



# Submission to the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery and Renewal

PREPARED BY THE KAMLOOPS FOOD POLICY COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

June 5, 2020

## Context: What has changed since COVID-19?

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, food security has been one of the key concerns among government, businesses, and individuals. There are a number of themes that have emerged that speak to the risks in the food system and possible mitigation factors. We have outlined these trends and themes below.

### *Emergency Food*

Emergency food access has been disrupted for vulnerable populations, and food supply and materials are harder to access for emergency food providers.<sup>1</sup> There is reduced emergency food provision capacity (volunteers and staff) because of uncertainty about health and safety procedures and risk of contracting the virus.

### *Household Food Insecurity*

There is concern for the medium and long term economic impacts on household food insecurity. Before the COVID-19, there were 4.4 million food insecure people in Canada and that number is expected to double as a result of the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

### *Community Food Security*

There is a significant increase in people wanting to grow food, a long waitlist for community garden spaces, and demand for education on how to grow and preserve foods for the winter. Many people are concerned about preparing for a second wave of the virus, which is anticipated by health experts in BC to appear in the fall.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Meeting notes from food sector dialogues held March 25th, April 1st, April 8th 2020

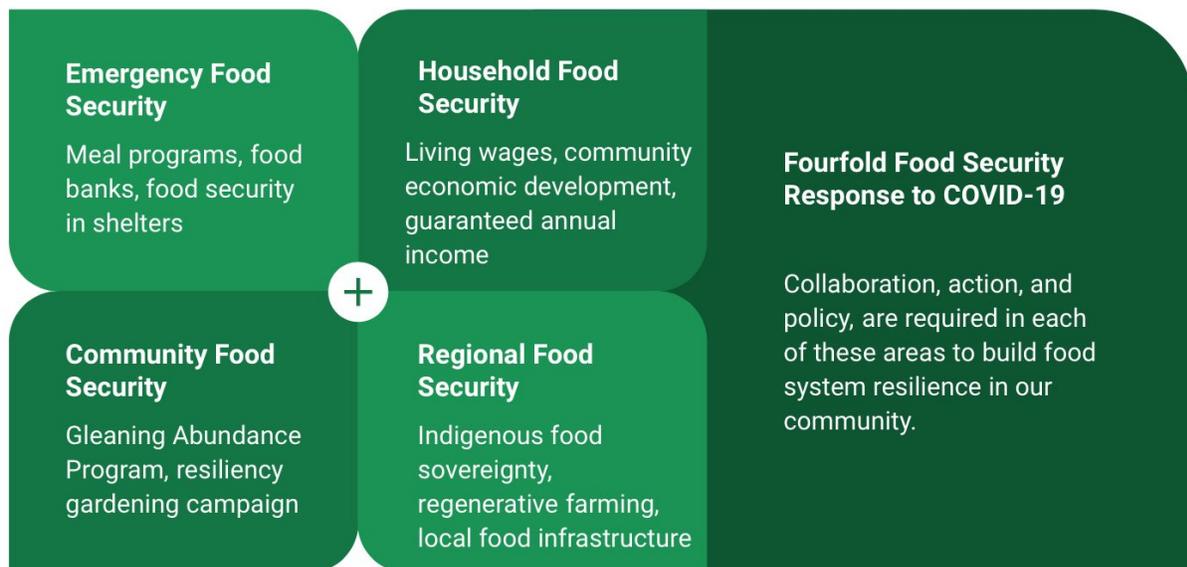
<sup>2</sup> Food Secure Canada (2020) Growing Resilience and Equity: A Food Policy Action Plan in the Context of COVID-19. Accessed from: [https://foodsecurecanada.org/sites/foodsecurecanada.org/files/2020-05\\_-\\_gre\\_en\\_12\\_49.pdf](https://foodsecurecanada.org/sites/foodsecurecanada.org/files/2020-05_-_gre_en_12_49.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> CBC (May 12, 2020) BC's Top Doctor Bonnie Henry Says 2nd Wave of COVID-19 Inevitable, but Current Lessons Will Guide Response. Accessed from:

## Regional Food Security

Regional food systems are more important now than they ever have been. We've seen how fragile the global food system is since March. For example, several outbreaks in meat processing plants in Canada, a sector that has undergone intensive concentration, have resulted in more expensive and less available protein in grocery stores. In the US, the closure of just three processing plants decreased pork production by 15%.<sup>4</sup> California exports almost 45% of its agricultural commodities to Canada (\$3.3B in fresh fruits and vegetables<sup>5</sup>) and it is in the top 5 states impacted by COVID-19. Our agricultural sector relies heavily on foreign workers who will be less able to travel, so planned crops may not be able to be planted or harvested like usual. Food prices, especially for fresh produce, are expected to increase.

These are complex issues, however, how we react locally will make a big difference to our resilience as a community. The following graphic shows how we can build capacity in the local food system across these geographies:



## Economic Recovery: What is the role of the local food system?

The Kamloops Food Policy Council urges the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery and Renewal to increase investment and strengthen policy that supports our local food system. A strong agri-food sector will be a driver for economic recovery and diversification. Investments in this sector will result in several evidence-based benefits.

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-may-21-2020-1.5577286/b-c-s-top-doctor-bonnie-henry-says-2nd-wave-of-covid-19-inevitable-but-current-lessons-will-guide-response-1.5577290>

<sup>4</sup> Globe and Mail (April 29, 2020) As meat plants shut down, COVID-19 reveals the extreme concentration of our food supply. Accessed from: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-as-meat-plants-shut-down-covid-19-reveals-the-extreme-concentration/>

<sup>5</sup> University of California Davis (2017) California Export Data. Accessed from: [https://aic.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2017\\_CDFA\\_Tables.xlsx](https://aic.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2017_CDFA_Tables.xlsx)

### ***Strong local food systems support access to food for everyone***

One of KFPC's core values is to strengthen household food security for everyone who lives in the region, and we see integral interconnections between the economic vitality of our region and the care we extend to the most vulnerable members of our community. We also see many opportunities for multi-functional partnerships that meet goals for increasing both household food security and economic recovery. The agri-food sector can be an important source of jobs and opportunities to the community, which results in less reliance on emergency food programs. Businesses creating value-added food products can create good jobs that utilize transferable skills of people currently out of work in the restaurant industry. Local producers can create beneficial partnerships with social service agencies who provide meals to vulnerable populations.

### ***Local food experiences can diversify our economy by connecting us to the seasons, to the land and to each other***

Increased interest in local foods is supported by established and emergent consumer awareness and desire to know where our food comes from. Sharing knowledge and stories of food and place builds community pride, and encourages local residents to explore their own backyards, supporting the local tourism sector while travel is still discouraged. A strong local food economy can result in substantial economic, cultural and ecological benefits in support of a vibrant and liveable community. Our farmers market, one of the most successful in the province, our established craft brewing industry, the growing Kamloops wine trail, and the recent relaunch of the Kamloops Agri-Centre on the old exhibition grounds are all examples of the ways local agriculture contributes to creating a vibrant community with spin off benefits for residents and visitors.

### ***Strong local food economies have significant economic multiplier effects and can create economic value through social connectivity***

Emerging economic research is working to better understand the impacts that multiplier effects can have in small regional economies – and to understand how and why these multiplier effects can be larger in local food systems than in other sectors. In part, this is because of how interconnected agri-food businesses are – e.g. an apple moves from the orchard to the cidery to the restaurant. Additionally, strong multiplier effects can be created by what are sometimes called “sticky relationships” – commerce based on social connectivity or mutual loyalties, which conventional economic modeling often misses.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Strong local food systems are more resilient to threats such as pandemics, natural disasters and climate change impacts***

Disruption in our food system due to COVID-19 has caused a lot of uncertainty and stress. We rely on a vast network of global food supply chains to ensure that our grocery store shelves are kept stocked.

---

<sup>6</sup> Goldenberg, Megan, and Ken Meter. 2019. “Building Multipliers, Rather than Measuring Them: Community-Minded Ways to Develop Economic Impacts.” *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, January, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2019.08C.010>.

Unfortunately, this system lacks resilience in times of crisis. The only upside of empty shelves and long lines at the grocery store has been a renewed interest in cultivating a more resilient food system. Beyond the immediate impacts of COVID-19, existing supply chains are also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as widespread flooding in the US Midwest or the increased frequency of drought and wildfires in California. Building up our local food economy is one way of increasing our community resilience to these external forces.

## Recommendations

1. Adopt a **holistic and asset-based approach** to economic recovery and community development. The global economic conditions created by the pandemic mean that traditional metrics of economic success may not be able to identify the most important local actions we should take. In order to support and develop businesses that can be resilient in these conditions, we recommend including multiple perspectives and working with experts who can engage with community assets and think innovatively about how to strengthen them.
  - a. Add an expert in community economic development to the task force. Our community has many such experts - Laura Kalina, KFPC's founder, is an excellent example of someone who has worked tirelessly on innovative asset-based development for the last 30 years.
2. Address the need for **access to affordable foods** for vulnerable populations and those on lower incomes.
  - a. Adopt a standard of emergency meal availability of 7-day/week:3 meals/day coverage on the north and south shores, and coordinate with partner agencies to ensure this standard is met.
  - b. Add an expert in food security to the City's Vulnerable Populations Committee.
3. Support the **Kamloops Food Processing and Innovation Hub**. This economic development project is ready to go, having completed a [business accelerator pilot, feasibility research and a detailed business plan](#) in December 2019, with the support of the BC Ministry of Agriculture. The Food Hub is modelled on the successful business accelerator approach developed by Kamloops Innovation.
  - a. Consider the importance of sector-specific economic development and business accelerator programs in key sectors for growth such as technology and agri-food and direct a portion of the city's economic development funding to this work.
  - b. Consider supporting the food hub with an in-kind contribution of city-owned land or facility space.
  - c. Continue the feasibility research conducted into the Food Hub by investigating the feasibility of expanding the capacity of existing local abattoirs or adding a new one.
  - d. Advocate with the BC Ministry of Agriculture to reactivate the Food Hub Network funding opportunity that is currently on hold due to COVID-19.
  - e. Provide letters of support from City Council for grant applications for the Food Hub.
  - f. Continue to dedicate a city staff liaison to the Food Hub Working Group.

4. Initiate a **Buy Local Campaign**. This campaign would benefit all local businesses, but in particular, it would have a positive impact on recovering food and beverage businesses, our farmers market and the further development of our local food economy.
  - a. Consider incorporating criteria for local sourcing in purchasing contracts for food services at City facilities and events.
  - b. Coordinate and support a partnership for a [Buy BC Cost-Shared Funding Application](#) to the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.
  - c. Use City communications capacity to promote local purchasing.
5. Support the implementation of a **Regenerative Farmers Institute**. Regenerative agriculture is a scientifically verified concept focused on building healthy soil that simultaneously builds adaptive capacity to climate impacts and natural disasters, and increases the economic resilience of local producers. KFPC is actively seeking grant funding to support knowledge sharing and applied research on regenerative agriculture practices in our region, with the goal of forming an institute within three years.
  - a. Advocate with the Province to provide funding for this initiative.
  - b. Provide a letter of support from City Council for grant applications for this initiative.
  - c. Consider supporting the institute with an in-kind contribution of city-owned land or facility space.
6. Support the startup of the **Rayleigh Ranch Incubator Farm**. This project will stimulate local food production, address the need for land access for new entrants to farming, and provide opportunities for knowledge transfer and business mentorship. We also anticipate creating an agri-tourism destination at the site. KFPC has been working closely with City staff in the planning department, and we plan to complete feasibility research and a detailed business plan for this project in summer 2020.
  - a. Contribute funding or in-kind City staff support for feasibility research and business plan development.
  - b. Secure a commitment from City Council and the Parks department that land at the Tournament Capital Ranch in Rayleigh is prioritized for food production rather than general park use.
  - c. Continue to dedicate a City staff liaison to the working group.
7. Support **Resiliency Gardening**, a [campaign](#) launched by the KFPC in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The goal of this campaign is to support increased backyard food production, expand on existing urban agriculture initiatives such as the [Gleaning Abundance Program](#) and the Butler Urban Farm, and donate fresh produce to partner agencies.
  - a. Expand existing supports for community gardens and other urban agriculture initiatives, consider making additional Parks staff time available, and examine how city land and greenhouse space might support this work.
  - b. Create incentives for backyard food production, such as increases to the tree coupon program for residents who register their trees with the Gleaning Abundance Program.
  - c. Increase edible landscaping on city land where appropriate, accounting for bear aware guidelines and neighborhood needs. Work with the Gleaning Abundance Program to harvest the produce.

8. Support regional **agricultural and climate change planning**. Climate change resilience is a key factor in the economic viability of agri-food businesses.
  - a. Review, update and expand on the Kamloops Area Agriculture Plan.
  - b. Advocate to the TNRD to develop an agriculture plan for the region. Provincial funding for the Agriculture Area Planning Program is expected to re-open in October 2020.
  - c. Together with the TNRD, advocate to the Province to create a plan for the Thompson-Nicola region through the [BC Agriculture and Food Climate Action Initiative Regional Adaptation Program](#).
9. Support **Indigenous-led agriculture sector development** projects. KFPC has been partnering with Community Futures Development Corporation of Central Interior First Nations (CFDC of CIFN) to scope a regional project focused on Indigenous Food Sovereignty and will be conducting feasibility research in summer 2020.
  - a. Provide a letter of support from City Council for grant applications for this project
  - b. Once feasibility research is complete, consider possibilities for an economic development partnership with CFDC of CIFN and Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc focused on Indigenous agriculture sector development.