



Summary Report

Your Local Food Future: An Interior Region Dialogue

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Summary Report: Your Local Food Future, an Interior Region Dialogue

On November 18, 2014, the Real Estate Foundation of BC in collaboration with the BC Sustainable Food Systems Working Group hosted a dialogue on sustainable and local food systems in Kamloops, B.C. The purpose of the dialogue was to bring together food system thought leaders from the interior Region to discuss priorities for education, research and policy to support a sustainable food system future. The dialogue was one of six held throughout the province. Dialogues were also held in Prince George, Cranbrook, Kelowna, Nanaimo and Richmond.

Invitations to the Kamloops dialogue were sent to thirty people with the aim of gaining representation from food producers, processors, academics and researchers, planners, regional health authorities, regional agrologists, local First Nations, community organizations, and others engaged in local food system activities.

At the dialogue, three central questions were posed for discussion:

1. What defines a sustainable food system for your region?
2. What are the opportunities for/challenges to development of a sustainable food system for your region and how would you prioritize them?
3. What are the priority actions that should be taken?

This document summarizes the information gathered at the Kamloops dialogue. Information was transcribed from attendee materials (Post- it notes, worksheets and poster paper), and from notes taken by facilitator Caitriona Feeney.

A comprehensive report on the findings from all six region dialogues will follow in early 2015.

Dialogue Location: Kamloops B.C., Thompson Rivers University Campus

Date: Thursday, November 18th, 2014

Facilitators: Caitriona Feeney; Cornelia Sussmann

Number of Attendees: 16

Attendee Names and Affiliations:

Stephen Bentley, Planner, City of Kamloops

Dede Bone, Interior Community Services

Kevin Boon, BC Cattlemen's Association

John Church, Thompson Rivers University

Jim Forbes, Regional Agrologist, MoA

Lavonne Fortie

Shaleigh Garson, Kamloops Garden

Anne Grube, Kamloops Regional Farmers
Market Society

Carole Hebden, Kamloops Food Policy Council

Adrienne Houlberg, Tranquille Farms

Keira Mcphee, Kamloops Food Policy Council

Elaine Sedgman, Master Gardener

Rose Soneff, Interior Health

Ron St.Marie

Cheryl Thomas, BC Food Systems Network

Dave Whiting, Kamloops Food Policy Council

Observers:

Brent Mansfield, BC Sustainable Food Systems
Working Group

Dr. Kent Mullinix, BC Sustainable Food Systems
Working Group; KPU

Jim Rempel, Real Estate Foundation of BC

Leanne Sexsmith, Real Estate Foundation of BC

Conversation 1: What defines a sustainable food system for the Interior Region?

What we heard:

A sustainable food system for the Interior addresses local demand and contributes to local food self-sufficiency. It is a complete system comprised of local production, storage, processing and distribution. It is good for people and for ecosystems. The system provides adequate financial compensation to people who work in it, and healthy food produced in the system is accessible to all members of the community. The system operates in alliance with Indigenous people. It can be sustained into the future.

Some of the participant comments we recorded:

Addresses local demand and conditions

- A sustainable food system in our region would not rely on food items imported by train, plane, and truck. All of our basic food needs would be supplied from within our region in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- Contributes to self-sufficiency; supports the local community.

- Utilizing, preserving and enhancing local production practices, capabilities and resources to supply demands for food within the area in a manner that will last into the future.
- Takes into account the various cultures within the region.
- Supports the work by small communities.
- Contributes to local resilience and inter-connectedness, to food sovereignty

A Complete system

- From seed to plate to waste – a closed system.
- Deals with all aspects of the food system: production (can be several types), distribution, processing, access, consumption, waste management etc.
- Holistic and organic practices in food production, organization, storage and distribution with a focus on sustainable environmental practices and economic development.
- Food recovery – recognition that issues of distribution & elimination of food waste are as critical as production.
- Has to be sustained over time; sustainable in the long run

Good for people and for ecosystems

- A sustainable food system provides all the nutritional needs of its population while nourishing the rest of the local ecosystem including plants, animals, and soil and water resources.
- Sustainable food systems provide wholesome food for people while providing economic profits for producers and protecting the environment.
- Socially just: the poorer, the more food insecure, are serviced through approaches like guaranteed annual income.
- An inclusive system where healthy food is made accessible to all. No food deserts.
- The process of growing and harvesting food doesn't deplete natural resources, harm the earth or poison those who are eating the food.
- The social benefits of local food production are considered – community building, health, food, education, care for the earth, food sovereignty.
- Takes into account the ecology of the region; supports the organisms within the soil; supports pollinators and other beneficial insects.
- Benefits wildlife.
- A system that mitigates carbon; conserves ground and surface water, and organic matter. It uses minimal energy inputs.
- Soil enhancement; conservation of water; seed saving.
- Free of man-made pesticides. Uses alternative pest control.
- Organic agriculture.
- Ground all food systems in alliance with First Nations.
- Integrates Aboriginal land use and access.
- A food system should be based on the 7 pillars of food sovereignty

Viability for food producers

- Food production provides a living wage.

One participant identified the Kamloops Food Policy Council Vision for reference. The vision content is included below, copied from: kamloopsfoodpolicy.ca.

Kamloops has a sustainable and just community food system where:

- Citizens have access to sufficient, culturally appropriate, affordable and nutritious food and the means to producing their own food.
- The food system depends upon interrelationships with a sustainable ecosystem and produces, processes, and distributes food in a way that supports and enhances rather than destroys ecological systems.
- The activities of local food producers, processors, distributors and retailers are integrated, efficient, economically viable, and resilient to climate change impacts
- Food sovereignty the public is informed about nutritious and ethically produced foods;
- the public has the capacity to grow, process, distribute, cook and celebrate local food;
- viable agricultural land and other local food system resources are valued and stewarded is achieved:

Indigenous communities honour, value, protect and use traditional food practices and networks.

All policy development, review and approval processes by governments and government agencies, community organizations and businesses consider food system impacts (both positive and negative).

Conversation 2: What are the opportunities for/challenges to sustainable food systems in the Interior and how would you prioritize them?

Attendees were presented with a list of opportunities for/challenges to sustainable food systems compiled from Interior region publications such as Agriculture Plans, Food Action Plans, and Official Community Plans. Attendees were asked to add any missing opportunity/challenge areas, and then to prioritize the complete list.

Prioritized list of opportunity/challenge areas

The number in brackets indicates the number of attendees who identified the opportunity area as a top priority for action.

1. Protection of agricultural land and water (8)
2. Incentives for food producers to be ecologically sound (7)
3. Education of ecological farming and gardening practices (5)
4. Community capacity building (5)
5. Infrastructure for storage, processing and distribution (3)
6. Improving access to traditional knowledge and harvesting opportunities (3)
7. Year round food production (what grows here? alternative products?) (3)
8. Farm profitability (2)
9. Marketing and branding local food (2)
10. Improved access to local food (2)
11. Public knowledge/awareness (community education) (2)
12. Policy, bylaws and urban design that support food systems (2)
13. Urban agriculture (2)
14. Research partnerships to inform policy (2)
15. Diversification of production methods (1)
16. Producer education and support for new entrants (1)
17. Local procurement by institutions and governments (1)
18. Increasing processing capacity
19. Food security as priority for all levels of government and food systems players
20. Food safety regulations

Discussion Notes

In discussion about the opportunity/challenge areas for sustainable food systems in the Interior, the following issues were highlighted and information shared.

Community Capacity Building and Education

- Need a centralized hub of resources for capacity building activities
- Develop community food system priorities
- Community support for food security volunteers in the area; we need constant champions in each area
- Not all aspects of community see sustainability as a priority, eg. politicians, municipal administration, restaurant owners; we need everyone involved
- Education on ecological farming and gardening; school gardens
- Education for the very young to very old
- In schools we could teach, as a specific topic, food waste-composting
- Celebrate and learn from traditional (Indigenous) knowledge, for example, about harvesting opportunities
- Support for gleaning operations
- Address food waste

Policy and Governance including incentives for ecologically sound food production

Attendees identified a number of areas for local/regional and provincial policy, zoning and bylaw change.

- Regional food policy councils would be useful
- More policy makers should be involved with/interested in food system issues, for example city councillors and mayors.
- Governments should put financial resources into development of food policy and its implementation
- All levels of government and community setting food security as a priority.
- Urban policy should promote urban growth to move up not out so that sprawl doesn't take the agriculture land.
- Urban zoning, policy and design should be re-thought for food friendly neighbourhoods: allow food production, processing and retail.
- Urban agriculture can contribute to local food self-reliance. Zoning and bylaws should address and recognize the importance of all aspects of urban agriculture
 - Community gardens/collective gardens
 - Public produce gardens
 - Front/backyard gardens
 - Spin gardening
 - Yard share
- Tax incentives-lower water rates for people that are utilizing their gardens for production
- Local procurement by institutions and governments could be encouraged

- Scale-appropriate regulation: we can create safe food systems that aren't over-regulated and full of red-tape. For example, we need to change food safety regulations for smaller food processors to be successful
- Consistency of regulations among geographic locations is important for food trade and to keep costs down – for example, cattle BSE regulations.
- WCB regulations can be a problem because volunteers are considered employees so they need to have the correct coverage
- Food grading systems create waste: there is an opportunity to use products that don't make grade
- Groundwater needs to be protected by ensuring implementation of Water Sustainability Act
- The division of ALR into 2 zones-creates more difficulties for zone 2 to preserve agricultural land
- Funding more legislation to protect the ground water and agriculture.
- Used to have a lot of tomato capacity; that land has been paved over- excellent productivity
- Incentives for food producers on a larger scale farms to be ecologically sustainable:
- Subsidy for maintenance of ecosystem services
- Tax reduction, lower water rates could be provided for organic, sustainable farming

Infrastructure

- We need more processing facilities; cooler vehicles for transport; underground storage
- Places to make and age products like cheese
- We need irrigation access/infrastructure
- We could increase processing capacity utilizing food that doesn't fit within the current grading system; that system is based on a cosmetics instead of nutrition

Production and Production Methods

- Modes of agriculture can be diversified: hydroponic, traditional, drought, soil-less gardening; greenhouse production
- To help maintain viability we can expand year round production. Research what we can produce here effectively.
- Identify alternative foods to replace those we might not import in future years, like coffee.
- Reduce and eventually eliminate non-ecological practice, for example, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, GE seeds and plants.
- Mentor young farmers.
- Make farm work sexy
- Lumby Gleaners use every bit of food that would be wasted. They dry it, preserve it and ship it all around the world. Good example of food production year round. Businesses are donating for the running of the company

Conversation 3: Actions for Prioritized Opportunity/Challenge Areas

Dialogue attendees ranked the following four opportunity/challenge areas as the most important for immediate action.

Prioritized Opportunity/Challenge Areas

1. Protection of agricultural land and water
2. Incentives for food producers to be ecologically sound
3. Education of ecological farming and gardening practices
4. Community capacity building

Attendees offered specific ideas for action in each of the four opportunity/challenge areas, identifying roles for funders like the REF BC.

Ideas for Action

Protection of agricultural land and water

- REF could help fund research on the bylaws which would help protect water and land for example, gray water use. They could fund research on changes to provincial codes so they better reflect protection of water.
- Fund research examining the recent changes to ALR/ALC to determine impacts, particularly with regard to protecting agricultural resources – land and water. See if changes need to be reversed or strengthened.
- Realtors prepare and provide a fact sheet regarding the ALR to every purchaser of property in the ALR.
- Advocate for funding of ALR and agriculture in urban areas.

Incentives for food producers to be ecologically sound

- Environmental farm planning is occurring through the Ministry of Agriculture. An environmental advisor and farmer sit down and work out an environmental farm plan. The program could use more money to help engage more farmers.
- A lot of producers will partner with Ducks Unlimited or other environmental organizations to make sure they are protecting habitat. We should start with an understanding of what is already being done.
- In addition to or in place of regulation, farmers could be incentivized financially to pursue best management practices, and ecosystem services.
- Tax break for maintaining a piece of land in an organic status; research how Europe does this.
- Research how everyone from home gardeners to commercial farmers would receive incentives (tax, water) to grow in an ecologically sound manner.
- Farm classification could be expanded to include urban agriculture (BC Assessment criteria)

- Whole measures – assess all food policy and check whether it meets the best ecological practices and social justice measures.

Community capacity building

- Support development of community food centres or food hubs
- Provide core funding to assist community groups and their projects Fund administrator salaries for non-profits.
- Support existing networks that facilitate important relationships in the community
- Support social enterprises
- Set up an institutional structure related to food systems that has regional ties
- People are already selling bruised foods, lower ‘grade’ foods at discount prices. There is an opportunity to expand this so lower income people can access healthy local food.
- Develop best practices for local food policy councils
- We don’t have a food production issue but a distribution problem. Develop programs and curriculum to teach people about what to do with all the food we have – preserving, canning etc.
- Promote local food procurement processes
 - Kamloops has a university, hospital; prison-not one of them is using a local producer-they have to use a regional distributor.
 - The prison does produce food but cannot use it internally. They have to donate the food.
- Influence other funders, especially community foundations, to support sustainable food systems activities (building off of Cultivating Food Systems Connections for Collective Impact Symposium)

Education of ecological farming and gardening practices

- Promote and support community - university research alliances about food education, for example UBC and Vancouver School Board *Act and Think Green* program.
- Support school programs with partnerships, for example school gardens, cooking, composting, and farm to school salad bars. Find partners in each area.
- Whole food system education – how to grow, prepare and eat healthy, local food in schools and broader community
- REF Foundation money comes from real estate transactions; REF could use some of that for neighbourhood level education on food production, for example education of renters and home-owners about ecological gardening practices at homes and in neighbourhoods
- Funding for development and curriculum:
 - Workshops and work parties for householders on perennial food systems, eco garden practices, permaculture.
 - Small scale groups 10-20 to inspire conversations
 - Sharing the abundance and gleaning programs
 - Public produce projects
 - Share food and knowledge: share a row, grow a row.

- Growing communities
- Outreach and learning via peer to peer and web tutorials.
- Activity Guide programs
- Mentorship of new farmers with successful farmers and intergenerational exchange of knowledge

Other actions to support development a sustainable food system in the Interior

Dialogue attendees offered the following suggestions for research that could contribute toward sustainable food systems in the Interior.

Research

- Funding research on by-laws and code for gray water use
- Research on tax-incentives or water rate reductions for growing food in ecological ways
- Research policy and regulations for payment for ecological services on farms
- Funding for research, policy and education on barriers / regulations preventing incorporating food grown at prisons into the meal program
- Funding for research, policy and education on how international trade agreements are impacting public procurement
- Research on the impacts of the recent changes to the ALR/ALC

What happens next?

In February 2015 a comprehensive report on the information gathered at all six regional dialogues will be released to the public. The report will summarize findings and identify region specific as well as pan-regional priority areas for action toward sustainable food systems. As a dialogue participant/invitee, you will receive an emailed copy of the report. The Real Estate Foundation of BC will be hosting a webinar to share findings from the dialogues. Information on the date and registration for the webinar will be emailed to you in January of 2015. If you have any questions or comments about this summary, the up-coming comprehensive report, or the dialogue series in general, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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