

Canadian Policy Landscape for Local, Sustainable Food Systems

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FLEdGE (Food: Locally Embedded Globally Engaged) & Food Secure Canada

This discussion paper was developed as a part of a community-academic collaborative project between Food Secure Canada and FLEdGE (Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged) to map the existing agri-food policy landscape in Canada. The views presented are those of the author and do not necessarily present those of either FSC or FLEdGE.



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Introduction

A sustainable territorial food system can be defined as a “set of agri-food supply chains that integrate sustainable development, that are localized on a regional geographic scope and that are coordinated by a territorial system of governance” (Rastoin, 2014). In Canada, farmer-led initiatives in the 1970s (e.g. supply management) and, more recently, consumer-driven efforts (e.g. community supported agriculture) are enabling the emergence of territorial food systems. These initiatives are diverse: in 2009, one study identified 2,300 ‘local food initiatives’¹ across the country, ten percent of which were organized as cooperatives such as producer marketing groups, farmers’ markets and grocery stores² (CCA, 2008).

Territorial food systems are comprised of direct and semi-direct marketing channels. They generally supply differentiated and specialty markets by appealing to third party bodies that can certify the quality of the agri-food products (organic, free range, terroir). For instance, Local Food Plus (LFP) began as a “regional label (...) LFP not only lays out a set of standards for sustainable agricultural practices but also focuses on the “local” aspect of sustainable production (Louden & MacRae, 2010). In other words, its uniqueness lies in bundling local and sustainable together” (Sumner 2015, 129).

Territorial food systems represent a converging arena of food governance and policy to address the inter-related issues of health and sustainability. Municipalities and regional governmental authorities (public health, rural development, agriculture) are increasingly seeking to coordinate the development of territorial food system by launching task forces or designing strategies that are often in collaboration with civil society organizations and small to medium sized businesses. “Regional planning for improved agricultural capacity to supply produce, legumes, and whole grains has the potential to improve population health as well as the local food economy” (Desjardins 2014, 1).

A territorial food systems approach underscores that local and sustainable food systems systematically suffer from jurisdictional gaps and policy constraints. Federal, provincial, and territorial legislation and policy - such as food safety, institutional purchasing, agricultural expenditures and rural revitalization schemes - are misaligned with the goals of sourcing food sustainably and supporting small and medium sized regional businesses to capture the opportunities of growing niche and differentiated markets. In this context, there is an urgent need to review the policy frameworks to support and facilitate the emergence of sustainable *and* local food systems in Canada as a means to deliver on the broader socio-economic and environmental public agenda.

In this discussion paper, we examine the definition and promotion of “local food” and the

¹ The inclusion of new questions in the 2016 Census on Agriculture, on direct marketing practices and succession planning, will likely fill some gaps in the current state of knowledge.

² Canada has 8,500 co-operatives and credit unions with more than 17 million members, 21% of which are in the agricultural sector ([House of Commons Special Committee on Co-operatives, 2012](#)). A ‘food systems’ approach like the one adopted by the Canadian Co-operative Association also highlights the role of food co-operatives in the retail sector.

emergence of “scale appropriate”³ regulations in the context of supply management and meat processing. We end this discussion paper by investigating some of the existing mechanisms to leverage government purchasing (i.e. public procurement) to grow regional food economies. We will start by addressing the federal policy frameworks and mechanisms.

Methodology

Canadian Policy Landscape for Local, Sustainable Food Systems is one of six discussion papers on the current landscape of Canadian food policy and institutions. The research was the result of a partnership between Food Secure Canada⁴ (FSC) and [Food : Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged](#) (FLEdGE), led out of Wilfrid Laurier Universities’ Centre for Sustainable Food Systems.

The research questions, analysis, and results were developed with community leaders in FSC’s network. The aim of the research was to better understand good practices and frameworks, gaps, and obstacles in provincial and federal policy interventions.

The focus on local, sustainable food systems was selected through a short survey with provincial and territorial networks. The concept of territorial food systems bundles local and sustainable food and connects to several of the People’s Food Policy⁵ discussion papers. This topic was also the subject of knowledge exchange activities by an FSC issue-based network⁶.

In developing this paper, we drew from semi-structured interviews with three informants in Ontario, and two in the northwest territories outside the FSC team. We also relied on informal scoping conversations and available documentation. The maps were used in two workshops (October 2016) and were sent to provincial/territorial networks, both of which provided opportunities for feedback. The first draft of this discussion paper was also reviewed Phil Mount, FLEdGE partner and Research Associate at the Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems.⁷

Particular attention was paid to the relationship between provincial/territorial and federal jurisdictions to identify best practises for the development of a joined-up food policy . The author’s familiarity with the context in Quebec was useful, as the experience of this province is particularly relevant to the development of local and sustainable food systems.

The reader can refer to the Summary Policy Table and Maps, which were designed to summarize and illustrate this discussion paper. The Summary Policy Table provides both a federal and inter-provincial/territorial outlook. The three policy maps respectively address the topics of local food consumption, public procurement, and access to regional markets.

Complementary discussion papers that were developed as part of the research partnership between FSC and FLEdGE include: Northern and remote Indigenous food sovereignty; Territorial

³ Regulations that are adapted to a graduated scale of operations of a farmer or processor. The regulatory landscape includes food safety, packaging, labelling, grading and marketing requirements.

⁴ A national coalition of individuals and organizations working towards zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems. See: foodsecurecanada.org

⁵ See <https://foodsecurecanada.org/resources-news/newsletters/discussion-papers-peoples-food-policy>

⁶ See: <https://foodsecurecanada.org/community-networks/local-sustainable-food-systems>

⁷ The author would also like to acknowledge the contributions of FSC staff in editing and formatting the final draft of this paper.

food systems; Food insecurity; New farmers and; Healthy school food.

Federal jurisdiction

Trade liberalization

Since the 1950s, the agricultural sector has been a driver of food policies at the federal level. This has resulted in strong insurance programs and legislative protection over supply management in some key commodities (quotas, import control, farmer payments). Since the 1980s, however, the liberalization of agriculture has brought significant pressure on state intervention, farm profitability, and the trade balance.

As a world-class exporter of commodity crops (flaxseed, canola, pulses, durum wheat)⁸, Canada's focus has been on exports and global markets. Since the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995⁹, Canada has ratified a number of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements that include provisions on agri-food goods and government purchasing¹⁰ (Crowley and Slimani, 2012; MacRae, 2014). The Canada-EU Comprehensive Trade Agreement is the most recent landmark agreement.

The federal government also has jurisdiction over interprovincial trade as stipulated in the Canadian Agreement on Internal Trade (1994). The [Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food](#) states that due to “the recent trade negotiations with South Korea and the European Union, there is a perception that domestic trade is lagging behind international trade liberalization” (2015, 1). This has led to the development of inter-provincial agreements¹¹, which this discussion paper will explore further in the context of provincial/federal abattoir licenses.

The impact of trade liberalization is uneven and is dependent on the policy mechanisms and sub-sectors that this discussion paper will examine. A full assessment is outside of the scope of this paper (MacRae, 2014). Here are some examples:

- Food safety and labeling: the Food and Consumer Safety Action Plan represents an active step being undertaken to harmonize food labeling ([Labeling Modernization Initiative](#)) and food safety standards ([Safe Food for Canadians Act and Regulation](#)) (SFCA) with international trade partners (e.g. the Food Safety Modernization Act in the United States).
- Supply management: From 1995 to 2000, Canada reduced tariffs on supply-managed commodities by thirty-six percent (MacRae, 2014). The most recent Canada-EU trade agreement eliminates Canadian tariffs on entry over milk protein substances. Although not a result of a specific trade agreement, the dismantling and eventual privatization of the Canadian Wheat Board is a dramatic instance of trade liberalization on agricultural marketing bodies.
- Government purchasing: contrary to popular belief, there are “numerous exemptions and thresholds” in trade agreements that exempt municipal agencies, schools, and hospitals (MASH) from privileging local and sustainable food. (MacRae 2014, 103).

⁸ For more detail, read AAFC's [Description - Where Ag's At - Top commodities by province and territory](#).

⁹ This trade agreement includes the Agreement on Agriculture and the Agreement on Government Purchasing.

¹⁰ Free trade agreements with Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Jordan, Panama, Peru; North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA);

Uruguay Round – Agreement on Agriculture.

¹¹ New West Partnership Trade Agreement (BC, AB, SK in 2010) and the Ontario-Quebec Trade and Cooperation Agreement (2010).

Regulatory environment

Food safety policy

The civil service, under federal, provincial, and territorial governments, is responsible for food safety regulations (standards, inspection, and compliance).

The main federal institutions involved are:

- The Food Directorate (FD) under the Department of Health, (Food & Drugs Act and Regulations; Department of Health Act). Since 2010, the FD has had a Food Expert Advisory Committee. (Mikulsen & Diduck, 2012)
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA Act of 1997)

Outbreaks of foodborne diseases (BSE in 2003, listeriosis in 2008, E. Coli in 2012, Salmonella, etc.) have revealed a number of characteristics of the governance of food safety policy in Canada:

- The principles of fraud prevention (i.e. criminal law) are on the basis of food safety policy (MacRae 2011). Furthermore, food safety policy and governance are fragmented into a number of laws, regulations, and agencies at the provincial, territorial, and federal levels¹² with a duplication of administrative costs (MacRae 2011, Brynne 2016).
- The focus on science, technology, and expert advice have neglected the involvement of the public and consumer bodies (Jones & Davidson 2013). For example, the Health Products and Food Branch's Public Advisory Committee (PAC) was disbanded in 2005 (Mikulsen & Diduck, 2012). Additionally, despite there being a strong case for a national foodborne surveillance system¹³, no such system is currently in place that could be made readily available to the public¹⁴. (Mikulsen & Diduck, 2012; Jones & Davidson 2013).
- Traditional 'command and control' approaches to food safety are shifting towards self-regulation, co-regulation, and management-based regulation mechanisms (Fuchs et al., 2011). These have led to the development of food standards for conventional (HACCP¹⁵, [CanadaGap](#)) and differentiated (Organic, Fair Trade, Local Food Plus) supply chains (Sumner, 2015). The purchasing power of retailers highlights the importance of retail-driven food safety standards (i.e. requirements federally inspected meat abattoirs).¹⁶

A systematic overview of regulatory gaps and constraints is outside the scope of this discussion paper and should be investigated in future research¹⁷. One study in Atlantic Canada reveals that

¹² Ex: the Canadian Agricultural Products Act, Feeds Act, Fish Inspection, Act, Seeds Act, Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act, Plant Protection Act, Plant Breeders Act, Health of Animals Act, Meat Inspection Act, Hazardous Products Act, and the Pest Control Products Act

¹³ <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/foodnetcanada/case-arguments-eng.php>

¹⁴ For example, there are no reports of food poisoning since 1982 <http://diseases.canada.ca/notifiable/charts?c=pl>; Data from the National Enteric Surveillance Program is posted on the Canadian Network for Public Health Intelligence, but requires a log in.

¹⁵ Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point is an internationally recognized preventative food safety system that became mandatory in federally-registered meat and poultry establishment since 2005.

¹⁶ The top three food retailers (Loblaws, Metro, and Sobeys) supply approximately 78 per cent of the food distributed to consumers through grocery channels" (Carter-Whitney, 2008)

¹⁷ The discussion paper provides evidence for meat processing; next steps should consider a close reading of the *Canadian Agricultural Products Act* and the *Meat Inspection Act*, and the relevant regulations associated with their application.

federal and provincial regulations “ignore farm size and scope of production” (Kelco Consulting Ltd, 2008, 25). In Alberta, the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce states that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), “advise that current CFIA food safety regulations are outdated and need to be revised to remove unnecessary regulations that lack adequate scientific validation of enhancing food safety outcomes, but constitute significant impediments to sound business interests” (2014, 1). There are however, divergent views on the appropriate regulatory responses for agricultural trade and commerce that would need to be further explored.

There are constraints on local and sustainable, small and medium sized, food business operations at several levels of government. For instance:

- The certification of part time kitchen and processing facilities, meeting levels of sterilization, prohibiting certain unpasteurized products (i.e.. ‘raw milk’), and meeting labeling requirements (Carter-Whitney and Miller, 2010; Kelco Consulting Ltd, 2008).
- Inter-provincial and territorial trade barriers, which govern the movement of goods across provinces and territories, are specifically an issue for value-added products, organic products, and meat products.
- Local zoning laws that assess farmland property for municipal tax purposes and business registration do not adapt well to farms that engage in activities other than production (i.e. storing, processing, and marketing)(Carter-Whitney, 2007).
- Road signage, which used to direct customers towards on-farm stands or agri-tourism routes, is another local regulatory item that could be further adapted to the goals of local food systems.(Kelco Consulting Ltd, 2008).

It is unclear whether the CFIA’s labeling and food safety modernization initiatives, as well as Health Canada’s [front-of-package nutrition labeling](#), will significantly reduce the burden of risk on small producers and processors.

The case of meat regulations

Research participants repeatedly acknowledged that regulatory requirements and compliance are a significant barrier in the context of regional food systems (117, 2016). This is particularly the case in regards to meat regulations:

- Compliance with Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and federal meat inspection regulations require technical expertise, capital investment, and market reach, which small and medium size ranchers and butchers may lack. It can cost up to \$150,000 to set up a food safety system. This sum does not include wages for several full-time staff ([Gibson, 2012](#)). In addition to upgrade costs, the lengthy timeline, inspections, and test fees may also represent obstacles: “CFIA inspections stations cost from \$9,855 per year for one red meat station to \$16,218 per year for a poultry station.” (Red Deer Chamber of Commerce, 2014, 1).
- Federal regulations do not scale appropriately for practical operations . For example, a federally inspected abattoir needs to be equipped with “a private, furnished workspace for the use of inspectors, with access to dressing rooms, shower facilities and lavatories” ([Part II, \(28\)3 of Meat Inspection Regulations, 1990](#)).
- Because their supply chains crosscut provinces and territories, retailers require meat suppliers to have a federal license. However, contrary to public perception, provincially

- inspected plants are not riskier than federal ones ([Lapalme, 2015](#)). The exclusion of these provincial facilities from inter-provincial is, therefore, a notable barrier (Kelco Consulting Ltd, 2008)
- Previously, provinces and territories only regulated the ‘cut & wrap’ stage and had authority over processing and waste disposal. According to one respondent, there remains a jurisdictional ‘grey area’ around the inspection of meat curing (i.e. preservation methods) and retail.

There is evidence that there are a number of regulatory obstacles to place-based food systems, which would need to be systematically identified in future research. Unlike legislation, the civil service shapes regulations. For example, the Canadian Agricultural Products Regulations outlines requirements on the content of different food products. One respondent highlighted the potential of inserting language that implies proximity (i.e. replace ‘concentrate’ by ‘whole’ or ‘fresh’) to incentivize domestic investment and revitalize rural economies (16, 2016).

While this means there is more room for policy change, it is unclear whether policy proposals can align. On the one hand, a single set of food standards may provide a clearer policy framework, but also discriminate SMEs and criteria for local and sustainable food. On the other hand, more flexible interpretation may lead to uneven application, lack of transparency and predictability.

There are multiple alternative policy considerations that might be more scale appropriate and less onerous (Schieber, 2013¹⁸):

1. Targeted regulations, instead of broader ones, that shift the regulatory burden to the risky enterprises;
2. “Regionalized regulations and oversight based on national uniform standards” (ibid, 281);
3. Enforcement of performance standards, instead of process-based standards;
4. Increased consumer responsibility, instead of government-driven approaches, through increased transparency, product labels, and public involvement (Mikulsen & Diduck, 2012).

Targeted programming and expenditures

Sustainable development is at the heart of territorial food systems. Local and sustainable food systems, therefore, cross-cut the responsibilities of economic and rural development, innovation and research, training and employment, agriculture and agri-food, small business, and tourism. This section provides a brief overview of targeted federal programs specifically in the domain of agriculture and agri-food and rural development.

Agricultural policy framework

Since 2002, the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) has been the main federal-provincial-territorial (FPT) cost-sharing agreement in the agri-food sector. The framework is updated every five years. The next Agricultural Policy Framework, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership is now open to consultation and will be adopted in 2018.

¹⁸ Schieber’s research (2013) is based on the exemptions of the Tester Amendment in the Food Safety Modernization Act (US). The amendment was an attempt to reduce the regulatory burden on SMEs who do not have the sufficient capital and markets to comply.

There are two types of programs associated with the APF (Padamsi, 2013):

- Business Risk Management (BRM) programs aim to insure farmers from volatile prices, weather, and pest disasters. Between 2000 and 2009, fifty-nine percent of total spending on agriculture by FPT governments was spent on BRM programs (annual average of \$3.8 billion per year) ([CAPI, 2011](#)).
- Non-BRM programs consist of AgriInnovation, AgriCompetitiveness, and AgriMarketing funding streams, as well as the other “pillars” of the APF, such as environmental programs, food safety, food quality, science and innovation, and rural renewal.

A brief assessment of the relationship between non-BRM programs and the objectives of territorialized food systems reveals the following:

- AgriMarketing: according to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, this program was “once allocated solely to export development but now available for domestic promotion¹⁹” (2015, 5). Domestic marketing is understood as national, provincial, or territorial, and not as place-based.
- AgriCompetitiveness: the third stream of non-BMR programs consists of building a modern regulatory environment. As we have seen, this is commonly understood as a barrier to territorial food systems (16; 117, 2016). National harmonization with global trading systems necessarily sacrifices smaller scale operators. Neither does this account for the fact that local and sustainable food systems are safer, more nutritious, and easier to trace than global, mechanized supply chains.
- AgriInnovation: the focus on applied sciences and technologies, biofuels, and genomic research means that innovation is primarily defined from a technical and industry-driven standpoint. The focus on value-added food processing may converge with local and sustainable food objectives. Generally, the focus on technology and science neglects other forms of social, institutional, financial, and organizational innovations (Dubé et al, 2012).

Other federal initiatives

Targeted federal funding for the Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI) and the Canadian Rural Partnership initiative (CRP)²⁰ ended in 2013 ([AAFC 2013](#)). One review of Canadian rural and regional development policies and programs states, “Traditional approaches and instruments (...) are insufficient for meeting the challenges of regional, rural and community development today”. Instead, the report prescribes investing in capacity building, community economic initiatives, effective partnerships, and new governance models (Goldernberg 2008, iv).

The Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development oversees the work of Canada’s six regional development agencies.²¹ Supporting the development of local food economies, however, does not appear as a specific priority. Furthermore, environmental programming only accounts for one point eighty-nine percent of total Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)

¹⁹ See Local Food Consumption map in annex

²⁰ These initiatives were under the responsibility of the Rural and Cooperative Secretariat of AAFC. They provided advisory services, research and development and funding for cooperatives and rural development.

²¹ Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA); Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions (CED); Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario); Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor); Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD)

Growing Forward budget (2011).

Provincial and Territorial approaches to local food

Defining local food

How do Canadian public institutions define “local food”? The multiple approaches demonstrate that there is a partial consensus over local food, particularly at the provincial level. As a starting point, we refer to Local Food Plus, the regional label in Ontario mentioned earlier in this discussion paper, which “defines local food as products that have been produced, processed, and distributed within the province in which they are consumed (LFP 2011)” (Sumner 2015, 129).

Until the Food Labelling Modernization Initiative is completed federally, the CFIA has adopted an interim policy that defines local food as “food produced in the province or territory in which it is sold, or food sold across provincial borders within 50 km of the originating province or territory.”²²

There are two types of definitions that are being adopted at the provincial level, one is general and the other product-specific.

- The product (food, seafood, or beverage) is either grown in the province, made entirely from ingredients sourced in the province, or composed of eighty-five percent of the main ingredients, with all processing and packaging activities done in the province (BC, MB, QC).
- Criteria for local foods are based on the specificities of what is grown in a province. In [Ontario](#), ninety percent of the milk in cheese must be produced from dairy farms in the province, while newly hatched chicks may be sourced from within Canada or the U.S. Yukon has a similar approach (i.e. medicinal plants).

Provincial policy efforts are primarily promotion-oriented and aimed at improving customer food literacy and the visibility of “local” foods (tours, social media strategies, toolkits, and programs). “Buy Local” programs are shaped by different institutional arrangements, ranging from being government-led or initiated to market-based. There are also hybrids, cost-shared promotional programs with the food industry. Overall, these programs are oriented towards the sectors of retail, food service, and tourism.

At the regional level: the case of Quebec illustrates two types of approaches that may define food based on regional criteria.

- Geographic indications, or controlled origin certification,²³ determine specific quality designations on agri-food products, which are unique to a region’s culture, history, and know-how. In Quebec, these considerations entered into law in 2006 with the [Loi sur les appellations réservées et les termes valorisants](#)²⁴ with funding through both agriculture

²² The CFIA currently enforces the *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act*. Since 2008, the CFIA has adopted new guidelines with regards to the claims of country of origin. “Product of Canada” claims passed from a 51% to a 98% threshold of Canadian content (Cobb et al 2011, 143), whereas “Made in Canada” claims remained subject to a 51% threshold of Canadian. See [Enforcement Guidelines](#) by the Competition Bureau Canada (2009).

²³ These are adopted in Europe, for example with the appellation contrôlées in France or the Italian denomination control system

²⁴ The *Conseil des appellations réservées et des termes valorisants* recognizes quality based on the mode of production (organic), protected geographic indication (IGP), designation of specificity (AS) and designation of origin (AO).

- (until 2016) and rural (until 2015) policy and programs. Until now, the council responsible for the law's application has recognized only four products with five others are being under consideration. One respondent points out: "Apart from Quebec, and perhaps Prince Edward Island, there is no historical commitment to quality in other parts of Canada" (I6, 2016).
- Voluntary labeling designations: in Quebec, regional agri-food roundtables have applied region-specific, voluntary labeling designations in almost all of the regions. They may serve as an inventory of agri-food products and small businesses, as a regional branding and promotion package, or as an agri-tourism route. Agri-food roundtables are "mandated to bring together all actors in the food industry within a specific region, thus cross-cutting through all of the existing value-chain roundtables" (Ashraf and Konforti 2010, 12). It is acknowledged, however, that these roundtables are under-resourced and those region-specific designations "do not have particular legal foundation" (I6, 2016).

What would a coherent multi-level approach to "local food" that would respond to growing customer expectations look like? Could a pluralistic definition see "local food" as a continuum, ranging from region-specific designations to provincial approaches with product-specific criteria, to a less restrictive "Made in Canada"? What gradual policy changes would this entail?

Strategic planning

Now that we have reviewed how provinces and territories define "local food", we will now try to identify how governments integrate domestic marketing of local agri-food products in their official planning documents.

This section identifies policy interventions as setting targets, legislation, strategic initiatives, agricultural extension services, public information and education, and targeted programming and investments, research and development.

Targets for local good

British Columbia's [Agrifood and Seafood Growth Plan](#) and Nova Scotia's [Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act](#) (2007) have publicly set local food consumption targets for 2020. The first aims to increase domestic purchases of B.C. products by \$2.3 billion (forty-three percent), whereas the second²⁵ projects a rise in twenty percent of local food consumption among Nova Scotian consumers.

Quebec's [Food Sovereignty Policy](#) set the ambitious goal of increasing consumption of local foods by fifty percent, but the overall project was politically unviable after the party championing the policy lost the house majority. The government now plans to launch an Agri-Food Policy (Politique bioalimentaire) in 2018, the same year the Agricultural Policy Framework is being renewed.

Ontario is currently developing metrics for local food access and literacy (see below) as part of its Local Food Strategy. Simultaneously, the Ontario Food & Nutrition Strategy design team received a grant from the Public Health Agency of Canada to identify systems-level indicators for food

²⁵ The reader will note that these are different metrics, raising the question of which indicators to privilege regionally, provincially and federally.

access and food literacy (OFNS, 2016).

Legislation

In the past few years, several private Member's bills have been discussed in provincial parliaments. However, these bills rarely receive Royal Assent:

- [Bill 222, British Columbia Local Food Act](#) (1st reading)
- [Bill 202, the Alberta Local Food Act](#) (3rd reading)
- [Bill 11 Local Food Security Act](#) (NB) (defeated)
- [Bill 20, Buy Nova Scotia First Act](#) (2nd reading)

These legislative proposals share some basic similarities, such as developing a permanent task force, designing a joint strategy, leveraging government purchasing, and setting targets. It appears that the legislative proposal in New Brunswick goes the furthest to include a cross-sectoral language.

The case of Ontario

Local food has only entered one provincial government's legislative agenda, with Ontario's Local Food Act (2013). The act includes²⁶ :

- Planning an annual Local Food Week
- Setting goals and targets to:
 - Improve food literacy in respect to local food
 - Encourage increased use of local food by public sector organizations
 - Increase access to local food
- Prepare and publish an annual report

Local food strategies

Provinces and territories are developing local food strategies which will be implemented in the upcoming years. In the context of the provinces with agricultural capacity, we found:

- [Local Food Strategy](#) in Ontario
- [Food Island Partnership](#) in Prince Edward Island
- [Local Food and Beverage Strategy](#) in New Brunswick.

It was also noted that northern and remote territories and provinces are also considering import substitution strategies. Import substitution aims to replace imports with domestic production:

- [Local Food Strategy](#) in Yukon
- [Northwest Territories Agriculture Strategy](#)
- Food Security and Agricultural Growth Strategy in Newfoundland and Labrador (Upcoming)

Import substitution strategies are particularly promising because there is a higher multiplier effect of domestic agricultural trade than over imports. One respondent highlighted that the province of Ontario is importing \$20 billion in food per year, over half of which could be produced and/or processed in the province (Cummings and MacRae et al 2015).

²⁶ We do not mention the tax credit for food banks, see FLEdGE discussion paper on food security

Furthermore, we found examples of agricultural ministries re-directing staff and technical support toward local food systems functions.

For example:

- In Yukon, the Local Food Strategy identifies the officers who are responsible for matching land seekers with landowner, and commits to increase the number of food safety technicians when supply is at its peak.
- In Alberta, the Local Food Section, created within the Rural Development Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, supports business planning and research.

Targeted programs

The majority of provinces and territories have domestic market development programs, as well as strategies to strengthen value-added markets (Summary table I).

Some programs stand out for being entirely dedicated to harnessing domestic market development opportunities:

- [Greenbelt and Local Food funds](#) in Ontario
- [Programme Proximité](#) in Quebec
- [Buy BC program](#)

These programs operate on a funding-per-project formula. Partnerships with provincial farmers markets associations, such as in Quebec and Ontario are also promising examples that should be further explored.

The case of Quebec

Quebec has piloted a number of programs that foster local and sustainable food systems.

- [Plan de développement de la zone agricole](#): This program consists of supporting municipal counties to engage regional stakeholders in the development of agricultural land use plans. They have contributed to fostering “territorial systems of governance” (Doyon et al, 2016), which may result in direct marketing initiatives.
- There are instances of policy linkages with the provinces [Organic Sector Strategy](#).
 - Organic businesses are eligible for subsidies when they apply for investment loans in the *Financière agricole*'s rural and business development programs.
 - The Ministry of Agriculture provides municipal counties with tools and resources to support organic agriculture within their agriculture land use plans
- The Ministry of Agriculture is also launching an urban agriculture strategy (\$2 million). It is meant to raise awareness around gardening and support municipalities in designing appropriate interventions to improve access to urban agriculture. Finally, the strategy funds emerging agri-food businesses, which may otherwise not receive support because they operate on land that is not zoned for agricultural purposes.

These programs are creating various linkages between the local food economy and sustainable agriculture. However, they also face shortfalls:

- These programs are largely marginal relative to total budgets, each representing under zero point one percent of the Ministry of Agriculture's total budget, which is largely committed to reimbursing taxes on farmland and supporting farm insurance programs (Benoit 2015).
 - Previous programs that have been interrupted, including the pilot program [Multifonctionnalité](#) (2008-2011), meant to support the diversification of farm activities, and the Politique de la ruralité (2001-2014), which provided a strong rural extension service and targeted investments in the agri-food *terroir*.
-

Instances of scale-appropriate policies

There are concerns over whether federal, provincial, and territorial policies provide an enabling framework for local/sustainable food systems, specifically for small and medium size businesses to access differentiated markets and public contracts (I6; I8; I13; I16, 2016).

In this section, we look at regulatory reviews and instances of scale appropriate policies in the context of meat slaughtering, supply management, and government purchasing.

Meat processing

We found two examples of licensing policies that integrate the concerns of small-scale businesses:

- British Columbia: the province introduced Class D and E licenses²⁷ to allow the direct sale and on-farm slaughter of small size units in designated remote areas (Miewald et al 2013).
- Quebec: forty small-scale abattoirs were regularized²⁸ between 2009 and 2015 and issued licenses, the “[permis d’abattoir de proximité](#)”.

Provincial meat slaughtering regulations may therefore exempt, through the issue of context-specific licenses, small-scale businesses.

However, there is a perceived risk that a ‘direct sale’ or ‘self-consumption’ approach is overly restrictive and misaligned with the reality of semi-direct marketing channels (I6, 2016), in which case intermediary aggregators (i.e. cooperatives, food hubs) are active partners in the marketing of local/sustainable food.

Regulatory reviews

There are also instances where government reviews or commissions facilitate the development of scale-appropriate regulations. For example:

- The government of Newfoundland and Labrador made [amendments](#) to the Fish Inspection Act and Food Premises Act after a review was conducted to allow direct fish sales.
- In Alberta, the review of the [Gaming and Liquor Commission](#) resulted in the elimination of Minimum Production Capacity Requirements, significantly reducing barriers to entry for microbreweries.
- The [Small Scale Food Working Group](#) in Manitoba was created to provide recommendations to improve regulatory frameworks, technical support, business and financial tools, marketing and distributions, and governance. In regards to regulation, the working group suggests, among other things, to develop plain language and training tools,

²⁷ The [Meat Inspection Regulation](#) under the BC *Food Safety Act*

²⁸ After the [Loi visant la régularisation et le développement d’abattoirs de proximité](#) passed in 2009, the MAPAQ invested 2.5 million dollars in the *Programme de soutien à la normalisation des abattoirs québécois* and the *Programme d’appui à la normalisation des abattoirs québécois*.

to harmonize food safety inspection services across health and agriculture departments, to improve access to provincially inspected abattoirs, and to make adjustments in the supply managed sectors.

Regulatory reviews provide an opportunity to develop an ongoing consultative process with the small-scale food-processing sector. What lessons can we draw from one province to inform others? What regulations are appropriate to review federally?

Supply management

Supply management is a mechanism based on the three pillars of production controls (through quota allocation), regulated pricing (through marketing bodies), and high border protection (through tariffs). They maintain production levels to correspond to domestic demand and prevent the flooding the market that would drive down the prices. Commissions and marketing boards were consolidated provincially and nationally²⁹ over the course of the 1960s to 1970s to regulate supply management for dairy, poultry, eggs, and turkey.

Canada defends this position internationally: “For example, in 2009 Canada’s International Trade Minister, Stockwell Day, stated: ‘We have to protect our supply management system. That’s our position and we’re going to continue to maintain it.’” (quoted in Cobb et al 2012).

One report, by [Young and Watkins](#) (2010), provides a countrywide assessment of supply management relative to the objectives of local/sustainable food systems and identifies:

- The pros and cons of supply management: “The system works well for large dairy, egg, and poultry operations that produce a consistent and standard product in predictable amounts. It does not, nor was it intended to, accommodate the needs of farmers who are producing non-standardized food commodities, such as organic milk, free-range eggs, or rare-breed poultry. All the things that make supply management successful for conventional production are constraints on the production and marketing of these differentiated products” (2010, 8). The cost of quotas and minimum quota requirements may constitute barriers for SMEs (Carter-Whitney, 2008).
- An overview on quota exemptions, minimum quota requirements, and production costs across supply-managed sectors and provinces.
- Existing options within supply management systems to better respond to growing demand for differentiated products, such as: increase quota exemption levels, alternative market development, decrease minimum quota holdings, establish specialty market quota, specialty product exemption, direct marketing exemption, and target specialty markets in allocating processing.

Examples from other provinces of programs, either for new entrants, organic production or other differentiated markets³⁰ include:

- In British Columbia, since the Farm Industry Review Board integrated the definition of “specialty products”, the milk, turkey, and egg marketing boards have designed programs

²⁹ Canadian Dairy Commission Act of 1966, Farm Products Marketing Agencies Act of 1972

³⁰ These have not been included in the maps (annexe), although there are possibly ways to represent these provincial differences.

tailored to this exemption. For example, the Small Lot program has expanded to increase options for organic and specialty market eggs .

- In Alberta, egg producers designed a Market Development Leasing Program for Organic Egg Production. It is “aimed at promoting and facilitating certified organic egg production and providing access for persons wishing to enter the industry.”
- Ontario’s Dairy Farmers’ “Artisan Dairy Program” was designed to allocate milk quota to farmers interesting in developing products through traditional production methods (Carter-Whitney, 2008). Meanwhile, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario have developed a number of programs adapted to the different specificities of farmers (Artisanal Chicken, Family Food, Local Niche Markets, Specialty Breeds Chicken)³¹, as well as a targeted program to increase the capacity for organic and kosher food processing (NFU 2016).
- In Quebec, the Fédération des producteurs d’oeufs initiated, in 2016, a program for farmers to receive quotas specifically for direct marketing purposes.

We have also heard that commodity-marketing boards may support emerging markets by providing organic farmers the possibility of contributing to industry bodies specifically aimed at representing the organic sector. For instance, the Union des Producteurs Agricoles, in Quebec, passed a resolution to charge organic grain growers an addition \$.5/metric so they can pool funds to support their industry body. Ontario, on the other hand, “has just started a voluntary check off from five commodity groups for organic farmers.” (117, 2016).

The expansion of these programs and exemptions may provide additional opportunities to help producers meet new markets, or encourage new entrants, without sacrificing the system itself—which, as the National Farmers Union (2016) makes clear, must remain the primary goal of any change.

However, these reforms are both province- and commodity-specific, which entails slow and incremental change. The one national organization, Farm Products Council of Canada, could provide leadership and promote policy options to respond to emerging opportunities across the country. This could start by approving a definition of ‘specialty’ or ‘niche’ markets that would include traditional and organic production methods and unique animal breeds.

Institutional food procurement

Public institutions – childcare and schools, hospital and seniors homes, correctional centres and government offices – can leverage public finances to deliver on the government’s wider socio-economic and environmental agenda, as evidence suggests³².

Government purchasing for local/sustainable food suffers important policy gaps:

- There is no overarching framework that set standards on food purchasing practices or that defines local/ sustainable food. The United Kingdom’s [Plan for Public Procurement](#)

³¹ See: <https://www.ontariochicken.ca/Programs/Overview.aspx>

³² Evidence is made available by the Rural and Environment Analytical Services in the Rural and Environment Research and Analysis Directorate of the Scottish Government (2009) as part of Scotland’s Food and Drink Policy (Workstream 4 on Public Sector Food Procurement)

(2015)³³, for example, provides a scorecard to assess public procurement contracts that account for seventeen value-based criteria other than immediate financial cost³⁴ (p.10).

- There are weak and non-uniform reporting mechanisms on food purchasing and service quality in government-funded facilities.
- The jurisdiction over public institutions is fragmented, both vertically and horizontally. The federal government is responsible for a narrow set of facilities, including offices, the military, and prisons, with food being a small proportion of total expenses. Provinces and territories, on the other hand, have each adopted their respective legal frameworks to manage health and social services. School boards and health authorities are, however, generally organized regionally.
- At the provincial and territorial level, policies lack cross-sectoral coordination depending on the priorities and frame of each department, including agriculture (i.e. local food promotion), health (i.e. healthy food environments and healthy eating promotion), and public procurement (i.e. sustainable development; small businesses).
- Public institutions face a number of constraints, including the lack of staff time and training and cooking installations, and insufficient financial resources to buy, grow, cook, and educate around food.

The federal government has designed a [Policy on Green Procurement](#) in 2006. It will possibly be broadened, as the mandate letter to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement suggests, “to modernize procurement practices (...) and include practices that support our economic policy goals, including green and social procurement” (PMO 2015).

Furthermore, the implementation of the updated Canadian Food Guide, the multi-year FPT Health Accord, and the upcoming Agriculture Policy Framework are all potential policy levers to integrate public procurement objectives that span health, sustainability, and local socio-economic development.

Instances of institutional-level innovation

The connection between agriculture and health has been more successful within the education sector, with health care lagging behind. [Farm to Cafeteria](#), a national organization working to strengthen linkages between farms and public institutions has mapped hundreds of local initiatives, providing a snapshot of the innovative practices already in place. In the education sector, the Réseau des cafeterias communautaires has worked with la Récolte de chez nous and Terroire Foods & Agrimarketing Inc., supplying the best-rated school meals in the province³⁵.

In the health care sector, the Whitehorse General Hospital has administered a traditional food program for its Aboriginal patients for decades, while the Capital Health in Nova Scotia is the first hospital to implement a “whole-hospital” healthy eating strategy. Local Food Plus – a third party certification body– worked with the University of Toronto and the Municipality of Markham to

³³This plan was developed following the experience of the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (see 2009 Evaluation)

³⁴ (1) Production: supply-chain management, animal welfare, environment, variety and seasonality; (2) Health and wellbeing: nutrition, food safety and hygiene, authenticity and traceability; (3) Resource efficiency: energy, water, waste; (4) Socio-economic: fair and ethical trade, equality and diversity, inclusion of SMEs, local and cultural engagement, employment skills; (5) Quality of service: food quality, customer satisfaction

³⁵ Evidence is made available by the New Brunswick Medical Society, Make Menus Matter report.

increase their procurement levels of LFP-certified farmers.

Provincial initiatives

There are multiple entry points to discuss public procurement for local/sustainable food at the provincial level, including agriculture-driven strategies promoting local food, public purchasing legislation and programs, and sustainable development policies, as well as health promotion initiatives.

Targets

In some provinces, governments have taken leadership to set public purchasing targets for local food. These include:

- In Manitoba, the [Farm and Food Awareness Act](#) enables the minister to establish goals to strengthen the domestic market for local foods. This was followed by the [Climate Change and Green Economy Action Plan](#) which committed to a twenty percent target of government food procurement for food that is produced or processed in the province.
- New Brunswick's Local Food Strategy aims for a medium-to-long-term target of thirty percent local food for all public schools.
- In the context of Nova Scotia's [Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act](#) (2007), which aims an increase of twenty percent in local food consumption, the province has implemented a [Sustainable Procurement Policy](#).

Financial incentives

There are modest financial incentives exist, with the implementation of

- Grants to build capacity within institutions or the supply chain (Ontario's [Broader Public Sector Grants](#); Nova Scotia Healthy Eating Policy Grants),
- Rebates for goods manufactured in the province (Yukon's [Business Incentive Program](#)). We are unsure of how high rebates need to be to make a difference in the market, although this could be modeled in future. In Ontario, the Local Food Procurement Policy requires ministries and agencies to consider purchasing local food for procurement under \$25,000.

Information and tools

Furthermore, some provinces have

- Developed guidelines or toolkits to support decision-making (Alberta)
- Published organizational directories of institutions and agri-food enterprises (Nova Scotia, Newfoundland)
- Developed tracking mechanisms like local food procurement benchmarks (i.e. Manitoba on the Menu) and patient satisfaction indicators.
- The Ontario's Broader Public Sector Accountability Act enhances transparency of government purchasing.

The case of Quebec

Following the Food Sovereignty Policy, the Ministry of Agriculture launched a strategic initiative to increase the share of local food in public institutions, which ended in 2016. The [Stratégie de](#)

[Positionnement des aliments du Québec sur le marché institutionnel](#) (SPAQMI) provided support to regional agri-food roundtables to investigate public procurement policies and practices and build partnerships with supply chain actors.

Independent from this local food initiative, the government of Quebec launched an action plan specific to the social and solidarity ([Plan d'action gouvernemental en économie sociale](#)) and sustainable development ([Stratégie gouvernementale de développement durable](#)). Both policies highlight the role of public procurement in supporting cooperatives and non-profits as well as fostering clean and efficient supply chains.

The case of Quebec shows that government departments may reach their respective goals through public procurement. However, the sectoral implementation of these strategies runs the risk of not creating synergies across departmental objectives.

Discussion

Good practices

There is a patchwork of good practices in the policy landscape that will need to be combined to strengthen local/sustainable food economies, these include:

- Provincial government may foster an enabling environment for territorial food systems
 - Integrating local food in legislation to set targets, plan, report, and collect data
 - Establishing linkages between sustainable agriculture, land use planning, and agri-marketing programs
 - Re-orienting technical and agricultural extension services towards emerging market opportunities
 - Support the development of municipal or regional food policy councils
 - Providing clear and plain information on food safety and public procurement (ie. 'mythbusters') to different audiences (consumers, public institutions, businesses, and farmers) with appropriate tools (repertoires, checklist, etc.)
 - Launching targeted regulatory reviews and consultative mechanisms as well as issuing specific licenses to small-scale abattoirs
- Supply-managed commodity groups are developing programs and exemptions for new entrants and niche markets (artisanal, organic, specialty breeds, etc.)

Constraints and gaps

This discussion paper revealed a number of high-level policy constraints and gaps:

- There is no integrated, graduated definition of what local/sustainable food is
- There is a lack of clarity of what can and cannot be accomplished under the current international/inter-provincial trade, and food safety regime.
- Rural, environmental, agricultural, and public procurement policy is largely decoupled from one another and operate in silos. Furthermore, agricultural expenditures are over-committed to farming insurance schemes.
- The MASH sector and other government institutions are under-utilizing their purchasing power to support the growth of regional/sustainable food economies.
- Supply management is specific to a commodity group and to a province, meaning that change is incremental and slow.
- The bureaucratic and fragmented logic of the regulatory system encumbers costs on small and medium size businesses, especially value-added, meat, organic, and direct marketing operations.
- There are no ongoing consultative processes to integrate the concerns of non-conventional stakeholders to determine appropriate policy options.

Opportunities for scaling up

There are short-term opportunities at the federal level that the upcoming national food policy could integrate:

- There is much room for legislation and policy to support the development of territorial food systems³⁶ : “Canadian governments can put in place more substantial policy and program drivers without triggering trade disputes” (MacRae 2014, 103). If local and sustainable are ‘bundled together, agri-food products “may not be considered equivalent to imported conventional ones” MacRae 2014, 103). Furthermore, the federal government could take the lead to adopt a graduated definition to local/sustainable food based on regional and provincial designation, distance, environmental regulation, and recognized certification bodies.
- The government could share best practices between provinces, through conferences, working groups, research, and policy briefs, in order to promote regulatory changes and the combination of policy instruments in support of territorial food systems
- A national food policy could issue a series of press release that de-mystify food safety and trade agreement obligations
- A policy could coordinate federal departments and policy initiatives to create synergies and leverage government purchasing in the MASH sector:
 - Health Canada: Canadian Food Guide
 - Public Services and Procurement: development of green and social criteria
 - Agriculture and Agri-Food: upcoming Agriculture Policy Framework
 - Small Business and Tourism: Social innovation agenda.
 - Health Canada: upcoming Health Accord
 - Regional development agencies
- A policy could undertake a comprehensive regulatory review³⁷ of the following federal initiatives to incorporate language that is scale-appropriate, that incentivizes proximity and sustainability, and that communicates information that can be easily understood by consumers:
 - [Front-of-package nutrition labelling](#) (Health Canada)
 - Food Labeling Modernization Initiative (CFIA)
 - Food Safety Modernization Initiative (CFIA)
- The Farm Products Council of Canada could approve a definition of ‘specialty’ or ‘niche’ markets (traditional and organic production methods, unique animal breeds, direct and semi-direct marketing). It could also create a task force where supply-managed bodies share their experiences to accelerate or expand the development of new programs and exemptions.
- Create a National Food Policy Council and reserve a seat to a representative of municipal and regional food policy councils.

Research

There are no systematic reviews of the extent of regional agricultural marketing operations and agri-tourism in Canada. However, the 2016 Census on Agriculture³⁸ will include new questions on direct marketing practices that might be valuable when combined with farm activities and income

³⁶ “Ya-t-il un avenir pour la souveraineté alimentaire?” September 21st, 2016. Video-recorded conference.

³⁷ Including across *Canadian Agricultural Products Act* and the *Meat Inspection Act*

³⁸ See FAQ, http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/document/3438_D4_T9_V1-eng.htm

In the same spirit, we found no data to show how much Growing Forward 2's AgriMarketing invested in regional agri-food marketing opportunities. This would provide a useful baseline to set higher targets in the upcoming Agricultural Policy Framework. The same exercise could be undertaken with other agencies (rural development, small business, and tourism).

Future research could systematically identify regulations that limit SMEs and identify policy pathways to change them (i.e. zoning, road signage, labeling, licensing and inspection fees, organic, pasteurization levels, supply management quota). Furthermore, systematically identify the language in regulations in order to imply proximity in the supply chain (i.e. regulatory amendment replacing "concentrate" with "whole" or "fresh" in the composition of agri-food products).

Partner with the Farm Products Council of Canada in a joint report on emerging specialty market opportunities for supply-managed commodity boards.

Regional food assessments and the comparative studies of local food systems planning interventions are critical to provide provincial, territorial, and federal policy makers with a context-specific perspective of emerging practices (i.e. food hubs, cooperative supply chains, import-substitution).

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