Growing Food Security in Manitoba Communities



A Policy Guide for Manitoba Municipalities

MANITOBA Food CHARTER
CHARTE ALIMENTAIRE DU MANITOBA

THE MANITOBA FOOD CHARTER INC.

641 St. Matthews Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3G 0G6
Phone 943-0822 Fax 774-1847
Toll Free 1-800-731-2638
Email Info@mbfoodcharter.ca
Website www.manitobafoodsecurity.ca

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A POLICY GUIDE FOR MANITOBA MUNICIPALITIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Investing in food security programs such as those outlined in this report provide a tool for municipal governments to increase the health of their communities, create jobs, raise the quality of life of residents, provide opportunities for recreation and physical exercise, reduce landfill costs, and create the conditions for an economically prosperous and environmentally sustainable food system. Manitoban municipalities are in a unique position to address the issue of food security. In partnership with other levels of government, the private sector, and community organizations municipal governments can improve local economies, health, and the environment through food security initiatives.

While food is plentiful in Manitoba many Manitobans suffer from food insecurity. People with low incomes frequently have difficulties accessing nutritious food because of its cost and other barriers. The same is true in many northern communities in which healthy food is either not available or highly priced. Meanwhile, there are difficulties in other aspects of the food system as well. Food producing regions have been challenged by high input costs, low livestock prices, and resulting farm income issues. Thus, in all regions of Manitoba, municipalities must address food system issues.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- Incorporate food security considerations into the public planning process
- Conduct or fund a Community Food Assessment
- Develop an urban agriculture strategy and guidelines
- Increase the number of available community garden plots
- Work with retailers to ensure retail food access in all neighbourhoods
- Establish and promote a municipal composting program
- Develop local food and/or fair trade purchasing policies

The planning community is becoming aware of the importance of addressing food security and the role that planning can play. In recent years, the American Planning Association has released a policy guide on the importance of community food planning and food security streams have become important aspects of planning conferences in Canada and the United States.

Across Canada, municipalities are recognizing the significant benefits of creating food secure communities. Several have created food policy councils to provide advice on an ongoing basis or have developed municipal food charters to guide food policy. Others have become involved in developing municipally-funded food security programs, community gardens, healthy meal programs, or local food procurement policies. Municipalities are demonstrating ingenuity and resourcefulness to address food security challenges at the local level.

This report outlines opportunities for municipal governments in Manitoba to promote food security. The variety of options demonstrates a range of programs that a municipality can adopt depending on size, budgetary requirements, and interests. Addressing food security has the opportunity to help create healthier economies, healthier environments and healthier citizens.

INTRODUCTION

Health, nutrition, poverty, transportation, agriculture, and the environment are all components of food security. Food security encompasses the entire food system including producers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers. It means that all people can access and afford healthy, nutritious food and that a diverse and environmentally sustainable agricultural sector provides adequate livelihoods for food producers and processors. Additionally, it means that the entire food system is environmentally sustainable, including how food is transported and how food waste is handled. Thus, food security involves all the components of the food system.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD JOBS IN MANITOBA COMMUNITIES
(as a percentage of the total workforce)

Winnipeg	12%
Brandon	18%
Thompson	11%
Portage la Prairie	29%
Rest of Manitoba	25%
MANITOBA AVERAGE	16%

Unfortunately, there are food security concerns across Manitoba. One in ten Manitoban households is considered to be food insecure and the rate is far higher amongst people with low incomes, Aboriginals, and families led by a single female.[1] While some people cannot afford healthy foods, other Manitobans can afford them but choose not to eat them. Over half of Manitoban adults are overweight or obese and two-thirds do not eat the recommended number of servings of vegetables and fruits per day.[2] Many Manitoba municipalities report high rates of diabetes, heart disease, or cancer, all of which are connected, at least in part, to unhealthy diets.

Meanwhile, rural Manitoba is confronted with ongoing struggles in the agricultural industry. Farm incomes are low and input costs are high. As a result, the number of farmers is declining and the average age of farmers is increasing. Young people do not see agriculture as a viable career option. Indeed, the number of farmers under the age of 35 in Manitoba fell by 55% between 1996 and 2006.[3]

Northern Manitoba also has significant food security concerns. Healthy foods are often inaccessible or unaffordable for people in northern communities. Since food must travel long distances to reach northern communities, perishable items often arrive in poor condition. Basic items such as fruit, vegetables, and milk are high in cost due to transportation and because retailers must cover the high rate of spoilage. For many people living with low incomes, healthy food remains unaffordable in remote, northern communities.

Producing, processing, and retailing food plays an important role in Manitoba's economy. One in six jobs in this province (and one in four jobs in rural areas) are in the agriculture or food industries. Economic strategies that promote the growth of these industries have the potential to significantly benefit Manitoba municipalities.

Food security is a complex issue that does not stop at jurisdictional boundaries between levels of government. It must be addressed at multiple levels, from international trade agreements to grassroots organizations. Consequently, it is necessary for all levels of government as well as the corporate and non-profit sectors to cooperate to improve our food system. Municipal governments cannot solve food

insecurity on their own, but, in partnership with other levels of government, community organizations and the corporate sector, have an essential role to play in creating food secure communities.

Across Canada, food security is being addressed by communities of all sizes. Major urban centres such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal all have significant food security initiatives and longstanding food policy bodies. Midsized cities such as Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Kamloops, and Waterloo have taken vigorous steps to address food security issues through municipal policies and support for community programs. Smaller municipalities have also taken action on food security. Communities such as Kaslo, British Columbia and Wolfville, Nova Scotia demonstrate that food security can be addressed by municipalities with small populations.

This report outlines some options that Manitoba municipalities can utilize to address food security. Naturally, communities may have different starting points or priorities. For some, combating food insecurity related to poverty might be the top priority, whereas others might emphasize supporting local food and agriculture. The options presented in this report provide a series of ideas that can be adapted to meet the needs and interests of each community.

Municipal governments are able to tackle particular local concerns and issues. Efforts to address food security at the local level can develop solutions to meet a community's particular needs. Through such targeted policy development, municipal governments stand to increase the quality of life for municipal residents, improve the environment, and support local economies.

Municipal Issues that Affect Food Security:

- *Land Use*
- *Economic Development*
- *Growth Management*
- *Infrastructure*
- *Transportation*
- *Housing*
- *Social Planning*
- *Environmental Planning*
- *Health*

MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND FOOD

Food security can be a valuable lens for municipal planning

Public planners have traditionally not recognized food security and food systems planning as part of their mandate. This has been the case for several reasons: agriculture was seen as a rural activity occurring outside municipalities, the food system seemed to be working, the private sector was seen as responsible for the food system, and the built environment was not seen to directly affect the food system.[4] In recent years, however, there has been increasing recognition within the public planning community of the need to address food security. Indeed, several of the programs and policies discussed throughout this report are directly related to planning decisions (also see the text box to the right with highlights from the American Planning Association's "Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning"). In short, municipal planners have a fundamentally important role in addressing food insecurity at a municipal level.

These are just three of the ways that planners can promote food security. Planners can facilitate:

- food access through zoning and public transportation;
- the ability to grow food;
- infrastructure necessary for the food processing industry;
- the development of food policy;
- opportunities to revitalize neighbourhoods by using brownfields and other vacant lands for agricultural purposes and community building;
- programs to minimize the environmental footprint of municipal food requirements;
- policies to reduce urban encroachment on to agricultural lands.

This document contains more specific examples of ways that planners can contribute to making Manitoba municipalities more food secure. This report is meant to serve as an introduction, and is not a comprehensive list. If you are interested in more comprehensive studies on the role that planners or municipal governments can play to address food security, see Appendix A for a list of further reports.

The APA's "Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning"

The American Planning Association's "Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning" includes seven general policies to guide planning and the food system. These are to:

Support comprehensive food planning processes at the community and regional levels;

Support strengthening the local and regional economy by promoting local and regional food systems;

Support food systems that improve the health of the region's residents;

Support food systems that are ecologically sustainable;

Support food systems that are equitable and just;

Support food systems that preserve and sustain diverse traditional food cultures of Native American and other ethnic minority communities;

Support the development of state and federal legislation to facilitate community and regional food planning discussed in general policies #1 through #6.

See: http://myapa.planning.org/policyguides/food.htm

COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENTS

Conduct or Fund a Community Food Assessment

As an initial step to address food security, municipalities can conduct or fund community food assessments. A community food assessment involves consultation and research to determine a community's food assets and challenges. This process helps community members and municipal leaders determine what food security policies or programs are most urgently needed. The study can be carried out by municipal staff or funding can be provided to an interested community organization with experience in food security work. This can create partnerships between municipal leaders, communities, local businesses, and the non-profit sector.

Instead of merely inventorying challenges or barriers, a food assessment acknowledges the assets that a community already has as well as the challenges it faces. By recognizing skills or assets that already are in place, it is possible to shape future programs and policies that not only address the concerns of residents but also make use of local knowledge, infrastructure, and resources. Since a community food assessment involves extensive consultation with community members, it raises awareness and interest in food security issues and develops a base of support for further action.

An Example from Vancouver

In 2005, Western Economic Diversification Canada, the City of Vancouver's Department of Social Planning, Simon Fraser University's Centre for Sustainable Community Development, and the Environmental Youth Alliance funded a Vancouver Food System Assessment. This project examined the status of the food system in Vancouver and promoted solutions that focused on local food systems. For example, it suggested that the City of Vancouver had the potential to grow as much food in the city as in all the Fraser Valley (British Columbia's pre-eminent agricultural region) combined. The assessment addressed the challenges faced by low-income neighbourhoods. It demonstrated that while the cost of the nutritious food basket was only 7.3% of the family budget in wealthy neighbourhoods such as Dunbar, it amounted to 21.2% in the low income neighbourhood of Strathcona-Downtown Eastside. Several recommendations for city council were included in the final report such as enhanced training opportunities, consumer education on 'buying local,' improved access to retail stores and farmers' markets, including the purchase of local foods within the City's Ethical Procurement Policies, creating more community gardening opportunities, and linking charitable food providers with social enterprise organizations.[5]

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Increase the number of community garden plots

Community gardens:

- are a source of healthy, fresh food that supplements the diet of gardeners and their families;
- provide opportunities for recreation and physical activity;
- are an impetus to bring communities together;
- increase neighbourhood safety;
- beautify neighbourhoods;
- add green space and environmental diversity.

Community gardeners come from all age groups and income levels. They might be seniors, wanting mild exercise through a life-long hobby who no longer have a garden of their own. A community gardener could be a middle-aged professional unable to grow food in their small yard, a low income person supplementing their diet, or a young apartment dweller looking for a place to grow a few vegetables. By replacing vacant, unused lots, community gardens create functional, community-oriented space that facilitates neighbourhood interaction in addition to growing food for local residents.

Some Manitoba municipalities have extensive community garden networks while others have yet to develop community gardening spaces. Municipalities can increase the number of garden spaces available based on the demand within their community. The goal for each community will differ depending on size and interest. Increasing the number of community garden plots will enable more people and neighbourhoods to benefit from gardening.

Establishing community gardens is not an expensive proposition. Sometimes all that is required is providing a space and community volunteers are willing to prepare the gardens. In some situations, depending on the plot, some work (such as building raised garden beds) might be required to make the land suitable for gardening. Even such work is not expensive, particularly considering the numerous benefits that can arise as a result.

Olympian Efforts

Vancouver is an example of a city that has established a goal for increasing the number of community garden spaces. A goal was set to have 2,010 garden plots in Vancouver in time for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. Since 2006, 1,620 garden plots have been created in Vancouver.

The Saanich Story

The community gardening policy of Saanich, British Columbia has amended the municipality's zoning bylaw to allow community gardening in nearly all zones. It provides incentives to developers to include community gardens in new neighbourhoods. These policies have served to increase the number of community gardens throughout Saanich.

Undertake an inventory of underutilized municipally owned properties that can be used for community gardens

A first step towards increasing the number of available community garden plots is to undertake an inventory of land that can be available for gardening. This can include a variety of sites from vacant infill lots to areas within municipal parks. Many neighbourhoods have unused or underutilized spaces. Depending on the location, such spaces might be excellent sites for community gardens. By understanding where there is space available for gardening, municipalities can best utilize vacant space and enable residents to establish new community gardens.

Promote community gardens through municipal websites and other public forums

Senior citizens who do not have access to a garden in their home may not know that the option exists for them to have garden space in a community garden. Similarly, newcomers to Canada may be interested in finding a place to grow plants from their home countries but do not know where to do so. Therefore, publicity efforts are important for the promotion of community gardens to ensure that all citizens are aware of the services offered through community gardens.

To support efforts to increase the number of available garden plots in a municipality, communities should explore methods to aggressively promote community gardening. One natural location for such publicity would be the municipal website. Information should appear in Leisure Guides, local newspapers, community clubs, and other publications. It is particularly important that such promotional material reach diverse demographic groups, such as the seniors and newcomers cited earlier, that may be less aware of their options for community gardening.

Community Gardening in Montreal

Montreal is known for its promotion of community gardening. It has had community gardens since 1975 and now has over 8,000 garden plots.

The Department of Sports, Recreation, and Social Development promotes gardening, offers support to volunteer garden organizations, offers practical advice, and promotes the establishment of new gardens to meet community needs. The city employs six horticultural animators to help community garden organizations work with the city's administrative system and to provide practical advice to gardeners.

To help offset some of the costs involved, the city charges a registration fee of $10 per plot. In total, Montreal spends $315,000 per year on the gardens to provide maintenance, build new gardens, coordinate gardens, and provide the horticultural animators.

Montreal protects many of its community gardens through zoning regulations.

See: http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/librairie_en/documents/montreal_community_gardening_program.pdf

The Spence Green Plan: Grassroots Support for Green Neighbourhoods in Winnipeg

The Spence Green Plan is a five year strategy developed by the Spence Neighbourhood Association emphasizing the benefits of green space in their neighbourhood and outlining a five-year strategy to increase the green space in Winnipeg's inner city.

What makes the Spence Green Plan unique is its use of community planning. It is an example of working with a community to address local needs. Residents pushed for increased green space because of its health benefits, importance for children's learning experiences, neighbourhood safety, the environment, and the development of social capital and the community.

See: http://www.spenceneighbourhood.org/GreenPlan.pdf

Employ Community Garden Animators

An option for larger communities is to employ one or more community garden animators. Animators work with gardeners to provide practical gardening advice and hold workshops and consultations to teach gardening techniques. They can also assist gardeners to work with the city's administrative system when necessary, help manage the administration of the gardens (for example, maintaining lists of participating and interested gardeners), and evaluate potential future garden sites.

Ensure long-term stability for community gardens

One challenge faced by community gardeners is the long-term survival of their gardens. The land used for gardens is often vulnerable to redevelopment. Given the labour involved in developing a garden space, land tenure is a key issue.

Community gardens can be supported through zoning mechanisms. For example, community gardens can be re-zoned as park space, a move that both increases the amount of park space in a community and provides security from redevelopment for gardens. An alternative would be for municipalities to provide long-term leases to community garden organizations. This would ensure stability for gardeners, providing the necessary incentive to develop the land into garden space.

FOOD ACCESS

Work with retailers to ensure retail food access in all neighbourhoods

People living on low-incomes face many challenges when they attempt to access healthy, nutritious foods. One of these is that large grocery stores with lower prices are rarely located in the neighbourhoods where they live. The result is areas known as 'food deserts,' areas which are not adequately serviced by grocery stores. Since they often lack access to transportation, residents of low income neighbourhoods regularly shop at nearby, but more expensive, corner stores. These stores have higher prices because they are unable to benefit from the economies of scale used by larger retail outlets and are less likely to stock perishable items because sales volumes are lower. The result is that people with the lowest incomes often pay the most for food and have access to fewer healthy foods. According to an article in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine,* individuals living closer to grocery stores maintain a healthier weight than those with less access to them.[6] Thus a lack of grocery stores is a public health issue that can be addressed through municipal planning mechanisms.

While there are few legislative options available to ensure that there are grocery stores in low-income neighbourhoods, municipalities do have a few options at their disposal. One is to include grocery stores as planned retail uses for new developments to ensure that communities have access to retail food stores. Secondly, municipalities can work with retailers and communities to provide incentives for grocery stores to invest in lower income neighbourhoods. For example, a municipality can provide property tax breaks for retail grocery stores willing to open in designated priority neighbourhoods. The money expended in such a program would create employment opportunities for residents of lower-income neighbourhoods and healthier communities.

False Creek North, Vancouver

False Creek North is rapidly growing development in Vancouver. As part of the Official Development Plan for the neighbourhood, the City of Vancouver recognized the importance of access to grocery stores so it included a 2,300-square-metre grocery store as a planned retail use. This will ensure that residents of False Creek North have access to a nearby grocery store.

See:
http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/bylaws/odp/fcn.pdf

Saskatoon Food Deserts

Food deserts exist in cities of all sizes. A survey by Saskatoon Community Clinic revealed that Saskatoon has food deserts in its low income neighbourhoods. It outlined several possible means to address the problem including:

- Zoning regulations
- Incentives for grocery stores in underserved neighbourhoods
- Promotion of urban gardens
- Regulation of the sale of junk food
- Regulations promoting healthy foods in schools and public buildings.

See:
http://www.saskatooncommunityclinic.ca/pdf/CC%20Food%20desert%20sheet%20Oct%2014.pdf

Pilot special community markets for neighbourhoods underserved by conventional food stores

Farmers' markets can be an excellent source of fresh, nutritious food but they are often located far from low-income neighbourhoods. In Winnipeg, for example, St. Norbert Farmers' Market is located on the outskirts of the city, far from public transportation or low-income neighbourhoods. Some Canadian communities, such as Waterloo, Ontario have developed special community markets in cooperation with local farmers to ensure that fresh fruits and vegetables are available in neighbourhoods underserved by conventional food stores. Municipalities can play a role in the development of these markets by guiding them through regulatory hurdles and funding interested community organizations to do so. While farmers' market vendors are often skeptical about the idea at first, they have discovered new markets for their products. These markets can be a win-win situation: a source of fresh, nutritious foods for people in low-income neighbourhoods and a new market for farmers.

URBAN AGRICULTURE

Develop Urban Agriculture Guidelines

Throughout North America, people are increasingly interested in urban agriculture. Urban agriculture provides urban residents with the opportunity to acquire high quality foods from local sources (or grow it themselves), benefits the environment by reducing the distance food travels, helps absorb storm water runoff, and creates jobs, while beautifying cities and putting to use otherwise vacant land. People interested in urban agriculture often face regulations that were not designed to accommodate small-scale agricultural projects. Safety and zoning regulations were usually not written with modern urban agriculture in mind and either prohibit common urban agriculture practices or are unclear about what is allowed. For urban agriculture to thrive, however, it is important that a supportive policy framework be established with clear regulations that balance the needs of those practicing agriculture and the rest of the city.

Modern urban agriculture is not like other industries or businesses and its small scale makes it different than conventional agriculture. Consequently, municipalities should develop clear policies that deal specifically with urban agriculture. This way, people who are interested in urban agriculture will know the precise regulations to be followed and would face fewer barriers related to municipal regulation. Such policies should be developed in consultation with community members and people interested in engaging in urban agriculture. They should support urban agriculture, remove unnecessary regulatory barriers, and provide opportunities for urban residents and entrepreneurs to engage in agricultural activities. There are too many benefits to urban agriculture to miss the opportunity it presents.

Use 'edible landscaping' in municipal boulevards and parks

Municipalities often use decorative plants in boulevards, parks, and around municipal buildings. While the flowers and shrubs planted in these gardens do much to beautify public space, the same effect can be accomplished through edible landscaping. For example, instead of planting an inedible shrub, a berry bush can be planted. Herbs and some vegetables can be used as attractive garden plants. City parks can be decorated with fruit trees that have beautiful spring blooms, leafy green summers, and a fruit harvest in the fall. In some Canadian municipalities, groups of volunteers harvest fruit trees in local parks and private yards for use by food banks and other non-profit groups that address hunger. In this way, municipal landscaping can be used to not only beautify communities but to provide fresh and nutritious food.

Allow small scale urban poultry production & beekeeping

Canadian municipalities are increasingly supportive of individuals who want to keep a small number of chickens in urban areas for personal consumption. This is already a common practice in other countries. For example, it is conservatively estimated that approximately 500,000 British households currently raise hens in their backyards.[7] In numerous American cities, chicken rearing is allowed. Thus far, a British Columbia and Ontario have pioneered urban poultry husbandry in Canada. For example, in Victoria, British Columbia, residents are allowed to keep chickens (but not roosters) as they are not classified as farm animals under the city's Animal Control Bylaw.[8]

Selected Canadian Cities that Permit Urban Poultry:

- New Westminster, BC
- Burnaby, BC
- Vancouver, BC
- Gibsons, BC
- Nelson, BC
- Victoria, BC
- Richmond, BC
- Surrey, BC
- Niagara Falls, Ontario
- Brampton, Ontario

Proponents argue that chickens not only provide food but are social animals that make good pets when properly cared for. They suggest that a chicken is no more of a nuisance or health hazard than any other common pet. While the legalization of urban poultry has been controversial in some cities, it has been found that after the legalization of urban chickens there have been few complaints. For example, in Missoula, Montana, the introduction of urban poultry was highly controversial but the measure gained widespread support after its first year and almost no complaints have since been registered.[9]

Municipal governments can explore the possibility of permitting residents to own chickens. Similar interest has been expressed in urban beekeeping or Apiculture. By establishing guidelines to regulate urban poultry (such as limiting the size of flocks) or apiculture rather than prohibiting these practices altogether, municipal governments have the opportunity to increase the amount of food produced locally and enable residents to participate in a healthy hobby.

Establish food producing roof-top gardens on publicly owned buildings

While rooftop gardening is relatively new in Canada, several cities already have successful green roofs or rooftop gardens. In British Columbia, Vancouver, Burnaby, and White Rock all have rooftop gardens on municipal buildings. In Ontario, Kitchener/Waterloo has at least six rooftop gardens. Rooftop gardening is more common in other countries. For example, in Switzerland, new buildings must dedicate an area of green space on their roof equivalent to the amount lost due to construction.[10]

Establishing gardens on municipal buildings can serve many purposes. Roof top gardens not only produce fresh food but have been shown to reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 20%, lengthen roof lifespan, reduce precipitation going into storm water runoff by retaining up to 100% of precipitation, absorb carbon dioxide emissions, and increase biodiversity. Rooftop gardens can provide municipalities with both economic and environmental benefits.[11]

There is an untapped potential for food production on Manitoba's rooftops. If Manitoban communities capitalized on this opportunity in cooperation with community organizations or entrepreneurs, jobs would be created and food would be grown for local consumption. Previously non-functional space would be put to use generating revenue for local businesses and healthy food for local residents while reducing the environmental impact of municipal activity.

There are undoubtedly challenges associated with developing rooftop gardens. Not every roof is suitable for a garden and the initial cost may be a deterrent. Therefore, a cautious, prudent approach is necessary to investigate the possibilities for rooftop gardening in Manitoba municipalities.

HANDLING FOOD WASTE

Develop a municipal composting program

When discussing the environmental impact of the food system it is important to recognize the consequences of food waste disposal. When organic materials are deposited in landfills they release methane, a potent greenhouse gas, as they decompose. Yet, if the same organic matter was composted, it would provide nutrient-rich materials while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and decreasing demand on landfills.

Compost provides an opportunity for Manitoba communities to reduce their environmental impact and improve local growing conditions. There are several benefits to investing in a compost program: reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved soil with composted material, and reduced tipping fees at landfills. Aggressively managed municipal composting programs can divert up to 70% of materials from landfills, thus significantly extending their lifespan.[13] Some Manitoban communities have already introduced composting programs. Such programs come in all sizes. These include neighbourhood compost bins, centralized drop off points, and household compost collection (although this has yet to happen in Manitoba).

Household Participation in Composting in Canada (2006)[12]	
Prince Edward Island	91%
Nova Scotia	69%
Ontario	34%
New Brunswick	32%
British Columbia	30%
Saskatchewan	27%
CANADA	27%
Manitoba	23%
Alberta	22%
Newfoundland and Labrador	21%
Quebec	13%

Composting in Canada

Municipalities across Canada have developed composting programs. Several communities in Ontario and the Maritimes have Green Box programs. These cities provide door-to-door household compost pick up similar to recycling and garbage pickup. These programs are economical for communities that face a shortage of landfill space. Composting programs, though, need not be expensive or highly technical. There are options to meet the needs of communities of all sizes. A composting program can simply be a well-advertised central drop-off location for community residents to bring their compost. Consequently, composting does not need to be confined to major urban centres. It can also work in northern communities. For example, Iqaluit, Nunavut has a municipal composting program.

CITY ADMINISTRATION

Form a food policy council

Several Canadian cities have food policy councils to advise city council on food policy issues. These councils are composed of stakeholders in the food system and are able to both respond to requests from city council for policy advice and contribute to discussions about municipal food policy. A food policy council can undertake research that illuminates the nature of food insecurity in the city and helps develop policy. They are often composed of food processors, consumers, community workers, health professionals, restaurants, retailers, farmers, and city councilors each of whom bring unique understandings and perspectives on the food system.

Vancouver Food Policy Council

In 2004 Vancouver City Council created the Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC). Its members include nutritionists, retailers, wholesalers, non-profit organizations, and city council representatives. The VFPC describes itself as supporting "the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver that fosters equitable food production, distribution, and consumption; nutrition; community development and environmental health."[14]

Since its creation, the VFPC has acted in an advisory role to provide assistance to Vancouver City Council and advocate for policies to improve food security in the city. It has formulated a Vancouver Food Charter, assessed City waste policies, worked with the Park Board to increase the number of fruit trees, participated in design strategies for new developments, and worked on public education. On numerous occasions, the VFPC has made policy recommendations to City Council that were then accepted.

Kamloops Food Policy Council

The Kamloops Food Policy Council was created in 1995. It serves as a meeting place for people to collaboratively act on food security issues, educates the public, advocates for policy changes that would improve food security, and creates and supports a variety of community programs such as gardens, a Good Food Box program, food recuperation, farmers' markets, and community kitchens.[15] While the Food Policy Council facilitates the connections that result in these programs, it does not run them itself. These efforts have been described as "very successful" because, between 1998 and 2001, it was the only Canadian city to experience a decrease in food bank use.[16] The Food Policy Council includes representation from a variety of groups including: community organizations, faith groups, the City of Kamloops, agricultural organizations, the food industry, and the provincial department of Agriculture and Food.[17] Although it includes government

Food Security Programming Exists in Communities of All Sizes

The Village of Kaslo adopted the Kaslo Food Charter in February 2008, demonstrating that action on food security can happen in communities of all sizes.

According to the Kaslo Food Charter, the Village Council is charged with championing the importance of food security, emphasizing the importance of nutrition, promoting food safety, encouraging community gardening, fostering policies to encourage and assist Kaslo residents to grow their own food.

Numerous activities have occurred within the Kaslo region as part of the Kaslo Food Security Project such as a bulk food club, a community kitchen feasibility study, the founding of a Community Garden Society of Kaslo, the preparation of a West Kootenay Food Directory, and the inclusion of food security in the Village's Official Community Plan.

representation, and has worked closely with the government, the Food Policy Council remains independent and receives no direct funding.[18]

Toronto Food Policy Council

The Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) is one of the longest standing governmental food security organizations in Canada. Since 1991, the TFPC has advocated for food security policies in Toronto, advised municipal and provincial governments on policy decisions related to food, organized educational efforts, published discussion papers on food security, and facilitated partnerships to promote food security in Toronto. It is composed of 24 members appointed by the Board of Health for three-year terms and is accountable to the Board of Health and Toronto Public Health. The TFPC is mandated to "promote food security initiatives that foster healthy public policy, social equity, economic renewal, and environmental sustainability."[19]

Hire a local food coordinator

Local food coordinators serve as on-going support people to lead a municipality's work on food security, develop new policy in partnership with community groups and other municipal officials, and coordinate and facilitate existing policies and programs. Additionally, they can provide administrative support for a food policy council.

Food security programs rarely fit neatly into one municipal department. Consequently, citizens (and even municipal staff) are often not sure which municipal department is responsible for answering questions or addressing concerns. A food policy coordinator can act as an intermediary to help people navigate municipal regulations and facilitate connections between community workers and other municipal staff members.

HEALTHY FOODS

Develop nutrition guidelines for municipally owned facilities

All Manitoban communities face considerable health challenges associated with diet. In 2004, 52% of Manitoban adults were either overweight or obese.[20] Coronary heart disease, diabetes, and some types of cancer can all be linked to healthy eating and are all common in Manitoba. Indeed, up to 30% of all chronic diseases are linked to poor nutrition.[21] Manitoban municipalities need to seriously address their role in contributing to healthy diets, given the high cost of chronic disease.

Many municipalities do an excellent job of promoting healthy living and active lifestyle choices through walking or cycling trails, parks, and community recreation facilities. The foods that are available in municipal facilities and meetings can also reflect a healthy lifestyle. For example, a concession stand at a community centre can serve products that promote healthy eating habits. Municipalities have the opportunity to increase the health of their residents through the types of food that they offer.

Public education, of course, is an important component of any plan to promote healthier foods in municipal facilities. The public should be made aware of why changes are being made and the benefits that they will have for themselves and their community. This will both increase awareness and make the public more receptive to health changes.

Healthy Foods in Kelowna

Some people argue that consumers will not purchase healthier foods if they are offered. Since community organizations often rely on the sale of food at municipal facilities as a fundraising activity, they fear that they can lose revenue by removing unhealthy products. Kelowna, British Columbia has recently undergone a process to only use food products with a Healthy Choice Checkmark from the Heart and Stroke Foundation in municipal facilities, putting healthier foods into vending machines, and developing new food policies. It discovered that rather than hurting sales, the volumes and profits actually increased as a result of the switch to healthy foods. If Kelowna's experience is any indication people will continue to buy food if it is healthier and the result will be healthier communities.

See: British Columbia Public Health Services Authority, *A Seat at the Table: Resource Guide for Local Governments to Promote Food Secure Communities*, 19.

Conduct an inventory of municipal kitchen facilities and make them available to interested community groups

One barrier that prevents many people from eating healthy food is that they do not know how to prepare it. To support programs that educate people about healthy cooking methods, communities can inventory available kitchen spaces in municipal facilities (such as community centres) and make them available to interested community organizations. The lack of appropriate cooking facilities is a major obstacle for organizations interested in conducting cooking lessons so this would be a significant support. Through such in-kind support, a municipality can increase the amount of nutrition skills education being offered to those that need it.

Residents in Winnipeg's North End highlighted the potential need for a dual track regulatory system for community based kitchens. Currently these kitchens must meet the same regulations as restaurants. Community groups highlighted the regulation of approved kitchens in the community setting as a barrier impeding community based food programming.

Use zoning regulations to restrict unhealthy foods

Several studies have suggested that one means of reducing obesity is limiting the location of fast food restaurants through zoning regulations. Some communities have already taken such a step. For example, municipal zoning has been used to limit fast food restaurants to certain parts of a municipality, limit the number of fast food restaurants, or ban them altogether.[22] Although it may seem like a drastic action, there is evidence to support such measures. In a study completed by the National Bureau of Economic Research in the United States, it was determined that the presence of a fast food restaurant within one-tenth of a mile (160 metres) of a school increased the obesity rate at the school by over five percent. Therefore, by preventing fast food restaurants from opening beside schools, student obesity can be reduced. This is an example of how zoning regulations to reduce the access of vulnerable populations to unhealthy foods can be used to benefit public health.

SUPPORTING LOCAL FARMERS

Raise awareness about the availability of local foods through food directories

Agriculture is an important sector in Manitoba's economy. The livelihood of many municipalities is directly linked to the success of nearby farms. Farmers and their families shop at local businesses, attend local schools, and support community organizations. Consequently, Manitoba municipalities have a direct interest in promoting the consumption of food from local farmers. Money spent buying food from local farmers circulates through the community when the farmers come to purchase supplies and equipment.

Increasingly, consumers are interested in finding local sources for their food. Farmers' markets, the sale of local foods in mainstream retail outlets, direct marketing, and Community Supported Agriculture farms have grown rapidly in recent years. Yet, consumers continue to have a difficult time finding local food. Some Ontario communities have begun publishing guides and maps to show nearby places where people can purchase local foods. This is an initiative that Manitoba communities can consider. In partnership with Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Initiatives or local farm organizations, a municipality can publish a directory or map of local food sources such as farmers' markets, farms that direct market, local food processors, restaurants that use food from nearby farmers, and retailers that stock local products to assist consumers who are interested in supporting local agriculture.

Savour Ottawa

The Savour Ottawa program established by the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Tourism, and Just Food promotes restaurants that use food from the Ottawa region. It recognizes the importance of establishing Ottawa as a year-round culinary destination. This highlights another benefit to promoting local food. Many communities are now promoting local foods as part of tourism promotion. Increasingly, tourists are looking for unique culinary experiences.

Buy Local! Buy Fresh!

The Waterloo Regional Health Authority has developed a "Buy Local! Buy Fresh!" map in partnership with Foodlink Waterloo Region. The map has been published annually since 2002 and serves as a resource for residents interested in purchasing local food.

Examine and address regulatory barriers faced by farmers' markets

One of the best way for a municipality to encourage local food consumption is through farmers' markets. These markets create connections between consumers and producers and enables consumers to access nutritious and fresh produce. Farmers' markets often draw business into the neighbourhoods where they are located, thus having indirect economic spinoffs for nearby businesses.

Local Food in Markham

Markham, Ontario is the Canadian leader in developing a local food procurement policy. In 2008, it reached an agreement with Local Food Plus (LFP), an Ontario non-profit organization that certifies local, environmentally sustainable farmers to purchase a minimum of 10% of its food from LFP farmers in the first year, increasing by 5% in each following year. In this way, Markham is able to use its municipal purchasing power to support local farmers, particularly those using sustainable farming practices.

See: http://www.organicfoodcouncil.org/files/downloads/Announcement%20on%20Markham.pdf

Toronto's Food Procurement

Toronto is investigating a similar policy. In 2009, its Children Services Division will be piloting local food procurement strategies in 37 child care centres. An additional $15,000 has been added to the division's $1.3 million food budget. In preparation for the pilot project, it was estimated that 20% of food is currently purchased from local sources, and that this can be increased by 8% through purchasing local cheese and vegetables.

See: http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/gm/bgrd/backgroundfile-16137.pdf

Despite these benefits, there are numerous regulatory barriers to the establishment of a farmers' market. Markets struggle to find a suitable location and obtain the necessary health and business permits. Since markets often run on volunteer labour and have small budgets, this hassle can be prohibitive. It is necessary, therefore, for municipalities to work with farmers' markets and interested local organizations to develop a regulatory framework that protects consumer health while easing burdens on marketers. Re-examining policy in a manner sympathetic to the needs of farmers' markets will help increase the availability of local food.

Develop local or fair trade procurement policies

Many Manitoba municipalities are surrounded by fertile agricultural land and farmers are an important component of local economies and communities. Many Manitoban consumers support local producers and processors. Communities can do the same by developing food procurement policies that support nearby farms and businesses. By purchasing from local farmers or processors, a municipality supports individuals and businesses that provide jobs in their community rather than using municipal funds to pay for products from far away.

A food procurement policy can take many forms. It might require the municipality to source a certain amount of its food purchases from local farmers or processors, or it can commit to purchasing local food if it was roughly equivalent in cost to food from elsewhere.

Fair Trade Communities

As part of a food procurement policy, municipalities can commit to purchasing fair trade products such as coffee and tea. This would demonstrate a commitment to promote justice for food producers around the world. Many European cities, towns, and villages are fair trade communities. This means that they have agreed to use fair trade products for municipal meetings and offices, have passed a council resolution in favour of fair trade, and fair trade products are easily accessible within their community.[23]

In Canada, Wolfville, Nova Scotia and La Pêche, Quebec are Canada's first fair trade municipalities. Becoming a fair trade community allows municipalities to demonstrate their commitment to broader food issues and supports farmers and processors around the world.

CONCLUSION

Municipalities have the potential to make significant contributions in the struggle against food insecurity. By developing innovative and strategic policies, communities can meet the needs of their most vulnerable residents and support local agriculture and business.

Key areas that can be addressed to improve food security are:

- Zoning issues;
- Urban agriculture;
- Food waste handling;
- Support for local agriculture and food economies through promotion or food procurement policies;
- Increasing the accessibility of healthy foods;
- Food policy development.

In cooperation with community residents and organizations and other levels of government, municipal governments can work to address issues of health, the environment, agriculture, and social equity through food security programs. Food security provides strategic opportunities for municipalities to create healthier environments, healthier economies, and healthier citizens.

APPENDIX A

Reports on Municipal Food Policy

American Planning Association. *Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning.* http://myapa.planning.org/policyguides/food.htm.

British Columbia Provincial Health Services Authority. *A Seat at the Table: Resource Guide for Local Governments to Promote Food Secure Communities.* http://www.phsa.ca/NR/rdonlyres/76D687CF-6596-46FE-AA9A-A536D61FB038/29298/PHSAreportaseatatthetable4.pdf.

Capital Region District Roundtable on the Environment. *Putting Food and Food Policy On the Table.* http://www.vipirg.ca/campaigns/crfair/CRFAIR_Final_Report_Food_Policy_on_the_Table.pdf.

Capital Region District Roundtable on the Environment. *Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan.* http://www.crd.bc.ca/rte/documents/Healthy_phase2_web.pdf.

Interior Health Authority, Kamloops Food Policy Council, and the City of Kamloops. *Kamloops Food Action Plan.* http://www.fooddemocracy.org/docs/FoodActionPlan_sept06.pdf.

Toronto Food and Hunger Action Committee. *The Growing Season.* http://www.toronto.ca/food_hunger/growing_season.htm.

Waterloo Regional Health Authority. *Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region.* http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/166d88b4f3b1c09485256e5a0057f5e7/54ED787F44ACA44C852571410056AEB0/$file/FoodSystem_Plan.pdf?openelement.

Community Food System Assessment

Herb Barbolet, et al. *Vancouver Food System Assessment.* http://www.sfu.ca/cscd/pdf/final_draft_compress.pdf.

Kami Pothukuchi, Hugh Joseph, Hannah Burton, and Andy Fisher. *What's Cooking in Your Food System: A Guide to Community Food Assessment.* http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html.

Urban Agriculture

Kamloops Food Policy Council. *Best Practices in Urban Agriculture.* http://www.fooddemocracy.org/docs/BestPractices_Urban%20Agriculture.pdf.

Toronto Food Policy Council, *Feeding the City from the Back 40: A Commercial Food Production Plan for the City of Toronto.* http://www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc_feeding.pdf.

Waterloo Regional Health Authority. *Urban Agriculture Report.* http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/166d88b4f3b1c09485256e5a0057f5e7/54ED787F44ACA44C852571410056AEB0/$file/UA_Feasibility.pdf?openelement.

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