

Title: Food Access and Farm Income Environmental Scan

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Release Date: Pending

This paper is one of a series of working papers developed for the Nourishing Communities research partnership. **Nourishing Communities** has been evolving since 2007, over the course of several projects. In response to input from our community partners, the current project builds on two years of collaborative work that developed an inventory of community food initiatives in Ontario, and explored their efforts and effects in multiple ways.

We are investigating a number of **critical research issues** that have emerged as potential avenues for improving the viability of community food initiatives: 1. land access for local / sustainable production; 2. innovative models of financing for community initiatives [distribution / processing / aggregation]; 3. strategies for tackling the tensions between food security and housing security; 4. opportunities to help farmers access sustainable local food markets; 5. supply management; 6. scale-appropriate regulation; and 7. institutional procurement.

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TITLE: Food Access and Farm Income Environmental Scan

DATE OF STUDY: From September 2012-June 2013

PURPOSE/RESEARCH QUESTION: What are the best strategies for tackling affordable access to local food in a way that still fairly rewards the producers of that food? How do we move beyond making local food a high-end, niche market for the rich? What are the initiatives in Eastern Ontario (or elsewhere) that do both – augment productive capacity and ensure viable incomes for farmers while also addressing access issues? Are these strategies specifically targeted at low-income groups, or based on universality (e.g. school breakfast programs)? What policies and incentives can be put in place to support these strategies at local and provincial levels? Are there policies that effectively hinder progress in this area?

KEYWORDS: Food Access, Farm Income, Eastern Ontario.

Background

The research questions for this project were developed in consultation with the Eastern Ontario Advisory Committee for the *Nourishing Ontario: Sustainable Local Food Systems Research Group* – co-led by Dr. Peter Andr e and Dr. Patricia Ballamingie, both of Carleton University. The committee consists of community based organizations, health centers, and academic institutions. Drawing from both academic and grey literature, this paper provides an environmental scan of initiatives that combat access to food issues while contributing to equitable livelihoods for farmers. The need to establish connections between initiatives that serve food access for low income citizens and fair livelihoods for farmers stem from concerns that access to local and local organic food is often limited to high income earners unless active measures are taken to ensure this is not the case.

Gross (2011) notes that there is much criticism of the expense of local food by critics when there should be questions of the cheapness of food produced in the industrial food system.¹ Nevertheless, the availability of local food to all members of the community is a growing concern. Hinrichs and Kremer (2003) argue that while many local food projects seek broad socio-economic participation, there are often limiting factors like income and education.² This is further supported by Macais (2008) who argues that these initiatives not only restrict access to elite classes but are often spearheaded by upper middle class, well-educated majorities.³ Finally, Guthman (2011) echoes these concerns and focuses on the racial exclusivity of alternative food options being pursued and shaped by the intrinsic “whiteness” of these alternatives.⁴

While segments of the population are marginalized from alternative food options due to factors such as ethnicity or income level, it is important to note the opportunities for change that these conditions present. Slocum (2006) argues that while alternative food spaces are predominantly “white”, the underlying rationales for alternative foods such as health environmental sustainability are much more universal.⁵ Furthermore, the intrinsic “whiteness” of alternative food spaces has progressive potential in both its intention and momentum.⁶

¹ Joan Gross, “Constructing a Community Food Economy,” *Food and Foodways* 19 no 3 (2011): 181-200.

² C. Hinrichs and K. Kremer, “Social Inclusion in a Midwest Local Food System Project,” *Journal of Poverty* 6 (2002):65–90.

³ Tomas Macias, “Working Toward a Just, Equitable, and Local Food System: The Social Impact of Community-Based Agriculture,” *Social Science Quarterly*, 89 no 5 (2008): 1086-1101.

⁴ Julie Guthman, “If they Only Knew: The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food,” in *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class and Sustainability*, ed. by Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011).

⁵ Rachel Slocum, “Whiteness, space and alternative food practice,” *Geoforum*, 30 (2006): 1-14. Note that the author includes elements of white privileged in the definition of “whiteness”, such as high incomes, access to a vehicle etc.

⁶ *Ibid*, 8.

Acknowledging the presence of race, class, gender and other social elements of alternative food initiatives allows for more pointed efforts to increase the universality of these initiatives. When reviewing the remainder of this scan, it is important to assess the level of consideration given to the social barriers and opportunities created by alternative food spaces.

It should be noted that the research question excludes initiatives that increase the accessibility of local food in ways that do not attribute to farm income. A prime example of this is community gardens, which more and more are being created to provide access to food for low income people. While these concerns are not reflected in this review, they are the focus area of a related project exploring the linkages of food access to social housing.

Methodologically, this scan focuses on initiatives across North America. Upon the request of members of the steering committee, there is a section that analyses a case study in Brazil. While the highlighted initiatives represent only a portion of the initiatives that exist across the continent, they are emphasized because of their online presence and the breadth of literature available. When possible, each section provides Canadian examples but the contextualization of each initiative at the provincial and local level will vary. The first nine sections of this document are separated according to initiative. This environmental scan concludes by outlining future research directions in this area.

Findings, Discussion and Limitations

Farmers Market – Low Income Citizens and Communities

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) connecting to Farmers' Markets (USA)

The SNAP program originated from the food stamp program in the United States (renamed in 2008). Eligible citizens obtain an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) access card, which can be used to purchase food. Traditionally, EBT purchases were made exclusive at grocery stores. However, a number of Federal and State efforts have attempted to create linkages between SNAP participants and localized food systems. As of 2011, the United States federal government has invested 4 million USD in an attempt to link farmers' markets to SNAP program purchases.⁷ The money is used to equip farmers' markets with a wireless point of sale that accepts EBT access cards. The 2012 Farm Bill, amendment #26 states that SNAP participants will also be allowed to use their benefits to participate in Community Supported Agriculture.⁸

⁷ Gross (2011) states that only 10% of farmers' markets in the US accept EBT cards.

⁸ Community supported agriculture is designed to share the risks involved in a farm growing season among the producer and consumer. A CSA allows consumers to buy shares in the farm and in return share in the harvest. CSA operations are unique and limited to the diversity and productive capacity of the region they are located.

Early progress reports demonstrate some of the initial challenges of connecting the SNAP program to farmers markets.^{9 10} A 2010 report entitled *Real Food Real Choice: Connecting SNAP Recipients to Farmers Markets* lists the financial cost of administering the SNAP program at the market and the costs incurred by outreach activities that are necessary to informing people that the market is SNAP compatible as some of the initial challenges of the program. The report stresses that farmers' markets should not bear the entire costs of operating the EBT machines and there is a clear role for the state to subsidize the administration costs, as is the case in California and Iowa.

More recently, Oberholtzer et al. (2012) have studied SNAP programs to evaluate the impact of these programs on farm sales.¹¹ The authors indicate that farmers from small- to medium-sized farms (under USD 250,000), reported increases in sales.¹² This increase is compounded if farmers sold their goods at a medium to small size farmers market. The authors conclude that market characteristics are, at the very least, equally as important of a factor of consideration as the characteristics of the farmers selling at the market. Finally, the study demonstrated that non-organic farmers selling at SNAP compatible markets did not see disproportionate increases in sales as compared to organic farms. Here the authors call for further research into the value of organic products from people using SNAP compared to non-program consumers.¹³

Extended Dollars Community Support Programs

To increase the benefits provided under the SNAP program, charitable organizations sometimes pursue initiatives to increase the benefits of SNAP participants. For example, Wholesome Wave works to increase the purchasing power of SNAP participants at farmers' markets, as an incentive for shopping there. The Wholesome Wave Program coordinates a Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) that matches the amount of federal nutrition benefits spent at farmers

⁹ Suzanne Briggs Andy Fisher Megan Lott Stacy Miller Nell Tessman, "Real Food Real Choice: Connecting SNAP Participants with Farmers Markets," Funded by the Convergence Partnership Fund of the Tides Foundation and private donations to the Community Food Security Coalition (June, 2010), available online at www.foodsecurity.org/pub/RealFoodRealChoice_SNAP_FarmersMarkets

¹⁰ See also Andy Fisher, "Hot Peppers and Parking Lot Peaches," *Evaluating Farmers Markets in Low Income Communities*, Community Food Security Coalition (1999). This report provides initial insights into the SNAP program along with a strong description of the technical considerations of administering the program.

¹¹ Lydia Oberholtzer, Carolyn Dimitri and Gus Schumacher, "Linking Farmers, Healthy Food and Underserved Consumers: Exploring the Impact of Nutrition Incentive Programs on Farmers and Farmers Markets," *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 2 no 4 (2012): 65.

¹² *Ibid*, 71.

¹³ See Barbara Mknelly, Stephanie Nishio, Cynthia Peshek, and Michelle Oppen, *Community Health Centers: A Promising Venue for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education in the Central Valley*, *Journal of Nutrition, Education and Behavior* 43 no. 4 (2011):137-144. The authors call on health centers to educate consumers about SNAP purchases at farmers markets to address some of the shortcomings of the SNAP program.

markets.¹⁴ Initiatives like Wholesome Wave demonstrate how civil society and state initiatives can co-operate to connect farm income to food access programs. Another example is the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Match Association, which has been active since 2010. Similar to the DVCP, the association runs a Market Match program where CalFresh recipients receive an extra 5.00USD when they purchase a minimum of 10.00 USD.

Generally, community support programs maintain a decentralized funding structure. For instance, the Market Match program is funded by both private sector philanthropists and a Specialty Crop Block Grant, provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Other programs are funded wholly by private sector donations and community foundations. The Fair Food Networks' Double Up Food Bucks program in Detroit, Michigan is funded by 30 private sector and community foundations, demanding much fundraising and administrative resources.

A cluster evaluation for four major farmers' market incentive programs in the United States was conducted for the 2011 season and released in 2012. See figure 1.1 for a summary of the programs.

Figure 1.1

¹⁴ "Double Value Coupon Program," Wholesome
Source: Cluster Evaluation 2011 ([http://wholesomewave.org/dvcp/.](http://wholesomewave.org/dvcp/))

EXHIBIT 1

Characteristics of SNAP incentive programs, 2011

FEATURE	ORGANIZATION			
	Fair Food Network	Market Umbrella	Roots of Change	Wholesome Wave
Number of markets offering SNAP incentives in 2011	54	3	72	225*
Location of markets	Michigan, plus two in Ohio	New Orleans	California	21 states and Washington, DC
Match (how much incentive is provided for every \$1 in SNAP incentives)	\$1	\$1	Varies	Varies; \$1 in most markets
Maximum amount of incentive benefit offered per day	\$20	\$25	Varies	Varies
Source of incentive-funding support offered to markets	Private funding (mainly foundations, but also other private organizations and direct fundraising)			

* Five of the markets supported by WW also received support from ROC

The evaluation found that farmers' market incentive programs benefit both producers and consumers. Furthermore, farmers tended to benefit regardless of size, with an average booth receiving \$540.00 in SNAP benefits and \$350.00 in incentives over the course of the season. More than fifty percent of customers stated that the incentive programs were the reason they spend SNAP dollars at the market with eight percent of participants stating their intake of fruits and vegetables was a direct result of accessing the farmers market.

Although the cluster evaluation frames farmers market incentive programs as a success there are some limitations. The evaluation highlights lack of public sector funding as a major limiting factor to program success. Although directly funding the SNAP program, the federal government does not contribute any funds to the incentive programs. Furthermore, reliance on private sector funding requires immense resources be dedicated to generating and administering funds.¹⁵

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

The FMNP is an active program in the United States established in 1992 under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). In 2011, grants were

¹⁵ Healthy Food Initiatives 2011 Final Report: Cluster Evaluation.

awarded to 46 state agencies and federally recognized Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs). Certified WIC program recipients are eligible to partake in the FMNP, and can use the allotted FMNP coupons or checks at farmers' markets or roadside farm stands that have been approved by state agencies. State agencies may supplement the federal benefit level with state, local or private funds. Not-for-profits and other organizations provide additional nutritional education through these programs. According to a USDA FMNP fact sheet, in the fiscal year of 2011, 18,487 farmers participating at 4,079 farmers' markets and 3,184 farm stands were authorized to accept FMNP checks or coupons. The program generated over 16.4 million USD in revenue to farmers in 2011.¹⁶

A 2003 study by the American Society for Nutritional Sciences found that the program demonstrated a total net gain, with farmers reporting a 7-9% increase in sales beyond the value of the coupons from extra purchases by coupon users, demonstrating that potential of the program to stimulate sales. The study notes a direct relation between geographical accessibility of the market and the percentage of coupon redemptions. Participants in the study noted that as the program was expanded to areas with less access to farmers' markets, there was a decrease in total coupon redemption, which may indicate a correlation between coupon redemption and access to markets.

Overall, both the SNAP and the WIC FMNP are reasonably successful in connecting low-income citizens to local food while providing adequate incomes to farmers. In both instances this is done through government funding. Canada has no equivalent to a SNAP program but it is possible to replicate the FMNP initiative using government money or third party sources. Further research in third party funding mechanisms is encouraged, perhaps pioneering methods like crowd sourcing, child credit remittances and/or tax rebates.

Farmers' Market Nutrition and Coupon Program (FMNCP) (BC, Canada)

The FMNCP is a Canadian adaptation of the FMNP, specifically targeting low-income families and seniors in the province of British Columbia (BC). The FMNCP is administered by the BC Association of Farmers' Markets and largely funded by the provincial government (including a one-time, 2 million dollar investment in 2012).¹⁷ The program supports up to fifty families and up to ten seniors per community with the requirement that they must be enrolled in cooking and skill building classes. The FMNCP provides families with fifteen dollars and seniors with ten

¹⁶ See "FMNP Fact Sheet 2012," United States Drug Authority, accessed on Oct. 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/WIC-FMNP-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

¹⁷ "\$2-Million investment Increase Access to Farm Fresh Produce," accessed on Oct. 6, 2012, <http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/07/2-million-investment-increases-access-to-farm-fresh-produce.html>. For a 2007 evaluation of the program see Coyne and Associates Ltd. "BC Farmers' Market Nutrition and Coupon Pilot Project 2007: Final Evaluation Report," (British Columbia Association of Farmers' Market, 2007), http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org/ind/pdf/fmnep_finalreport.pdf.

dollars of coupons each week, which can be used as cash equivalence at the farmers market.¹⁸ The FMNCP began in 2007 in seven BC communities but was cancelled for a year in 2010 due to lack of provincial funding. The program was reinstated, with a one-time grant of 2 million dollars CAN in 2012.

After the initial pilot project in 2007, Coyne and Associates Ltd. prepared a program evaluation for the BC farmers' market association. The evaluation looked at both the process and outcomes of the program.¹⁹ The evaluation methods included a workshop evaluation survey, an on-line monitoring survey completed by farmers' markets managers and program coordinators, respondent interviews with clients in two respondent groups, and a written evaluation survey, completed by participating clients and farmers' markets. Overall, the report deemed the program a success. It highlighted farmers' markets as a resource for low-income access to food and the moderate increase in farmers' market sales, (74% of coupon recipients surveyed used some of their own funds at farmers' markets in addition to the coupons) as a result of the FMNCP.

Despite the programs' overall success, the evaluation found that 62% of participants claimed that the produce at farmers' markets was more expensive than grocery stores, compared to 24% that claimed it was cheaper. Some major recommendation made in the evaluation report included securing more resources for advertising the program, and issuing the coupons less frequently (at the time of the evaluation, coupons were issued once a week) at a higher dollar value to reduce administration and processing of coupons for low dollar amounts. I would suggest future research to assess the fluctuations in sales beyond the value of coupon redemption in models that incorporate the latter recommendation.

Farm Stands, Mobile Food Carts and The Strategic Locating of Farmers' Markets

Along with initiatives that connect existing farmers markets' to low income citizens, there are examples of locating the markets in neighborhoods that are known to be low income. Permanently establishing farmers' markets in low-income communities as well as temporarily using mobile farm stands have developed as ways to remedy the issue of lack of access to farmers' markets.

Markowitz examines case studies in the Louisville area and outlines concerns with locating farmers markets in low income neighborhoods.²⁰ The author notes that in order to function, this approach often relies on subsidies for both the farm vendors as well as the targeted consumer population.²¹ The subsidies are derived from community groups, public and private sources. Although the Louisville FMNCP increases a consumer's purchasing power, Markowitz

¹⁸ I would suggest further research to assess if there are any stigma associated with their use at farmers markets.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid,74.

²¹ Ibid.

also cites the state implemented Cash Value Vouchers (CVV) as a way to work around the costly purchase of EBT machines to link the FMNCP to farmers markets.²²

In the region of Waterloo, Ontario, two pilot neighborhood market projects have been developed to bring local food to low-income areas.²³ The St. Mary's General Hospital and the Mill Courtland community center were the selected for pilot projects. The projects were pioneered by a collaboration of municipal organizations, public health agencies, farmer associations and the City of Kitchener. The area public health agency acted as the lead agency and the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation made notable contributions (\$200,000), and community partners made various in-kind contributions. The partners decided to adopt a community collaboration model. Unlike a farmers' market, where farmers sell their own produce at select stands, a community collaboration model involves several community agencies taking on different roles. The pilot markets bought produce from a nearby food co-operative and sold the food that same day, since there were no storage facilities on site at the pilot markets.

A 2007 report on the pilot projects explains the numerous obstacles in setting up the markets and sites (e.g., obtaining vendor licences and re-zoning proved to be among the most difficult to overcome).²⁴ At Courtland Community Market food was sold at cost, to increase access to the low-income citizens in that area compared to the 10% markup at the St. Mary's General Hospital market which is considered a more affluent area. The report states that during most weeks of operation, costs were recovered. Of note is the significant amount of volunteer time required in making the markets operational and that the markets still utilized coupon programs to increase sales. While the Waterloo neighborhood markets were the closest to self-sustaining or cost recovery models drawn from to inform this environmental scan, they still relied heavily on initial donations, subsidised sales, and volunteer hours.²⁵ The challenges of implementing this program suggest caution in replicating this model in other communities.²⁶

Food Box Programs

²² CVV are taken as currency substitute and then redeemed for American currency.

²³ Judy Maan Miedema, "The Region of Waterloo Public Health's Neighbourhood Markets Backgrounder," (Waterloo Public Health, 2008), available at http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/clinicsClassesFairs/resources/NEIGHBOURHOOD_MARKETS_BACKGROUNDER.pdf.

²⁴ Judy Maan Miedema and Katherine Pigott, "A Healthy Community Food Systems Plan," (Waterloo Public Health, 2007), available at http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/researchResourcesPublications/resources/FoodSystem_Plan.pdf. For access to all Waterloo Public Health reports pertaining to food systems see <http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/researchResourcesPublications/reportsdata.asp#FOOD>.

²⁵ For a 2008 evaluation report of the pilot project see Judy Jean Miedema, "Neighborhood Market Imitative: Evaluation Report," (Waterloo Public Health, 2008), Available online at http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/clinicsClassesFairs/resources/NM_Evaluation.pdf.

²⁶ The exception to this is the Western Fair Market in London, ON – one of our case studies from our community tool kit – it is run as a private business and proven to be quite a profitable one. See <http://nourishingontario.ca/western-fair-farmers-market/>

Food box programs are organized like buying clubs, with centralized processing and distribution. Often the programs rely on volunteers for the packing and delivery of boxes. In Toronto, FoodShare's Good Food Box program chooses locally-grown Ontario produce whenever possible, and the United Way, among other donors, subsidizes some of the overhead. The program requires consumers to pay for the cost of food themselves, and they can choose from a number of box types. These box types include options for small and large boxes, organic boxes, fruit boxes and wellness boxes, which provide chopped and washed food proportioned for convenience.²⁷ The boxes also include recipes.

Making the boxes affordable to low-income consumers is a top priority of many good food box programs. It is common for a subsidy to cover some of the cost of the program allowing consumers to receive much more food than they pay for. In Ottawa, the Good Food Box program buys food at a wholesale price and resells it at the same price. The cost of the food is covered through box purchases and the administration of the program is covered by a grant from the City of Ottawa. The Ottawa Good Food Box Program requires the box to be paid for prior to (or at time of) purchase. While the logistics of the program cater to people living on low incomes many food box programs are available to the greater public including examples in both Toronto and Ottawa.

An environmental scan of 37 good food box programs in Ontario demonstrates that the majority of programs report an urban/rural split in populations served and in general, the programs does not have a mandated income level for participation.²⁸ The environmental scan also explains that a large majority of food box programs serve less than 500 households (86%), with FoodShare's Good Food Box program serving the greatest number of households (4000 monthly current as of 2011).²⁹ Finally, the study shows that programs in Ontario rely heavily on volunteer support, with 89% of participating good food box programs identifying volunteers as significant contributors.³⁰

The academic literature on food boxes looks at the ability of the programs to foster broader social change. For instance, Johnston and Baker (2005) call for a broader scaling up of community food security initiatives, including food box programs, in order to engage the large number of urban consumers.³¹ Torjusen et al (2008) go on to discuss that box schemes should go beyond providing healthy food and educate consumers of the goals of the box scheme.³² It

²⁷ See "Good Food Box," accessed Oct. 8, 2012, <http://www.foodshare.net/good-food-box>" for more information.

²⁸ Community Voices Consulting Group, "Environmental Scan Report: The Future of the Good Food Box Project," (Community Voices Consulting ,2011), 6.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, 11.

³¹ Josee Johnson and Lauren Baker, "Eating Outside the Box: Foodshares Good Food Box and the Challenge of Scale" *Agriculture and Human Values* (2005) 22: 313–325.

³² Torjusen et al. "Learning, communicating and eating in local food-systems: the case of organic box schemes in Denmark and Norway," *Local Environments* 13 no. 3 219-234.

should not be assumed that every participant of box programs adhere to the same logic. Since many programs are evolving to attract consumers from all demographics, geographies and income levels, further research should explore the population demographics that are purchasing from food box schemes are the rationale for doing so. This will help illustrate how the program can foster wider support and also inform a comparison between the perceived message of the box scheme and how or if it is being received by consumers.

This initial scan of the available literature, demonstrates that good food box schemes vary depending on the lead organization and community in which they are enacted. Generally, the program seems to be one of the most widely available and successful program in providing healthy food to citizens, including people living on low incomes. Whenever possible, it seems that good food box schemes are willing to connect with local farmers, although there is room for further documentation on the challenges and success of how the program may connect with farmers. Connecting to local farmers seems to be ancillary to providing healthy food for low income people.

Farm-to-Institution Programs

Farm-to-institution programs generally attempt to provide a locally sourced meal to a target population on a predictable basis (e.g., lunch twice a week). The participating institutions may include schools, prisons, hospitals or seniors' homes, and the costs vary.

In the United States, a centralized school lunch program entitled the National School Lunch Program, funded by the US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (8.7 billion USD worth of funds received in 2007), operates a school lunch program in over 2,000 school districts.³³ Izumi et al. (2010) explore the reasons why and how local farmers participate in school lunch programs. Some of the barriers to farmer participation discussed by the authors include the timing of deliveries, refrigeration space, and the fact that many schools have lost the capacity to prepare foods due to their dependency on pre-prepared heat-and-serve meals. Despite these barriers, the authors argue that farmers participate in these programs in order to diversify their market potential as well as contribute to the social development of students, through reconnection urban populations to the land. The authors state that although the program represented a small percentage of total farm sales, farmers claimed that participation in the program helped to mitigate their economic risks.

Joshi et al (2008) provide more in-depth figures in regards to farmer's participation in the program.³⁴ The study shows that most programs purchased directly from farmers on an annual

³³ Izumi et al., "Market diversification and social benefits: Motivations of farmers participating in farm to school programs," *Journal of Rural Studies* 26 (2010): 374-382. See also <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/> for more information.

³⁴ Joshi A, Azuma A, Feenstra GW. "Do farm-to-school programs make a difference? Findings and future research needs," *Journal of Hunger Environment and Nutrition* o. 3 (2008):229-246.

basis but there were some examples of purchasing from farm co-operative and other examples of providing term contracts to farmers.³⁵ The study found that overall, a modest increase in farm income of five percent, was reported by farmers participating in the program. Further studies that look at the validity of farmers participating in the program should be encouraged.

Canada has no national school program like the United States, but programs have emerged at provincial and municipal levels. In Eastern Ontario, the Ottawa Network for Education (ONE) is the lead agency in delivering a healthy school breakfast program. The ONE is a registered charity and the designated lead agency for the provincial nutrition program. The ONE works on a program level, meaning that the development and implementation of any specific initiatives must be in conjunction with the individual school boards. The ONE's school breakfast program serves 1000 students in 148 Ottawa schools.³⁶ Further research is encouraged to see how the decentralized Canadian healthy meal programs can connect with farmers.

Community Food Hubs

A food hub is perhaps best understood as a concept or organizational model that can manifest itself to take on a variety of different forms and functions. A United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2009 report defines a community food hub as: "A centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products".³⁷

Morley et al. (2008), describe food hubs as a concept, which assumes a number of market actors are involved in the sourcing and supplying of food and coordinating their function will increase efficiency in market relations.³⁸ The authors organize food hubs into four types differentiated by lead agency. This typology includes retail led, public sector led, producer-entrepreneur led and co-operative led food hubs.³⁹

The conceptual understating of a food hub is under constant revision. For instance, Joel Fridman and Lindsey Lenters (2013) extend the food hub concept to community kitchens, in an attempt to highlight the potential for urban based community organizations to engage with the food system.⁴⁰ This understanding of food hubs allows for the organization of decentralized food

³⁵ I would encourage further research to explore the validity of buying from co-operatives or contracting farmers on a term basis as compared to annual direct sales.

³⁶ "School Breakfast Program," accessed Oct. 4, 2012, <http://www.onfe-rope.ca/programs/school-breakfast-program>.

³⁷ See Jim Barham, "Regional Food Hubs: Understanding the Scope and Scale of Food Hub Operations," (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service).

³⁸ Adrian Morley, Selyf Morgan and Kevin Morgan, "Food Hubs: The Missing Middle of the Local Food Infrastructure," BRASS Centre, Cardiff University, 2008

³⁹ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁰ Joel Fridman and Lindsey Lenters "Kitchen as food hub: Adaptive food systems governance in the City of Toronto," Publication pending (2013).

initiatives into system focused possibilities, connecting individual food issues to larger structural considerations.

The multiple uses of a food hub make it a contributor to both farm income and food access; although the degree to which a given food hub may achieve this will vary. For instance the Charlottesville Local Food Hub (Charlottesville, VA) provides farmers with accounting services, education and marketing expertise, and warehouse capacity for farm sales. To increase affordable access to locally grown food, the hub donates 5% of warehouse sales to food banks and community groups.⁴¹ The Charlottesville Local Food Hub also grows more than six acres of food on an educational farm. 25% of produce on this farm is donated to food banks and the remainder is added to the warehouse distribution.

Many community food hubs, such as Food Chain North East (Bridport, England), operate a variety of school programs including education and healthy meals.⁴² Overall, community food hubs seem to manifest the intersectional nature of food policy, and physically connect the many stakeholders of food policy at the community level.

Community Food Centres

Whereas a community food hub often augments one, or several stages in the production process, a community food center (CFC) focuses on low income and at risk populations, both through providing access to food but also through initiatives that change behavioural patterns like cooking and skill building classes and school lunch programs to name but a couple. Community Food Centers Canada defines a CFC as a space where people come together to grow cook, share and advocate for good food.⁴³

According to Community Food Centers Canada, CFCs provide programming in the areas of food access, food skills, education and engagement. Notably, both The Stop in Toronto and The Table in Perth developed from food banks into community food centers. The Stop coordinates a number of programs, including incentives for growing culturally specific food, community cooking and skill building classes, while also continuing to operate a food bank. Community food centers attempts to involve the community in their work, in order to eliminate the stigma of receiving free food and social isolation. Funded by a mix of foundations, corporate donations and government support, there are currently six community food centers based on this model active in Canada.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

⁴¹ See Jim Barham, “Regional Food Hubs: Understanding the Scope and Scale of Food Hub Operations,” (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service).

⁴² “Food Chain North East,” accessed on Oct. 9, 2012, <http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/about/ds/foodchainnortheast.cfm> for more info.

⁴³ <http://cfccanada.ca/>

CSA is one of the most established programs that attempts to increase farm income and food access and there are a plethora of examples worldwide. Generally, CSA involves buying a share in farm output at the beginning of the growing season. Through this program, consumers receive seasonal food on a consistent basis and farmers receive guaranteed consumers. Consumers share the risk with farmers as there is no guaranteed level of foodstuffs.

Forbes and Harman (2007) note that income levels may act as barriers to participating in a CSA, largely because of the lump sum costs associated with participation. Forbes and Harman highlight a number of payment structures and other initiatives to make participating in CSA shares more accessible for low-income consumers (see Table 1).⁴⁴ Further research should evaluate the merits and barriers of each CSA initiative.

Table 1

Initiative	Details	Examples
Government Food Assistance	- Allowing assistance vouchers to be used for the purchase of CSA shares	-Washington (USA) has a rule that vouchers used for CSA shares must directly translate into food received, despite crop failure
Payment Plans	- Allowing consumers to make small incremental payments instead of the usual one time lump sum payment -This method burdens farmers who rely on the lump sum for initial growing costs	-Future Farm in New York allows for this but relies on off-farm income to make up for the lost capital
Revolving Loan Funds	-Farm uses fund money, which is generated from grants and donations to cover the initial costs while monthly payments received later in the season replenish the fund -People with limited financial ability can also borrow money from the fund to pay for a CSA membership	- Chelsea CSA and Canticle Farm in New York established a revolving loan fund using grants from the Hunger Action Network
Working Shares	-In exchange for a discounted CSA share, members can donate their time to work on the CSA farm - This method requires both time and the ability to perform physically-intensive labour, which low-income individuals may be unable to do	-Gallatin Valley (Montana, USA) allows for CSA members to perform 1 4-hour shift per week of the growing season for 50% off their CSA membership
Sliding Scale Systems	-Operate by allowing those who earn less to pay less, and those who earn	- Homestead Organics Farm Inc.(Peachland, BC) allows

⁴⁴ Cristin B Forbes and Alison H. Harman, "Buying into Community Supported Agriculture," *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 2 (2007): 66-80.

	<p>more to pay more</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Higher price shares work to subsidize lower price shares -The size of the food box is often determined by the number of people in the household rather than the ability to pay -Sometimes outside organizations subsidize the cost of a set number of boxes 	<p>consumers the ability to choose how much they pay for a CSA share based on income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full Plate Collective of Tompkins County works more in line with the subsidy model
Low-Cost Shares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -This method requires the CSA farm to be developed with the goal of serving low-income communities - Only grow low-input produce, like root vegetables, with minimal labour and energy required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Future Farm in Chemung County (NY) is able to offer CSA membership for 26 weeks at a price of 200 USD - This farm utilizes biodiesel production and relies heavily on volunteers
Transportation Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some CSA utilize several different pickup locations to accommodate a number of communities - Delivery of CSA shares are sometimes made available - CSA organizers may also set up a CSA member with access to a vehicle with a member who does not have access 	<p>Genesee Valley Organics utilizes a buddy system to connect people with access to a vehicle to people without access</p>

Co-operatives

Generally, co-operatives can be understood as collectively controlled business ventures, with a number of democratic governing mechanisms.⁴⁵ While producer co-operatives have a long history in Canadian agricultural production, along with pooling systems for foodstuffs, more recent developments have led to the development of co-operatives that include food retail, with some co-operatives including food production as well as distribution.

An interesting example of a co-operative venture is Co-op Atlantic, located throughout Atlantic Canada. This co-operative grocery chain partners with local farmers and producers to market products within the region.⁴⁶ The co-operative provides farm inputs, such as seeds, and purchases the products when they are ready for sale. The products are sold at various co-operative retail locations. Centralization results in a greater share of farm dollar going to the

⁴⁵ Much literature exists on worker co-operatives. For a good overview see Carla Dickstein, "The Promise and Problems of Worker Co-operatives," *Journal of Planning Literature* 6 no. 1 (1991): 16-32.

⁴⁶ Canadian Co-operative Association, *Local Food Initiatives in Canada: An Overview and Policy Recommendations* (2008). Available at http://www.coopscanada.coop/assets/firefly/files/files/pdfs/GovSubmissions/LocalFoodInitiatives_in_Canada_Brief-Final_18jun08.pdf.

farmer.⁴⁷ While this co-operative model is not tailored to supporting low-income consumers, modifications like establishing retail locations in low-income neighborhoods can be made to this model to better serve low-income communities.

A number of food co-operatives have emerged as multi stakeholder co-operatives, which include both producers and consumers into the model. In Ottawa, the Ottawa Valley Co-Op is a multi-stakeholder co-operative that connects both consumers and producers. It does this through online marketing and ordering. Although the co-operative boasts a commitment to sustainable development and locally produced food, the internet based ordering system may be a limiting factor in marketing this food to people living on a low income. The co-operative depends of volunteer support for many program costs, such as food delivery. Further research is encouraged to explore the broader connections of people living on low incomes and the availability of online resources for food purchasing.

Food Banks

Once understood to be emergency food relief providers, food banks are now very much part of the systematic response to food insecurity, and many have sought to creatively ensure a sustainable income for local farmers. Food banks in Canada are represented by Food Banks Canada, a national charitable organization formed in 1989. Food banks continuously face fiscal and logistical challenges – in fact, 70% of Canadian food banks receive no government funding.⁴⁸

In Ontario, the Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) developed a program designed to link food banks with local producers entitled *Community Harvest Ontario* (CHO). The program focuses on three linkage mechanisms: a) direct donations from farmers to the food bank; b) gleaning of non-marketable produce; and, c) requesting farms allocate a portion of production specifically for food banks.⁴⁹ While this program does not necessarily improve farm income, there have been various incentives, such as tax incentives, for producers to donate to food banks.⁵⁰

Responding to the lack of financial remuneration for connecting farmers to food banks, The Research Shop (Guelph) completed a report in November of 2012, entitled *Farmer-Food Bank Linkages*. This report discusses a number of issues in connecting farmers to food banks, including funding and logistical issues. In response to funding issues, the report states that

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Foodbanks Canada, “Stimulating Canada’s Charitable Sector: A Tax Incentive Plan for Charitable Donations,” (Jan. 2012). Available at http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/getmedia/3940f0c5-9363-4512-9852-b5ecf9b5e5b5/Stim--Charitable-Food-Donations_Feb2012.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf.

⁴⁹ Community Harvest Ontario, http://oafb.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=oafb10_home.

⁵⁰ Food Banks Canada, “Stimulating Canada’s Charitable Sector: A Tax Incentive Plan for Charitable Donations,” (Jan. 2012). Available at http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/getmedia/3940f0c5-9363-4512-9852-b5ecf9b5e5b5/Stim--Charitable-Food-Donations_Feb2012.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf.

foundation-based grant funding, pooling funds with other community-based programs and private citizen project funding are some of the main vehicles that can be used to fund farmer-food bank linkages.⁵¹ Logistical concerns in establishing farm-food bank connections include the transportation of food to the food bank as well as limited cold storage for food at both the farm and food bank. Logistical concerns may be overcome by building partnerships with other community organizations to increase capacity and resources. Furthermore, they have launched an app to help build connections.

For food banks that have adequate private sector donations, contracting farms to grow food specifically for food bank usage is a viable option to create farm-food bank connections. For example, Bellingham Food Bank in Bellingham, Washington operated a successful farm for five years before shutting it down to rely on a contract system. The food bank now contracts food production out to local farmers (who sell produce for 10% below wholesale price). The program, entitled Food Bank Fresh, is funded by corporate donations.⁵²

The Secretaria Municipal Adjunta de Abastecimento (SMAAB) (Belo Horizonte, Brazil)

The SMAAB is a centralized approach to connecting food access to farm income, with the municipal government of Belo Horizonte, as a lead agency. A number of municipal government departments have been created with the focus of improving food security in the region, including the Department for Promotion of Food Consumption and Nutrition, and the Department for Administration of Food Distribution.⁵³ The concept for a centralized municipal actor in food policy emerged as a result of the 1993 Movement for Ethics in Politics.⁵⁴ The municipality, under the direction of Mayor Patrus Ananias, declared the right to food as a right to citizenship. The administration clearly sees a lead role for government in upholding this right. The SMAAB spearheads initiatives but also work with Federal government. Overall, some of the greatest successes of the food policy initiatives in Belo Horizonte include the institutionalization of food security as a responsibility of the state, and the universality of many of the SMAAB key ideas to gain legitimacy for the alternative food system from the broader public.⁵⁵ Below is a list of SMAAB initiatives that address the research question and may foster further research.

- 1) Department of Promotion of Food Consumption and Nutrition

⁵¹ Greta Chiu and Michael CoDyre, "Farmer-Food Bank Linkages," (Guelph, 2012). Available at http://www.theresearchshop.ca/sites/default/files/Farmer%20Food%20Bank%20Linkages.FINAL_.pdf.

⁵² Kie Relayea, "Bellingham Food Bank Shuts Down Its Farm, Shift to Paying Local Farmers to Grow Produce," *The Bellingham Herald* (Dec. 5, 2012). Available at <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/2012/12/05/2792400/bellingham-food-bank-shuts-down.html>.

⁵³ Cecilia Rocha and Iara Lessa, "Urban Governance for Food Security: The Alternative Food System in Belo Horizonte, Brazil," *International Planning studies* 14 no.4 389-400 (2009): 390.

⁵⁴ Report, 2009: 6

⁵⁵ Cecilia Rocha et al (2009), 397-398.

The Department of Promotion of Food Consumption and Nutrition is primarily responsible for the administration and delivery of three initiatives that involve the government as the main purchaser of foodstuffs. These programs include: fighting and preventing malnutrition, school meal programs (discussed above) and popular restaurants. The fighting and preventing malnutrition program was developed as a response to the high infant mortality rate in the area and originally involved the free distribution of “enriched flour” (now discontinued) to pregnant women and mothers with young children.⁵⁶ The inputs for the product came from rural producers in the area and labour power from municipal based NGOs.

Popular restaurants in Belo Horizonte are modern, cafeteria-style restaurants that provide nutritious meals at affordable prices, while being located strategically in both high traffic areas (such as subway terminals) and low-income suburbs.⁵⁷ With the SMAAB as the instructional buyer for popular restaurants, many of the foodstuffs are procured through local farmers, providing a stable buyer for their products.

2) Department of Incentives to Basic Food Production

The Department of Incentives to Basic Food Production aims to create direct links between food producers and consumers. In acting as the facilitator between these two groups, the SMAAB helps keep food costs low (minimizing third party markup) while supporting optimal income for local farmers. In order to operate in profitable areas in the city, SMAAB licenses private operators to locate their mobile food trucks and vans operating in these key areas.⁵⁸ In exchange for operating in profitable areas, sellers are required to also work in low-income areas on the weekends. As of 2007 operators are mandated to sell 25 products at a price set by the SMAAB, often 20-50% below market price.⁵⁹ SMAAB also monitors quality of the products sold by operators and provides technical assistance to the operators in the area of sanitation.⁶⁰

While this is not an exhaustive list of the many programs and initiatives pioneered by Belo Horizonte, it serves as an introduction into the unique institutional framework of the municipal food policy. The municipal programs work in conjunction with a national program focused on ending hunger. The national strategy includes a Family Grant (*Bolsa Familia*), the largest conditional cash transfer in the world, providing low-income families with a means to

⁵⁶ Cecilia Rocha and Adriana Aranha, “Urban Food Policies and Rural Sustainability – How the Municipal Government of Belo Horizonte, Brazil is Promoting Rural Sustainability,” (Toronto: Centre for Studies in Food Security, and Department of Nutrition, Ryerson University, 2003). Enriched flour is a combination of flour, eggshells and other nutrients. The enriched flour distribution has been discontinued as infant mortality rates have since dropped and other programs have emerged to address the issues.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 6. See also Rocha et al (2009) at 391.

⁵⁸ Rocha et al (2009), 393. Rocha outlines a number of Belo Horizonte initiatives including Straight From The Country/ Harvest Campaign, City Supplies Center, Green Basket, County General Store, Institutional Food Policies, Preventing/Fighting Malnutrition, School Meals, Popular Restaurant, and Education and Information for Food Consumption.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

participate in municipal programs.⁶¹ The municipality of Belo Horizonte undoubtedly has a different approach than the market driven and/or grassroots initiatives that have developed in North America.

Future Directions

This environmental scan has explored a variety of initiatives that directly connect citizens living on low incomes to local food while providing equitable and fair livelihoods for farmers. Some of the initiatives were recently evaluated while others require further evaluations and pilot projects. The majority of the initiatives explored were designed to address one of the two elements of the research question. That is to say, some initiatives designed to provide access to food for low income citizens attempt to also improve farm income and initiatives that are created to improve farm income sometimes undertake initiatives to ensure universal access to local food.

A third class, which is deemed here to be social enterprise ventures, are created with the purpose of addressing both elements of the research questions at the outset. Social enterprises encompass a vast array of initiatives that utilize creative entrepreneurship to foster social change.^{62 63} Social enterprise ventures have also been described as a transition from collective action to individual entrepreneurialism, in order to achieve specific socioeconomic objectives.⁶⁴ Although the language is used here to describe a third way, the concept overlaps with all initiatives explored in the scan. They are often understood as resulting from either a withdrawal of government services or a reorganization of government and civil society organizations.⁶⁵ In Canada, there is no specific legal category for a social enterprise and they could only fall into the category of a charity or not for profit under certain conditions.⁶⁶ Adopting this language may provide a common framework to further connections between farmers and low income citizens.

- 1) The connection between local farmers and people living on low incomes should not be assumed. Organizations considering creating the types of initiatives outlined in this review should first explore whether or not the region has the agricultural capacity to make locally produced food widely available.

⁶¹ Ibid, 396.

⁶² Johnson and Ballamingie, *Social Entrepreneurship : Green Business: An A-to-Z Guide*.

⁶³ The vagueness in this definition is deliberate to account for the number of initiatives that can be included in this category. For an in-depth review see Simon Teasdale, "How Can Social Enterprise Address Disadvantage? Evidence from an Inner City Community," *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing* 22 (2010): 89-107.

⁶⁴ Teasdale, 92.

⁶⁵ See Marguerite Mendell, "Reflections on the Evolving Landscape of Social Enterprise in North America," *Policy and Society* 29 (2010): 243-256.

⁶⁶ Sean Markey, Stacy Corriveau, Michael Cody and Brenda Bonfield, Social Enterprise Legal Structure: Options and Prospects for a Made in Canada Solution, Center for Sustainable Community Development (BC: Simon Fraser University, 2011). Available at <http://www.mtroyal.ca/wcm/groups/public/documents/pdf/selsreport.pdf>.

- 2) Often, initiatives require a third party to offset the price of locally-produced food for people on low incomes.
- 3) Almost every initiative explored relies, to some extent, on volunteer support. Initiatives that are structured around long term volunteer support should review the challenges that this presents, and consider the opportunities created for the volunteers.
- 4) Initiatives explored in this review should not be viewed as replacements to more traditional support for people living on low income, such as social assistance. Rather, they should be developed in conjunction with initiatives that call for more systemic change.
- 5) Further research should explore the opportunities in connecting these two groups through online resources for food ordering and delivery, to remedy the geographic challenges of some initiatives, as pointed out in this scan. This should include research into broader initiatives that connect people living on low income to internet resources.

Acknowledgements

Gratitude is owed to all stakeholders in Eastern Ontario who were consulted for the research highlighted in this environmental scan. We would like to specifically acknowledge the members of the Eastern Ontario node of the Nourishing Communities project. A special thanks to Phil Mount and Ross Curtner for reviewing earlier versions of this work. Also thanks is owed to Louise Livingston of the Harvest Hastings, Susan Hubay and Charlotte Kennedy for organizing and providing input to a parallel research project that we drew from when developing this scan.