Introduction: Towards a Healthy, Just and Sustainable Food Policy for Canada

written by: Hugo Martorell
July 2017

FLEdGE (Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged) and 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 do not necessarily present those of either FSC or FLEdGe.
Introduction

Towards a Healthy, Just, Sustainable Food Policy for Canada provides an overview of policies at the provincial, territorial, and federal level in key focus areas in the realms of sustainable food systems, zero hunger, and healthy and safe food in Canada. This research is the result of a community-academic partnership between Food Secure Canada and Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged, led out of Wilfrid Laurier Universities’ Centre for Sustainable Food Systems. It identifies legislation, policies, programs, and other government-related initiatives and pilots across sectors and levels of intervention.

The intention of this policy scan, presented in a series of six themed papers and maps, is to inform and contribute to a conversation on building a national food policy in Canada that addresses the inter-related issues of hunger, health, and sustainability. The research follows some of the key policy issues Food Secure Canada has advocated for since writing the People’s Food Policy and when organizing the Eat, Think, Vote campaign in 2015. Each area explores current policies and the jurisdiction under which they fall. This ‘food policy landscape’ provides examples to draw from- like farm to cafeteria pilot projects or hunter support programs - that effectively reconcile the three goals. By identifying good practices, we are able, in some cases, to delineate some of the gaps and obstacles to scale up and scale out policy efforts.

We pay particular attention to the responsibilities of the federal government, the differences and similarities between provinces and territories, and the jurisdictions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments. In particular, provinces and territories are vital arenas for municipal and federal governments to undertake cross-sector approaches, by either taking a supportive or lead policy role over the implementation of legislative proposals, task forces, strategic initiatives, and joint programs. Contextual factors from one region to another play a significant role, which is particularly relevant in terms of how history has shaped the current policy landscape and what governance mechanisms are in place. Through a comparison of the provincial and territorial government food policy landscape, we are able to identify, contrast, and map this uneven policy terrain (Epp-Koop 2011).

We followed a number of specific policy threads to identify promising practices and practical steps being taken to reach the goals mentioned above. Our scan prioritized the following policy areas: community food security, indigenous food sovereignty, new farmers, the organic sector, local food systems, and school food. We also included literature on natural resource management (land preservation, ecosystem services) and health promotion efforts. We were limited in exploring other dimensions related to these policy areas such as waste reduction and resource efficiency, labor standards and supply management, Indigenous Peoples’ governance, fisheries, and rural development.
Methodology

The primary research question guiding this project was: What are the policy frameworks, and resultant gaps and obstacles, at the provincial/territorial and federal level for six selected topics.

Several secondary research questions were also explored:

- How are the various jurisdictions involved?
- What are the gaps, tensions, or constraints?
- How do policy interventions compare amongst provinces and territories?
- Are there initiatives that reflect a joined-up approach?

The methodologies of this project were informed through the lens of community-based research, meaning that the results are aimed at building the capacity of social movement organizations (SMOs) and provincial networking organizations (PNOs). The research questions, analysis, and results were closely informed by leaders in the food movement, and in particular by Food Secure Canada. Food Secure Canada acts as a national SMOs, described as a ‘network of networks’ with its affiliated PNOs, all working towards food systems change.

To start drafting these scans, we studied comprehensive reviews, policy reports and academic articles, online information on programs, legislation, and government hearings. The staff of Food Secure Canada was also instrumental in providing resources, expertise, and support in initiating the policy scans. We then drew on the knowledge of twenty-five practitioners and organizations (see Appendix A). Informal and formal interviews were conducted with research centres, national organizations, and civil servants. Priorities in policy threads were determined through a short scoping survey given to PNOs. These priority policy threads include: northern and remote food, community and household food security, and regional food systems. In some of the policy scans, we also outlined policy opportunities for Canada based on the content of federal mandate letters of the ministers of Families, Children and Social Development, Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

The research underwent several iterations. As a first step, we identified relatively comprehensive food policy scans (Epps 2011, MacRae and Winfield 2016, Crowley & Slimani 2012, de Schutter 2012). From there, we looked for literature specific to provinces and territories, programs (Seed 2012, Addy 2014, Thompson et al 2012) as well as reviews on specific policy issues such as nutritional guidelines, public investment in school food, hunter support programs, agricultural subsidies, and environmental management. In some cases, such as new farmers, we drew from existing regional reports available on Food Secure Canada’s website. Once we had a general idea of the larger policy arenas - health, agriculture, and poverty reduction - we consulted government reports and websites of each province and territory where available.

To validate and complement the policy scans, we interviewed practitioners, academics, and civil servants who could provide a stronger understanding of the realities of policy implementation on the ground. This was particularly useful in order to update information found in previous scans, validate the framing and the accuracy of the information, and identify whether a government program was still running or had been interrupted. In total, we conducted fifteen scoping conversations, and fifteen formal, open ended interviews with key national and regional organizational representatives (see Appendix A). At the
same time, we built on Food Secure Canada’s policy matrix on local food and public procurement, where we outlined the policy data based on provinces and territories and points of comparisons between them as a means to identify patterns and gaps. This process was iterated three times, as framing and priorities would change along the way. In total, the Excel-based policy matrix covered six issues with a total of forty-six different categories comparing provinces and territories.

The third and last research stage of this process was to communicate our analysis. At Food Secure Canada’s 2016 Assembly, members of the research team engaged with provincial networking organizations (PNOs) and participants on the ‘nitty gritty’ of a joined-up national food policy. The policy matrix was translated into six discussion papers, each of which underwent a community-academic peer-review process. Finally, we layered the baseline policy data through a graphic design software onto a dozen visual maps. These maps provide a summary of the various jurisdictions involved on any specific issue, and are color coded in such a way to differentiate different policy tools, may it be public investment, programs, strategies, or roundtables. We presented these maps at a pre-Food Secure Canada Assembly meeting with PNOs, and on the last session of the Assembly with Rod MacRae, a professor at York University’s Faculty of Environment and leading expert on Canadian food policy. Several board members, PNOs, and civil servants were in the room to hear more about this partly meta-analysis, and fully experimental social science research.

**Key Themes**

Taken together, the six policy scans provide an overview of the current patchwork of food and agriculture policy in Canada. To begin, this paper synthesizes and connects these policy threads in relation to the distinct but inter-related goals of Food Secure Canada: ending hunger, healthy food for all, and sustainable agri-food systems. A fourth theme of governance is addressed, highlighting some of the patterns and mechanisms of co-governance among civil society, government, and business. While there are innovative cases of joint programming, for example, to foster community food security, support new farmers or organic agriculture, nonprofits are largely volunteer-run and under-resourced, limiting their ability to scale up their impact. The growing interest and role of civil society, environmental and social movements, and the broader public in food governance has raised the concern and importance for government transparency and accountability. Finally, we discuss some examples of regulatory reviews, commission, experts panels, task forces, and councils to operationalize the transition towards a joined-up food policy for Canada.

In each of these themes, we identify several key challenges, opportunities, and ways forward. Within this discussion we also provide concrete examples to draw from- like farm to cafeteria pilot projects or hunter support programs - that effectively reconcile the three goals. By identifying good practices, we are able, in some cases, to delineate some of the gaps and obstacles to scale up and scale out policy efforts.
I. Ending Hunger: Ensuring healthy food access for all

Provincial and federal jurisdictional challenges

The mission to Canada of the United Nations Special Rapporteur to the Right to Food was a reminder that the right to food is not enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom (De Schutter 2012, 5). Resources for social, health, and educational programming are allocated based on a federal-provincial/territorial (FPT) cost-sharing arrangement, the Canada Social Transfer (CST), and the Canada Health Transfer (CHT). However, in contrast with the pre-1996 FPT model, which was known as the Canadian Assistance Plan, “the CST and CHT reduce federal conditions on how provinces and territories spend federal funds, allowing them to make significant cuts to social assistance rates at their own discretion” (De Schutter 2012, 11). Furthermore, Koc et al highlight, “over the years, the federal government has expanded its jurisdiction over income tax, unemployment insurance, social welfare programs, and a national health care plan. Yet, the administration of many food-related levers, such as education, labor, health care, agriculture, and social legislation have remained under provincial jurisdiction.” (Koc et al 2008, 126).

The mandate letter to the federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development asks the Minister to “lead the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that would set targets to reduce poverty and measure and publicly report on progress” (Prime Minister of Canada 2015). As part of this mandate, the Department of Employment and Social Development launched a consultation toward a Poverty Reduction Strategy. In the absence of such a strategy, and, in particular, since the abolition of the Canada Assistance Plan, provinces and territories have implemented their own strategies and programs.

The policy landscape is thus uneven, with only five provinces explicitly integrating food security as a priority. Scaling up this work to the federal level would mean making community food security, especially in the North, a full-fledged pillar of the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy 1, in a similar fashion to accessing adequate housing. As for household food insecurity, we can draw from the experiences of Newfoundland and Labrador (2007-2012) and federal public pensions for seniors, where evidence shows that the income-based measures that reach a certain threshold can effectively curb rates of food insecurity (Tarasuk 2014, Emery 2013).

Our scan reveals that jurisdiction over food security is split between social development departments and public health authorities. Provinces and territories like New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Nunavut lean towards the former, whereas British Columbia and Quebec to the latter. Provinces and territories that have a historical commitment to community economic development, such as Quebec and Manitoba, tend to frame community food security through the lens of the social and solidarity economy.

When provincial and territorial public health authorities have played a leadership role, they have struggled to reconcile health promotion and food access with food safety mandates, export oriented agriculture, and climate change-inducing natural resource extraction (Seed et al 2013, 463). One

---

1 “Lead the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that would set targets to reduce poverty and measure and publicly report on our progress, in collaboration with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour. Our strategy will align with and support existing provincial and municipal poverty reduction strategies.” Quoted from the mandate letter to the federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Prime Minister of Canada 2015).
assessment of regional public health authorities in Quebec states: “We actually realize that a large majority of actions implemented or supported by regional public health authorities subscribe to an approach that aims to improve access and consumptions of nutritious food, with very few initiatives actually contributing to changing the structures and policies underlying the issue of food insecurity” (free translation, Parent 2015, 59).

In the north, the development of participatory resource management mechanisms and the integration of traditional ecological knowledge are areas where actors strive to reconcile sustainability with health and equity. Support programs to hunters, fishers, and harvesters provide them with the tools and resources they need to distribute culturally sensitive, country and traditional foods to their communities (Council of Canadian Academic 2014, 78). Programs, such as Traditional Harvest Program in the Northwest Territories and the recently revamped Hunter Income Support Trust (previously Nunavut Hunter Support Program), are managed by territories and are the result of a long history of land claim treaties or impact benefit agreements with industry (Natcher 2015).

This historical context in northern and remote regions is important when brought into the context of the recent announcements to pilot initiatives to support hunting and fishing as part of the Nutrition North program (CBC Sept. 27th, 2016). Notably, instances of land-based programs can be found in Nunavut and Manitoba, where territorial and provincial poverty reduction efforts have adopted a community economic development lens. It was also noticed that some demand-side, health promotion efforts also invest in facilitating access to traditional foods, as in the case of youth education projects in the Northwest Territories (such as the Time-honoured Aboriginal Actions Sustaining Traditional Eating pilot initiative). While there is overlap with supply-side hunter support programs, no cases of coordinated supply-side and demand-side efforts stood out.

Partnerships with civil society

There are some innovative examples of joint programming between provincial-territorial government departments, the nonprofit sector, private foundations, and socio-economic development agencies. These generally aim at fostering community inclusion and building purchasing power to work with local producers and harvesters. Provincial-territorial, and national organizations - such as Manitoba Food Matters, the New Brunswick Food Security Network, le Régroupeissement des cuisines collectives du Québec, and Community Food Centres Canada - are playing an instrumental role in program delivery. The recognition of community expertise in addressing the issues faced by vulnerable communities and the development of equitable partnerships are critical to scaling innovation up and out.

Indeed, a number of tensions and challenges have emerged from these experiences. First, both state and civil society have to negotiate a relationship that is de facto funder-driven, which often erodes trust and leads to top-down, departmental and time-demanding accountability mechanisms. The reproduction of decision-maker/executant relationships in program delivery inhibits information exchange and knowledge transfer with what is happening on the ground. Second, civil society has acted as a service provider and a source of a cheap labour, which have arguably been ‘band-aid’ solutions to more structural issues. Research in remote communities with high rates of food insecurity show, that despite small successes with community economic development approaches, regulatory and institutional barriers persist.
“Food Charity” paradigm

Despite some promising steps within the nonprofit sector, the majority of interventions related to household food insecurity are still locked in the “food charity paradigm.” Food banks were originally developed as a temporary solution to food insecurity in the 1980s but have now become the norm (Mah et al 2014). The institutional “lock-in” between government inaction on poverty reduction and the persistence of charitable responses relying on donations has made it difficult to shift attention towards systems change. Today, the “food charity paradigm” is increasingly blending with sustainability-minded efforts on the part of food companies to reduce food waste, which many critics claim sidesteps addressing food insecurity with a focus on environmental performance targets. Alternatively, community and family resource centres are integrating multiple and complementary services, such as food access, food skills, and community engagement, under the same roof. They are also known as Good Food Organizations and Community Food Centres. New Brunswick’s Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation is the first major provincial-level institution to explicitly consider how to support the transition from a food bank to a community centre model through policy (Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2014).

2. Healthy Food for all: Chronic disease prevention

Federal, provincial, territorial health promotion efforts

Since 1996, when Canada made domestic and international commitments to the World Food Summit, research has documented a shift of policy discourses from to the right to food to the right to health (McIntyre 2014). With this, the issue of the right to food was diluted into existing efforts towards health promotion that had existed since the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in 1986. With the Declaration on Prevention and Promotion (2010), the federal, provincial, and territorial ministries of Health/Healthy Living, and Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation announced a “framework for action to promote healthy weights” that meant to harmonize efforts across jurisdictions.

The 2015 Towards a Healthy Canada progress report of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Health/Healthy Living scans activities across provinces and territories. The report identifies provincial and territorial champions. For example, Alberta is highlighted for its food guidelines in child daycare settings and schools and its comprehensive healthy weights program. British Columbia is recognized for its healthy communities initiatives (Healthy Families BC). Manitoba is recognized for increasing the availability and accessibility of nutritious foods in remote and northern communities (Northern Healthy Food Initiative).

At the federal level, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is responsible for two initiatives related to healthy foods: the Innovation Strategy, where the PHAC works with provinces and territories to fund regional and national projects delivered by civil society organizations, as well as the Canada

---

2 Full list of Community Food Centres Canada and Good Food Organizations, http://cfccanada.ca/good-food-organizations
Prenatal Nutrition Program (see Evaluation Report 2004-2009), which delivers services to vulnerable pregnant women and new mothers through family resource centers.

Provinces and territories have also made commitments to healthy food via health promotion initiatives. Initiatives like Thrive! in Nova Scotia, Healthy Families BC, and Quebec en Forme have adopted “whole-of-society” approaches, creating partnerships across sectors, including government departments, school boards, health care institutions, nonprofits, and philanthropic organizations to improve health outcomes. However, here again, policy interventions, are uneven. Some provinces and territories have privileged accessible healthy eating advice and social marketing campaigns (e.g. Drop the Pop in the Northwest Territories), while others have focused on research and grant-based programs to the community sector. In some cases, initiatives are no longer in operation (eg. Alberta’s Healthy U campaign, Saskatchewan’s Healthy Weights Strategy, or Thrive! In Nova Scotia).

Analysis of the Public Health Organizational Capacity Study (2004-2010) census data provides insights on a large pool of chronic disease prevention organizations and strategies. The action framework of the 1986 Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, signalled a shift towards building supportive environments and healthy public policy. Supportive environments are generally understood as changing the built environment, like urban agriculture, healthy initiatives in the workplace, or recreation settings (WHO 1986). Healthy public policy is comprised of two components: advocacy strategies and policy development (legislation, fiscal measures, taxation, and organizational change). “It is coordinated action that leads to health, income and social policies that foster greater equity” (WHO 1986). The PHOC study adds that strategies such as developing personal skills, strengthening community action, and the reorienting of health services towards disease prevention have not been prioritized to the same degree (Maximova et al 2015).

At the federal level, the 2015 mandate letter to the Minister of Health includes the “promotion of public health by introducing new restrictions on the commercial marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children; bringing in tougher regulations to eliminate trans fats and reduce salt in processed foods; and improving food labels to give more information on added sugars and artificial dyes in processed foods” (Prime Minister of Canada 2015). Since the Liberal government came into power in 2015, the Obesity in Canada report issued twenty-one recommendations to Health Canada and the Public Health Agency, including making it easier for Canadians to identify healthy foods via labelling, implementing stricter controls on industry advertising to children (in the spirit of the Quebec’s Consumer Protection Act), overhauling Canada’s outdated food guide (in the spirit of Brazil’s recent dietary guidelines), and exploring fiscal measures to encourage healthy lifestyles (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology 2016).

Since this report was commissioned by the Senate, Health Canada has launched its Healthy Eating Strategy. Of particular relevance to the discussion of health policy is the ongoing consultation to revise Canada’s Food Guide. The consultation will involve two stages: the first aims to identify evidence in support of healthy diets and eating patterns, and the second will look at ways to implement the food guide in various governmental institutions (i.e. schools, health care, etc.). A challenge in this process is the necessity of moving beyond an exclusively dietary/nutritional approach to diets and adopting a food systems lens that can take into account the different stages in the agri-food supply chain. This approach would include, among others, issues such as sustainable farming and animal husbandry practices (pesticides, antibiotics, genetically engineered organisms) and how processed agri-food products are. The report, Plates, pyramids, planet, relays international experiences that have incorporated
sustainability in national dietary guidelines, such as Brazil, Qatar, Germany, and Sweden (Fischer and Garnett 2016).

Healthy school food

Improving the food literacy and nutrition intake of children in and outside the school system are key goals of provincial and territorial health promotion strategies. To achieve these goals federal, provincial, and territorial governments have adopted Health Promoting Schools (HPS) as a policy framework. Since 2005, there have been attempts to coordinate and harmonize policy initiatives via the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health.

While provincial and territorial governments have adopted or renewed nutritional guidelines for schools since the mid-2000s, they are uneven in content, length, scope, and nutritional thresholds. In addition, it remains difficult to know the uptake at the school level, which largely depends on how well resourced schools are, the level of technical support or evaluation capacity, and whether guidelines are considered mandatory or voluntary. In the case of the territories, no such school nutrition policies have been adopted, making all the more difficult to achieve and measure the goals of healthy school food. A further challenge is that not all food provided in schools is covered under existing guidelines: “Breakfast programs and other foods that are offered for free within schools are not captured within many provincial guidelines. For example, provincial school nutrition policies in Ontario and British Columbia explicitly state that they only apply to food and beverages that are sold in schools (e.g. through cafeterias, canteens, or fundraisers)” (Godin et al. 2015, 9).

Funding, via school health promotion initiatives or school food programs, also varies considerably from coast to coast to coast. While British Columbia is leading in terms of investment per child, Canada falls behind other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. In the face of this funding shortage, a number of cost-sharing programs and partnerships with nonprofits and foundations have been developed to provide healthy, affordable meals to schools. Hundreds of programs and local school food fundraising pilots are sprouting across the country. The Nourishing School Communities initiative, which recently received funding from the federal government3, represents a first attempt of scaling this work nationally. Farm-to-cafeteria and institutional procurement more broadly have the potential of reconciling health, education, and agriculture by simultaneously working towards community connectedness, healthy and local food, and hands-on learning (food literacy, business and leadership skills, etc.).

Encouraging a healthier food industry

Since 2012, federal, provincial and territorial governments have made joint health prevention commitments to reduce the population’s intake of sodium, from 3400 milligrams a day (2010) to 2300 (2016), a thirty-two percent reduction target with voluntary industry partners. Health Canada has committed to monitoring change in 2017, using the Canadian Community Health Survey. According to Health Canada, “Canada was the first country to require manufacturers to declare the amount of trans fat on food labels” (2016).

---

3 Canadian Partnership Against Cancer’s Coalitions Linking Action & Science for Prevention (CLASP)
Other voluntary mechanisms exist, such as the Informed Dining Program (British Columbia, Manitoba). The Health Check Restaurant Program (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario) managed by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, was discontinued in 2014. Some provinces have instituted industry-recognition awards for enterprises that reduce trans fat, sugar, and sodium levels in their products. For example, Quebec’s Melior Program and Alberta’s Food for Health Awards.⁴ Additionally, Health Canada’s report on working with grocers and retailers for healthy eating (2012) mentions British Columbia’s Healthy Convenience Store Initiative. This program has since ended, but British Columbia recently launched an online rewards program, Carrot Rewards, to encourage British Columbia residents to adopt healthier lifestyles. The program is delivered in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Social Change Reward, the Canadian Diabetes Association, and YMCA Canada. Other examples of healthy small food retailer certification programs exist at the municipal level and in the United States (Fry et al 2013). Voluntary industry agreement interventions, therefore, put emphasis on the food service sector (i.e. restaurants), retailers (i.e. convenience store), and manufacturers (i.e. processors), but do not include the agricultural sector.

Excluding school food guidelines, only two pieces of legislations have been passed to encourage the sale and distribution of healthier foods in the private sector. In 2008, British Columbia amended the Public Health Act to restrict trans fats in food service establishments and starting in 2017, Ontario’s Healthy Menu Choices Act requires restaurant food chains to display the number of calories of every standard food item on their menu.

As previously mentioned, the federal government has announced its new Healthy Eating Strategy, streamlining its salt reduction strategy into a slightly broader policy agenda. At the time of writing, in addition to Canada’s Food Guide, other consultations include banning partially hydrogenated oils in foods and front-of-package nutrition labelling.

3. Sustainability of the agri-food sector

The 2015 Minister of Agriculture’s mandate letter asks the Minister to “work with provinces, territories and other willing partners to help the sector adjust to climate change and better address water and soil conservation and development” (Prime Minister of Canada 2015). The challenge will be to streamline the current, siloed approach to policy making, as there are multiple government departments, jurisdictions, and initiatives that make up Canada’s approach to sustainability in the agri-food sector.

Under the current Agricultural Policy Framework, Growing Forward 2, spending on environmental programs represents a fraction of the overall funding package (Schmidt et al 2012). Currently, most of the Growing Forward 2 environmental programs focus on farm-level interventions and do not provide avenues to tackle broader issues of environmental sustainability across the sector (Crowley and Slimani 2012).

The Federal Sustainable Development Strategy streamlines and measures environmental sustainability efforts of multiple departments, and includes several Agri-Environmental Performance Metrics. As part of the Sustainable Development Strategy, the federal government is responsible for monitoring some baseline indicators related to soil and water quality.

---

⁴ Latest online reference dated from 2010.
We have heard, in both formal and informal settings, that cap-and-trade protocols, soil conservation programs, and the green infrastructure fund are potential avenues for the federal government to facilitate the growth of the ecological services market and properly incentivize farmers as private landowners (Interview 17, 2016).

One successful program that merits mention is Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS), a nonprofit which has received government support under the National Conservation Plan. The program works with communities in order to address place specific challenges related to farming and water ecosystems. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec are at the pilot stage, Manitoba is committed to adopt a province-wide ALUS program, and Prince Edward Island has fully adopted the program.

The discussion paper on Sustainable and Organic Agriculture draws connections between several ‘policy streams’ that cross jurisdictional boundaries, including agri-environmental measures, conservation programs, climate change plans, food safety regulation, and the development of the organic sector.

Farmland preservation

Constitutional authorities over agricultural land use and farmland preservation mainly fall under provincial, territorial, and municipal jurisdiction. However, the Lands Directorate of Environment Canada (now Environment and Climate Change Canada) used to monitored land use change through Canada Land Use Monitoring Program (CLUMP) in the 1970s and 1980s. This program since has ended, making it difficult to set targets or fixed limits on farmland loss. Monitoring how much prime farmland is left, who owns it, and whether policies have the desired effect would be one key step to improve decision making and cross-sector engagement.

The Agricultural Land Use Planning Project, piloted in the University of Northern British Columbia in partnership with researchers across the country, has assessed the strengths of provincial legislative frameworks to preserve farmland. It also documents eight cases of municipal agricultural land use planning. According to their research Quebec, British Columbia, and Ontario have the strongest frameworks. Dating date back to the 1970s, some of them are now being eroded, as in the case in British Columbia with the passing of Bill 24 in 2014. Prince Edward Island\(^5\) and New Brunswick\(^6\) are currently developing agricultural land use policies. The next Agricultural Policy Framework, beginning in 2018, and the upcoming national food policy, are two policy fields where farmland preservation for new farmers can be achieved now, and for seven generations into the future (Connell et al 2016).

New and future entrants into agriculture

The federal government has few programs and initiatives that are specifically designed for new entrants to agriculture, and even fewer for those who practice diversified, small and medium scale agriculture. The federal government does indirectly support other new farmer programs through its cost-sharing of Growing Forward 2 with provincial and territorial governments. The New Farmers Initiative, a network of Food Secure Canada, released a policy brief in 2016 outlining a series of recommendations to support farm renewal within the next Agricultural Policy Framework (AFP). They identify three priorities areas:

---

\(^5\) Report of the Task Force on Land Use Policy (January 2014) (Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs)

\(^6\) Agriculture Land Policy Consultation, What Was Said (June 2016) Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries (DAAF)
accessing training, capital and financing, and secure land tenure and argue that these can best be addressed through the inclusion of a Farm Renewal Pillar in the next AFP.

The development of the organic sector

Despite the positive environmental impacts of the organic sector and strong consumer buy-in, the development of the sector is far behind the European Union and the United States. Observers have noted that “among Canadian jurisdictions, only Quebec has a full strategic plan that rivals plans in Europe” (Macrae et al 2009, 125). At the federal level, the Canadian Organic Regime came into force in 2009, after ten years of development. The government has played a role in funding research (Organic Science Cluster I and II). It has also created a government-industry forum, the Organic Value Chain Roundtable, where issues such as access to data, insurance schemes, and industry equality fees are on the agenda.

It would be relevant, in the future, to systematize how much is actually invested in organic agriculture, what training programs are available, and how much technical support is provided.

4. Governance

Transparency

Governance, transparency, and the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders are key to a joined-up food policy. There are several specific food issues on which the government has been called to act, providing opportunities to assess governmental actions and responses. In 2014, food insecurity in northern and remote communities was raised successively by the Council of Canadian Academies and the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. They echoed the report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food’s mission to Canada presented two years earlier. Some health promotion strategies have also been assessed with mixed results. The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology reported on the issue of Obesity in Canada. In Quebec, the Auditor on Sustainable Development7 raised concerns about government interventions to promote healthy food. Additionally, The Royal Society of Canada’s report on biotechnology (1999-2001), noted that nonbinding recommendations can have little impact on the status quo (Andrée 2006).

Facilitating access to information is one way to ensure transparency and measure the impact of policy interventions. The lack of data is a major weakness of the current policy making process (Crowley 2012, 45), making it difficult to effectively develop evidence-based policies. Our research came across several instances where accessible data is lacking. Research analyzing Canada’s Progress Report to the Committee on World Food Security echoes this, noting a “disparate array of measurement approaches” and “few systematic or consensual approaches to documenting the problem of food insecurity across jurisdictions and levels of government” (Mah et al 2014).

Interview respondents also mentioned the absent or weak mechanisms to monitor the loss of prime farmland in Canada (Interview 2, 2016), as well as wildlife harvesting and replenishment rates in northern

7 To access the summary, in presentation format
and remote areas (Interview 18, 2016). More evidence is needed “to measure the actual levels of desired environmental goods and services outputs before and after initiation of programs” (Schmidt et al 2012, 33). In some cases, groups have advocated government departments, such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Health Canada, to release key information, including data collected by organic certification agencies or industry-based evidence on the safety of genetically engineered foods (Interview 15 and 17, 2016). This lack of transparency and data sharing has implications on the federal government’s role in partnering with scientific and academic institutions to monitor and generate accurate information to the public. In the age of big data, we rapidly need to ask the question: what is the information we need for a joined-up national food policy, and how do we get it?

Coordination and engagement

While beyond the scope of the research project, municipal governments are an important lever for food systems change and will continue to serve an important role in collaborative food governance moving forward. Municipalities and city-regions have activated food systems thinking to inform decision-making. In 2013, a study identified sixty-four municipalities with some forms of food policy arrangements, ranging from municipal administration directly championing efforts to community roundtables (MacRae and Donahue 2014). These rich experiences provide examples of credible, hybrid governance models that are working to include diverse voices. These councils have led to innovative, cross-sector responses in the domains of community food security, public procurement, urban agriculture, and agricultural land use planning (MacRae and Donahue 2014). Nevertheless, municipalities are “instruments of the provinces, do not have independent jurisdiction” (MacRae and Winfield 2016, 164), highlighting the importance of scaling-up food-systems thinking to the provincial, territorial, and national level.

Advisory councils and task forces have also been used to raise contemporary issues and provide intelligence. We have come across examples, such as Alberta’s Next Generation Council, which has released recommendations to support new entrants into the farming sector. In Manitoba, the Small Farms Working Group has provided recommendations on how to remove regulatory barriers for small and medium sized enterprises and on specialty products entering the market. While it might take years before these recommendations are effectively implemented, they do send a message to government departments and incrementally change the working culture of civil servants.

There has also been some progress at the provincial and territorial level to address multiple government departmental responsibilities. This research identified several provinces and territories with interdepartmental committees, ranging from food security and health concerns to local food. Food councils instituted in British Columbia (Provincial Healthy Eating Council) and Quebec (Table québécoise sur la saine alimentation) are explicitly working from a health perspective. Yukon has established an interdepartmental food security working group as part of its Wellness Plan (Government of Yukon 2015).

In 2007, during a civil society food security conference, Newfoundland created an interdepartmental food security committee. Unlike others, Newfoundland has two co-chairs - the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, and the Division of Agri-Foods, which is embedded in the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture, and Rural Development - which is not insignificant given the challenge of navigating departmental priorities (Interview 10).
The case of Prince Edward Island is also worth noting, as the interdepartmental working group (Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning; Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development; Agriculture and Forestry; and Tourism and Culture) has been mandated to “design a food innovation strategy” through a local food lens (Food Island Partnership 2015, 6).

Unfortunately, the mandates of these interdepartmental groups and initiatives remain time-bound and often depend on the political context in which they emerged. More permanent places for engagement are important next steps to increase the momentum within government departments. At the federal level, McNicoll’s (2013) research draws on several pieces of policies and legislation that could be applied to a potential National Food Policy Council, a mechanism that has received support from both industry-bodies and civil society organizations. Legislative proposals have been made in that direction at the provincial level: in Alberta (Bill 202, the Alberta Local Food Act) British Columbia (Bill 222, British Columbia Local Food Act), and in New Brunswick (Bill 11, the Local Food Security Act). The latter piece of legislation goes the furthest to adopt a cross-sectoral approach to such council. These legislative proposals share some other basic similarities, such as designing a joint-strategy and setting targets that should inform the development of a permanent task force or body. More in-depth study of these models is required to fully assess their scalability. With regards to governance, we can also learn from the recent experience of the federal Organic Value Chain Roundtable (OVCRT), where co-chairs “presented an alternative governance model that would eliminate Working Groups and establish multiple time-bound, targeted Task Forces intended to address OVCRT priority areas, increase outputs, better utilize resources and attract new expertise.” This example is a reminder that an iterative process is an important dimension of working in roundtable settings.

Consultations are a common tool to inform the policy making process. Since 2015, consultations have taken place, or are underway on over a dozen topics, including Climate Change (international, Environment Canada), Sustainable Development Strategy (domestic, Environment Canada), International Aid (Global Affairs Canada), and the next agricultural policy framework (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada). According to some observers, “The effectiveness of the public consultation process is uncertain, given a lack of resources and skills within the civil service and, depending on the government of the day, the degree of political commitment to it. Inherent in the structure of government-driven consultative processes is their legitimacy in light of ideological goals and international commitments” (MacRae and Abergel 2012). Sustained engagement and capacity building is necessary across the policy making domain. Furthermore, these mechanisms need to effectively engage civil society as a full fledged actor, and not merely as representative of consumer interests. Similar concerns were raised with the 2017 Food Summit in Quebec, which plans to consult consumers, operators, and producers.

Nation-to-nation engagement is one condition for the reconciliation of Indigenous and settler peoples in Canada, as stated in the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015, 4). In this vein, one respondent told us, “The word consultation has a negative meaning for us in the North. In too many instances, consultations have left northerners behind (...) There needs to be pre-consultative work done at a region-specific level (...) The government would have to partner with organizations who know the community and the protocols. It could delegate this process to existing or emerging networks, but it needs to make the resources available” (Interview 12, 2016).

---

8 Organic Value Chain Roundtable Meeting Summary: March 7 – 8, 2016. 14th meeting – Ottawa, Ontario
The Everybody Eats public engagement process in Newfoundland and Labrador is a strong example of aligning cross-departmental food security work with civil society efforts (Interview 10, 2016). It remains to be seen how this process informs the upcoming provincial Food Security and Agriculture Growth Strategy, but there are some indications that the process will be replicated and adapted to New Brunswick. In Ontario, the comprehensive framework associated with the Food and Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan demonstrates some of the qualities of cross-sectoral and multi-actorial engagement. In these cases, the capacity of province-wide, civil society-led networks (such as Food First NL, Sustain Ontario, Food Matters Manitoba, etc.), to participate is one of the conditions to receive technical support and legitimacy at all stage of the policy process, from design and implementation to evaluation.
Conclusion

From these policy scans and discussions it is clear that the existing agri-food policy landscape in Canada is highly complex, uneven and dynamic. A variety of different initiatives, policy and programs are being piloted at various levels of government, while troubling gaps remain in certain policy areas and regions. The challenge is to ascertain how these policies might be better connected together, networked and joined-up. A national food policy provides one such opportunity. While it will not bring whole-scale change overnight, it has the potential to be a first step in a longer process of building a more integrated food policy landscape in Canada, one that moves our food system towards to goals of equity, health and sustainability.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks the various peer reviewers, supporting authors and editors that contributed to this project, including: Peter Andrée, Rhonda Barron, Susan Belyea, Alison Blay-Palmer, Diana Bronson, Cathy Holtslander, Sasha McNicoll, Phil Mount, Jennifer Reynolds, Av Singh, Kelly Skinner, Rachel Engler-Stringer, Amanda Wilson, and Hannah Wittman.

These papers and the policy maps that accompany them are intended to be living documents that will require updates and revisions in the months and years to come. Additional feedback and suggestions for edits are welcome and can be provided by emailing community@foodsecurecanada.org.
Bibliography


MacRae, R., Martin, R.C., Juhasz, M. & Langer, J. (2009). Ten percent organic within 15 years: Policy and program initiatives to advance organic food and farming in Ontario, Canada. Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems: 24(2); 120–136. doi:10.1017/S1742170509002531

MacRae, R. & Winfield, M. (2016). A little regulatory pluralism with your counter-hegemonic advocacy? Blending analytical frames to construct joined-up food policy in Canada. Canadian Food Studies: 3(1); 140–194

MacRae, R. and Donahue, F. (2013). Municipal food policy entrepreneurs: A preliminary analysis of how Canadian cities and regional districts are involved in food system change. The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, 1-34.


Introduction: Towards a Healthy, Just and Sustainable Food Policy for Canada


# Appendix A - Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Policy area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BC Food Systems Network</td>
<td>Indigenous, new farmers, school food,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alberta Food Matters</td>
<td>School food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention</td>
<td>School food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Alberta First Nations Food Security Strategy (consultant)</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>REACH</td>
<td>Food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sask Organics</td>
<td>Organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Manitoba Food Matters</td>
<td>Indigenous, regional food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Organic Council of Ontario</td>
<td>Organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Canadian Organic Trade Association</td>
<td>Organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>USC Canada</td>
<td>New farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Slow Food Canada (former member)</td>
<td>Regional food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Atlantic Canada Organic Network</td>
<td>Organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ecology Action Centre</td>
<td>Regional food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Nourish Nova Scotia</td>
<td>School food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Food First Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>Food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Arctic Institute Community Based Research</td>
<td>Indigenous food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yukon Food Network (farmer)</td>
<td>New farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yellowknife Food Charter</td>
<td>New farmers, regional food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>University of North British Columbia</td>
<td>Farmland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sudbury Social Planning Council</td>
<td>Indigenous food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>University of York</td>
<td>Regional food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>New Brunswick Food Security Network</td>
<td>Community food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Next Generation Council</td>
<td>New farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chaire sur le droit de la diversité et la sécurité alimentaire</td>
<td>Regional food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ontario Public Health Association</td>
<td>Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Alternative Land Use Services</td>
<td>Sustainable agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>