

Growing resilience and equity: A food policy action plan in the context of Covid-19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food is undeniably center stage in Canada and around the world today, and with this comes an unprecedented opening and urgency to advocate for food systems change. Covid-19 is revealing and magnifying the structural inequalities in our food systems, the insufficiencies of our social protection programs, and the challenges with the dominant food supply chains – largely controlled by a limited number of often multinational corporations. Food insecurity in Canada is expected to double from the existing 4.4 million, and there are disproportionate impacts on Indigenous, Black and racialized communities. Our long distance, overly import/export oriented, fossil fuel-dependent food chains are exposing wide-ranging vulnerabilities to market, labour and border disruptions. Farmers were already struggling with a farm income crisis, and their livelihoods are now further in jeopardy. And low-paid, often precarious food system workers are on the frontlines of the crisis, facing increased health risks as they work to ensure a steady supply of food.

The moment clearly calls for visionary and bold structural change rather than piecemeal approaches grounded in “more of the same.” Pandemic response and recovery plans, and

It is critical that decisions made now – when system change is finally understood as not only possible, but necessary – lay the foundations for resilient and equitable food futures.

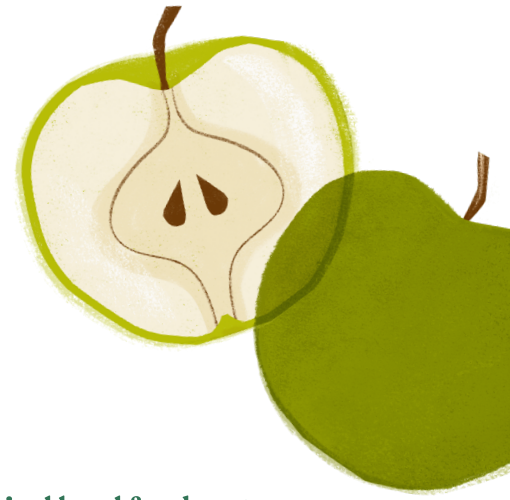
***NB:** The policy proposals here have been developed through a process of information gathering, listening, consultation and convening with individuals and organizations involved in “food movements” (social movements advancing food system transformation).*



FSC

Food Secure Canada

associated stimulus packages, will impact our food systems for years to come. It is critical that decisions made now – when system change is finally understood as not only possible, but necessary – lay the foundations for resilient and equitable food futures, notably in the context of climate change and the ongoing collapse of biodiversity. With an inclusive public-interest based approach to food policy and programming, Canada can:



- Address the root cause of food insecurity through **establishing a universal livable income floor beneath which no one can fall**, while ensuring that everyone in Canada has access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food;
- **Support Indigenous food sovereignty** where First Nations, Metis and Inuit determine their own place-based food systems, advancing policies that will best support resilient futures;
- Ensure everyone is at the policy-making table through **immediately convening, resourcing and empowering the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council** to engage in policy decisions and program design **measured against fulfilling the right to food, other human rights obligations, and the Sustainable Development Goals**. The Council should actualize the broad vision of the Food Policy for Canada, as well as include resourcing to ensure that wider civil society voices, above all those most marginalized by the present food system, are included;
- **Build resilient, ecological local food systems** that shorten and diversify food chains, revitalize communities, ensure greater access to healthy and fresh foods, support lower-emissions food systems, build greater resiliency to shocks and reduce food loss and waste;
- **Champion decent work and justice for all workers along the food chain** by ensuring decent pay and conditions for every Canadian and international food worker, and meeting the specific demands of migrant workers;
- **Harmonize Canada's national and international food policies**, prioritizing food sovereignty approaches, supporting family farms and low-input, low-emissions agroecological food production as well as sustainable processing and distribution, and
- **Immediately advance a National School Food Program**, as promised in Budget 2019 and in the Food Policy for Canada, ensuring that it meets health outcomes, is universal, and is developed in collaboration with provinces, territories, key stakeholder groups and Indigenous leaders.

The time for healthier, more just and more sustainable food systems is now.



FSC

Food Secure Canada