



what's  
**YOUR**  
recipe

a  
better  
food  
system



**FINAL REPORT**  
**Civil Society engagement towards**  
***A Food Policy for Canada, July to September 2017***

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**FSC**

Food Secure Canada

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Cover photo credit: Neha Deshmukh



Discussions in Halifax, NS, September 2017

## Introduction

Food matters. Canadians make choices every day about food that directly impacts their health, environment, and communities. The Government of Canada conducted consultations to get input from Canadians to help shape [A Food Policy for Canada](#) that will cover the entire food system, from production to consumption to compost.

Food Secure Canada organized community engagement events called *What's Your Recipe For A Better Food System?* to provide input and policy proposals related to a range of regional food systems and perspectives across Canada as part of these consultations.

We wanted to bring a diverse set of voices to the table – community members with lived experiences of food insecurity, sustainable agriculture and fisheries leaders, local food business owners, and innovative community food programmers, among others – to talk about how we can build a healthier, more just, sustainable, and economically viable food system for all Canadians.

Food Secure Canada is a national alliance of organizations and individuals working towards three interconnected goals: zero hunger; healthy and safe food and sustainable food systems.

Our 75+ organizational members represent farmers, dieticians, academics, food banks, Indigenous leaders, youth groups, research alliances, environmental groups, food businesses, provincial and territorial food networks, municipal community development organizations, food policy councils, farmers' markets, fisheries'

organizations, trade associations, faith groups, school food programs, international development NGOs, anti-poverty groups and more.

Food Secure Canada has an extensive history of civil society and public engagement on national food policy issues including:

**People's Food Policy:** Over 3,500 Canadians involved in three-year process (2008 – 2011), comprehensive national food policy platform developed.

**United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food mission to Canada:** Convened civil society participation in 2012, including: joint civil society submission, events across the country, and webinar for over 1000 Canadians with Special Rapporteur upon release of report.

**Eat, Think, Vote Campaign:** Over 4,400 Canadians participated in 68 events, hosted by 192 organizations, from coast to coast to coast organized in the lead up to the federal election in 2015.

This report summarizes the results of the 29 *What's Your Recipe For A Better Food System?* events (26 in-person and 3 webinars) hosted from July to September 2017 that engaged 856 individuals.

**29** → **856**  
events individuals

## Community engagement event details

Food Secure Canada (FSC) created a guide outlining how hosts could lead community engagement events to discuss ideas and policy proposals for *A Food Policy For Canada*. Events aimed to be inclusive, accessible, and engaging for citizens from varying levels of interest and expertise in food systems issues.

The Event Guide (Appendix 1) was generously translated into French by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and FSC widely promoted the bilingual event guide through its network. Event hosts self-identified and coordinated all of the logistics for their sessions including sharing a follow-up report summarizing the content of discussions with Food Secure Canada.

A total of 29 *What's Your Recipe For A Better Food System?* events hosted from July to September 2017. Details of the dates and locations of the events are listed below.

### In-person *What's Your Recipe For A Better Food System?* events

DATE	EVENT HOST	LOCATION	# PARTICIPANTS
15 July 2017	BC Food Systems Network	Vancouver, BC	37
20 and 31 July 2017	Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research (AICBR)	Whitehorse, YK	60
25 July 2017	Ecology North	Yellowknife, NWT	11
14 August 2017	Social Planning Council Sudbury and Flour Mill Community Farm	Sudbury, ON	80
24 August 2017	Ecology Action Centre	Halifax, NS	33
29 August 2017	Food Matters Manitoba (Plenary session at Growing North Conference)	Wabowden, MB	13
30 August 2017	United Food and Commercial Workers (Session at National Council Convention)	Montreal, QC	26
7 September 2017	Food Matters Manitoba and Winnipeg Harvest	Winnipeg, MB	25
12 September 2017	Système Alimentaire Montréalais	Montreal, QC	25
12 September 2017	Antigonish Food Security Association	Antigonish, NS	29

“It was a good chance to discuss the pressure on farmers from various angles. Producing sustainable and ethical food will require the government to alleviate some of this pressure.”

- MURRAY JOWETT,  
WINNIPEG, MB

DATE	EVENT HOST	LOCATION	# PARTICIPANTS
13 September 2017	City of Edmonton, Edmonton Food Council, U of A Office of Sustainability, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Alberta Food Matters	Edmonton, AB	62
14 September 2017	Wolfville Farmers Market To Go and Canning Recreation	Wolfville, NS	17
18 September 2017	Mount Saint Vincent University, Department of Applied Human Nutrition	Halifax, NS	11
19 September 2017	Dartmouth North Community Food Centre	Dartmouth, NS	44
19 September 2017	FSC Youth Caucus members	St John's, NL	6
20 September 2017	Family Resource Centre of West Hants	Windsor, NS	11
22 September 2017	NDG Food Depot	Montreal, QC	120
25 September 2017	Annapolis County Community Health Board	Bridgetown, NS	20
25 September 2017	Ecology Action Centre (Fisheries focus)	Truro, NS	12
25 September 2017	EarthSave	Ottawa, ON	10
26 September 2017	Pictou County Food Security Coalition	New Glasgow, NS	22
27 September 2017	Community Connections (Revelstoke) Society	Revelstoke, BC	16
27 September 2017	Cape Breton University	Sydney, NS	4
28 September 2017	Mount Allison University, Department of Geography	Sackville, NB	14
28 September 2017	Toronto Youth Food Policy Council and FoodShare	Toronto, ON	48
<b>Total participants</b>			<b>756</b>

“Using the word ‘affordable’ suggests that the price of food is the problem and frames policy discussions around the cost of healthy food, rather than income [and] other rising costs.”

- DUNCAN EBATA,  
WOLFVILLE, NS

“We need [food] education for kids in public schools and for university students - at this level, people are becoming autonomous for the first time, more learning is needed in this area.”

- NATALI BAUSTEAD,  
TORONTO, ON



Discussion in Dartmouth, NS, September 2017

## Webinars

We used the ZOOM videoconference platform to host three webinars (60 minutes) and also shared a follow-up survey for input directly following the session to capture ideas.

### Webinar *What's Your Recipe For A Better Food System?* events

DATE	THEME	# REGISTRANTS
21 September 2017	New farmers	27
25 September 2017	Social food entrepreneurs	24
28 September 2017	Food security	47
<b>Total number of registrants:</b>		<b>98</b>

“Support food start-ups – make food a viable career path.”

- NATALI BAUSTEAD,  
TORONTO, ON

## Who participated?

### *A diversity of food-system stakeholders were engaged*

These event sessions brought together diverse food-system stakeholders:

- Academics and students (from undergraduate and graduate programs to immigrants in an English as a Second Language school)
- Community members from a wide range of ages, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds including low-income, single-parent families, families with young children, seniors, disabled, using food banks and food centres, and residents of social housing
- First Nations individuals
- Community food activists
- Farmers - both rural and urban, small-scale, provincial federation of agriculture, new entrants
- Seafood industry
- Unionized food workers
- Community organizations (neighbourhood houses, anti-poverty, environmental, etc.)
- Community food programs such as food banks, community gardens, meal programs



Discussion in Montréal, QC, September 2017.

- Farmers' markets
- Health stakeholders – health professionals, public health dietitians, community health boards, family resource centres
- Municipal food policy councils
- Small business owners and food entrepreneurs
- Representatives from municipal and provincial governments
- School, health care and campus food practitioners



Discussion in Montréal, QC, September 2017.

### ***What worked well? What didn't?***

Both Food Secure Canada and event hosts were constrained with the very short timeframe and limited resources to organize these events. Several event hosts noted that it was difficult to recruit primary producers as the timeframe for the events was during the height of the growing season. And, particularly in the North, travel costs were prohibitive to full participation of stakeholders.

Despite these challenges FSC is very pleased with the number of events hosted and the quality of the conversations! Event hosts told us that organizing these events really did deliver on bringing the voices of citizens who would otherwise not have been heard to the consultations of *A Food Policy for Canada*. For example, many event participants shared with event hosts that this was the only opportunity they knew of to provide input (e.g. were not aware of an online survey) and valued that could make a direct connection from their local communities to national consultations. Additionally, these conversations were generative and participants liked sharing ideas and perspectives with each other and creating new ideas from the facilitated sessions (as opposed to sharing just their individual perspective).

In terms of support provided by FSC, event hosts told us the event toolkit was very helpful in planning and executing their events. However many found it challenging to promote the events, and to complete their reports back, with the



very short timelines they were given. Small budgets to enable offering food at the events would have helped to further catalyze conversations (e.g., providing local food from a farmers market or community food program). Several event hosts were able to access other resources in order to provide meals and felt this was helpful in making events more inviting and open for contributing to a conversation about policy.

Hosts also shared that they felt the events helped to increase community capacity in policy development. In fact in some communities the events were a 'spark' for continuing local dialogue and action around food. Exploring how we can continue to nurture ways for communities to remain engaged via events like *What's Your Recipe For A Better Food System?* in the roll-out of *A Food Policy For Canada* will remain a priority.

## Emergent themes from discussions

Here we present themes emerging from discussions in communities across Canada organized around the potential **vision, principles, objectives**, and **short-term actions** of *A Food Policy for Canada*.

The compilation was quite a challenge as each discussion was rich and varied in perspectives. The full texts of the follow-up reports from each event have been compiled in Appendix 2 to permit a more detailed review.

### *Vision for A Food Policy For Canada*

**Food is connected to health, environment, economy and equity.**

National food policy belongs in a social justice framework and should emphasize fairness, food sovereignty, health, and sustainability.

**Access to affordable, nutritious, healthy and culturally appropriate food.**

Food is a human right. We will achieve community food security when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound diet through an economically and environmentally sustainable food system that promotes community self-reliance and social justice.

**Strong local food systems.**

Need to focus on growing more food for Canadian consumption, which strengthens local economies and communities, finding the right balance with export-focused production. More supports and infrastructure are needed for small food producers and farmers, and the next generation of farmers, to help build more thriving communities and bridge rural-urban divide.

**Healthy, local food is prioritized in public institutions such as schools, daycares, and hospitals.**

Patients, students, staff and visitors to public institutions will benefit from more local, fresher, healthier menus and food environments, and local food economies will grow. Improving food literacy – knowledge about food production, sustainability, healthy eating, and cooking – is important for all Canadians but in particular for children and youth.

**Flourishing traditional food systems.**

Celebrating and fostering Indigenous connections to the land and food ways should be an integral part of the process of reconciliation.

**Water, soil, land, foodlands and other natural resources are protected**

to ensure viability for food production and harvesting for current and future generations.

**Reconsideration of the traditional fishery model,**

including a shift to harvesting seasonally and multi-species, and encouraging the viability of coastal communities through the provision of training and skills development for full employment.

“Affordable, healthy food is a right of every Canadian citizen.”

- KATHLEEN BOUTILIER,  
DARTMOUTH, NS

“Education on the value of nutritious eating and how to grow/sustain your own food needs to start in primary school.”

- DAN BERTRAND,  
SUDBURY, ON



Discussion in Wabowden, MB, August 2017

## ***Principles of A Food Policy For Canada***

Food is holistic and should be viewed systematically across silos by connecting policy instruments and structures amongst federal government departments.

National food policy needs a way to take regional and local differences and issues into account. Municipal, provincial/territorial, and Indigenous governments have key roles to play.

Engage a wide range of stakeholders in policy development and implementation who typically are not at the policy-making table, e.g. those experiencing food insecurity, new farmers, community food leaders.

Recognition of Indigenous food systems and use culturally appropriate ways to engage in discussions. The land is key, especially around issues pertaining to unceded Indigenous territory.

Recognize the difference between food systems in the North and South and that there are cultural differences among communities; need to develop culturally appropriate strategies.

Integrate 'fish' into 'food' policy more comprehensively – from Indigenous rights, to *Canada's Food Guide*, to institutional food procurement strategies, while still recognizing its distinctness.

Food equity/access needs to be understood in a bigger context, including how it is linked to housing affordability, childcare, and social determinants of health.

## ***Objectives of A Food Policy For Canada***

***Ensure access to healthy, culturally appropriate food for all Canadians:*** Establish a basic income so all Canadians can afford healthy, culturally appropriate foods. Ensure minimum wage rates are set so that they are living wages.

**Encourage shifts to more sustainable agriculture:** Reduce use of fossil fuels in food production and provide support for developing alternative food production methods and research.

**Increase farming population and number of young farmers:** Provide more support for new entrants to agriculture including resources for needed infrastructure to build stronger regional food systems (e.g. processing, distribution).

**Level the playing field for small-scale farmers:** Recognize small-scale farming as an economically viable business model and undertake reforms to agricultural support programs, supply management, procurement protocols, food safety protocols, etc. so they are scale-appropriate.

**Increase food literacy and access to healthy food, particularly for children and youth:** Healthy school food programs are a proven strategy to improve food access and build knowledge and skills around healthy eating, growing and cooking.

**Encourage the formulation of healthier products by the food industry and healthier food choices:** Front-of-package labeling for consumers will help them to better understand their food purchases' impacts on their health and encourage the food industry to formulate healthier products.

**Reduce food waste** along the value chain from food producers to consumers.

**Improve food safety:** Frequent food recalls means that food safety is on people's radar. Ensuring greater food safety in the large-scale food system is one component of this work. In addition, developing a more localized, smaller-scale food system will also support more accountability and stronger connections between producers and consumers.

**Ensure equitable, safe, and viable working conditions for farmers and farm workers:** Currently, many farmers struggle to operate viable businesses, and many farm workers do not have equitable pay, rights and employment standards compared with other Canadian workers.

**Promote sustainable diets:** Encourage an overall shift to more plant-based diets, along with more humane and sustainable production of animal-based foods, a "less meat, better meat" strategy.

**More collaborative research:** Incite more collaborative research that engages actors in the food system at all levels and across silos; prioritize learning from experiences in other countries that have been effective.

**More cohesive action by government on food issues:** The complexity of jurisdiction of various levels of government on many food issues needs to be

“Canada’s regulatory system, and particularly Nova Scotia’s regulatory system, is difficult to navigate, intimidating and overbearing. Regulate small farms into business, not out of it.

- SUE EARLE,  
ANNAPOLIS, NS



Discussion in Montréal, QC, September 2017

explored so that there is greater synergy and impact with the cohesive implementation of government policy, programs and strategies.

## *Short-term actions of A Food Policy For Canada*

### **Integrate food into the Poverty Reduction and Social Innovation strategies**

- We need to address income to fully address food insecurity. Food also offers countless ways to generate social innovation and impacts.

### **Support development of Northern food systems**

- Northern local food producers face challenges to market access including issues stemming from the inflow of subsidized southern food products. These issues should be considered in the overhaul of Nutrition North and other efforts to support of Northern Food Systems.

### **Ensure flourishing traditional food systems**

- Redesign current provincial regulations that prohibit rights-based harvesters from sharing harvested foods with non-Indigenous people, creating difficulty in sharing food and thus culture.
- Provide supports to enable more 'on-the-land' access of country foods.
- Better integrate country food access by addressing regulatory barriers related to food processing (e.g. create community-run processing facilities).

### **Support small-scale and new farmers (north and south)**

- Increase flexibility for small-scale farmers and urban growers to access Canadian Agricultural Partnership funding.
- Establish new entrant programs for farmers – support for producer acquisition of land, access to mentors and more training.
- Promote urban agriculture, not to replace traditional rural/peri-urban agriculture, but to foster innovations in small-scale farming and potentially a stepping-stone to larger production systems.
- Change agricultural subsidies that hide the real price of food and are a disincentive to small-scale producers.
- Develop scale-appropriate food safety protocols.
- Establish a minimum guaranteed income for farmers (e.g. policy in Switzerland).

### **Protect farmland**

- Establish agricultural land trusts and foodlands protection programs (e.g. scale BC's Agricultural Land Reserve).

### **Increase access to fresh, local foods**

- Support the development of local food distribution networks and infrastructure (e.g. processing) to better supply food to local institutions and build local economies.
- Expand farmers' market nutrition coupon programs.
- Support mobile food markets.

“Food matters to everyone in the North. Food security for all citizens is essential that includes access to high quality, affordable, culturally appropriate for all Yukoners/ Canadians.”

- JENNIFER DANIELS,  
WHITEHORSE, YT

“Support local market gardens, food coops and community gardens. Encourage fruit trees and beehives.”

- PARTICIPANT,  
MONTRÉAL, QC

### **Core support for community food programs**

- Many innovative community food programs run by the not-for-profit sector address systemic issues of health, equity, sustainability and economic viability in the food system, including: farmers markets, Good Food Box programs, community meals, community kitchens, food co-operatives, student nutrition programs, community gardens and farms, community food centres, mobile markets, community root cellars, etc. Core funding is required to help sustain programs and to help them scale to serve more of the population.

### **Enhance civil society networks to better deliver social innovation**

- Support regional food organizations and provincial networks to increase information sharing about good practices and programs. In particular, there is an organizational gap in the North around connecting all types of food provisioning – hunting, fishing, harvesting, agriculture and imported foods. Another example is municipal food policy councils, a growing model of innovative governance (that engage stakeholders from across the food system to identify key issues and solutions) however they are currently are linked via an informal network. Support is needed to facilitate the creation of a formal national network that could engage more effectively on national food policy.

### **Improve the health of Canadians**

- Incentivize the production of nutritious value-added foods to contribute to the health of Canadians.
- Scale initiatives like the BC School Fruit and Vegetables Nutritional Program.
- Support food skills education in schools and communities.

### **Encourage food growing in communities and urban areas**

- School and community gardens and urban farms help to educate Canadians about healthy food and empower them to grow some of the food they need for themselves and others in their community.

### **Collect better data on food insecurity**

- Require household food insecurity data to be collected by all provinces in the Canadian Community Health Survey.

### **Establish a pan-Canadian research network**

- Support a pan-Canadian research network to assess priority research areas for generating data, guidance, and evaluation of progress in support of a national food policy.

“Food (in)security is one of the most pressing issues facing people in Dartmouth North. We need real solutions to address poverty in our communities as a first step to food security.”

- SUSAN LEBLANC,  
DARTMOUTH, NS



Discussion in Montréal, QC, September 2017

### **Implement a better food labeling system**

- Canadians want to know more about the food they buy. Examples include mandatory GMO labeling, more comprehensive labeling so that consumers can understand the impacts of their food choices on health (e.g. salt, sugar, fat) and environmental labeling (e.g. carbon footprint).

### **Improve food literacy**

- Build skills and knowledge around healthy eating, food preparation, food growing, agricultural practices (including sustainable production and equity issues), seasonal availability of fruits and vegetables, etc. Include fish/seafood industry as important part of food literacy.

### **More justice for food workers**

- Develop systems for immigrant farm workers to become Canadian citizens and to have more equitable work arrangements.
- Include workers' rights as part of the dialogue about improving sustainability of the food system.

### **Encourage public institutions to purchase local, healthy, sustainable food**

- Set benchmarks for purchasing, including targets for food from small-scale producers.
- Support food hubs for better distribution of local food.
- Develop a sustainable procurement framework so institutions can better measure the social, economic, and environmental impacts of their purchases.

### **Taxation of unhealthy foods**

- Tax unhealthy foods to generate resources for food programming and supports and encourage healthier eating.

### **Encourage the formulation of healthier products by the food industry**

- Many processed foods are high in sodium, nitrates, fats and sugars. We need policies to encourage more natural/less-processed foods that are available at affordable prices. Food manufacturers need guidelines to follow.

### **Reduce food waste**

- Explore policies to regulate waste generated by grocery stores and restaurants (France as an example).
- Generate consumer education campaigns on the issues, including tips for reducing food waste.
- Support initiatives that better utilize 'ugly' produce instead of it being wasted.
- Clarify for consumers the difference between best before date vs. expiry date for food products.

“The development of our country's future human resources and social capital necessitates adequate nutrition for today's youth now.”

- MICHAEL PAUL MARTINO,  
REVELSTOKE, BC

**Improve public transportation and municipal zoning for food access**

- Both public transportation routes and municipal zoning can have an impact on access to food (e.g. lack of feasible public transportation options for food shopping; creation of food deserts). Federal infrastructure investment should include priorities and criteria for improving food access.

**Build community out of emergency food programs**

- Often food banks and meal programs are only available 1 to 2 days a week during the day. More options need to be made available, e.g. mobile food trucks and food programming not during the workday when people may not be able to participate. Organizations need funding and support for food programs that encourage a sense of community while supporting food access and education about healthy eating.

**Championing principles of sustainable diets**

- Encourage more plant-based diets based on whole food ingredients that are sustainably produced – having a positive impact on the health of people and the planet at the same time.
- Physicians and other health professionals need to be trained in nutrition science and food systems to better understand the interconnection between food and health.

**Foster community-based policy-making**

- Higher-level policy makers should act as facilitators and supporters in the creation of policy that is informed by communities' needs, strengths and opportunities and empowers them to lead change.

“Nobody in Canada should ever go hungry.”

- DEBRA FOUNTAINBLEAU,  
DARTMOUTH, NS

“Canada needs to be encouraging a transition to a plant-based diet for the health of people, other animals and the environment.”

- CATHERINE COLES,  
ANNAPOLIS, NS



## Conclusion

Many event hosts shared with Food Secure Canada that their primary motivation to host *What's Your Recipe For A Better Food System?* events was to help their communities have a voice in this important conversation about national food policy. They noted that strong public engagement is needed to achieve buy-in and make national policy effective. We feel this report makes a significant contribution of these community voices to the consultations for *A Food Policy for Canada*.

Interest from Canadians from many walks of life continues to grow in the food system and the policy changes needed to create a more sustainable and healthy Canada for everyone. We look forward to the continued conversation.



Discussion in Winnipeg, MB, September 2017