



Manitoba's Local Food System: Growing Healthy Communities

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THE MANITOBA FOOD CHARTER INC.

The Manitoba Food Charter document emerged from input elicited at over 70 community consultations with stakeholder groups and concerned citizens across Manitoba. As an organization, Manitoba Food Charter Incorporated works to educate Manitobans about food security and the sustainability of our food systems, strengthen networks and partnerships to address local food issues, holds workshops and conferences on food skills including local food production and storage, and coordinates food security programs in rural, urban, and northern communities.

To date, over 50 organizations have signed the Charter and, in doing so, have developed concrete work plans to work towards greater food security in their organizations and communities.

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On the Cover:

Top Left: Master inner city gardener Audrey Logan teaches a West Broadway youth to garden in Spirit Park.
Photo: Karen Lind

Top Right: Two youth community gardeners from Mel Johnston School at their home gardens in Wabowden, Manitoba.
Photo: Diana Delaronde Colombe

Bottom Left: Charles Harper teaches traditional fish and moose meat smoking at the Northern Harvest Forum in Thompson, Manitoba.
Photo: Kreesta Doucette

Bottom Right: Agricultural compost machinery operated by Gerry Dube.
Photo: Kelly Dube

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Photo: Karen Lind

West Broadway community garden on the annual Community Garden Celebration Tour organized by Spence Neighbourhood Association, West Broadway Development Corporation, Winnipeg Boys and Girls Club, and St Matthews Maryland Community Ministry Green Team.

Executive Summary

The Government of Manitoba is well-positioned to address the issue of food security. By investing in food security programs, the Province can reduce acute health-care costs, spur economic development and create jobs, raise the quality of life of Manitobans, and create the conditions for an economically prosperous and environmentally sustainable food system in Manitoba. By taking advantage of the opportunities for action outlined in this report, the Government of Manitoba will position itself as a leader in Canada in addressing food security.

Food security involves ensuring all people can access and afford healthy, nutritious foods and a vibrant, environmentally sustainable agricultural sector that provides adequate livelihoods for food producers and processors. Many Manitobans do not enjoy food security. Over 100,000 Manitobans worry if they will have enough money for food or are forced to limit their diet to meet budgetary restrictions. Other Manitobans do not eat healthy foods and cope with the resulting health problems. Parents are concerned about finding safe, nutritious food for their families. Rural areas are experiencing low farm incomes and depopulation. Northern Manitobans face high food prices, particularly for perishable, nutritious products. Thus, while food insecurity affects people differently, it is an issue faced by all Manitobans.

In recent years, provincial governments have become increasingly aware of the challenges posed by food insecurity. Across Canada, provinces have begun developing programs and policies addressing hunger, nutrition, the needs of farmers, and supporting environ-

mentally sustainable agriculture and harvesting. As will be seen throughout this report, the Government of Manitoba has already established some innovative programs to address aspects of food security in Manitoba. The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, Healthy Child Manitoba, Healthy Schools, and the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative have enabled communities to promote healthy eating and living. Meanwhile, the government has funded numerous agri-environment measures and has been increasingly supportive of food production for local markets. Yet while Manitoba has developed several programs that improve food security, they have not been part of a co-ordinated, interdepartmental effort that addresses food security in a systematic manner.

This report provides examples of initiatives that the provincial government could take to make Manitoba a more food secure province. The 37 Opportunities for Action presented in this report provide innovative approaches to reduce healthcare costs, promote social equity and environmental stewardship, and create new economic opportunities in rural communities. They have been developed in consultation with numerous stakeholders based on a vision shared by Manitobans from all regions of the province and from diverse backgrounds. Based on the experiences of other Canadian provinces, change is possible. The Government of Manitoba has already begun to address some food security challenges, and now has the opportunity to work with communities throughout our province to make Manitoba truly food secure.

A Summary of Key Opportunities for Action for the Province of Manitoba

- 1. Develop an interdepartmental food security framework to coordinate work between departments.** Food security has direct implications for the departments of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Health and Healthy Living, Conservation, and Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative is an excellent example of how numerous departments have worked together, each bringing their own expertise and perspective, to promote food security in Manitoba.
- 2. Establish a Food Security Action Fund** to provide grants that support a wide variety of grassroots food security projects that meet the needs and interests of local communities.
- 3. Continue to address northern food insecurity by finding ways to lower the price of healthy foods in the North. To do so:**
 - i. Expand the jurisdiction of the Manitoba Milk Price Review Commission to encompass the entire province.
 - ii. Develop a pilot project to reduce freight costs on essential foods in the north in cooperation with transport companies and grocery retailers.
- 4. Take the lead in promoting local foods** by developing institutional purchasing policies that support the purchase of Manitoba foods by government agencies.
- 5. Establish a Compost Infrastructure Fund** to assist municipalities develop composting facilities or conduct feasibility studies into the potential for local composting programs. ■



Photo: Karen Lind

The Sunshine Community Garden on Maryland during the annual Community Garden Celebration Tour.

INTRODUCTION

Manitoba is fortunate to have a large abundance of food. Anyone visiting a grocery store in this province will likely see food piled high on the shelves, offering consumers a wide variety of selection. Similarly, a drive through rural Manitoba in summer reveals countless acres of bountiful fields. Nevertheless, food insecurity is a reality for many Manitobans. The Canadian Community Health Survey estimated that 9.4% of Manitoban households were food insecure in 2004.¹ Winnipeg Harvest reports that over 40,000 people rely on its emergency food supplies monthly, nearly half of whom are children.² These rates are far higher among some segments of the population. For example, one-quarter of households led by a lone female parent and one-third of off-reserve Aboriginal households were food insecure.³

Not surprisingly, there are considerable health consequences to food insecurity. People who are food insecure consume fewer essential nutrients than those who are food secure,^{4,5,6} are at a greater risk of obesity than the general population,⁷ are more likely to report

Those who produce food also face a wide variety of pressures. This is of particular concern in a province like Manitoba, as rural communities depend on a vibrant farm economy. The average net cash farm income of Manitoba farmers was -\$1,752 in 2005 and -\$896 in 2006 before program payments, although it increased to \$21,668 in 2007.^{12,13} Consequently, farming is not seen as an attractive option for young people. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of farmers in Manitoba under the age of 35 fell by 26.3%. During the same time period, the total number of farm operators also declined by 7.6%.¹⁴ On average, farmers only receive 27% of the price of a week's groceries while, for grain farmers, this dips to 4%.¹⁵ Some farmers have developed alternative production and distribution channels in an effort to increase their profitability, although they remain a small minority.

Food is an important part of the economy in Manitoba's towns and cities. Nearly 100,000 Manitobans (approximately 16% of the labour force) are employed

The approximate number of Manitobans who are food insecure: 110,000

The approximate number of Manitobans who are overweight or obese: 616,920

The approximate number of Manitobans who do not eat 5-10 servings of vegetables and fruit per day: 605,153

poor health, suffer from emotional distress,⁸ and children from food insecure households are more susceptible to behaviour disorders.⁹ While access to healthy foods is compromised for some because of geography or income, those Manitobans with adequate incomes often do not use it to acquire healthy foods. Less than one-third of Manitobans eat five or more servings of vegetables and fruit per day as recommended by the Canada Food Guide.¹⁰ Meanwhile, 52% of Manitobans are either overweight or obese while only 42% are a healthy weight.¹¹ The close link demonstrated between chronic disease and diet has the potential to have significant detrimental consequences for Manitoba's health system in years to come.

in jobs directly linked to agriculture or food. This is particularly high in rural regions, where one-quarter of the population is employed in the agriculture and food industries.¹⁶

As highlighted in the 2008 *Beyond Kyoto* report, our current food system uses a tremendous amount of fossil fuels to grow, process, and transport food. Several studies have predicted that large environmental benefits could be associated with eating local foods. For example, a study in the Waterloo Region in Ontario suggested that 49,485 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually would be reduced if food that could be grown in Waterloo Region or Southwestern Ontario was sold in Waterloo rather than being imported from elsewhere.¹⁷

Similarly, research in Iowa projected that if the state grew 10% more of its own food, up to 346,000 gallons (1,309,610 litres) of fuel would be saved annually.¹⁸

The Manitoba Food Charter document (see Appendix A) highlights the importance of collaboration between levels of government, community organizations, the private sector, and individual citizens to create a food secure society. While not minimizing the import-

Food security is about people who do not have money to buy the foods they need to be healthy AND...

- supporting the economies of Manitoba communities;
- keeping Manitoba farmers and harvesters on the land;
- healthy families in rural, northern, and urban communities;
- available healthy food choices in all communities and schools;
- our environment;
- relationships: food is part of most family and community celebrations.

ance of these other groups, this report focuses on the policies and programs of the Government of Manitoba in order to highlight opportunities for the provincial government to promote food security. This report does not envision that food security will be, or should be, only addressed by the provincial government, but the provincial government is in a unique position to address food security in Manitoba.

Food security includes issues of the economy, agriculture, health, social equity, and the environment. A food secure province is one in which all people can access and afford healthy, nutritious foods and a vibrant and environmentally sustainable agricultural sector

provides adequate livelihoods for food producers and processors. As such, all Manitobans are affected by issues of food safety and healthy food. By examining the policies and programs that affect our food system, we have the opportunity to improve our health, our economy, and our environment.

Format

This report is divided into sections based on topics. Each section is composed of:

- an outline of the challenges and opportunities identified by the stakeholders who participated in our consultation process,
- examples of the provincial government initiatives addressing the topic, and
- opportunities for provincial government action based on stakeholder input to address food security in Manitoba.

While there are more provincial programs addressing food security than the ones mentioned in this report, these were highlighted by stakeholders as being particularly important programs for discussion. The consultation process included input from over 50 stakeholders including: staff from four provincial government departments, farmers, retailers, northerners, community workers, and academics. ■

FOOD SECURITY AND THE NORTH

As acknowledged in the provincial government's *Northern Food Prices Report* of 2003, the most significant barrier to food security in the north is the price of food, particularly that of healthy, perishable items. The northern residents that we consulted were quite concerned about the lack of affordable healthy food in their community. They questioned why the price of liquor was regulated while healthy items such as milk, eggs, bread, fruits, and vegetables are not. Additionally, they highlighted the difficulty of promoting nutrition education when people cannot afford healthy foods due to high prices. This is particularly a problem because many people in the north have low incomes. For many north-

the average price was \$8.80. Since heavily processed foods have a longer shelf life, their cost is lower in small, remote stores. For example, in Leaf Rapids, milk recently cost \$6.29 for four litres while pop was selling for \$1.49 for two litres. In communities across the North in which diabetes and obesity are ongoing concerns, such pricing provides people with a significant economic disincentive to consume healthier products. As a result, unhealthy choices are far more economical for northern residents.

Since many northern communities are far from larger centres, the cost of transporting food into them is high. This also means that fruits and vegetables arrive in very poor condition because of the long distance that they travel. If people travel to a larger centre such as Thompson to buy food in bulk, the trip is very expensive as it can require several days of travel and overnight stays. As a result, the cost precludes many people from taking such trips and prevents them from returning with perishable items due to the time necessary for travel.

Several stakeholders also highlighted a lack of nutritional education as a key challenge for people in the North. For example, in one community it was reported that the grocer had brought healthy food into their store but very few people purchased it. Undoubtedly, the same story can be told in many northern communities. In some communities, the only store is a convenience store that does not stock any fresh fruits or vegetables. An unhealthy cycle is maintained as children are not exposed to fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods as children and so, as adults, do not feed those items to their own families. Upon consultation for this report, an educator explained that during nutrition workshops offered in several schools, often one-third or more children are unable to identify basic vegetables such as carrots or potatoes.

Stakeholders also expressed concern about the northern commercial fishing industry. While recognizing the importance of the Northern Fishermen's Freight Allowance, it was suggested that more of the fishery's benefits could be realized in northern communities if more fish was processed in the North and if local fish was available for sale rather than being shipped to Win-

nipeg. This would have environmental and economic benefits as it would result in a reduction in both the cost of the product and greenhouse gases caused by transporting the fish.

Northerners also highlighted the importance of preserving food skills, or teaching them in communities where they have been lost. This includes traditional Aboriginal hunting and gathering techniques, gardening, and food preservation. Such knowledge, northerners say, will enable communities to become increasingly food self-sufficient. Stakeholders envisioned a North in which people could eat from their gardens in the summer and would have access to winter fishing and preserved food in the winter. This would increase the probability of northerners achieving a healthy diet through the addition of healthy foods grown or harvested locally.

Northern Healthy Foods Initiative Accomplishments Include:
 28 communities involved;
 400 garden plots;
 160 freezer purchases;
 15 families involved in poultry and goat farming;
 8 greenhouses;
 3 airport refrigeration units.

Examples of Provincial Responses

In 2003, an investigation into the high cost of food in northern Manitoba culminated in the *Northern Food Prices Report*. Several policy recommendations were developed, such as a Northern Foods Self-Sufficiency Initiative to work on producing food in the North, efforts to encourage gardening and greenhouses in northern communities, encouraging the development of agri-food businesses in the North, a review of milk prices (to result in caps on the maximum fair market price of milk), and an ongoing Food Price Survey Program in

the North to assist with policy making.

The provincial government has responded to the needs of northern residents by increasing the Food Allowance for northerners on Income Assistance. In 2005, Food Allowances were increased by 20% and then by a further 30% for those in remote communities in 2007, which assisted more than 1,800 families. The 2005 increase provided a two-parent family with two children an additional \$85.24 per month.¹⁹ The 2007 funding increase provided an extra \$154.80 per month for a two-parent family with two children.²⁰

The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative (NHFI) was developed to increase nutritional options and information about healthy food choices and develop community capacity to increase local food production for local consumption. It has now expanded to include 28 communities and annual funding has reached \$600,000. A variety of projects occur through NHFI such as:

- Four hundred vegetable gardens now dot northern communities and eight greenhouses have been built.
- Remote communities have received assistance to buy freezers to help with food preservation and to enable residents to buy food in bulk quantities to save money (276 freezers have been purchased).
- Fifteen families throughout the north have been assisted to begin poultry and goat production.²¹
- The program attempts to incorporate traditional knowledge from Aboriginal people and has encouraged people to learn how to prepare traditional foods such as smoked fish, moose, and pemmican and harvest healing plants.²²

Three regional partners (the Northern Association of Community Councils, Bayline Regional Round Table, and Four Arrows Regional Health Authority), an educational partner (Frontier School Division), and a participatory agency (Manitoba Food Charter) deliver programming in many communities while local partners such as schools, community groups, and individuals help implement programs locally. While northerners, particularly those with low incomes, continue to face many challenges the NHFI has made great strides towards increasing the food self-sufficiency of the region.



Price of a 4 Litre Milk Jug in Select Northern Communities (January 2008):

- Brochet - \$12.00
- God's River - \$11.19
- Red Sucker Lake - \$12.69
- Tadoule Lake - \$12.19
- York Landing - \$11.99

ern residents it is a struggle to merely access enough food, let alone worrying about nutrition. Understandably, no matter how successful a nutrition education program may be, very few people are willing to pay \$8 for a cucumber or \$22 for a carton of eggs

A Manitoba Food Charter study in January 2008 found that the price of a four litre jug of milk in northern communities was several times its cost in southern regions of the province. Of 17 communities examined, a jug cost more than ten dollars in eight of them while



Photo: Krestia Doucette

Charles Harper teaches traditional fish and moose meat smoking at the Northern Harvest Forum in Thompson, Manitoba where northern communities gather to learn and share hands on food skills including community gardening, raising northern chickens and goats, food preservation, beekeeping, healthy eating on a low income, and involving community volunteers.

One of the unique components of NHFI is that it recognizes that addressing northern food issues requires an interdepartmental effort. The collaborating departments include Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Health, Health and Healthy Living, Conservation, Healthy Child Manitoba, and Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives. Funding and staffing is delivered through Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, but the different departments have specialized skills which are useful for food security promotion. For example, MAFRI works with several communities in the North to provide agricultural advice. Key contacts visit seven communities on a regular basis while educational materials have been made available through the Growing Opportunities Centre in The Pas to provide clear and simple directions on how to grow different plants.

The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative is an excellent example of the type of work that the provincial government can accomplish by interdepartmentally addressing the issue of food security. Through cost-effective sup-

ports, and in partnership with local communities, the Initiative has benefited small communities throughout the North. There are still significant food security challenges facing northern communities but with the help of dedicated community members, community partner agencies, and funding from NHFI, it is possible to create positive results within local communities.

There are several programs designed to support the northern commercial fishery. The Northern Fisherman's Freight Allowance allows fishermen in remote communities to remain competitive despite transportation costs. The Fisherman's Loan Program, administered by Aboriginal and Northern Affairs as part of the Community Economic Development Fund, provides loans to commercial fishermen to purchase or repair fishing equipment and purchase quotas.²³ Finally, Water Stewardship's Fisheries Enhancement Fund supports conservation efforts and the growth of Manitoba's recreational fishery.²⁴

Opportunities for Action

- Northern stakeholders were unanimous in their desire for the government to address northern food insecurity by finding ways to lower the price of healthy foods in the North. To do so:
 - The government could expand the jurisdiction of the Manitoba Milk Price Review Commission to encompass the entire province. This could lead to a regulated price of milk for northern communities to ensure that northern Manitobans can afford to access this product.
 - The government could develop a pilot project to reduce freight costs on essential foods in the north. Such a project should attempt to reduce food prices in cooperation with transport companies and grocery retailers. Stakeholders suggested that food subsidies could potentially pay for themselves in the long run because acute health care costs would be reduced.
- The government could expand the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative to more communities and continue its community education work and funding to promote access to healthy foods in the north.
 - For example, the government could hold, or fund, small scale workshops throughout the north to raise interest and knowledge about obtaining healthy foods and local food production.
- The government could support the development of innovative models that encourage the processing and retailing of northern fish for northern consumption in cooperation with northern fishers and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Board.
- As identified at the 2009 Northern Grocers' Forum, the government could partner with communities and businesses to explore the feasibility of providing refrigeration car services on northern trains to improve food quality in northern communities. ■

FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTH

Numerous medical studies have demonstrated the connection between nutritious food consumption and health. The British Columbia Provincial Health Services Authority suggests that 30% of all chronic diseases are linked to poor nutrition²⁵ while the United States Surgeon General's *Report on Nutrition and Health* reported that two-thirds of all deaths in the US had some association to diet.²⁶ In Manitoba, boys from food insecure households were twice as likely to be overweight or obese as those from food secure households.²⁷ Health issues, however, affect more than those with insufficient food. Only one-third of Manitoban adults consume the minimum number of vegetables and fruits recommended by Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.²⁸

Type II diabetes is a chronic disease of particular concern in Manitoba and a significant cause of diabetes is an unhealthy diet. It is a major problem within Manitoba's Aboriginal community as 20% of status women and 13% of status men have been diagnosed with diabetes. The prevalence of diabetes amongst Aboriginal people is expected to triple by 2016²⁹ and is currently three to five times that of the general population.³⁰ The direct cost for the medical care of diabetes is currently \$196 million,³¹ a figure that is expected to reach \$295 million by 2016.³²

Several stakeholders we consulted proposed that relatively small investments in preventative care could result in significant long term health care savings. Poor nutrition has been linked to diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer. According to the Alliance for the Prevention of Chronic Disease (APCD), increasing average fruit and vegetable consumption in Manitoba could result in significant healthcare savings. It cites successful examples such as the Virginia Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, which taught low-income homemakers how to provide proper nutrition for their families. This program saved \$10.64 in healthcare spending for every dollar spent on prevention.³³ By promoting nutrition and developing programming that supports a healthy eating agenda, the government has the ability to reduce health care costs and allow Manitobans to lead healthy lives.



Photo: Kreesta Doucette

Nutrition education has been shown to save \$10 in healthcare spending for every dollar spent on prevention.

Frances Hall (far right) teaches a canning workshop at the Northern Harvest Forum in Thompson, Manitoba. Over the course of her career, she has given canning and preserving workshops and was instrumental in developing Frontier School Division's Gardening Curriculum and introducing healthy foods in northern schools.

Examples of Provincial Responses

Manitoba is one of a few provinces to have a Minister of Healthy Living. Manitoba Health and Healthy Living is committed to preventative healthcare. This department has been responsible for numerous programs that promote healthy lifestyles for Manitobans – many of which are outlined in various sections of this document.

Manitoba Health and Healthy Living has recognized the importance of the diabetes crisis in the province is addressing this through the leadership of the Chronic Disease Branch. In 1998, *Diabetes: A Manitoba Strategy* was published outlining the extent of diabetes and measures that could be taken to address it. The Regional Diabetes Program was established to address the recommendations made by the report. Regional Health Authorities develop plans for their regions based on local needs and capacities, with the support of the Chronic Disease Branch. Through this program, it is expected that 29 of the 53 recommendations made in *Diabetes: A Manitoba Strategy* can be addressed.³⁴

The Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative (CDPI) recognizes the importance of a healthy diet in the prevention of chronic disease. It is a five year demonstration project (ending in 2010) funded by Manitoba Health and Healthy Living and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Funding is provided to regional health authorities (RHAs) to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco cessation. The funds are then provided to communities based on criteria established through community action plans. At the beginning of the demonstration project, regions were asked to identify communities at high risk of chronic disease in their region.

In Winnipeg, for example, CDPI funds are used in the neighbourhoods of Point Douglas and Seven Oaks. The number of communities implementing CDPI community action plans varies from region to region. This grassroots involvement is intended to create supportive communities for healthy living and increase community capacity while at the same time targeting key risk factors for chronic disease. The program currently runs in approximately 83 Manitoban communities, including 21 First Nations and seven Métis communities, with a reach of approximately 330,000 people.³⁵

Opportunities for Action

1. Continue government support for programs such as the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative that provide small grants to local food security and healthy living programs.
 - Continue to support public health and community initiatives that teach cooking and shopping skills and nutrition.
2. The government could develop a Manitoba Nutrition Strategy.
3. The government could develop a public awareness campaign to encourage Manitobans to consume five to ten servings of vegetables and fruit per day as outlined in the Canada Food Guide.ⁿ

FOOD SECURITY AND SCHOOLS

Stakeholders consulted for this report highlighted the importance of nutrition education in schools and the provision of healthy foods for school children. By encouraging children to eat healthy foods, it is hoped that not only will the eating habits of their families change but that when the children become adults they will be better equipped to feed healthy foods to themselves and their families. There is a tremendous opportunity for the provincial government to improve the health of future generations through targeted nutrition education in schools.

Examples of Provincial Responses

The Healthy Schools program has taken tremendous strides to making Manitoban schools a healthier place for children. In 2004, the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures All-Party Task Force investigated how to promote healthy living in Manitoban schools. One of the recommendations resulting from the Task Force was that the government should increase access to healthy foods in school. To gather baseline data prior to the implementation of school nutrition policy recommendations, a *Manitoba School Nutrition Survey* was conducted in 2006.³⁶ A School Nutrition Policy Advisory Committee has been formed to guide the provincial government. Guidelines have now been prepared on the types of foods that may be served in schools. All schools in Manitoba are now required to develop a school nutrition policy. These policies can include everything from the types of food used for fundraisers, to what is available for sale at school vending machines or cafeterias and how schools deal with food packaging and waste.

In an innovative move, the Province of Manitoba is implementing a Manitoba School Fruit and Vegetable Snack Pilot Program through the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba. The program will provide approximately 1,500 students across the province with a fruit or vegetable snack at least three times per week for a three-month period in each of two school years and provide students with a nutrition education component. The province's role in the program will be to provide financial assistance for the purchase of fruits and vegetables, assist schools in developing relationships with local fruit and vegetable producers and distributors, cre-



Photo: Diana Delaronde Colombe

There are approximately 100,000 eating events in Manitoba schools every day.

ating program materials, and coordinating and managing the evaluation of the project. A similar program in Ontario³⁷ and a small pilot project in Prince Edward Island³⁸ have shown that exposure to fruits and vegetables through school snack programs makes children more likely to eat and enjoy healthy foods. The Organic Food Council of Manitoba also recently launched its Growing Up Organic program to encourage the consumption of organic fruits and vegetables in Manitoba daycares.

The Province of Manitoba has also established a School Nourishment Grant of \$125,000 to be delivered through the Child Nutrition Council. These funds will be used to provide breakfast clubs and snack programs and promote healthy foods in schools. The Province expects that up to 8,000 children will benefit from the program.³⁹ It is the first provincial government grant to the Child Nutrition Council, which otherwise receives its funding through donations and from Breakfast For Learning, a national school nutrition organization.

Two youth community gardeners from Mel Johnston School at their home gardens in Wabowden, Manitoba. Eleanor Waitowicz has taught the Northern Gardening Curriculum to her grade 3 and 4 students for three years now and visits them in their home gardens throughout the summer. During harvest she helps families can and store their produce. With 45 young gardeners in her community now, she is sowing the seeds of future northern gardeners.

Opportunities for Action

1. The government could conduct an inventory, or provide funding to a relevant community organization to do so, of all school feeding programs in the province including those funded by the Child Nutrition Council, school boards, and individual schools in order to coordinate efforts and share best practices.
 - Similarly, an inventory could be conducted of feeding programs in child care centres to determine the number of programs, the regularity of food provision, and the quality of food served to facilitate future policy development.
2. The government could provide financial support to enable schools with feeding programs to hire part-time Nutrition Coordinators.
 - This would reduce the volunteer time necessary to run nutrition programs in schools.
 - This would provide employment in low-income neighbourhoods and regions.
3. The government could work with schools and school boards to investigate possibilities for schools to purchase food from local producers and processors.
4. The government could establish a School Gardens Fund to create edible landscapes at Manitoban schools.
 - These landscapes could serve as an educational tool, promote healthy living, grow nutritious food, and beautify school grounds. ■

FOOD SECURITY AND LOW-INCOME MANITOBANS

People with low incomes are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Nationally, 60% of households on social assistance and 48% of households in the lowest income quintile are food insecure.⁴⁰ While data is not available for Manitoba, the number is likely similar. In Manitoba, statistics demonstrate that many low income people have difficulty accessing food. In March 2008, over 40,000 individuals, of whom 45.7% were children, received food from Manitoba food banks.⁴¹ Hunger is a serious reality for Manitobans with low incomes.

Stakeholders we consulted highlighted several barriers faced by people on low incomes that prevent them from acquiring healthy foods. Having insufficient financial resources was described as the major cause of hunger in Manitoba. As one stakeholder described it, there are four main needs that a Manitoban must pay for to survive: food, shelter, electricity, and water. Of these, only the food budget is flexible and, as a result, people take money from their food budgets to pay for other costs. People on Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), stakeholders reported, are regularly forced to use food money to pay for rent because their housing allowance is insufficient. According to the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 77.3% of EIA recipients living in private rental units had a rental deficit and nearly half had a deficit of over \$100 as of March 2008.⁴² The situation is similar for the working poor, many of whom have difficulty affording market rental prices. Several stakeholders also expressed their concern that the recent rapid rise in food costs would have a profound effect on those with the lowest incomes. According to the Consumer Price Index, the price of food in stores increased by 10.6% in Manitoba between November 2007 and November 2008, several times higher than the average rate of inflation.⁴³

Transportation was also described as a barrier to adequate nutrition for people with low-incomes. Large grocery stores that sell food for cheaper prices are often located in suburban neighbourhoods, rather than areas that have a substantial low-income population. As a result, people are left with the unpleasant choice between paying for transportation on an already limited income or shopping at nearby corner stores that charge high prices and rarely stock quality healthy foods. Given the



Photo: Kreesta Doucette

Between November 2007 and November 2008, the price of food increased 10.6% in Manitoba, while the price of vegetables increased by 33.6%, making healthy foods even less affordable for people with low incomes.

Good Food Clubs can provide a variety of programs including Good Food Boxes filled with nutritious foods at affordable prices, community meals, and develop relationships with local farmers.

West Broadway Development Corporation currently runs a Good Food Club program.

Winnipeg Harvest collects and shares surplus food with people who are hungry. Harvest opened its doors in 1985 and distributes food to over 40,000 people each month. Last year Winnipeg Harvest distributed over 8.7 million pounds of food to over 300 Member Agencies across Manitoba, including food banks, soup kitchens, youth programs and drop-in-centres. Their ultimate goal is to eliminate the need for food banks in Manitoba.

Community gardens give space for people to grow food close to where they live, create a sense of neighbourliness, and beautifies communities.

Congregate meal programs offer people the opportunity to enjoy healthy meals at affordable prices in a social setting. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority currently offers congregate meal programs for seniors.

A community cupboard buys food in bulk and passes those savings on to low-income people who purchase only the amount that they need. For example, the West Central Women's Resource Centre currently operates a community cupboard.

A community kitchen involves participants in food shopping and preparation skills as well as cooking healthy, fresh meals.

Bulk food buying clubs help members pool their resources to buy food in bulk.

energy and time required and the expense of transportation to larger, retail grocery stores, people with the lowest incomes often end up shopping at more expensive neighbourhood stores.

A third concern expressed by some stakeholders was that significant nutrition education is necessary amongst low-income populations. While some people with low incomes are less aware of the benefits of fresh food and are not exposed to as wide a variety of fresh food as people with higher incomes, a lack of nutrition education is a wider societal issue affecting rich and poor alike. Yet, even when low-income people receive nutrition education they are often unable to afford the healthy practices they have learned.

Examples of Provincial Responses

The provincial government has responded in several ways to address the needs of low-income Manitobans. It has particularly targeted the needs of children and families. For example, the Prenatal Benefit funded by Healthy Child Manitoba provides up to \$81.41 per month to pregnant women between the start of the second trimester to the month the baby is due.⁴⁴ Payments are based on net family income and are on a sliding scale for families with a net income of less than \$32,000. The purpose of these funds is to help pregnant women eat well, in recognition of the health consequences of proper nutrition during pregnancy. To reinforce this nutritional message, information on local healthy eating programs and nutrition is provided along with the benefit cheques.

Another component of Healthy Child programming are the Healthy Baby Community Support Programs. These programs for new parents encourage healthy eating through cooking and nutrition activities, building women's confidence and awareness of health and parenting choices, providing milk coupons during and after pregnancy, and fostering awareness by parents of their babies' needs. Programming is provided by thirty-three organizations throughout Winnipeg and in numerous other communities in the province.⁴⁵

The Neighbourhoods Alive program indirectly supports the promotion of food security in Manitoba. By providing funds to designated at-risk neighbourhoods, these funds support organizations that often incorpo-

rate food security work into their programming. Neighbourhood renewal corporations in inner city Winnipeg have helped to fund, organize, and facilitate food security programs in their neighbourhoods in recognition of the needs of local citizens.

Stakeholders commended the government for being a leader on eliminating the Child Tax Benefit clawback. This has ensured that more money has gone into the hands of low-income people, which has, in turn, increased the amount of money that they have available to spend on food. Additionally, the Manitoba Child Benefit provides up to \$420 per child per year to low-income Manitobans who are not on EIA.⁴⁶ Praise was offered for the Rewarding Work program that the government recently added to EIA which is designed to enable people to transition from Income Assistance to the workforce. The government was also applauded for increasing the minimum wage between 1999 and 2009 from \$6 per hour to \$9 per hour (as of 1 October 2009).⁴⁷

Opportunities for Action

The following recommendations address both the need to increase the financial resources of low-income people as well as opportunities to support food security projects within local communities. Stakeholders stressed that such investments in preventative measures will lead to healthier populations resulting in savings on acute healthcare costs in the future.

1. Establish a Food Security Action Fund to provide grants to assist food security projects in communities across the province. A model can be found in British Columbia where the Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) has funded grassroots projects that increase food security since 2005. CFAI demonstrates that government support for food security projects acts as a catalyst for community involvement. It funds programs in over 100 BC communities.
- Such a fund would support grassroots involvement in developing solutions to food security concerns that meet the needs and interests of local communities.

In the United States, people on social assistance are able to use their Electronic Benefit Transfers at farmers' markets through the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

- Funding should be new support for food programs rather than funding redirected from other food or nutrition programs.
- Funding would be flexible to include a wide variety of programs that increase access to healthy foods such as:
 - community gardens;
 - congregate meal programs;
 - community cupboards;
 - community kitchens;
 - bulk food buying clubs;
 - Good Food Club programs;
 - education and workshops;
 - farmers market coupons for low income families;
 - programs to meet the food security needs of newcomers;
 - developing community capacity that promotes food security and access to healthy, local foods.
- Both new pilot projects and ongoing projects

should be eligible for funding to ensure that successful programs are able to continue for the long term.

2. The government could fund an annual costing of the Nutritious Food Basket as defined by Health Canada to monitor the price of food in communities throughout the province.
 - This is currently being done in several provincial jurisdictions in Canada including British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.
 - The government could provide funding to a community organization or educational institution(s) to complete the research.
3. Stakeholders recommended that the province could address food insecurity by increasing EIA rates to ensure that all people have an adequate living wage. This way, all people in Manitoba would be able to afford at least the basics necessary for survival in this province.
 - The government could investigate the possibility of indexing EIA allowances for food to the actual cost of food to ensure that the food purchasing power of low-income Manitobans does not decrease as food prices rise.
4. The government could investigate the possibility of indexing EIA allowances for food to the actual cost of food to ensure that the food purchasing power of low-income Manitobans does not decrease as food prices rise. ■

FOOD SECURITY AND FARMING: AN INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that these are tough years for Manitoba’s agricultural sector. Input costs are high and, for many farm products, commodity prices are low. Agriculture stakeholders with whom we consulted highlighted farm income as a major concern. While the farming sector is diverse, it is apparent that almost every commodity has been struggling in recent years.

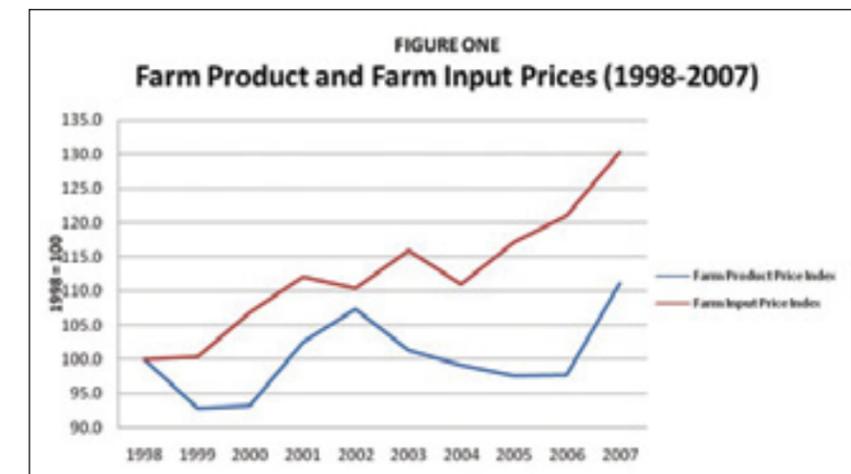
The cattle and pork industries are currently facing the implications of Country of Origin Labelling in the United States. This has decreased the number of animals that are heading to the United States, previously a major export market for Manitoba livestock producers. The National Farmers Union has also demonstrated that corporate concentration in the packing industry has had negative results for Canadian beef farmers.⁴⁸ These combined with other factors have resulted in a downturn in livestock prices. While revenue has decreased, expenses such as feed grain continue to increase causing tremendous strain on the livestock industry.⁴⁹

Manitobans are dependent on outside markets, in particular the United States, to process our food for us. The lack of local processing capacity in Manitoba has become a recent challenge for the agricultural industry, particularly as a result of the BSE crisis and current problems with Country of Origin Labelling in the United States. This leaves us vulnerable to the policies of foreign countries, lets opportunities to add value to our agricultural products slip away (and with that employment opportunities and economic spinoffs for rural communities), and increases the environmental impact of our agricultural sector when products have to be shipped to far-off destinations for processing only to be shipped back as finished products.

While grain farmers may be receiving higher prices for their product than they have in the recent past, they are also dealing with tremendous challenges. Input costs have risen dramatically for cereal producers and, as a result, whatever gains were made through increased incomes were countered by increased expenditures (see Figure 1). The price of fuel and fertilizer has risen dramatically (according to the Farm Input Price Index, the price of fertilizer in Western Canada increased 32% between 2006 and 2007 alone – see Figure 2)⁵⁰ and now, as grain prices have

begun to fall again, farmers are left facing high input costs without a high grain price.

One of the results of the agricultural crisis has been that the average age of farmers is increasing because fewer young people look to farming as a career. In 2006, the average farmer in Manitoba was 51.2 years of age (up from 49.0 years of age in 2001).^{51,52} Those who are in the industry are unable to get out because all their assets are tied to their farming operation. Meanwhile, even people who are interested in farming are deterred by the incredibly capital intensive nature of modern agriculture. The result is that whereas there were 5,905 farmers under the age of 35 in Manitoba in 1996, there were 2,845 in 2006 (see Figure 3).^{53,54} The transfer of agriculture to a new generation was a significant con-



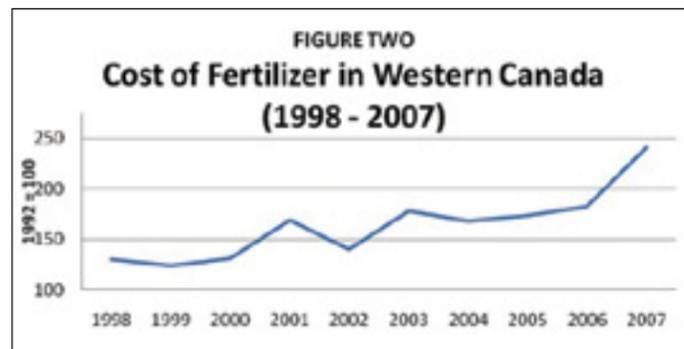
Source: Statistics Canada Tables 328-0014 and 002-0022.

cern for many stakeholders, and one that people felt was crucial to the future of farming in Manitoba.

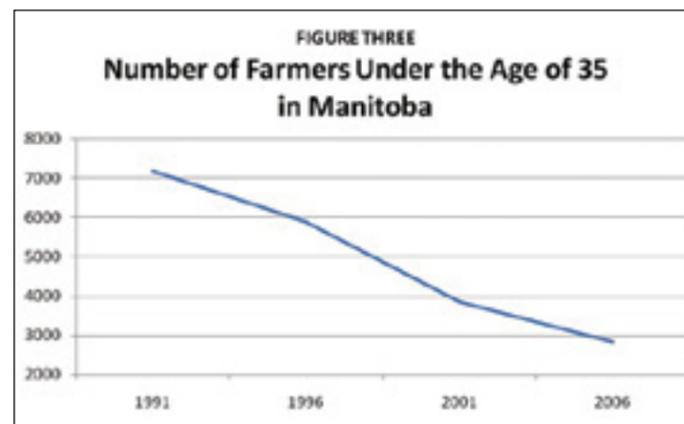
Not only are farmers getting older but there are also far fewer farms than there used to be. In 2001 there were 21,071 farms in Manitoba, whereas there were only 19,054 in 2006, a decline of 9.6%.⁵⁵ While a slower decline than the 13.6% reduction in farms in Manitoba between 1996 and 2001, this number still represents a significant loss of farmers in the province. The decline in the number of farms has coincided with an increase in the size of farms in Manitoba. As of 2006, the average farm in Manitoba was 1,001 acres, an increase of 12.3% from 2001.⁵⁶

Rural stakeholders were concerned about the future

of the rural communities that depend on the contributions of farmers. With fewer farmers coming into town to purchase goods and supplies, the economic viability of many rural communities is in question. Similarly, as Manitobans are removed from the land the resulting



Source: Statistics Canada Table 328-0014.



Source: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/ca-ra/dec15/4034206-eng.htm>;
http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/statistics/pdf/2006agricultural_profile.pdf.

rural depopulation can have profound consequences including a reduction of community services. Fewer farmers means fewer children which has led, in some communities, to a loss of their school. Depopulation also can lead to fewer health services being available locally, fewer retail options, and fewer employment possibilities for rural dwellers. Consequently, a decline in the farming community can have a negative impact for rural Manitoba.

Farmers have a tremendous amount of knowledge about the land and food production. As increasingly fewer people take up the profession, this knowledge is lost and it will be difficult to regain. As one stakeholder commented, “if we lose small diverse farmers we lose more than a carrot, we lose a way of living.”

Stakeholders stressed that in order for a re-visioning of agriculture to be possible, it is necessary for urbanites to value food and where it comes from. Too often, farmers are seen as a drain on the public purse. Yet, farmers provide an essential service to society that it would be impossible to do without. Not only is agriculture a powerful economic engine, it also provides food, a fundamental necessity of life. It is important to develop policies that value the integral role that farmers play in our society. Increasingly, urbanites are disconnected from the source of their food, the people that grow it, and rural realities. It is important to ensure that urban residents are aware of the issues of the farming community.

In a report of this scale, it is not possible to discuss in detail all issues affecting Manitoba’s agricultural industry. Other important agricultural issues not discussed in detail in this report include: international trade, production practices, industry consolidation and control, and agricultural taxation and subsidies. Reports by other agricultural organizations have highlighted the urgent needs of conventional farmers. Provincial organizations such as Keystone Agricultural Producers have done valuable work to ensure that the government is aware of the interests of agricultural producers. This report will not duplicate earlier reports but will instead examine a few overlooked market segments in detail. The alternatives examined here face many of the same challenges as conventional agriculture but they often face additional real or perceived regulatory barriers. They represent an attempt by an admittedly small number of farmers to react to the challenges that they face as they pioneer innovative ways of earning a livelihood from agriculture. ■

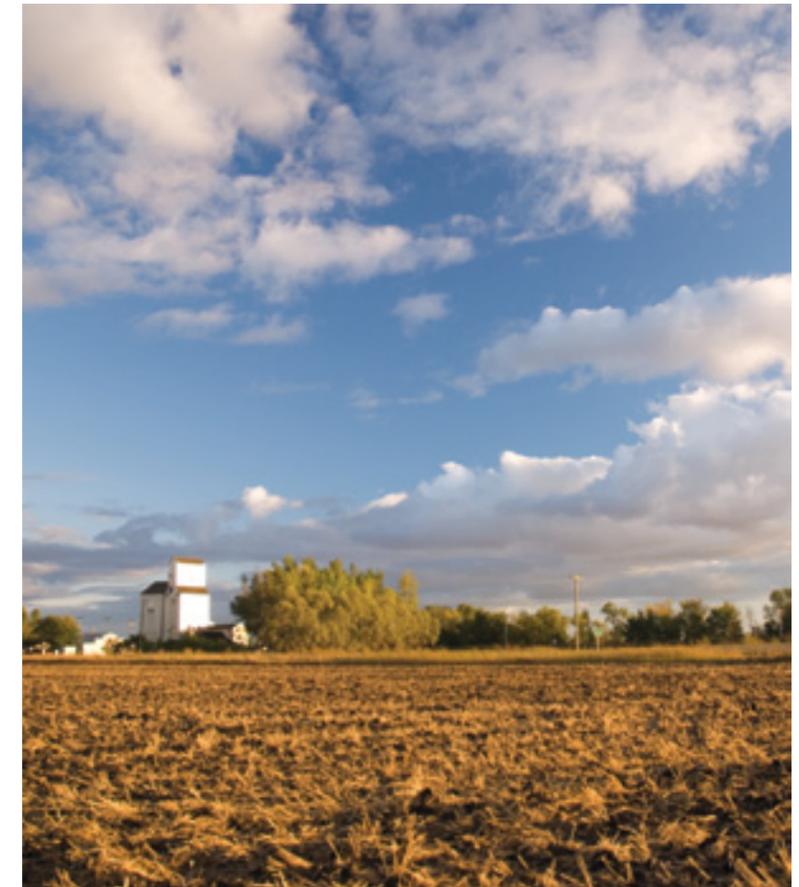
SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION FOR MANITOBA MARKETS

Production for local markets has several benefits. The first is economic: if people are purchasing food grown by Manitoban producers, farmers have a ready and nearby market for their produce. When consumers buy Manitoba-grown or raised products instead of imported goods, money is re-circulated through the provincial economy rather than being used to purchase goods from outside. By no means would the export of food cease. Manitoba simply does not have the population base necessary to consume all of the food we produce. If we were, however, to capture local market share and reduce our reliance on imported foods, there would be economic spinoffs for farmers, processors and rural communities.

A second reason to produce for local markets is the environment. As recognized by the Government of Manitoba’s *Beyond Kyoto* report, growing food closer to home reduces the amount of greenhouse gases emitted during transport.⁵⁷ In a study conducted in Waterloo, Ontario, it was found that while imported food in the region generated an average of 1.3 kg of greenhouse gases per kilogram of food during transport, food from the Waterloo region only produced 0.008 kg of emissions per kilogram of food.⁵⁸ Since this government has highlighted action on climate change as a priority area, the promotion of sustainably produced local food would be a natural extension of current policy.

Production for local markets can happen in many ways. Some farmers selling to local markets are small-scale producers growing food for farmers’ markets or directly marketing their produce to consumers. Others sell to organizations such as Peak of the Market which are able to distribute large amounts of vegetables to grocery stores.

The market demand for locally produced food is expanding as consumer awareness increases. Direct marketing increases the farmers’ share of the food dollar but farmers are not always able to take advantage of these new markets. While being skilled at food production, not all farmers are able to, or interested in, direct marketing. Additional supports are required to equip farmers with the necessary marketing skills or ability to add value to their products to ensure that they are able to



Grain elevator.
Dufresne, Manitoba

take advantage of this consumer trend. Access to information, workshops, or other resources on these topics could improve the ability of farmers to benefit from a market segment that has the potential to improve the economic viability of their farming operation.

Several challenges to production for local markets were identified through our consultation process, some of which are clearly beyond the government’s control. Manitoba’s short growing season, for example, hinders the types of crops that can be grown and the amount of time each year that fresh, local produce is available. Another factor is that farmers located far from urban centres face logistical difficulties in bringing their produce to market.

One comment made by several stakeholders was that it was difficult to get local produce into grocery stores. Since most retailers, particularly large supermarkets, have year round supply contracts it is difficult for local

seasonal producers to compete. Additionally, most, if not all, purchasing decisions are made outside the province. This can be a barrier to all but the largest Manitoba producers. Even when local store owners in rural areas are interested in stocking their shelves with local foods they are unable to because of their prior contracts with other distributors. Therefore, a key first step is to get Manitoba products onto the shelves of stores where most Manitobans buy their food.

A second challenge identified by stakeholders is infrastructure. As previously mentioned, there is very little processing, storage, or distribution infrastructure in Manitoba. Even products that are grown and sold in Manitoba are often not processed locally due to a lack of processing facilities. For example, while over 48,000 lambs are produced by Manitoba farms annually, only 3,400 are processed in provincially inspected abattoirs, while roughly 38,000 are shipped to federally-inspected plants outside the province (an additional 7,000 are illegally slaughtered in Manitoba).⁵⁹ The additional transportation cost puts Manitoba lamb producers at a competitive disadvantage compared to those located closer to federally inspected plants. Other farm sectors face similar challenges as there are shortages in processing facilities for most agricultural products in Manitoba. Consequently, Manitoba is missing opportunities to add value to our products by sending unprocessed goods to other provinces or countries.

Manitobans are interested in buying local food. A recent survey suggested that 70% of Manitobans would go out of their way to shop for Manitoba food if they knew where it could be found.⁶⁰ Yet, outside of farmers' markets, many Manitoban consumers do not know where to go to purchase local food. Education is necessary to inform Manitoban consumers where locally grown and processed items may be purchased. It is important that it is convenient for consumers who are interested in supporting locally grown and processed food to be able to know where they can purchase these products.

Examples of Provincial Responses

Numerous initiatives have been developed in Manitoba to support local food production, processing, and consumption. Stakeholders sensed that Manitoba Agri-

culture, Food, and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) increasingly supports production for local markets. MAFRI's Direct Marketing Conference provides educational resources to farmers interested in direct marketing. Although the province is yet to introduce a widespread marketing campaign to highlight Manitoba produce, MAFRI has a website outlining where Manitoban consumers can go to buy locally grown and processed foods (www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/food/consumers/index.html). The province also publishes the information in a brochure and makes it available to consumers.⁶¹

Value Chain Manitoba Initiative (VCMI) was initiated by the Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council (MRAC) and is supported by MAFRI. In 2007, the provincial government announced \$800,000 in funding for VCMI in addition to \$1.1 million in in-kind support.⁶² VCMI supports the development of value chains through education, facilitation, and financial support. A value chain is defined as "a market focussed collaboration among businesses working together to achieve a more rewarding position in the marketplace."⁶³ Funding is available for up to 50% of the cost of researching opportunities and conducting feasibility studies as well as carrying out pilot projects, project management, business planning, and other business costs to a maximum of \$100,000 per project.⁶⁴

The Manitoba Agri-Innovation Suite (MAIS) works to develop products from concept to market and increase diversity within Manitoba's agri-food industry. While these products are not necessarily prepared for local consumption only, they do help small and medium sized agri-food businesses test and launch projects. The program favours projects that use Manitoba-based commodities and research facilities. Funding can be provided for marketing, certification, product development, and commercialization (developing an inventory and production costs). The amount of funding available depends on the stage of development, from \$15,000 for certification to a maximum of \$250,000 for commercialization.

The Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie helps businesses with product ideas turn those plans into reality through product development, evaluation and testing, and other advice. Clients range from small-scale entrepreneurs to larger firms. The Centre provides

advice and research at affordable rates to help clients increase the likelihood of product success. Its pilot plant can help clients develop manufacturing processes and experiment with a variety of production techniques. While products tested at the Development Centre are not necessary intended solely for Manitoba markets, the Centre does provide opportunities for local processors to develop capacity and new products.

MAFRI and Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth provide some funding for Agriculture in the Classroom – Manitoba, an organization that develops and dis-

tributes agricultural curriculum to Manitoba schools. The majority of Agriculture in the Classroom's funding comes from industry sources. Its goal is to promote interest in and awareness of agriculture and to explain farm processes to consumers.⁶⁵ Since one of the challenges identified by stakeholders was the lack of knowledge in urban centers about rural life and farming, this program provides educational tools for use in Manitoban classrooms. Given the continuing need for such education, there are numerous opportunities for organizations to develop further educational resources to increase agricultural awareness.

Opportunities for Action

1. The government could take the lead in promoting local foods by developing institutional purchasing policies that support the purchase of Manitoba foods by government agencies. Since the government has significant purchasing power, this would have the potential to spur producers to grow food for the local market. This would give the government an opportunity to provide practical economic support to local farmers and processors, thus putting money into local economies in rural Manitoba.
 - Several American states and institutions have developed such policies. In Canada, a growing number of organizations are developing local food purchasing policies. Additionally, Canadian studies published by the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute and The Ontario Rural Council have urged provincial governments to adopt local food purchasing policies.^{66,67}
 - Here in Manitoba, the Sustainable Development Procurement Policy gives preference to environmentally preferable goods and materials. The provincial government could investigate adding a stipulation to the procurement policy that food purchases should meet particular environmental standards. Purchasing foods from local sources, for example, would reduce carbon emissions that occur as a result of transport.
2. Similar to the above, the government could take an active role in facilitating connections between urban institutions who are interested in local food purchasing and rural farmers.
 - Some organizations identified an interest in purchasing food from Manitoban farmers but were discouraged by the significant amount of work involved required to locate the necessary farmers. To make the transition to local food purchasing easier, MAFRI could help make these connections.
3. The government could fund a study to determine the size of the local market and identify needs within it to establish the potential value of capturing increased local market share.
4. The government could establish domestic marketing supports that would enable farmers and harvesters to develop their capacity for selling to the Manitoban market. The goal would be to increase the consumption of foods produced in Manitoba by Manitobans.
 - A model for such a program is New Brunswick's Agri-Food Market Development Program which is intended to build domestic New Brunswick market channels to increase the sale and consumption of New Brunswick produced agri-food products within the province. Grants of up to \$10,000 are provided to individuals, businesses, or organizations to fund marketing and internal capacity building efforts.⁶⁸

SUPPORTING SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURE AND A NEW GENERATION OF FARMERS

- In Nova Scotia, the Direct Marketing Community Development Trust will provide \$2.3 million over three years to improve local food infrastructure and support creative approaches to direct marketing.⁶⁹
 - In the United States, Washington state funds a small farm direct marketing assistance initiative while several other states promote direct marketing or local sales.⁷⁰
 - This program could support:
 - capacity building (such as marketing training or food safety workshops);
 - infrastructure to support sales for local markets;
 - marketing materials or supplies (for example, farm signage).
 - Such a program could also help farmers and processors capitalize on the growing interest in speciality or ethnic food products to meet Manitoba's increasingly diverse food demands. For example, education could be provided regarding how to meet Halal slaughter standards.
 - Stakeholders identified numerous individuals and communities in rural Manitoba with ideas for new products or ways to improve their farming livelihood through local markets that do not have the financial resources to capitalize on these ideas. Establishing a fund to provide small grants to local agri-food enterprises would diversify rural economies and allow entrepreneurs to develop their ideas.
5. The government could continue to promote local food by developing an accessible one-stop consumer-friendly website for consumers interested in purchasing local food products. The current website (www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/food/consumers/index.html) has a lot of valuable material but it could be marketed better.
- For example, an Alberta website run by Tourism Alberta, www.chomparoundalberta.com, includes information on where to get direct marketed food, farmers' markets, what food is in season, food driving tours, and restaurants serving local food. ■

Many stakeholders shared the perception that due to a focus on export-oriented production, current government regulations favour larger scale farming operations over small scale agriculture. Stakeholders suggested that policies ranging from land planning regulations to farm crisis subsidies have disproportionately benefited large-scale farming operations. When economic supports are provided for farmers, some stakeholders suggested, large farmers benefited more than smaller farmers and were even able to use these subsidies to buy out their smaller neighbours.⁷¹

All farmers we met with accepted the necessity of food safety regulations, but some questioned a one size fits all approach that applies the same criteria to all farm operations regardless of scale. Some stakeholders suggested that food safety regulations that have been developed with the mindset of large-scale export-oriented farming, do not address the realities of small scale farming. Additionally, they propose, as safety regulations are increasingly tightened, small farmers and processors are unable to afford the costs associated with the new requirements. The result has been that they are forced to make a difficult decision between closing their farm or business or paying high costs and remaining in business.

Supply management systems have provided relatively stable markets in five fields of production: eggs, hatchlings, poultry, milk, and turkeys. The supply management system is tremendously valuable to farmers. While this continues to benefit farmers, it is also important that the supply management system not work to the exclusion of young or small scale farmers. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the agricultural sector, however, it is important that the quota system be improved to ease access by new entrants and small scale producers. Since quota allocation is often quite expensive (and becoming increasingly so) it requires a significant amount of capital to buy into the system, something that young farmers or those farming on a smaller scale often cannot afford. This provides a significant barrier to entry for new farmers. It is important that smaller scale farmers be able to partake in the advantages provided by supply managed commodities as well as ensuring that young farmers have avenues of entry into the supply manage-



Photo: Karen Lind

ment system to ensure a successful transition to the next generation of farmers.

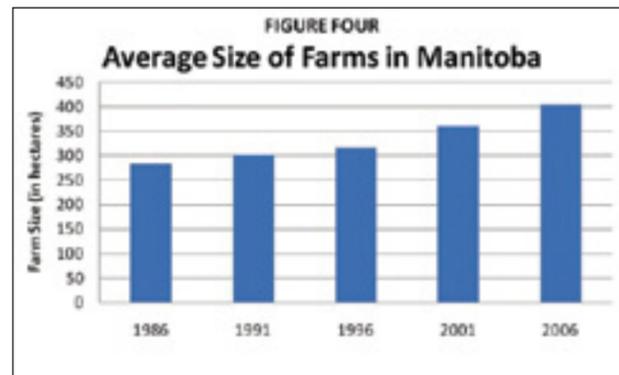
This does not mean that there are not opportunities in smaller scale agriculture. Since land and machinery are expensive start-up costs, some stakeholders suggested that smaller operations offered less capital intensive opportunities to young people interested in farming. Yet small scale agriculture also is challenging. It is labour intensive and does not necessarily yield larger returns than large farms. Just like larger farms, small farms are affected by the whims of commodity markets, although the diversified nature of many small farms helps mitigate this risk. Small scale farmers also often have to acquire off-farm work to maintain a living wage for their family.

Examples of Provincial Responses

The Bridging Generations Initiative run by the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC) provides low cost mortgages and training support for young farmers. Since 2002, the Initiative has supported 575 farmers with \$75.6 million in financing options for intergenerational farm transfers. Young farmers can reduce their mortgage payments up to a maximum of \$2,500 per year through Management Training Credits by taking farm management courses. Young farmers are also eligible for MASC's Young Farmer Rebate, which is an annual rebate of 2% of the principal on the first \$150,000 in direct lending up to \$3,000 per year for five years to ease the financial burden on young farmers.

Master inner city gardener Audrey Logan teaches a west broadway youth to garden in Spirit Park. Spirit Park was built on the site of four abandoned homes and includes garden plots for some twenty community gardeners as well as common green space planted in indigenous flowers and shrubs.

Succeeding Generations is a farm mentorship program established by MAFRI to assist a new generation of farmers. Farmers with less than six years of farming experience who are under 40 years old are partnered with experienced farmers who volunteer their time to offer personalized support. MAFRI's field staff helps facilitate the mentorships and recruit mentors. This program helps new farmers learn about agricultural techniques, farm management, business skills, and risk management.⁷² The Organic Food Council of Manitoba, in cooperation with several partners, offers a Manitoba Farm Mentorship program, which also provides one-on-one farm mentorships, workshops, and farm tours with a focus on organic and sustainable agriculture techniques.



Source: <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/agrc25h-eng.htm>.

Opportunities for Action

1. The provincial government could ensure that the needs of small scale agriculture are recognized when making agricultural policy decisions.
 - Additionally, the provincial government should determine if new food safety regulations will have detrimental side effects for small farmers and processors and develop programs to mitigate any negative consequences.
 - Existing agricultural regulations should also be reviewed to understand their affect on small-scale agriculture.
2. The government could consider a review similar to that completed by the British Columbia Farm

Industry Review Board to work with commodity groups to examine mechanisms to promote speciality production (such as direct marketing or organic farming) as well as to enable new entrants to have access to quota.⁷³

3. The government could investigate easing size restrictions on crop insurance to allow those growing less than three acres of a crop to have crop insurance. Since a small, albeit growing, number of people now make their living through direct marketing or through farmers' markets, the loss of their crops is a significant loss of income and they should be able to access the same resources as larger scale farmers. ■

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Organic agriculture has been growing rapidly in Manitoba as farmers look to increase the profitability of their farming operation through premium markets, reducing input costs, and incorporating sustainable environmental practices. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of certified organic farmers in Manitoba increased by 118%.⁷⁴ There are now 196 certified organic farms in Manitoba, approximately one per cent of farms.⁷⁵

Organic Farms in Manitoba in 2006 (By Crop Type)^{76,77}

	Certified Organic	Organic But Not Certified
Total Organic Farms	196	600
Hay or field crops	170	308
Fruits, vegetables or greenhouse products	21	91
Animals or animal products	44	303
Maple products	0	8
Other (herbs, etc.)	3	55

One challenge identified by stakeholders is the transition from conventional to organic agriculture. This is not only a difficult period financially but also requires a steep learning curve as farmers begin adopting organic production practices. Organic stakeholders suggested that this knowledge-barrier discourages farmers from considering a transition to organic production.

Examples of Provincial Responses

Organic stakeholders reported being pleased with the recent announcement of the Manitoba Organic Transition Program (MOTP). This program reimburses up to two-thirds of the cost of certification fees paid by Manitoba farmers or processors to obtain full organic status to a maximum of \$800 per year for two years. This assists farmers during transitional years when yields are lower but they are unable to charge organic premiums. The goal of this program, which began in September of



Photo: Kreesia Doucette

2008, is to increase the number of organic producers and processors in the province.⁷⁸ One stakeholder commented that the MOTP indicates that the government is listening to the needs of organic producers.

Many people in the organic industry are equally supportive of the Organic Agricultural Products Act. This Act mirrors the incoming national standard for organic agriculture. According to some organic producers, the Act provides a level playing field and will lend credibility to the organic industry as only people who are properly certified will be able to identify their product as organic. Retailers are also supportive of the Act, because it will ensure that the products that they receive are genuinely organic. This, stakeholders said, will provide clarity to the organic industry and should make decisions easier for retailers and consumers.

There were also concerns over potentially adverse side effects resulting from the Act. Non-certified organic farmers are concerned that they could potentially lose their markets because they will no longer be able to identify their products as organic. For small scale farmers, the cost and paperwork required to acquire certification is often prohibitive. Some suggested that while the regulations are necessary to support export-oriented organic agriculture, they do not reflect the reality of small-scale production for local markets.

Holstein calf at Steinbach Pioneer Days.

Photo: Diana Delaronde Colombe



Northern Thicket chickens from Thicket Portage, Manitoba. Through the northern Healthy Foods Initiative Bayline Regional Roundtable has partnered with community members and Manitoba Agriculture to pilot chicken and egg production in northern Manitoba.

Opportunities for Action

1. The government could bolster the Transition Program with an investment in training opportunities and by increasing the number of MAFRI field staff trained in organic techniques.
 - It should be noted that MAFRI has provided several workshops on organic agriculture and has developed a series of resources available from its website. Such education work is important and a valuable contribution to the growth of the organic industry.
2. In recognition of the challenges faced by smaller scale organic farmers producing solely for local markets, the provincial government, along with organic stakeholders, could investigate options for alternative certification systems.
 - This could provide some level of certification while reducing the cost associated with conventional organic certification processes and would be meant only for those producers selling their product solely within Manitoba. ■

FARMERS' MARKETS

Farmers' marketing is another niche through which producers can grow or raise food for local markets. While individual farmers' market operations tend to be small, they have a significant economic benefit for Manitoba. At markets that are members of the Farmers' Market Association of Manitoba (FMAM), fewer than half the markets in the province, sales total \$2.28 million annually and result in economic spinoffs of more than \$10 million.⁷⁹ The income earned by farmers' marketers can supplement incomes in rural areas where there may be few job opportunities. Farmers' markets can also build community spirit, provide unique shopping opportunities for urban residents, and can have positive economic spin offs for businesses located near them.⁸⁰

Some farmers' marketers expressed that the Temporary Food Market Guidelines under which farmers' markets operate pose obstacles to the further development and growth of farmers' markets. Most contentious is the section of the Guidelines which reads that "unless otherwise approved by a Public Health Inspector, Temporary Food Markets are restricted to 14 operating days per calendar year as designated on the Food Handling Permit."⁸¹ While inspectors are usually flexible about the application of this condition, and some markets have been granted multiple permits, some stakeholders are concerned that too much discretion is left in the hands of the Public Health Inspector. This, they say, discourages investment in farmers' markets because vendors do not know how many market days they will have available to them and has the potential for some markets to receive more favourable treatment than others.

Opportunities for Action

1. In close consultation with farmers' markets, the government could develop Farmers' Market Safety Guidelines tailored to address the unique nature of farmers' markets.
 - These guidelines could re-examine the number of allowed opening days for a farmers' market and the types of products that can be sold. For example, the Farmers' Market Association of Manitoba's economic impact study suggested that 26 weeks would be achievable for many Manitoba markets.⁸²
2. The government could develop a one-stop resource website to provide clear information on regulations, guidelines, and opportunities for farmers' market organizers and vendors. This would save time and hassle as well as assisting organizers and vendors to be aware of all the appropriate regulations.
 - An excellent example from Alberta can be found at [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620).
3. The government could develop resources that would support farmers' markets and their unique needs. For example, farmers' marketers now take a food handling certificate. It would potentially be valuable to have provincial food safety workshops targeted specifically towards the needs of farmers' marketers. ■

Year round markets exist in most Canadian provinces, including communities with growing conditions similar to Manitoba such as Saskatoon and Thunder Bay. Under current regulations, year round markets would require special permission to operate in Manitoba.

The restriction on operating days is an example of a wider concern held by farmers' market vendors and organizers. Stakeholders we met with discussed the need for clear regulations and rules with specific guidelines tailored to address the unique nature of farmers' markets. They stressed that a farmers' market is a very different enterprise than other types of temporary food markets. When vendors had questions with regulations, they had difficulty navigating the necessary government departments to either start a new farmers' market or to find answers to regulatory questions. A lack of regulatory clarity, therefore, is a concern held by farmers' market stakeholders.

Examples of Provincial Responses

The provincial government has been supportive of farmers' markets in Manitoba. For example, an annual directory of farmers' markets is published by the government to help consumers find their local market. It has also helped build capacity within farmers' market organizations through financial and in-kind support of the recently established Farmers' Markets Association of Manitoba (FMAM). The provincial government has recently commenced a review of the Temporary Food Market Guidelines in consultation with farmers' marketers.



Photo: Kreesta Doucette

Preserves for sale at St. Norbert Farmers' Market.

FOOD SECURITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Food, through its production, distribution, consumption, and waste has a large environmental impact on our province. In 2005, agriculture was responsible for 29.6% of greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba while the transport, processing, storage, and disposal of food products also produce significant emissions.⁸³ The stakeholders we consulted stressed the importance of working with the agricultural industry to continue improving its environmental sustainability. They suggested that farmers often have the closest connection to the land and have a particular interest in ensuring that it is cared for. At the same time, however, they pointed out that ongoing education is very important

Examples of Provincial Responses

According to Manitoba's action plan on climate change, *Beyond Kyoto: Manitoba's Green Future*, locally grown food has environmental and economic benefits.⁸⁵ Consequently, the Climate Change Action Fund (administered by the Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines) can be used to support and expand local food programs.⁸⁶ The Action Fund was established in 2001 and is a component of the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund (SDIF) which has provided grants that improve Manitoba's environmental sustainability since 1989. SDIF is managed by Manitoba Conservation and awards grants to projects focussed on innovation, conservation, community development, northern development, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, climate change, water quality, youth involvement, and natural resource conservation.⁸⁷ In 2006-2007, \$3.2 million was distributed to institutions and organizations throughout the province. Several of these projects had a food component, including support for community gardening, school garden programs, university research, organic food for child care facilities, compost education, and greenhouse development.⁸⁸

One of MAFRI's five priorities is "enhancing [the] environmental sustainability" of agriculture in Manitoba.⁸⁹ Consequently, MAFRI provides several programs and resources that promote environmental sustainability. In addition to the programs highlighted below, MAFRI also provides resources on on-farm composting, watershed management, soil management, and climate change. In the 2008-2009 budget, slightly more than \$5 million was allocated to Agri-Environment programming.⁹⁰

The Agricultural Sustainability Initiative works to improve the agricultural industry's environmental performance by funding several types of projects to improve sustainability. The priority areas for 2008-2009 include: water quality, agri-energy (promoting alternative energy sources), biological cropping systems, ecological goods and services, and northern foods and new production systems in the north. The maximum funding available is \$50,000 per proponent.⁹¹ Total funding is \$1,118,500 annually.⁹² In this way, the province attempts to encourage sustainable environmental practices within the agricultural sector.

so that farmers are able to utilize the newest environmental techniques on their farms.

The environmental impact of food does not end when it leaves the farm, or even when it is sold to a consumer. Part of the food system involves dealing with food waste. Some stakeholders suggested that it is important to explore options that reduce the environmental impact of food waste disposal while benefiting the environment and agriculture by capturing the nutrients held in food waste. For example, several Manitoba communities are already running municipal composting programs. Composting has the potential to reduce the amount of methane, a greenhouse gas far more potent than carbon dioxide, released into the atmosphere, allows for nutrients to be captured and returned to productive use, and reduces the amount of waste, and reducing the amount of waste deposited in landfills. Yet, currently in Manitoba, only 23% of households compost, the seventh lowest among Canadian provinces.⁸⁴



Photo: Kelly Dube

Agricultural compost machinery operated by Gerry Dube.

In 2005, the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program was launched in Manitoba. It is considered to be highly successful, as over 5,000 farmers participated in EFP workshops and over 8,500 on-farm environmental projects have been undertaken as of June 2008. Funding was provided by the federal government as a component of the Agricultural Policy Framework, while Manitoba provided in-kind support for the program.⁹³ The Agricultural Policy Framework has expired, and the details of the EFP program under its replacement, Growing Forward, have yet to be determined.⁹⁴

To reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, the provincial government has established the Manitoba Sustainable Agriculture Practices Program. This Program is part of the government's broader commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It has three branches: producer incentives for beneficial management practices, research and development, and extension. Up to \$100,000 is available per research applicant.⁹⁵

Another example of farmers' interest in conservation is the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) pilot project in the Rural Municipality of Blanshard. This project pays producers for providing ecological services from sensitive areas, wetlands, riparian areas, and natural areas with pay-



Photo: Kreesta Doucette

Community compost sign at Spirit Park created by community composter Carol Radway.

Only 23% of Manitoban households currently compost, 7th out of 10 provinces. In contrast, 91% of Prince Edward Islanders compost.

ments ranging from \$5 to \$25 per acre depending on the type of service provided and if the land is taken entirely out of agricultural production. It recognizes that while landowners are interested in ecological care it can be expensive and deserves appropriate compensation. Farmer interest appears to be high as over 70% of eligible landowners registered during the first sign-up period.⁹⁶

Opportunities for Action

1. The government could work with municipalities to encourage and support efforts to develop composting infrastructure to deal with food and agricultural waste.
 - This could include a Composting Infrastructure Fund to assist municipalities develop composting facilities or conduct feasibility studies into the potential for local composting programs.
2. The government could require that compost be used in erosion control projects.
 - Compost has been demonstrated to be very effective for erosion control. Currently, the states of Minnesota and Texas require compost to be used in erosion control and have found it to be very successful.
 - Such a requirement would create a market that would spur the development of the local composting industry, create jobs, and reduce methane emissions.
3. Based on the results of the ALUS pilot project, the provincial government could use it as a mechanism to support sustainable agricultural practices province-wide.
4. The government could fund research into true-cost accounting of food production practices including environmental impacts.
5. The government could conduct an analysis of existing agro-environmental programs to examine their mitigating impact on air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, soil erosion, biodiversity, and other key environmental indicators. ■

FOOD SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE

The provincial government has targeted aspects of food access and health through a wide range of programs such as the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, Healthy Child Manitoba, the Chronic Disease Prevention. There are many possibilities for the Government of Manitoba to partner with community-based organizations that support food security projects throughout

the province. These organizations have strong connections to, and knowledge of, the grassroots and can provide cost-effective service delivery. The government has the opportunity to be a leader and inspire Manitobans to address food security concerns in our province and, by doing so, create a province with healthy communities, environments, and individuals.

Opportunities for Action

1. Given that the government already has several programs that target aspects of food insecurity in Manitoba it could draft a food security policy framework to guide future program and policy development.
 - Several Canadian provinces have explicitly recognized and targeted food security as an issue. These include: British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. By doing so, these provinces have developed policies specifically designed to address food security concerns.
2. Given the interdepartmental nature of food security, it is important to develop a framework to coordinate work between departments. Food security has direct implications for: MAFRI, Health and Healthy Living, Conservation, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and Family Services and Housing. The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative is an excellent example of how numerous departments have worked together, each bringing their own skills and perspectives, to promote food security in Manitoba.
 - The government could use the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative model to develop an interdepartmental working group on food security to develop and implement a food security policy framework.
 - This committee should be provided with adequate staffing to maintain ongoing policy
- dialogue on food security and coordinate the committee's activities.
 - The committee should report annually the steps taken to reduce food security in Manitoba by the provincial government.
3. As a means of gathering baseline data to determine the effectiveness of food security projects, the government could fund community agencies to carry out Community Food Security Assessments throughout Manitoba.
 - A Community Food Security Assessment is a collaborative, community-oriented process that seeks to identify both needs and current assets in local food systems.⁹⁷
4. The government could highlight the importance of local food, health, and celebrate Manitoba's proud agricultural heritage by establishing edible landscaping including a vegetable garden on the grounds of the Legislative building.
 - The Legislative grounds have previously housed gardens. For example, during World War II, Victory Gardens were grown to support the war effort.
 - The fresh food grown in the garden could be used in the Legislative cafeteria or donated to Winnipeg Harvest to increase the amount of fresh, healthy food available to the poorest Manitobans. ■

CONCLUSION

The Government of Manitoba is well positioned to substantively address the issue of food security in Manitoba by building on existing provincial initiatives and through taking advantage of the Opportunities for Action outlined in this report. Investments in food security lead to a healthier economy, a healthier environment, and healthier Manitobans. By viewing food security as a strategic priority, implementing action steps with a systemic approach, and developing new partnerships the government can take innovative steps to reduce health care costs, create jobs, support farmers, and increase the quality of life of people throughout the province, while combating climate change. ■



Photo: Krestia Doucette

Manitoba sunflowers near St. Leon, Manitoba. Manitoba produces over 85 % of Canada's sunflower crops, over 200,000 tons of sunflower seeds per year.

Summary of Opportunities

Food Security and the North

1. Northern stakeholders were unanimous in their desire for the government to address northern food insecurity by finding ways to lower the price of healthy foods in the North. To do so:
 - The government could expand the jurisdiction of the Manitoba Milk Price Review Commission to encompass the entire province. This could lead to a regulated price of milk for northern communities to ensure that northern Manitobans can afford to access this product.
 - The government could develop a pilot project to reduce freight costs on essential foods in the north. Such a project should attempt to reduce food prices in cooperation with transport companies and grocery retailers. Stakeholders suggested that food subsidies could potentially pay for themselves in the long run because acute health care costs would be reduced.
2. The government could expand the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative to more communities and continue its community education work and funding to promote access to healthy foods in the north.
 - For example, the government could hold, or fund, small scale workshops throughout the north to raise interest and knowledge about obtaining healthy foods and local food production.
3. The government could support the development of innovative models that encourage the processing and retailing of northern fish for northern consumption in cooperation with northern fishers and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Board.
4. As identified at the 2009 Northern Grocers' Forum, the government could partner with communities and businesses to explore the feasibility of providing refrigeration car services on northern trains to improve food quality in northern communities.

Food Security and Health

5. Continue government support for programs such as the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative that provide small grants to local food security and healthy living programs.
 - Continue to support public health and community initiatives that teach cooking and shopping skills and nutrition.
6. The government could develop a Manitoba Nutrition Strategy.
7. The government could develop a public awareness campaign to encourage Manitobans to consume five to ten servings of vegetables and fruit per day as outlined in the Canada Food Guide.

Food Security and Schools

8. The government could conduct an inventory, or provide funding to a relevant community organization to do so, of all school feeding programs in the province including those funded by the Child Nutrition Council, school boards, and individual schools in order to coordinate efforts and share best practices.
 - Similarly, an inventory could be conducted of feeding programs in child care centres to determine the number of programs, the regularity of food provision, and the quality of food served to facilitate future policy development.
9. The government could provide financial support to enable schools with feeding programs to hire part-time Nutrition Coordinators.
 - This would reduce the volunteer time necessary to run nutrition programs in schools.
 - This would provide employment in low-income neighbourhoods and regions.

10. The government could work with schools and school boards to investigate possibilities for schools to purchase food from local producers and processors.
11. The government could establish a School Gardens Fund to create edible landscapes at Manitoban schools.

- These landscapes could serve as an educational tool, promote healthy living, grow nutritious food, and beautify school grounds.

Food Security and Low Income Manitobans

12. Establish a Food Security Action Fund to provide grants to assist food security projects in communities across the province. A model can be found in British Columbia where the Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) has funded grassroots projects that increase food security since 2005. CFAI demonstrates that government support for food security projects acts as a catalyst for community involvement. It funds programs in over 100 BC communities.
 - Such a fund would support grassroots involvement in developing solutions to food security concerns that meet the needs and interests of local communities.
 - Funding should be new support for food programs rather than funding redirected from other food or nutrition programs.
 - Funding would be flexible to include a wide variety of programs that increase access to healthy foods such as:
 - community gardens;
 - congregate meal programs;
 - community cupboards;
 - community kitchens;
 - bulk food buying clubs;
 - Good Food Club programs;
 - education and workshops;
 - farmers market coupons for low income families;
 - programs to meet the food security needs of newcomers;
 - developing community capacity that promotes food security and access to healthy, local foods.

- Both new pilot projects and ongoing projects should be eligible for funding to ensure that successful programs are able to continue for the long term.
13. The government could fund an annual costing of the Nutritious Food Basket as defined by Health Canada to monitor the price of food in communities throughout the province.
 - This is currently being done in several provincial jurisdictions in Canada including British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.
 - The government could provide funding to a community organization or educational institution(s) to complete the research.
 14. Stakeholders recommended that the province could address food insecurity by increasing EIA rates to ensure that all people have an adequate living wage. This way, all people in Manitoba would be able to afford at least the basics necessary for survival in this province.
 - The government could investigate the possibility of indexing EIA allowances for food to the actual cost of food to ensure that the food purchasing power of low-income Manitobans does not decrease as food prices rise.
 15. Similarly, stakeholders recommended that the Province could increase the minimum wage to ensure that low-income people have enough money to afford a nutritious diet.

Supporting Agricultural Production for Manitoba Markets

16. The government could take the lead in promoting local foods by developing institutional purchasing policies that support the purchase of Manitoba foods by government agencies. Since the government has significant purchasing power, this would have the potential to spur producers to grow food for the local market. This would give the government an opportunity to provide practical economic support to local farmers and processors, thus putting money into local economies in rural Manitoba.
- Several American states and institutions have developed such policies. In Canada, a growing number of organizations are developing local food purchasing policies. Additionally, Canadian studies published by the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute and The Ontario Rural Council have urged provincial governments to adopt local food purchasing policies.
 - Here in Manitoba, the Sustainable Development Procurement Policy gives preference to environmentally preferable goods and materials. The provincial government could investigate adding a stipulation to the procurement policy that food purchases should meet particular environmental standards. Purchasing foods from local sources, for example, would reduce carbon emissions that occur as a result of transport.
17. Similar to the above, the government could take an active role in facilitating connections between urban institutions who are interested in local food purchasing and rural farmers.
- Some organizations identified an interest in purchasing food from Manitoban farmers but were discouraged by the significant amount of work involved required to locate the necessary farmers. To make the transition to local food purchasing easier, MAFRI could help make these connections.
18. The government could fund a study to determine the size of the local market and identify needs within it to establish the potential value of capturing increased local market share.
19. The government could establish domestic marketing supports that would enable farmers and harvesters to develop their capacity for selling to the Manitoban market. The goal would be to increase the consumption of foods produced in Manitoba by Manitobans.
- A model for such a program is New Brunswick's Agri-Food Market Development Program which is intended to build domestic New Brunswick market channels to increase the sale and consumption of New Brunswick produced agri-food products within the province. Grants of up to \$10,000 are provided to individuals, businesses, or organizations to fund marketing and internal capacity building efforts.
 - In Nova Scotia, the Direct Marketing Community Development Trust will provide \$2.3 million over three years to improve local food infrastructure and support creative approaches to direct marketing.
 - In the United States, Washington state funds a small farm direct marketing assistance initiative while several other states promote direct marketing or local sales.
 - This program could support:
 - capacity building (such as marketing training or food safety workshops);
 - infrastructure to support sales for local markets;
 - marketing materials or supplies (for example, farm signage)
 - Such a program could also help farmers and processors capitalize on the growing interest in speciality or ethnic food products to meet Manitoba's increasingly diverse food demands. For example, education could be provided regarding how to meet Halal slaughter standards.
 - Stakeholders identified numerous individuals and communities in rural Manitoba with ideas for new products or ways to improve their

farming livelihood through local markets that do not have the financial resources to capitalize on these ideas. Establishing a fund to provide small grants to local agri-food enterprises would diversify rural economies and allow entrepreneurs to develop their ideas.

20. The government could continue to promote local food by developing an accessible one-stop consumer-friendly website for consumers interested in purchasing local food products. The current

website (www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/food/consumers/index.html) has a lot of valuable material but it could be marketed better.

- For example, an Alberta website run by Tourism Alberta, www.chomparoundalberta.com, includes information on where to get direct marketed food, farmers' markets, what food is in season, food driving tours, and restaurants serving local food.

Supporting Small Scale Agriculture and a New Generation of Farmers

21. The provincial government could ensure that the needs of small scale agriculture are recognized when making agricultural policy decisions.
- Additionally, the provincial government should determine if new food safety regulations will have detrimental side effects for small farmers and processors and develop programs to mitigate any negative consequences.
 - Existing agricultural regulations should also be reviewed to understand their affect on small-scale agriculture.
22. The government could consider a review similar to that completed by the British Columbia Farm Industry Review Board to work with commodity

groups to examine mechanisms to promote speciality production (such as direct marketing or organic farming) as well as to enable new entrants to have access to quota.

23. The government could investigate easing size restrictions on crop insurance to allow those growing less than three acres of a crop to have crop insurance. Since a small, albeit growing, number of people now make their living through direct marketing or through farmers' markets, the loss of their crops is a significant loss of income and they should be able to access the same resources as larger scale farmers.

Organic Agriculture

24. The government could bolster the Transition Program with an investment in training opportunities and by increasing the number of MAFRI field staff trained in organic techniques.
- It should be noted that MAFRI has provided several workshops on organic agriculture and has developed a series of resources available from its website. Such education work is important and a valuable contribution to the growth of the organic industry.

25. In recognition of the challenges faced by smaller scale organic farmers producing solely for local markets, the provincial government, along with organic stakeholders, could investigate options for alternative certification systems.

- This could provide some level of certification while reducing the cost associated with conventional organic certification processes and would be meant only for those producers selling their product solely within Manitoba.

Farmers' Markets

26. In close consultation with farmers' markets, the government could develop Farmers' Market Safety Guidelines tailored to address the unique nature of farmers' markets.
- For example, the Farmers' Market Association of Manitoba's economic impact study suggested that 26 weeks would be achievable for many Manitoba markets.
27. The government could develop a one-stop resource website to provide clear information on regulations, guidelines, and opportunities for farmers' market organizers and vendors. This would save time and hassle for organizers and vendors and allow everyone to be aware of all the appropriate regulations.
- An excellent example from Alberta can be found at [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa6620).
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Food Security and the Environment

29. The government could work with municipalities to encourage and support efforts to develop composting infrastructure to deal with food and agricultural waste.
- This could include a Composting Infrastructure Fund to assist municipalities develop composting facilities or conduct feasibility studies into the potential for local composting programs.
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- Compost has been demonstrated to be very effective for erosion control. Currently, the states of Minnesota and Texas require compost to be used in erosion control and have found it to be very successful.
- Such a requirement would create a market that would spur the development of the local composting industry, create jobs, and reduce methane emissions.
31. Based on the results of the ALUS pilot project, the government could use it as a mechanism to support sustainable agricultural practices province-wide.
32. The government could fund research into true-cost accounting of food production practices including environmental impacts.
33. The government could conduct an analysis of existing agro-environmental programs to examine their mitigating impact on air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, soil erosion, biodiversity, and other key environmental indicators.

Food Security and Governance

34. Given that the government already has several programs that target aspects of food insecurity in Manitoba it could draft a food security policy framework to guide future program and policy development.
- Several Canadian provinces have explicitly recognized and targeted food security as an issue. These include: British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. By doing so, these provinces have developed policies specifically designed to address food security concerns.
35. Given the interdepartmental nature of food security, it is important to develop a framework to coordinate work between departments. Food security has direct implications for: MAFRI, Health and Healthy Living, Conservation, and Aboriginal, Northern Affairs and Family Services and Housing. The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative is an excellent example of how numerous departments have worked together, each bringing their own skills and perspectives, to promote food security in Manitoba.
- The government could use the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative model to develop an interdepartmental working group on food security to develop and implement a food security policy framework.
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 - The committee should report annually the steps taken to reduce food security in Manitoba by the provincial government.
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- A Community Food Security Assessment is a collaborative, community-oriented process that seeks to identify both needs and current assets in local food systems.
37. The government could highlight the importance of local food, health, and celebrate Manitoba's proud agricultural heritage by establishing edible landscaping including a vegetable garden on the grounds of the Legislative building.
- The Legislative grounds have previously housed gardens. For example, during World War II, Victory Gardens were grown to support the war effort.
 - The fresh food grown in the garden could be used in the Legislative cafeteria or donated to Winnipeg Harvest to increase the amount of fresh, healthy food available to the poorest Manitobans.

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Appendix A



The Manitoba Food Charter emerged from Manitobans’ common vision for a just and sustainable food system. The Charter provides vision and principles that will guide and inform all levels of government, businesses, non-profit organizations, communities, families and individuals in planning, policy development, programs and practice in mutual effort toward food security and community development. It was drafted through broad public consultation and is to be endorsed by Manitoba food system stakeholders.

CURRENT SITUATION

Manitoba’s food system has both strengths and weaknesses. Our province has a significant and diverse agricultural sector and many Manitobans can access the food that they want. However, agricultural communities are challenged by an increasingly urban and globalized economy. Many northern, inner-city, and low income women, children and men have difficulty accessing quality food. The nationally ratified Human Right to Adequate Food has not been realized. Rural, urban and northern communities are disconnected. Not all of our food is necessarily nutritious, not all information about our food is complete or accurate; and much of our food travels long distances. There has been a loss in food knowledge and skills and an increased reliance on fast and highly processed foods. There is growing interest in and widespread concern about Manitoba’s food system and a desire for increased coordination and leadership on the issues facing it. The Manitoba Food Charter is testimony to Manitobans’ willingness to collectively and constructively engage in meeting these challenges.

VISION

A just and sustainable food system in Manitoba is rooted in healthy communities, where no one is hungry and everyone has access to nutritious food. It is an economically viable, diverse and ecologically sustainable system to grow, harvest, process, transport, and distribute food while minimizing waste.

A just and sustainable food system in Manitoba means:

- ❖ Farmers, fishers, harvesters, processors and distributors can generate adequate incomes and use ecologically sustainable practices.
- ❖ Respect for the traditional hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and conservation practices of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples within sustainable limits;
- ❖ A sustainable balance between fair international agricultural trade and diverse vibrant production for the local market;
- ❖ Healthy relationships between producers and consumers in urban, rural and northern Manitoba communities;
- ❖ Province-wide availability of a variety of nutritious and affordable food through accessible retail outlets and food service operations and the economic means to obtain sufficient daily food for health and dignity;
- ❖ Well grounded confidence in the quality and safety of our food; and
- ❖ Easy access to understandable accurate information about nutrition, food composition, the ways food is grown, preserved, processed, purchased, and cooked, and how to minimize waste.

WE, THEREFORE, DECLARE our commitment and intent to work in partnership towards achieving a just and sustainable food system in the province of Manitoba. We recognize that this commitment has real implications for our policies, programs and practice. Our willingness to make this commitment indicates our sense of collective and personal responsibility for the present and future ecological, economic and social well-being of Manitoba.

Signature _____

<http://food.cimnet.ca>

10 Ways to Take Action

towards a just and sustainable food system

- 1 Choose healthier, fair trade & local food
- 2 Support local farmers & food businesses
- 3 Grow your own... eat really close to home!
- 4 Compost your food and agricultural waste
- 5 Cook and share your food skills and traditions
- 6 Teach and learn about food justice issues
- 7 Change the menu... ask for healthy and local food
- 8 Seek healthy food for all Manitobans
- 9 Host a 100 Mile potluck, picnic or bbq
- 10 Sign the Manitoba Food Charter



Northern Healthy Foods Initiative

10 Ways

to a Northern Harvest in your community:

- 1 Gardening
- 2 Involve Schools
- 3 Freezer Purchase Program
- 4 Greenhouses
- 5 Harvesting Wild Foods
- 6 Canning and Preserving
- 7 Raising Chickens and Eggs
- 8 Fishing and Hunting
- 9 Wild Rice
- 10 Composting/ Soil Blending



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