crisis levels, there has been a resurgence of food production in urban areas. Rather than wait for this state of emergency, we need to recognize that there is substantial potential for food to be grown on an economic basis in urban areas when a supportive policy mix is provided. Municipalities need to consider zoning bylaws that would remove barriers to such developments.

Community organizations promoting community gardens are proliferating, leading the way to encourage more urban food production. Institutions and publicly owned lands need to be surveyed for their potential as sites for food production. For example, school gardens can provide fresh food for children as well as re-acquainting them with the food cycle—now almost lost knowledge in the urban context. Opportunities for urban children and youth to engage in agricultural activities need to be provided. An urban 4H program could be an excellent vehicle for education and agricultural career preparation for urban youth.

## **Genuine progress indicators: social and environmental returns on investment**

To ensure that regional and local planning includes economic, social and ecological concerns community-led metrics projects such as the Genuine Progress Indicators are emerging all across Canada. Community organizations are measuring economic outcomes together with environmental and social outcomes according to values and future directions set by community groups. This move accords well with the demands of the conscious consumer wishing to know the exact provenance of their food. Support to develop common tools and procedures in the food industry are needed that reflect these “multiple bottom lines.” This would assist investors and consumers who are looking to benchmark ethical outcomes in businesses and organizations. Volunteer time and donations can be documented as internal social and cash investments, and social return on investment can be measured and shown to be of critical value in meeting economic goals as well. This technology would be beneficial if more widely available. Community organisations and small and medium enterprises need access to training and tools in order to provide statements on social return on investment. For example, eating good food should reduce health care costs but ‘hard’ evidence of this is needed. Small organizations are not in the position to carry out this kind of analysis and do not often have the knowledge of how to make this case. A national project to develop these metrics and share these tools with community organizations is needed.

## **Non-market contributions**

Community organizations are well positioned to contend with issues that cannot be resolved by government or the marketplace. The importance of supporting the role of community organizations is gaining ground with the recognition that social capital (networks, social norms, trust) and associational life create the necessary conditions for success of local manufacturing networks, co-operatives, community shared agriculture, farmers markets, etc. In recent years, support has dwindled for farm and community organizations thus many farmers’ organizations have languished as farmers must find off farm income and thus have reduced time for meeting. The farm-women’s organizations in Canada are struggling to survive. Lack of investment in building this important ‘social capital’ over the past number of years has reduced their effectiveness. This situation must be redressed.

## **Social marketing**

Community organizations often include social marketing as part of their work. High levels of public trust mean that community organizations are uniquely positioned to carry a message to the public. Social marketing is using marketing techniques to achieve a social goal. Typically, this includes campaigns to encourage recycling, exercising or eating healthy food or otherwise change behaviour using marketing techniques to spur motivation. Support for social marketing programs that encourage healthy eating and healthy lifestyle provide the link between public concern to improve population health, and public concern with the food system. Many community organizations are engaged in encouraging consumers to make healthy and environmentally acceptable choices in their lifestyles. When health is factored into the food equation, the importance of social marketing is highlighted. Social marketing campaigns funded

by government generate savings for government. A well-planned and supported social marketing campaign encouraging people not only to feel guilty about their weight or health status but also to help them change their behaviour would be well worth the investment. The “5-10 program” made a start in this direction but did not have sufficient reach. Re-invigorating this program as a partnership between industry, community organizations and government would make a lot of sense.

## **Public education**

Community organizations are carrying out many exciting and innovative activities to engage the public in the resurgence of an ecological agriculture and food system. The importance of these events and programs for educating and engaging the public are instrumental in linking the farm and the consumer—a connection that has been largely lost in recent years.

# RECOMMENDATIONS from “the Community Voice”

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## **Separate Food Issues from agri-business issues: Create a healthy food policy**

Many policy problems are attributable to the fact that food is not considered separately in policy. Understanding how to support a healthy, well-nourished population requires a focused effort. An integrated Food Policy is urgently needed in Canada in order to

- Develop a comprehensive, cross-ministerial, cross-governmental framework for developing policy to create a healthy, sustainable food system that is aimed at ensuring accessible, nutritious food for all citizens in Canada
- Reduce the impact of chronic disease thereby cutting health care costs
- Reduce the impact of malnourishment and obesity
- Eliminate hunger in disadvantaged groups in our society
- Ensure that vulnerable populations are able to acquire healthy food and not just cheap food
- Create an argument at international trade tables to support domestic food policies in all countries.

This can be done through:

- Creating a super ministry that integrates concerns from all other ministries as they intersect with the issues of food, hunger and food sovereignty for Canadians
- Supporting social marketing programs and public education that promote consumption of healthy food as an investment to reduce future health costs and to ensure strong markets for local and ecological producers.
- Recognizing that farmers who grow good food for local consumption are creating products that are important for the health of the nation and that they need economic recognition to do so.
- Provide support to schools and institutions to remove “junk food” and provide good food as a health investment.
- Support indigenous populations to develop strong local and indigenous food supplies
- Ban all trans fats and unhealthy products that increase Health care costs
- Developing new preservation technology to replace the use of chemical preservatives that are increasingly connected to negative health outcomes
- Establishing a centralized information gateway for consumers focusing on food issues

- Ensuring that Disaster preparedness includes planning for adequate food supplies

## **Uncouple local food policy from commodity/export led agri-food policy**

The very strong voice from the community is demanding that the food system be localized/regionalized for purposes of improving health and reducing demands on the environment. Efforts to re-localize the food system currently exist in a policy vacuum at best and at worst, are thwarted by policies designed to support agri-business and export-led commodity production. An integrated policy framework based upon food system localization is urgently needed in Canada to exist in parallel with policies supporting commodity production and export.

Resources need to be made available to support regional and local food system planning and implementation through collaboration between producers, processors, consumers and groups from civil society. The recommendations given below are meant to flesh out the notion of a ‘local food system policy’.

## **Reverse the farm income crisis as an urgent priority**

- If farmers cannot grow food for our population in an economically sustainable way, the health and security of our nation will be in jeopardy. Many reports have been written and many policy initiatives have been proposed but a comprehensive and aggressive approach is needed if this problem is to be properly addressed in time to curtail any more losses. Farmers who grow healthy food for local consumption need an economic incentive to do so to balance trade policy and trans-national company practice that ‘dumps’ cheap food into our market.
- Recognize the importance of the domestic market and remove barriers to producers who wish to supply local demand.
- Invest in rebuilding local food system infrastructures in order to deliver value-added food products to domestic consumers. Creating community-owned food value chains will produce the most equitable outcomes for farmers, farm workers and communities.
- Develop and legislate food Geographical Indicators that will support and protect regionally identified specialty foods.
- Reinstate agricultural extension workers and have these services made available to urban as well as rural food producers and processors.
- Lift all impediments to seed saving by farmers.
- Recognize the role of cooperatives as businesses that dedicate themselves to community. Provide ongoing support to facilitate the work of cooperatives engaged in value-added and ecological food system/product development.



- Reform taxation policy to facilitate rather than discourage sustainable farming practices and on farm value-adding.

## **Deal with challenges with access to land**

- Protect agricultural land in perpetuity
- Provide farm succession plans that allow greater flexibility for cashing out equity for the elders at the same time as making it feasible for youth to take over or buy farms
- Create funding sources that will facilitate community organizations and cooperatives to hold in trust land designated for food production.
- Reduce barriers to urban agriculture

## **Re-invigorate the supply management system**

Support the maintenance of the Canadian Supply Managed programs at the WTO level, and ensure that it evolves to meet changing Canadian consumer demands. To do that specialty quota must be made available to local, organic and eco-certified products in direct proportion to the local/regional market demand. The quota would not be intended to supplant existing quota, but to better respond to the increasing yet fragmented consumer demand for premium local and organic foods. The quota system should also be re-designed to recognize that high quality rather than quantity is the major market driver. Canadian products need to be identified and marketed as “speciality” and “high quality” rather than “pooled” at the lowest common denominator.

## **Support the development of micro and small-scale food businesses**

- Support de-centralized development and growth of micro and small-scale food enterprises with a program that provides technical assistance for product development, merchandising, and marketing as well as providing patient start-up funds.
- Set aside funds to assist micro, small and medium sized producers and processors in local food system partnerships to access financing to allow them to comply with food safety regulations in the planning and implementation stages of creating enterprises.
- Support commercialization of unique products of interest to tourists and the gourmet market.
- Invest in regional infrastructure (warehousing, cooling, freezing and manufacturing).
- Support development of business-case-led community food manufacturing enterprises.
- Support development of ethnic food products and businesses.

## **Address low wages and de-skilling for agricultural labour**

- Support the development of labour co-operatives and other domestic agriculture/food system labour strategies with as much vigour and financial support as is provided to the program to bring labourers in from other countries.

- Encourage and support community organizations that seek to create dignified work for their members who may be facing labour force barriers to become involved with agriculture and food initiatives.
- Support programs that encourage involvement in food and agriculture pursuits for urban organizations. For example: youth training programs through Service Canada that relate to urban agriculture should be designed so as to train and facilitate urban agricultural development.
- Include labour and environmental standards in standards for “organic” certification.
- Ensure that training, education and support is made available to small business and Community Futures programs so that they can provide quality assistance to people wishing to pursue ecological food and product development.

## **Contend with food safety paradigm anomalies**

- Mandatory labelling of genetically altered foods is needed to meet consumer demand to allow consumers to make their own choices.
- Ensure that the ban on ‘Terminator Seed Technology’ be made permanent.
- Provide support to local food processing facilities to plan for and meet the commodity level ‘food safety’ standards that have been imposed upon them.

## **Promote Rural Community Sustainability**

- *Direct Statistics Canada and provincial Agricultural Statistics departments to collaborate to facilitate statistical analysis that separates out information that would be useful for local food system planning.*
- Ensure that “triple bottom line” metrics (including economic, social and environmental goals) be agreed upon for use in evaluating government sponsored programs and services to ensure that these programs are not inadvertently debilitating to rural communities.
- Support a re-invigorated economic farming and regional food production system to reduce the drain on farm ownership and ensure that supportive businesses can remain in place in local areas.
- Rural youth need to be given real economic options to once again consider farm and food production career futures. Supports to youth on farms should be extended in terms of scholarships for study, business loans and improvements in farm succession programs. Urban youth should be encouraged to consider farm and food careers as well. A reinvigorated program for education, training, apprenticeship and life-long learning in ecological food production systems needs to be developed.
- Farming and Food system issues cannot be complete without a gender analysis. The motivation of farm-women is keeping many farms afloat as they search for alternative income

streams. Supports to women who choose to farm such as child-care, specialized training opportunities, assistance with product and service development and business planning and support for farm-women's organizations are needed.

- That farm/city programs be supported to encourage children, youth and adults to become aware and involved in building relationships between farmers and food producers and urban consumers.
- That initiatives to educate the public through a variety of media be designed and launched.

## **Recognize the role of community organizations and civil society**

- Community organizations are taking on issues in food and health but often are unable to find resources to invest in implementation of plans to redress the urgent problems that concern them. This is particularly true in rural communities that have been decimated by the loss of family farms. Current programs require communities to find cash resources as well as their volunteer effort in order to receive Adaptation Council funding. The result is that these funds are not accessible to the people and communities that most need them even though these people and organizations have demonstrated their concern by investment of 'sweat equity' to consult and plan for change.
- Many of the issues facing Canada's food issues at the local level are being addressed through cooperatives and social enterprises. These groups are able to leverage community volunteer effort and some investment from alternative sources however; accessible development and investment resources tailored to their needs are of urgent importance if these groups are to meet their potential.
- Recognize that cooperatives and community organizations are dedicated to their communities and as such, investment in these organizations builds social capital and thus the economic strength of their communities.
- Pursue a program of inclusion to ensure that programs supporting sustainable agriculture and food systems can benefit people and organizations representing the rich diversity of people and cultures in Canada.
- Provide support to the Social Economy initiatives across Canada to balance the program announced recently for Quebec. Ensure that Social Economy development support is provided to support ecological food and agriculture initiatives.

## **Recognize climate change opportunities in the production and consumption of food**

- Support the Alternative Land Use Services plan that began in Manitoba in order to provide a new income stream for farmers who invest in ecologically important practices on their land.

- Develop programs to support local energy self-sufficiency planning and farm-level energy self-sufficiency planning and implementation.
- Create a program to support design and commercialization of appropriate technology for small-scale ecological farming and food processing.
- Respond to consumer awareness and demand with education and social marketing with the intent to shift production practices away from dependence on cheap energy.

## **Address access to funding and finance**

- Encourage strategic alignment of alternative funds to support food focused social enterprises.
- Provide loan loss reserve support for local investment funds when aimed at investing in sustainable food initiatives.
- Make member investment in coops eligible for tax credits, as is now the practice in Quebec.
- Reform The Cooperative Act and regulation to further encourage and recognize member investment approaches.
- Provide “patient” capital programs to assist farmers and food processors to move to production of ecological products. For example, consider a program similar to the Capital Formation Assistance programme now being developed for bio-fuels for value-added agricultural product development and commercialization recognizing that this investment will be an investment in rural communities.
- Ensure that the FMCLA program is reformed to meet a wider, more flexible mandate to support co-operative development in the food value-adding sector and to include processors as well as farmers as eligible as applicants to this program.
- Develop a national access to finance program for sustainable food and agricultural initiatives in Canada in partnership with Community Futures organizations and urban small business support programs.
- Provide funding for planning and investment in the creation of regional food manufacturing facilities to be owned by the community either cooperatively or by municipalities to ensure that they will be locally owned continuously and not subject to future sale.
- Make the Cooperative Development Initiative permanent to ensure that its benefits continue to support new and growing food products cooperatives.
- Provide special programs to support immigrants interested in food and agricultural pursuits once landed in Canada through investment and training programs.
- Work with community and cooperative organizations to educate commercial lenders about the renewed interest and profitable potential of ecological food and food products.