

# Planning for Sustainable Food Systems in Canada

Research & Project Plan

**Prepared by:** Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Planning activities address the allocation of land, resources, and services in ways that secure the health and well-being of communities. These activities have a significant influence on how and where food is grown and distributed, how individuals and communities access food, and to what extent food system activities impact ecological integrity. For example, agriculture and food production has a significant impact on the use and availability of land, water, and other resources. The design and regulation of built environments impact if and how people are able to access healthy food. The food system is also a significant economic and employment sector, creating diverse jobs for Canadians across production, processing, and distribution sectors. Additionally, food is critically linked to cultural expression, social life, and community cohesion. Despite the significant influence of food on everyday life, local communities have typically had very little influence over how food systems are developed, regulated and governed in Canada.



Since 2000, when the omission of food from local level policy and planning domains was highlighted by researchers Kami Pothukuchi and Jerome Kaufman, we have seen a significant shift. Municipalities have engaged directly in food systems planning by creating new food systems and food security portfolios within local government, and developing plans and policies to guide local level food system development, and address local food system challenges. The emergence of food policy councils has raised the profile of food in local level planning and policy agendas, and created space for direct engagement with communities on food issues. Higher levels of government are also beginning to reform their fragmented approach to food policy development. In 2019 the federal government announced the Food Policy for Canada which represents the first ever food policy initiated at the federal level linking planning domains such as agriculture, health, economic development, and waste management.

While these are promising signals of change, there is still significant work to do to understand how policy and planning domains can better support the development of sustainable food systems across Canada.

## Project Description:

This project represents three years of research led by the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (ISFS) at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, in close partnership with the professional planning community in Canada. This important partnership is realized through work with the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP), and outreach to their membership, as well work with local planning agencies in the Okanagan

bioregion of British Columbia. The project aims to examine three critical areas of food systems planning in Canada; 1) the skill and knowledge of planners and degree of engagement in food systems planning, 2) the tools, resources, and policy environments that support their work, and 3) the processes used to develop and implement food systems policies and plans. We will work across local and national scales to understand where and how food systems planning is occurring, and to develop tools and resources to advance sustainable food systems in Canada through planning.

## **Project Details:**

This project will be completed in three phases to increase understanding of where and how food systems planning is occurring, and to develop tools and resources to advance sustainable, local food systems in Canada through planning.

### **Phase 1: National Survey of Professional Planners and Food System Practitioners**

***April 2020 - March 2021***

The first phase of our project will address the lack of training and experience among planning practitioners. This will be accomplished with a national survey, developed through a strategic partnership with the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP). The survey will help identify key knowledge and training gaps amongst planners and inform professional development programming and supports for practitioners working in a variety of planning and policy domains.

### **Phase 2: Case Study Analysis of Food Systems Planning and Policy Environments**

***April 2021 - March 2022***

The second phase of the project will address the patchwork of food policies and programs in Canadian policy environments. This will involve evaluation of planning environments – including the tools (i.e. plans and regulatory structures), resources (i.e. data and information) and processes (i.e. governance and networks) - that support food systems planning. This will be completed through case study analysis of select policy jurisdictions in Canada. During this phase, researchers will conduct interviews with key actors in these jurisdictions, and conduct comparative analysis of these jurisdictions.

### **Phase 3: Local Food Systems Planning and Policy Development**

***April 2022 - March 2023***

The third phase of the project will address the lack of information and precedents to support stakeholders engaging in food systems planning processes. This will involve testing innovative planning tools and processes and the use of key decision support tools for bioregional food systems planning in one case study jurisdiction, the Okanagan bioregion of British Columbia. The ISFS is currently engaged in a significant food systems assessment in this region. This phase of research will draw on this work, on information collected in Phases 1 & 2 to develop a food systems planning charrette process to engage stakeholders in food systems planning and policy development.

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For additional information please contact ISFS Research Associate, Emily Hansen: [emily.hansen@kpu.ca](mailto:emily.hansen@kpu.ca)