Gathering.

a Youth Perspective on Food Issues

Volume 1 - March 2012

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of Gathering – where youth ideas on food systems and food policy meet. This journal was first conceived in 2011 when members of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council community realized we needed a way for the great ideas being shared at our meetings to reach a broader audience. Though TYFPC meetings provide a space for the sharing and exchange of new and exciting developments in food policy and food systems work, our momentum risked getting stuck in the meeting room. How could we share the importance of food issues with other groups, urban planners, health care providers, and policy makers in Toronto and beyond?

From this discussion the idea of the journal was formed: a place for young voices to share fresh ideas on food system change in an academic yet accessible way. The support we've received in putting together this first issue has been overwhelming. Compelling and prescient articles were submitted by young people throughout the Golden Horseshoe, from high school students and university grads to industry professionals. We received incredible input and feedback from an expert peer review team from different areas of the food system all across Canada.

We are so pleased to present you with the culmination of these combined efforts: the inaugural issue of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council's journal. Gathering is meant to be read both as a short collection of interesting articles and as an academic resource on the cutting edge of food systems thought. We are delighted to have contributions on a wide range of topics ranging from domestic to international food policy issues, and we are hopeful that you, our readers, will be as inspired by these young authors as we have been. While the first issue has now "hit the shelves", the discussion is only just beginning. We encourage you to contact us with feedback, opinions, and article ideas for the next issue at the e-mail address below.

Enjoy the food for thought and dig in,
The Editorial Team
Adeline Cohen, Anna Cote, Coly Chau, Emily Martyn, Kathleen Ko

We would also like to acknowledge our list of peer reviewers, who took the time out of their busy schedules to make this happen. Thank you to the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council and Toronto Food Policy Council members for your support and encouragement

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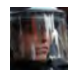

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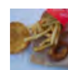

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Taking Action on Depleting Food Resources

By Emma Chiera

Many people are under the impression that food is an everlasting resource. This is not the case. Factors such as climate change have a definite impact on our earth, such that we may find one day that all our food resources have vanished. In fact, the resources are diminishing already, before our very eyes; and we blame anyone but ourselves, while in reality, it is humans who are destroying what we most need for survival.

Global warming and climate change, as mentioned above, are among those factors that play the strongest role towards natural resource destruction in our biosphere. But these two phenomena did not simply spring out of nowhere. Humans have played a large role in aggravating these phenomena, yet it is also within our power to reverse that trend.

Many pollutants (the chemicals that create global warming) are created by humans and humans alone. Made of sulfur and nitrogen from burning coal and fossil fuels, the pollutants enter our biosphere and kill some of the most precious organisms in it that we so largely depend on. Creating pollutants is not only bad for our food situation; it is also rapidly depleting our limited supply of non-renewable resources (coal, for instance). We are putting dangerous chemicals into our food or killing it off altogether in creating pollutants.

But why should we try to preserve what we have? We have huge amounts of food in certain concentrated areas: excessive meat sources on farms; flourishing fruits in tropical areas. But those foods are not as available as we might think, nor are they produced in a sustainable way. For instance, to keep beef cheap in price, we now feed cattle corn. However, cattle have not evolved sufficiently to digest corn. Therefore, cattle easily develop E.Coli, a dangerous germ that gets transferred to the food and can cause serious illness and death in humans. If one cow develops the germ, the rest on the farm will as well. But a solution has been found to this obvious problem: Grass-fed cows do not develop E.Coli. The trouble is that no one is willing to switch back to feeding their cattle grass, because it is often not as profitable. This calamity was most clearly demonstrated in the 2008 documentary Food, Inc.

> *"Simply helping the environment gives back to us, in more ways than one—and one is food."*

Another dilemma is that we simply have so many more mouths to feed now. At 7 billion in population on our planet, our food supply should be growing, not declining. However, many fertilizers used on plants are based on fossil fuels, which we are also running out of. In addition, with our vast population, it is estimated that we will need to meet 50% more demand for farming by the year 2030—when here we are already using 80% of the arable land on our planet for farms. This is a critical difficulty brought on, not by climate, but population expansion.

At this point, we must ask ourselves: What will happen when our food resources begin to dwindle away? Humans will die—but how? Based on historical precedent, when our supplies are limited, we will fight over necessary food. If we don't die of starvation, we will increasingly be battling over resources.

With all these complicated problems, it is hard not to turn our backs and assume that there's nothing we can do now. But there is still time to repair the damage we have done and become better people from it. Although it is difficult to know where to start, there are many, many things we can do to save our food.

For example, population expansion is a prime cause for resource destruction. Why don't we keep our numbers lower? Our Earth can comfortably hold 1.5 billion people; why can't we keep it there? We are nearing 7 billion in population, and are bursting the limits of our planet. If we have fewer people and more space, each of us will have more food.

Climate change is another cause; namely, pollutants. If we stop burning coal and releasing these dangerous chemicals into the air, we could put our global heating on hold, or at least delay it. True, eventually global warming will take its toll on our earth, because what has already been damaged cannot be reconstructed, but we can buy ourselves plenty of time.

Global warming can be fixed in other ways too. Simply helping the environment gives back to us, in more ways than one—and one is food. So why don't we listen when environmentalists tell us not to waste energy or water? Why don't we use those new cars that don't spew ridiculous amounts of exhaust? Why don't we help our planet and ourselves, and use the benefits that come with it?

All these things will bring us more food, a healthier lifestyle, and easier living—laziness is no excuse. A little extra work to keep us alive and healthy seems to be an easy deal, even a necessity. Some people don't think food resources diminishing will impact us in any way, but we are the first in line. We have no choice but to act.

In conclusion, these suggestions will bring a better life to all beings on our planet. However, if we don't follow them, we will find ourselves fighting to the death for food necessities and survival. So let's start now, and keep food going on our Earth, before all that we need is gone.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here**.*

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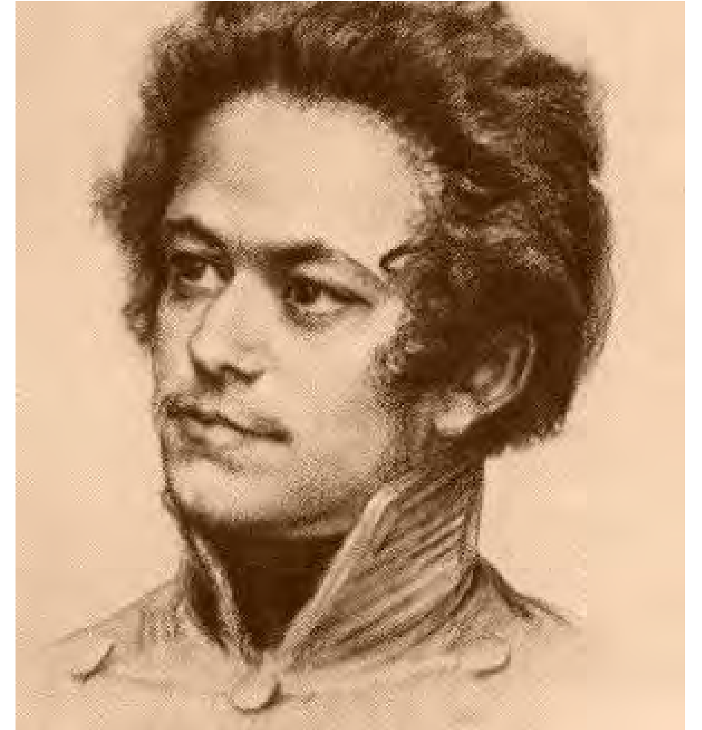
Was the Young Marx a Foodie?

By Anika Roberts-Stahlbrand

Most people have seen pictures of Karl Marx as an old man with a wild beard—the perfect look for someone known for strange ideas on economics. But like all who become chronologically-challenged, Marx was once young too. He even got into a bit of trouble with the police while taking part in a pub crawl (Eagleton, In Praise of Marx) and must have pulled at least a few all-nighters with Friedrich Engels to write The German Ideology in a matter of months. Sound familiar?



In The German Ideology, written 1845-1846 when he was still in his 20's, Marx first elaborated historical materialism—the core of what is known as Marxism and the method that set him apart from other philosophers who tried to come to grips with the human condition. Even though it has seldom been recognized that food is so central to his development of historical materialism, his words are so strong that the young Marx deserves to be considered as a foodie ahead of his time.

Like many young people today, Marx wrote with attitude about the abstractions of armchair philosophers. A year before writing The German Ideology, he made his now famous comment that "philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point is, to change it" (Marx, Selected Writings: These on Feuerbach 101).

The historical materialism presented in The German Ideology starts with what Marx calls "real individuals, their actions and their material conditions of life" (Marx, Selected Writings: The German Ideology 107). What made history meaningful, he emphasized, is that humans produce and reproduce their lives by producing "their means of subsistence" because "by producing food, man indirectly produces his material life itself" (German 107). In Marx's recounting of ancient history, it is the production of food that first set humans apart from other animals.

In his youthful writings, Marx clearly appreciated the primacy of food in human history. But more than that, his analysis of the turmoil in industrializing 19th century Europe gave him insights that were premonitions of today's Modernist food system. One of the central themes he looked at was alienation. The Modernist food system refers to the cheap, impersonal, industrialized, globalized, high input-high yield food system that became dominant after World War Two and is now pervasive in the Global North (Roberts, The No Nonsense Guide to World Food) . In the modernist food system, most people are separate from both the soil and nature. When this separation happened in industry, Marx called it alienation. Much as with

industrial goods, people have become alienated from their food because big machines and chemicals interact with the food rather than human hands, and because the resulting food product is then shipped far away from the producer. Critics of the Modernist food system argue that it externalizes the true costs of mechanized and polluting farming methods onto the environment. This externalization is only possible because, as Marx predicted, humans are alienated from nature and see themselves as separate from it.

Today, an increasing number of people are looking for "authentic" and artisanal food, made with love by a fellow human being rather than processed food produced and packaged by a machine. Local food has become fashionable, and sales of organic food continue to rise. Sometimes this trend is referred to as the search for "real food." But what is everyone really craving? All the issues contemporary food critics talk about can be understood as manifestations of Marxist alienation. Everyone is searching for a word to describe why they feel divorced from the current food system. Yet Marx came up with a comprehensive way to look at this problem of alienation more than 150 years ago. A Marxist translation would be to say that the modernist food system has succeeded in alienating people from their food.

It is only with the rise of the modern environmental movement that writers have taken a fresh look at Marx and realized the attention he paid to human relationships with nature. This sense of the importance of the interaction between humans and the environment was central to him right from his early years. Two years before Marx wrote The German Ideology, he wrote Alienated Labour. In it, Marx argued that since humans are their material production, it follows that "Man lives by nature" (Marx, Selected Writings: Alienated Labour 63). Indeed, Marx goes so far as to call nature the "inorganic body" of humans because "man is part of nature" (Alienated 63).

Contemporary environmentalists complain that too many people see the environment as something 'out there'. This is clearly not a problem Marx had. Although Marx is best known for championing the working class, it is evident right from his earliest days that he was concerned with the reciprocal relationship between the worker and nature.

> **"...his words are so strong that the young Marx deserves to be considered as a foodie ahead of his time"**

Marx does focus much of his writing on labour, but as John Foster's Marx's Ecology shows, Marx defined labour as "a process between man and nature" (Foster, Marx's Ecology 157). Food epitomizes this approach to labour since food is literally the fruit of human exertion in nature, and brings external nature right into the gut of humans. From his earliest days, Marx understood this dialectic linking the worker and nature. He argued that nature and humans cannot be seen as "independent entities. As long as man has existed, nature and man have affected each other" (German 107).

One of the most common statements people make about food is "you are what you eat." Marx profoundly understood this in his youth. The production of food "must not be viewed simply as reproduction of the physical existence of individuals," he argued, "rather, it is a definite form of their activity, a definite way of expressing their life, a definite mode of life" (German 107). For him, material activity is so much more than a "means of life" (Alienated 63), it is what we are. Most people who look at today's food movement comment on how fresh it is and how youthful its supporters are. The young Marx would have fit right in.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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Growing Resistance

the role of Toronto's community gardens in challenging the food system

By Cate Ahrens

Introduction

The capitalist food system fails to adequately feed the world's population and produces outrageous social costs (Albritton, 2009; McMichael, 2000; Patel, 2007). In response to this "dysfunctional industrial food system" (Sumner, 2008, p.36) there is growing momentum and widespread social concern for food-based issues (Sumner, 2008; McMichael, 2000). These concerns have translated into what some refer to as the alternative food movement, consisting of many projects and initiatives aimed at challenging the current food system and creating alternative ways of producing and relating to food. At the heart of many of these initiatives is a rejection of the globalized food system and a commitment to challenge the devastating social and environmental effects of this system (Allen, 2004; McMichael, 2000; Miller, 2008).

Community gardens are a popular expression of this food movement and are being taken up in many ways. Under a variety of names, community gardens have a long history dating back to the 1800s, often in response to periods of crisis (Schmelzkopf, 1995). Support for community gardens continues to grow (Irvine et al., 1999; Lawson, 2004; Schmelzkopf, 1995) and they can be found in a number of different places including parks, rooftops, senior citizens' residences, schools, and churches (TCGN, 2010). While they have a broad range of purposes, community garden projects are still often seen as a way of providing food for low-income areas and marginalized populations (Glover et al., 2005; Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Hough and Barrett, 1987; Irvine et al, 1999; Schmelzkopf, 1995).

Advocates suggest that community gardens have the potential to:

- improve communities' self-reliance (Baker, 2004) and food security (Baker, 2004; Cuthbert, 2009; Ferris et al., 2001; Glover et al., 2005; Jolly, 1999);
- improve food access and production (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Hough, 1984; Schmelzkopf, 1995);
- change relationships around food, and reconnect people and their food (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Levkoe, 2006; Miller, 2008);
- develop democratic citizenship and political efficacy (Baker, 2004; Glover et al., 2005; Levkoe, 2006);
- create feelings of ownership and

responsibility (Glover et al., 2005; Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Moskow, 1999);

- increase awareness of health-related aspects of food and improved nutrition (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Levkoe, 2006; Wakefield, et al., 2007);
- connect people to the ecological impacts of food production (Hancock, 2001; Schmelzkopf, 2002; Wakefield et al., 2007); and,
- build sustainable alternatives to the current food model (Levkoe, 2006).

Despite the growing support, questions remain about the capability of community gardens to act as a mechanism to challenge the food system and provide long-term solutions to issues of food security and social and environmental injustice (see Allen, 2004; Guthman, 2008; Johnston & Baker, 2005; Jolly, 1999; Lawson, 2004; Miller, 2008). Like other alternative food initiatives, the rapid growth of community garden projects and activities far exceeds the amount of critical analysis and reflection (Allen, 2004). This work takes a popular initiative within the food movement and questions how it relates to the food movements' ideals and objectives. The research is based on the perspectives gained from a focus group of five community garden organizers/participants and the current literature (Ahrens, 2011).

Area of Concern	Potential Connections within Community Gardens
Food Security	Access • increased physical and economic access • high quality foods produced • culturally appropriate foods available Community self-reliance • building food skills and knowledge • contributing to a sustainable food system Decommodification of food • food as a basic human right vs. a commodity to be bought and sold
Environmental Sustainability	Enriching ecosystems • genetic diversity and preservation • energy inputs/outputs • organic practices
Social Justice and Livelihood	Meeting basic human needs • contributing to sustainable food systems Access to opportunity and participation • citizenship engagement • inclusion Freedom from exploitation and oppression • decentralized power • challenging inequity

Table 1: **Main Concerns in the Food Movement**

Framework

I have used Allen's (2004, chapter 2) work as a platform from which to build and structure how I understood the many, wide ranging concerns that comprise the food movement and the analysis of how community gardens respond to these concerns. I have adjusted her three categories slightly to be: food security, environmental sustainability and social justice. Table 1 provides an overview of the concerns and potential connections made in community gardens.

While the study looked at each of the three areas in detail, this article will discuss the area of social justice and livelihood.

Social Justice and Livelihood in Community Gardens

"Community gardens are often more about community development than they are about food" (Participant 2)

Allen's (2008) criteria for social justice is a useful way to discuss the main concerns expressed in the food movement relating to social justice. The three criteria are: meeting basic human needs, access to opportunity and participation, and freedom from exploitation and oppression (p.157). I have grouped concerns such as food knowledge and skills building, hunger as a result of poverty, the demand for decentralized control over food systems and increased democratic participation, exploitative working conditions, and systemic marginalization and inequity under these three criteria. In the following discussion structured by these criteria we can see that community gardens have the ability to respond to these concerns and support a movement toward social justice: community gardens are able to contribute to building local food systems, increasing citizen engagement, and catalyzing agency and empowerment.

One of the ways that community gardens can contribute to meeting basic human needs is by supporting the development of sustainable, local food systems. (Gottlieb and Fisher, 1996; Hough, 1984; Schmelzkopf, 1995). In addition to the immediate production of food for the local community, community gardens also involve building and valuing the skills and knowledge for continued production of healthy and culturally appropriate food. This strengthening of food skills and knowledge is an important piece of growing a local food system because communities gain greater ability to feed themselves and have continued access to food over time (Gottlieb and Fisher, 1996; Participant 4; Participant 5). While this is not the only aspect of meeting basic human needs, we can see how sustainable, local food is a significant piece of this aspect of social justice.

Community gardens have also been understood to have strong ties to citizen engagement. These spaces often offer a place to get involved in decision-making, advocacy and have one's voice heard in a meaningful way (Baker, 2004; Glover et al., 2005; Levkoe, 2006; Participant 3; Participant 4). In Schugurensky's work, (2003), he describes the lineage of scholars that have linked participation in democratic experiences to building a community of engaged citizens that are more likely and able to participate in other aspects of life (for example, Cole, 1919; Mill, 1963; Pateman,1970). Participants in the focus group shared stories of their community gardens' decision-making processes. One participant commented that he sees people in his community garden that have likely never had a voice in a meeting before. Another participant commented that she works with mainly women who are new to Canada. She feels that the garden facilitates a realization that they can be active citizens in this country. A third example given was about a community garden group that was faced with having their garden covered over and built into a raised bed. The gardeners fought back, advocating that they had worked hard on that soil. Schugurensky summarizes Pateman's (1970) work in this area by saying: "Hence, in a virtuous circle, the more the individual citizen participates, the better able she or he is able to participate" (para 8). Community gardens provide the space to participate in a collective project and build on these skills and opportunities.

Inclusion is a key piece in the struggle for social justice. A strong theme in the focus group was that community gardens take many forms and have the capacity to take on the needs of the community and be shaped by that community. This uniqueness is one of the key strengths of community gardens (Participant 1; Participant 2; Participant 3; Participant 4; Participant 5). However, when the garden is shaped by one group, it is likely to exclude others (Participant 3; Participant 4). One participant described one of her garden experiences as being primarily a group of women with a particular cultural background. She is sure that others in the community don't feel like it's a space for them. It wasn't their intention to create this specific group, but it happened organically; they are the dominant bodies and that has steered the initiative. "At the same time, who is left out?" (Participant 4). This becomes an interesting and important question, because it seems that gardens have the ability to be inclusive spaces for groups that tend to be marginalized (Participant 1; Participant 2; Participant 3; Participant 4; Participant 5). Yet if one group makes it their space, another has likely been excluded. Inclusion needs to be an ongoing consideration.

> ***"community gardens are able to contribute to building local food systems, increasing citizen engagement, and catalyzing agency and empowerment."***

Time is another factor in the ability to participate. While community gardens can break down financial, cultural and gender barriers to access, one must have the time needed to be an active member of the community or to produce food (Participant 3). Leisure time is a luxury in many cases. In addition to affecting who is included, time can also limit the contribution gardens can make in building sustainable food systems and increasing access to food.

Community gardens' relation to Allen's third criteria for social justice, freedom from exploitation and oppression, is less direct and perhaps more variable than other aspects. In support of these concerns, community gardens can play

a role by modeling counter hegemonic spaces and building the political agency to potentially challenge these conditions in the broader context.

Johnston (2008) offers that food projects are counterhegemonic when they: (1) reclaim civil commons, and (2) promote post-consumer values (p.96). Activities that reclaim the civil commons, "restrict commodification, develop alternative modes of accessing life goods (eg. cooperation), [and] decrease the distance between production and consumption" (p.105). Community gardens involve building private and public spaces into cooperative land that is accessible to the community and produces food and social connections within the local community. In this way, community gardens can be considered to be reclaiming the commons. Activities that create post-consumer values, "challenge consumerism's hegemony, [and] provide a proactive vision, creating alternative pleasures and empowerment not based on ecological and social exploitation" (p.105). Community gardens often challenge consumerism in that they operate outside of the market and provide opportunity to grow rather than buy food. They are often as much about the social aspect as they are about gardening and in this way support alternative pleasures (Partcipant 2; Participant 3; Participant 4).

Given the strong resonance with both criteria, we can understand community gardens as having the potential to be counterhegemonic spaces, developing resistance to the exploitation and oppression that exists in the current food system. This concept helps to look beyond the face-value implications of community gardens and consider the more complex, indirect affects that these initiatives may create.

Another indirect way that community gardens can contribute to freedom from exploitation and oppression is by building agency within a community to mobilize and advocate for social change. Community gardens are gathering sites, building agency through relationships, sharing interests and civic skills and becoming engaged in issues of food and governance (Participant 3; Participant 4; Wakefield et al., 2007). These activities can increase a group's capacity to work together and advocate for change. As one participant describes: "at its very base value, it's getting people off the couch and into the garden and taking a proactive viewpoint as to their ... shit that their sitting in. And I'm going to change something about this and I'm going to grow a tomato" (Participant 1). This ties into Freire's concept of conscientization, or consciousness raising: the process of understanding the world and acting against the structures of oppression (Freire, 2000). In this way, communities can begin the process of exposing and understanding the structural oppression and exploitation and gain the strength and capacity as a collective to challenge these structures.

I want to be careful here to distinguish this point from suggesting that communities are responsible for and have ultimate control of their marginalization. Community gardens have been labeled uncritically as "self-help models" by Cuthburt (2009, p. 55) and others. This approach runs the risk of perpetuating beliefs about poverty and hunger as being the fault of individuals and pointing to them to fix their own problems (Allen, 2004; Dowler and Caraher, 2003). It is worthwhile to note that the degree of power or agency that a community holds is constrained by the dominant structures, and therefore it is not solely dependent on a group's ability to organize and seek empowerment (Johnston, 2008). However, I do believe that over time people have the power to create change.

> **"By providing sites where local food system skills and knowledge can grow, an environmental ethic and alternative food practices can flourish, democratic participation can build and expand communities' cohesion and capacity, community gardens hold significant potential to catalyze change in the food system and beyond."**

Emergent Themes

"These initiatives may in fact be seeds of social change, but they must be understood as works in progress" (Allen et al., 2003, p.62).

One of the most powerful ways that community gardens contribute to the struggle for food security, environmental sustainability and social justice in the food system is by creating part of an alternative food system (Participant 3; Levkoe, 2006). Community gardens are about cooperation, participation, connection with food and working in community, standing in stark contrast to the capitalist, export-oriented, industrial food system that exists today. While a superficial observation of a community garden may not provide clear links to transforming the food system, if we consider the indirect effects of community gardens we begin to see the connections (Participant 1; Participant 2; Participant 3; Participant 4; Participant 5). There is disagreement about the ability for incremental changes to result in meaningful resistance and rejection of the food system and inequity at a broader scale. For some, incremental change is understood as the only way that change ever takes place, building momentum and gradually creating something different. This position was supported strongly by participants in the focus group. Others see alternatives as piecemeal or ineffectual. Hassanein (2003) has written at length about this tension. (see also Allen, 2004; Guthman, 2008; Hinrichs and Lyson, 2007; Poppendieck, 1997).

Food sovereignty and food democracy, two central concepts within the food movement globally, both place participation and building local control over the food system as central to a transformation of the food system (Hassanein, 2003; Lang, 1999). By providing sites where local food system skills and knowledge can grow, an environmental ethic and alternative food practices can flourish, democratic participation can build and expand communities' cohesion and capacity, community gardens hold significant potential to catalyze change in the food system and beyond. I do not perceive community gardens as a solution per se, but the relationship between community gardens and challenging injustice is difficult to observe and we must consider the indirect effects and complexity of activism and resistance (Guthman, 2008a) to fully appreciate what these spaces have the potential to offer.

> **"Community gardens help to define the vision of how we could grow and produce food more equitably and engage with an alternative reality"**

Another strong theme of particular importance as I attempt to identify commonalities and the potential of community gardens, is that community gardens can be many different things. This was voiced strongly in the focus group and can also be seen in the literature (see for example, Ferris et al., 2001). For one, this means that we must take caution in making claims about what community gardens are or aren't (Participant 3). And second, this ability to take unique forms based on the needs and desires of a community strengthen their relevance as a vehicle for community capacity building and engagement in the food movement: "If the community needs food, it can be about food; if the community wants space to socialize it can be about socializing" (Participant 2). A community garden can truly be a grassroots, local initiative in this way. In a discussion about strengthening community gardens and increasing support for start-up and maintenance, focus group participants were adamant that any attempt to support them must not take away from their ability to reflect the unique needs of a community: "All of it is about maintaining the uniqueness of the locality and what the community wants, what the organization needs to do. And not moving toward this cookie cutter kind of community garden" (Participant 3).

The concept of community gardens, under various labels (victory gardens, allotment gardens, etc) has been used throughout history to respond to crisis, encouraging the urban poor to supplement their food and income needs by way of growing food and selling the surplus (Irvine et al., 1999; Schmelzkopf, 1995). Yet many question the capacity of community gardens as a long-term food access strategy because of the reliance on external resources. These gardens often exist on borrowed land (owned by the municipality or owned privately and lent out to the garden project), and depend on external funding that is temporary and can be withdrawn at any time. These factors leave community garden initiatives in an ongoing risk of losing the space and/or losing the capacity to continue the garden project (Lawson, 2004; Monroe-Santos, 1998; Schmelzkopf, 1995).

Institutional support was raised in the focus group as one response to this lack of stability. But the group expressed concerns about institutionalization leading to streamlining or homogenizing community gardens. Networks, on the other hand, are one way to maintain the leadership and direction from within the community while providing more consistent and reliable support (Participant 3). They could help facilitate training workshops based on specific community needs, and sharing skills and lessons learned between gardens. They could also coordinate resources to many different gardens, for example compost being delivered in big quantities to each garden rather than have them having to source our resources individually. The call for networks to facilitate urban gardens is also reflected in the Metcalf Food Solution Paper: Scaling Up Urban Agriculture in Toronto by Nasr, MacRae and Kuhns (2010). One of the central themes in the paper is a call for 'hubs' to connect various urban agriculture initiatives and disseminate knowledge and resources between these initiatives. Institutional support could come in the form of funding the network, while the outcomes from this network could be directed and experienced by the community.

Concluding Remarks

While this project was limited in size and scope, it is clear from this research that community gardens have the potential to play a significant role in building momentum within the food movement and supporting a shift toward food security, environmental sustainability and social justice. We cannot assume that all community gardens operate in the same way or have the same affects, but in the participants' experiences and through the literature there is strong support for these initiatives as sites for building incremental change in these areas. Offering space to strengthen local food systems, foster environmental consciousness, and build civic engagement and political agency undoubtedly contributes to the pressure for changing our food system. In addition to growing resistance to the industrial model, community gardens help to define the vision of how we could grow and produce food more equitably and engage with an alternative reality.

At the heart of the food movement struggle is a desire for food security, environmental sustainability and social justice – we cannot have one without the others. As the momentum builds, we must continue to engage in critical reflection: what are we trying to achieve, how are we working toward those outcomes and is it working? This research is a contribution to this ongoing process.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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Planning Tools for Improving Food Access

Lessons for Ontario's Municipal Planners

by Bronwyn White

The notion of 'food system planning' has, until recently remained largely ignored by the planning profession. Of course, rural planners have been involved where farmland preservation and agriculture is important, yet urban planners have largely ignored the 'other' elements of the food system that fall within their domain, including food processing, wholesaling, retailing, consumption and waste (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 116). Recently, a number of trends – including the implication of food miles, farmland degradation, and a resurgence in urban agriculture – indicate the need for urban planners to intervene and take a more active approach to food systems planning. Additionally, the concept of urban food accessibility has become a highly visible issue for the public, as well as planners. This has probably been most evident with the growing popularity of the 100-Mile Diet or the local food movement, whereby urban residents are demanding increased access to locally grown foods (Campsie 7). In response to this there has been a significant growth in alternative food spaces, especially farmers markets and community gardens (Bedore 228; "Farmers' Market Ontario " sld. 7). While the issue of local food is worthy of the widespread attention it has garnered, its prominence has at times overshadowed another important food accessibility issue; that significant portions of urban populations do not have access to any healthy food.

Access to healthy food can often be a challenge for the residents and communities living communities are sometimes forced to shop at fast-food outlets or convenience stores, where cheap and processed food is abundant and healthy food, if any is sold at inflated prices (Zenk 275). Without access to affordable fresh food – namely fruits and vegetables – the diet and overall health of adults and children become compromised (Powell et al. S301; Lui, Wilson and Ying 317). The impacts of these underserved neighbourhoods are most intensely felt by lower-socioeconomic communities and racialized communities (Larsen et al. 77). The existence of these underserved, low-socioeconomic areas is so widespread that they have been given their own name – food deserts (Wrigley 2030). While the phenomenon of food deserts has not been as consistently observed in Canada as in the United States, there nevertheless remain food-access inequalities in Canadian neighbourhoods (Larsen & Gilliland 1158). The planning profession has contributed to these spatial inequalities as their policies and processes help dictate land-use and the spatial dimensions of communities. As a result the profession is well placed to help remedy this situation by creating more sustainable and healthy community food systems.

Recently in North America, a number of initiatives and policies have emerged at the federal (United States only), state/provincial and local level, in both government and civil society to address the growing inequalities around access to healthy food; these range from plans and programs to fiscal and regulatory tools. Interestingly, a variety of planning specific regulatory tools have been employed in urban areas across the United States to help increase the sale of healthy food at the neighborhood level. These initiatives have targeted both smaller and larger food retail providers. While Ontario faces similar challenges in the provision of healthy food, examples of planners using their regulatory tools to increase food accessibility at the retail level remain sparse. The majority of initiatives that have attempted to improve food accessibility in Canada have done so by focusing on the development of alternative food systems (i.e. farmers markets, community gardens) (Bedore 187). Two examples of innovative municipal policies that address urban food accessibility – while only occurring in the United States – have important implications and lessons for Ontario's municipal planners. These examples include; 1) zoning incentives in New York, New York; and 2) General/Official Plans in Santa Rosa, California. They demonstrate how planning and developing agencies can be proactive in creating healthy food environments. While the examples are found in the United States, they are relevant to the Canadian planning environment, as Canadian and American planning systems have similar fundamental elements. They both rely on the Euclidian zoning system, which designates separate areas for separate uses. Also regional, municipal and town planning, within both jurisdictions are largely informed by the use of General Plans (United States) or Official Plans (Canada). These plans provide vision and direction for the growth and development of communities through policies, goals and plans. It will become apparent that similar planning tools are available to Ontario's municipal planners, and could potentially be used to improve access in underserved neighbourhoods.

Improving Access through Zoning Incentives: New York, New York: "FRESH"

In 2008, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), City Planning (NYCDCP) and the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) released a study that indicated a lack of grocery stores in many low- and moderate-income neighbourhoods across the city ("Fresh Food Stores Overview" par. 1). The study indicated that 16 to 26 percent of residents in the areas identified as needing full-line grocery stores, reported that they did not "eat a single serving of fresh fruits or vegetables the day prior to being surveyed" ("Fresh Food Stores Overview" par. 10). Predictably, residents of the same area suffer from higher than average rates of obesity and diabetes ("Fresh Food Stores Overview" par. 11). Recognizing the importance and potential of full-line grocery stores in improving individual health and quality of life, the City launched the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health, or FRESH, program. A FRESH food store is defined as a store;

> ... whose primary business is the sale of a general line of food products intended for home preparation and consumption, including a healthful selection of fresh fruits and vegetables; fresh and prepared meats, fish, and poultry; canned and frozen foods; dairy; and nonfood grocery products ("Special Regulations Applying to FRESH" 2).

This program supports the expansion of existing grocery stores and promotes the development of new stores in designated areas through a variety of incentives.

Adopted by Council in December 2009, FRESH has three major zoning incentives to attract grocery store development in underserved neighbourhoods. For the sake of remaining relevant to Ontario's planning context, only one zoning incentive will be examined, this is density bonuses. Specifically, FRESH offers density bonuses for developers with a grocery store on the ground level of mixed-use or commercial buildings.

A density bonus is a planning tool that allows developers to increase the maximum allowable development on a property in exchange for amenities or housing needed by the community (Miskowiak & Stoll 1). This may include the development of parks, affordable housing or heritage preservation. In this particular case, the density bonus allows for increases in developed square footage or in the total number of developed units. Under the FRESH initiative, additional floor area is permitted in a residential building when there is a ground floor FRESH food store. Specifically;

> One additional square foot of residential floor area would be allowed for every square foot provided for a FRESH food store up to 20,000 square feet ("Special Regulations Applying to FRESH" 4).

> **"the City of Toronto's OP recognizes healthy food as being essential to healthy neighbourhoods, yet it does not include specific policy goals to achieve this"**

Here, the density bonus is tied directly to the goal of increasing access to full-line grocery stores in underserved neighbourhoods. Using density bonuses to encourage food retailers into underserved neighbourhoods is also possible under Ontario's planning framework.

Zoning regulations in Ontario are similar to those in New York; essentially, they determine what can and cannot be built within designated districts (i.e. industrial, commercial, residential). Beyond the primary consideration of land use, zoning bylaws can be used to encourage social equity (Bednar et al. 3). Zoning incentives can be offered through Section 37 of Ontario's Planning Act. Essentially, this section loosens zoning density and height restrictions for developers in exchange for community benefits, like transit improvements, nonprofit arts, cultural, or child care facilities, etc. (Bednar et al. 3). For example, during the development and planning phase for the West Queen West Triangle (Toronto, Ontario), the City of Toronto negotiated with developers to build a community arts facility, include 190 affordable housing units in a particular building, donate $1.25 million to Toronto Public Health, and sell rental units to a non-profit arts organization (Bednar et al. 3). While sounding simple, the legislation does not put forth much guidance or regulations. As a result many municipal councils are divided over its merit (Tyndorf 1). In fact, the City of Toronto is one of the few municipalities in Ontario to use it (Tyndorf 2). To date, there is no record of Section 37 being enacted to secure a full service grocery store.

This is likely because benefits incurred from Section 37 are typically allocated to capital facilities, or cash contributions to achieve capital facilities ("Implementation Guidelines" 5).

There is a certain degree of discussion over the merits of Section 37. The advantages of Section 37 are its ability to; secure the provision of public benefits (municipal-wide, community-wide or site specific), provide a range of possible benefits not restricted to specific types of amenities (i.e. monetary benefits), further municipal initiatives (i.e. social, cultural, economic and political) and acquire benefits that are not limited to the proposed (re)development site (Longo & Costello sld. 56). However, Section 37 could lead to ad-hoc, "lets make a deal" planning decisions, the difficulty of determining a monetary value for bonuses, and a lack of legislative requirements for comprehensive and consistent standards (Longo & Costello sld. 56).

While there is some debate over Section 37, it remains a planning tool that can be used to improve social inequity. It would seem that in the absence of clear directives – including the need for full service grocery stores in underserved neighbourhoods – municipal staff are reluctant to use it. Learning from New York's FRESH program, Section 37 could be used to acquire more specific community needs.

Improving Access through General/Official Plans: Santa Rosa, California

In this example grocery stores are perceived as valuable assets to communities for a variety of reasons. Not only do they provide better access to healthy food, but can also increase the property value of the surrounding area, provide living-wage jobs and attract and anchor additional businesses. The establishment of full-line grocery stores can help to build and sustain a robust economy, and thus contribute to overall economic development (Fieldstein et al. 5). This goal is realized through the city's general plan.

In California, it is required by state law that every county and city adopt a general plan (Fieldstein 37). This document outlines how the land within the jurisdictional boundary is to be used through a series of general policy statements. This document plays a fundamental role in shaping the overall health of a community. The Santa Rosa General Plan, 2035 (SRGP) has a section designated to "Land Use and Livability". The concept of livability is diverse and involves many aspects of daily urban life, including protection from natural disasters, absence of crime, health of the environment, opportunities for employment, affordable housing, and a range of services and schools ("Santa Rosa General Plan" 2-1). Within this section there is a considerable amount of health implicit policy language. Meaning, its policy supports healthy changes to its community, but does not include specific health rationale. Specifically, under the guidelines for the downtown area, policy LUL-C-6 states, "Attract a grocery store to the downtown area" ("Santa Rosa General Plan" 2-17). The implementation of this policy is particularly important because the SRGP had specific language that "supermarkets and/or drugstores are permitted in Community Shopping Centers only" (Jones and Hartman 12). Unfortunately, a community shopping center does not exist in the downtown core. This limits downtown residents to smaller retailers that cannot always provide a full-line of products. This policy indicates that the city of Santa Rosa recognizes the importance of contextually-appropriate land use regulations in creating environments with healthy food options.

> *"The potential of using regulatory tools to improve food access through enhanced retail provision has yet to be acknowledged or documented by Canadian academics, planners or advocates"*

To help implement this policy, a number of more specific directives are outlined in Santa Rosa's Economic Sustainability Work Plan. The development of the Work Plan is in response to the recent recession. In an effort to increase economic development – through the development of grocery stores – the plan suggests an amendment to the SRGP that would allow grocery stores to have even more flexibility in where they locate, even beyond the downtown area. It recognizes the constraints of only allowing grocery stores to locate in community shopping centers. Potential retail owners have expressed their discontent with the inflexibility of current policies that force them to locate to these designated areas. Often this context is not appropriate for smaller traditional retailers, or more specialized retailers (Regalia 16). The plan suggests that by allowing greater flexibility supermarkets or grocery stores would likely locate in underserved areas.

This example demonstrates the extent to which general plans can help shape a community's access to healthy food. It is important to note that while these policies may not be framed as a food accessibility strategy, they nevertheless support healthy food environments.

The adoption of General Plans – which are termed Official Plans (OP) in Ontario – are also mandated under Ontario's Planning Act. The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing describes municipal OPs as "the primary vehicle for articulating a community's sustainable vision and overall planning direction" (Chap. 2). It must conform to higher planning documents (i.e. Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statements), while outlining more detailed planning goals, policies and activities for the municipality, town or city. Further, the Planning Act requires that the OP be reviewed at intervals no less than once every five years. This ensures that it remains relevant to changing circumstances.

OP's offer an opportunity for planners to take a more coordinated approach to food systems planning, and specifically to address issues of inadequate access to healthy food. Many official plans may allude to the importance of access to healthy foods through general, broad-based, aspirational statements. However, very few seem to put forth more concrete policies or actions. For example, the City of Toronto's OP recognizes healthy food as being essential to healthy neighbourhoods, yet it does not include specific policy goals to achieve this. Conversely, the Regional of Waterloo's OP contains a full section dedicated to food access, entitled "Access to Locally Grown and Other Healthy Foods" ("Regional Official Plan" 44). Under this section neighbourhood food accessibility is encouraged through specific policy directives. For example, under General Development Policies for Urban Areas (2.D.1) it states that development will occur in a manner that "facilitates residents' access to locally grown and other healthy foods in neighbourhoods" ("Regional Official Plan" 18). In this case the Region of Waterloo recognizes that accessibility to healthy food is important to the overall 'liveability' of the region (Region of Waterloo, 2010;). Yet, while the policies and goals of the Region of Waterloo OP's are more substantial than other OP's (i.e. Toronto), it is not as prescriptive as the policies outlined in Santa Rosa's General Plan.

Clearly, the policies outlined in an OP are indicative of the priorities of several stakeholders, including the public, elected representatives, developers, and community groups. Varying degrees of recognition and implementation can be given to specific issues through an OP; this will depend on the priority of the issue, the visibility of the issue, the mobilization of relevant stakeholders, and the degree to which Council feels they can affect change. Unfortunately, Ontario's towns, cities and municipalities have yet to realize its full potential.

These two examples present unique and innovative ways to address inadequate access to healthy food in urban neighbourhoods. New York City created the FRESH Program, which uses zoning incentives to encourage the development of new stores, as well as upgrades and expansions in existing stores. Santa Rosa, California's General Plan and land use policies, were used to promote economic development through food retailing. Both of these examples offer valuable lessons for Ontario's planners, and the planning profession in general.

Ontario's current planning framework already accommodates these types of initiatives, as seen through the use of official plans and zoning incentives (Section 37 of the Planning Act). Through the availability of these tools, Ontario's planners are positioned to improve access to healthy food in underserved areas. This is increasingly important given our understanding of the health problems associated with inadequate access to healthy food. A more deliberate and focused uptake of these tools would suggest that the planning profession has begun to acknowledge and address how the physical environment can influence individual and community health.

The potential of using regulatory tools to improve food access through enhanced retail provision has yet to be acknowledged or documented by Canadian academics, planners or advocates. As a result, this research fills a knowledge gap by identifying available tools planners can use to improve community food access. Yet, while this research sheds light on a little-known area of Canadian planning it does not investigate, in any great length, the reasons why the uptake of these tools is so minimal. Our understanding of how planning tools, like Section 37, can be used to increase community food security, and specifically food access is limited to non-existent. Further research is needed to better understand the perceived barriers in utilizing these tools to their fullest degree. While this paper has highlighted the potential for access to be increased through revitalizations and development at the retail level, it is not suggesting that this is the best or most appropriate method to improve food access. Various interventions – including the introduction of farmers markets, community supported agriculture, and improved public transportation networks – may also serve to improve food access. Further investigation of the barriers and opportunities to using each of these intervention techniques may help to clarify all of the available options planners have to improve food access.

Inevitably, food access will become an important item on the municipal planner's agenda. The complexity and diversity of the challenges our current food system holds will need to be addressed through the collaboration of various disciplines. Planners will not be left out. They are equipped with a variety of tools that can be used to effectively address these issues, and create a healthy more sustainable food system.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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Reduce, Reuse, And Recycle:

what's happening to 'food waste' in the City of Toronto?

By: Kate Greavette

Introduction

One aspect of the Canadian urban food system, only recently gaining a high public profile is food waste. Food losses and waste1 is present in every phase of the food system, from production through processing, distribution, consumption and waste management. By first contextualizing food waste in the City of Toronto, this paper focuses its discussion on three food waste initiatives in Toronto: gleaning, Second Harvest and the Green Bin program. The intention of this paper is not to discredit these programs, but rather to critically assess these programs to argue that initiatives aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling food waste are not long-term solutions to food waste nor are they long-term solutions to food insecurity2 within the City of Toronto. These initiatives make the best of surplus foodstuff caused by failures within the food system, but identifying and addressing the underlying failures is essential in order to build a more resilient food system.

Context

Amongst growing concerns of food insecurity and questions of regional and global availability of food, the reality in Toronto and much of North America and Western Europe is large quantities of food is thrown out every day. Canadians throw away approximately 40 percent of our edible food every year (Bain). This percentage represents avoidable food waste, defined as "food that: gets wasted because we buy more than we need; is out of date before we use it; gets wasted because we cook more than we need" (Love Food Hate Waste). Surplus food is being lost and wasted at all phases of the Canadian food system–the total food waste in Canada is a result of food loss in the field (9 percent), transportation and distribution losses (3 percent), food service wastage (9 percent), packaging and processing wastage (18 percent), retail store loss (11 percent), and home wastage (51 percent) (Gooch et al 5).

Issues of surplus food and food waste can be viewed in a number of different ways. From a production perspective: one cannot predict how much of a crop is going to survive to harvest, and thus producing more can help reduce risks and safeguard income for farmers. From a consumer perspective: surplus foodstuff can be directed towards food banks; and from a disposal and waste management perspective, surplus food can be recycled, broken down into compost with the nutrients being returned to the soil for fertilization, establishing a closed-loop food system. Thus surplus food is not necessarily wasted rather it is potentially redirected back into the food system.

Despite these positive views that can be taken to food waste, surplus food–lost and wasted–has economic, environmental and social repercussions. In Canada, it is estimated that the difference in value between what is consumed and "what is produced on farms, then processed, distributed, and sold every year" each year exceeds $27 billion (Gooch et al 2). The $27 billion value of surplus food is "greater than the value of all Canadian agricultural and agri-food exports in 2007" (Ibid 2), and thus represents a significant amount for the country.

Food in landfills is a main contributor of greenhouse gases, as "methane from food waste rotting in landfills is 25 times more powerful a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide" (CBC). Less obvious costs are also associated with this surplus food, including transit networks on which to transport this food and waste, and garbage fees. Seeing a gap in the literature on food waste management initiatives, this paper critically explores how surplus food is being recognized at various phases of Toronto's urban food system; how projects have been designed to reduce, reuse and recycle this food; and the potential social repercussions that need to be considered including their contribution towards food security and their impact on addressing the underlying causes of excessive food waste.

Reduce: Gleaning

One means by which surplus food produced is reduced is through the practice of gleaning. Gleaning is the "gathering of vegetables and fruits in the field that would otherwise be left to rot or be plowed under after harvest" (York Region Food Network). This activity helps to provide residents living on a limited income with fresh fruit and vegetables by collecting and utilizing some of the "25 million pounds of produce left on the vine or tilled in and sent to landfill in Ontario" (Ibid). Initiatives such as Community Harvest Ontario, a project of the Ontario Association of Food Banks, aims "to increase the quantity of fresh, local, healthy foods distributed to food banks across the province" (Community Harvest Ontario). This initiative does so by connecting with farmers to acquire their 'seconds'; working with farmers on specific planting projects for food banks; and connecting volunteer groups with farms that have surplus produce in their fields (Ibid).

As a means to reduce food waste in the field, gleaning is one step in recovering the remaining food on a field after the last harvest. Produce can be left on a field "because mechanized harvesters cannot retrieve the entire item or because the machines are unable to discriminate between immature and ripe products. However, these losses are often viewed as an acceptable tradeoff between field efficiency (lower production costs and faster operation) and increased yields" (Kantor et al 4). Consequently, gleaning occurs when "it is no longer economically profitable to harvest a crop" (Ibid 4). In regards to reducing food waste, the practice of gleaning is aimed at connecting different levels and actors within the food system: connecting producers with a means of distribution; connecting consumers with producers; and empowering consumers and producers to take an active role in reducing the amount of un-harvested food being used as fertilizer or animal feed, while also improving access of food insecure Ontarians to fresh produce.

Within the Greater Toronto Area, gleaners are most often community members- living on limited income (York Region Food Network) who glean the field for produce for themselves and family, or they are volunteers (often corporate volunteers) who harvest produce to benefit local food banks (Community Harvest Ontario). Although this may be viewed as a means to reduce the environmental repercussions of food waste and to make use of otherwise uneconomically-viable produce, the true value and social impacts to the gleaners or food recipients must be questioned in order to assess their long-term contribution to food security, and their impact on reducing food waste.

To be eligible to participate in gleaning activities through the York Region Food Network, and to keep the collected produce, one must be on limited income and glean at pre-arranged times, traveling to and from the farm together on a bus (York Region Food Network). The merits to this include ensuring that it is those who in the most need of the food, are those accessing the produce; traveling to the farm is not a limitation for any interested participant; and the farm-owner is not continuously disturbed by gleaners. Although the rationale behind this is fair, according to the Food Bank of Canada, the most vulnerable populations to food insecurity in Canada are the working poor, children, persons with disabilities, seniors, single parent families, and recipients of social assistance. This poses the question, how realistic are gleaning opportunities for the most vulnerable populations to food insecurity in the region? Are factors of time, childcare and the physical ability to glean are likely to limit their inclusion in this activity.

Theoretically, the increased access to fresh produce should contribute positively to urban food security at the individual and/or household level. In practice, research tracing this gleaned food from the farm to the plate has not yet been conducted. Thus it is difficult to assess if the greater availability of food is bringing greater food security, because food that is gleaned is most likely at a ripened stage, thus if there is not sufficient knowledge and skill of food preservation and management, how much of the gleaned food is used and how much of the gleaned food ultimately ends up in the landfill? Though gleaning does reduce the amount of produce tilled back into the fields, it does not necessarily guarantee the produce will be used resourcefully at home to positively impact food security and reduce food waste at a later phase of the food system. The long-term contribution of gleaning to reducing food waste is questionable, and thus addressing the inefficiencies within the food system causing this surplus food is necessary to build a more resilient

food system.

Reuse: Second Harvest

Second Harvest, an organization based in Toronto, works "to help feed hungry people by picking up and preparing excess fresh food and delivering it daily to social service agencies in Toronto" (Second Harvest 2010). Daily trucks leave from their Downsview base to all corners of the city, gathering mainly perishable foods from local hotels, restaurants, grocery retailers, food manufacturers, food distributors and major event planners (Second Harvest 2010a), which would otherwise go to waste. This food is delivered throughout the city to breakfast/lunch/after-school/summer programs, emergency food banks, shelters, harvest kitchens and community snack/meal programs, for a total of 250 social service programs in the Greater Toronto Area (Second Harvest 2010a). There are a number of different aspects to Second Harvest, including the direct delivery of goods to social service agencies, and harvest kitchens, which offer youth and adults with employment barriers an opportunity to gain job skills.

Second Harvest has grown considerably since its inception in 1985, and in 2010 this organization rescued 6,433,714 pounds of food within the Greater Toronto Area (Second Harvest 2010b, 5). From one perspective, this is a win-win-win situation: an economically, environmentally and socially friendly means by which to redistribute surplus food and reuse what would otherwise be food waste. Second Harvest is a type of meal preparation and feeding program, and it also ensures that fresh food goes to food banks. Tarasuk and Eakin's research on "Food assistance through 'surplus' food" offer great points of discussion in regards to reusing surplus food. The handling of food and disposal in food banks, is facilitated by the surfeit of unpaid labor in these agencies, the neediness of food bank clients, and the lack of client rights in this secondary food system. The marshaling of volunteer labor to serve a corporate need might be construed as a "win-win" situation because the work of salvaging edible foodstuffs from among industry "surplus" helps to "feed the hungry" while also diminishing the amount of refuse that is deposited in landfill sites, sparing corporations disposal costs and landfill tipping feeds, and helping them to forge an image of food corporate citizenship (Tarasuk and Eakin 183).

Consequently, when this perspective is applied to initiatives such as Second Harvest, as they are similar in rescuing food and relying heavily on volunteer labour, we cannot deny that for many the increased availability and accessibility of regular food is a positive impact towards food security in the City. However, one element that remains unaccounted for is the opportunity for food choice, ensuring that individuals have choice in what they are eating, and how it is prepared. This initiative aims to connect the food insecure with surplus food in the distribution phase of the urban food system. It promotes consumption, and helps to close the loop on food waste that would otherwise be going to the landfill. However in doing so it has institutionalized a secondary food system, one in which individuals and households have lost a great deal of the autonomy of what they eat and how it is prepared. Consequently, reusing food at the distribution phase of the food system has helped to ensure immediate access to food, and to reduce some of the repercussions of millions of pounds of food going to the landfill. Yet, currently there is insufficient research on how this reclaimed food is viewed by recipients; what, if any, stigma is associated with it; and how lack of food choice impacts a holistic definition of food security. Reusing surplus food is thus a short-term reaction to food waste – it is offering a response to food waste, yet it does not offer lasting changes to the failures of the food system creating the surplus foodstuff.

Recycle: The Green Bin

The Green Bin is a tool being used by the City of Toronto to manage solid organic waste. The need for an organic waste management system is demonstrated through Forkes' estimate that 30 to 40 percent of all municipal solid waste in Canada is made up of organic material (75). The Green Bin program thus collects organic waste, such as fruit and vegetable scraps, paper towels and coffee grinds, and turns it into compost (City of Toronto). As highlighted by Forkes, "wastes for the food system can be considered sources of lost nutrients. These losses can lead to increased storage of nutrients in soil and groundwater which in turn may lead to serious negative environmental impacts" (75), including high nitrogen levels on groundwater, surface water, and it can be a contributor to the formation of ground level ozone and smog. Consequently avoidable and unavoidable food waste can be collected through the City's Green Bin programs, and the recycled final product, compost can then be distributed back to the community.

The potential of the Green Bin program in recycling food waste into compost which can then be used as fertilizer is immense, as stated by Forkes "the recycling of nutrients present in domestic wastes could replace 35–45% of fertilizers needs" (75). The role of consumers in the amount of food waste produced varies considerably based on the study. Research from the George Morris Centre considers consumer behaviour to be the largest single contributor to food waste, accounting for more than 50 percent of the annual food waste in Canada, valued at $27 billion (4). This is in contrast to the statistic offered by Forkes, that consumers are responsible for 25 percent of the total food waste, and the remaining 75 percent of food waste is generated by the retail and food sectors (82). Consequently we can assume that one-quarter to one-half of what becomes food waste is a result of consumer behaviour, including the lack of knowledge or practice in food management techniques; the convenience culture which pressures Canadians to buy more foodstuff, less frequently; and the fact that generally in Toronto a low proportion of one's income is spent on food, and it is not so important if food is wasted. Thus the Green Bin program is designed to divert organic waste, and "change the social behavior of everyone in the community when it comes to how households manage their waste" (Biocycle 32).

One critique that has come in response to the Green Bin program is outlined in an article by Mullins, which "found that in the past two years thousands of tons of organics that are part of the green bin program were dumped in a gravel pit, landfills or stockpiled on city property. Some of the material that residents were told was safe for the green bin like plastic bags and diapers were sent to Michigan to the incinerator" (32). This article also suggests that following laboratory testing of the compost, the final compost product was left unfinished, and with a sodium content so high it would actually kill plants if it were used in a garden (Ibid 32). Consequently, due to disputes over what 'should' be happening within the Green Bin program and what is 'actually' happening, further interdisciplinary research must be conducted to assess the safety and health of that soil for agricultural and food growing purposes. Further research from an anthropological perspective would be beneficial in understanding how consumers view food waste in the Green Bin, if they are concerned that they are throwing away food (and see all the added costs of the food system) or if the Green Bin is being used as a tool to 'okay' the quantity of food waste individuals and households put in the bin, thereby in a way validating the current food system and its failures which cause food losses and wastes.

Conclusion:

The three initiatives discussed throughout this paper represent how surplus food, which would otherwise be heading to the landfill, is being recovered from the production, distribution and disposal phases of the urban food system. This paper sees three projects taking a stance against food waste, and using innovative methods to close the loop on surplus food, by working to ensure that the energy inputs/outputs stay within the urban food system by re-marketing food which would otherwise go to waste. This paper shows that food waste is not simply the end result of the food system, but rather it shows food waste engrained in three phases of the food system. Since food waste is engrained in all phases of the food system, individual interventions aimed at reclaiming food at various phases of the food system is not sufficient as a solution to the surplus wasted food. Rather food waste needs to be addressed as a food system problem and acted on accordingly.

Projects aimed at using surplus food such as gleaning and Second Harvest increase the availability and accessibility of fresh, wholesome produce to citizens within the City of Toronto. However, these initiatives also present stigma as the food available is not necessarily available to all, only to those who are publicly labeled as 'food insecure'. Additionally, with these projects emerge questions of choice, and lack thereof: why do the food insecure have significantly less choice and control of what food they eat and how it is prepared. Programs aimed at recycling food waste, creating a closed-loop system where nutrients from wasted food are reintegrated into soil as fertilization, are good in theory. However, because it is a relatively new technique of waste diversion, much more research and study needs to be conducted on the quality of the composted soil, and forging the links to ensure this composted soil is used for growing. As well, understanding household perception of municipal composting programs is essential to tailor education programs on food waste, and to understand how composting initiatives are impacting consumer's attitudes of food waste. Consequently, projects aimed at combating food waste appear to contribute towards reducing, reusing and recycling the amount of food wasted within the City of Toronto, but in reality major gaps exist. Long-term studies are needed in order to assess how much of this reclaimed food is actually being used; how much of it is actually going to the landfill; how consumers understand and perceive food waste and initiatives using 'food waste'; and most importantly what needs to be addressed in the food system to correct the failures and inefficiencies which is resulting in the high quantity of surplus food.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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Scaling Up & Out

Local Movements and Global Realities

By Coreen Jones

The dominant food system can be characterized by words such as industrial, conventional, corporatized, and mainstream. The dominant food system is powered by corporations and governments and is rooted in efficiency and productivity. These underlying characteristics have led to a food system that is highly energy intensive, inputs a catastrophic amount of chemicals in the form of pesticides, fungicides and herbicides, highly water intensive, highly resource intensive in general, and inefficient in terms of transportation costs and distances (Horrigen et al 445; Reganold et al 926). It is capital intensive and thus requires large subsidies in the form of fossil fuels, land and water to continue production at such a large scale (Gleissman 253). The food system is extraordinarily convenient (in so-called "developed countries") though, in that there is lots of food and it comes in what seem like endless varieties. However, the impacts of the dominant food system, as they relate to distancing and durability1, effectively alienate consumers such that the environmental and social costs of the current food system become extremely difficult to navigate.

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A number of alternative food strategies have emerged to counter the current food system including urban agriculture, community gardens, community shared agriculture, farmer's markets, etc. Community initiatives coupled with a conscious commitment to ethical consumption make up food citizens. Food citizenship "emerges from people's active participation in shaping the food system, rather than by accepting the system as passive consumers" (Welsh and MacRae 3). Food citizens are aware consumers but are not only consumers, rather they "also are engaged in their communities and have an 'intimate' connection to the food they eat" (Baker 308).

This paper reviews the results of a study that I conducted in 2011 where 10 Toronto, independent and socially conscious café owners and managers were interviewed regarding food citizenship, resistance and education. The research question for this study was "How, if at all, are Toronto's socially conscious and independent cafés educating café go-ers to resist the dominant food system?" Here I will only focus on one part of the results: Scaling Up & Out: Local Movements and Global Realities, exploring the importance of scaling out or connecting with local movements, an integral piece of food citizenship, and scaling up or paying attention to structural concerns associated with the food system (Johnston & Baker 318).

Exploring the ability and importance of connecting the local with the global in the popular local food movement that all of the participants in this study are committed to has been a critical area of exploration. While a commitment to the local food movement is essential to food citizenship and should be encouraged, it should happen with caution and consideration. Johnston and Baker use the notion "scaling up and scaling out" to assess how well an approach integrates local concerns/movements with structural realities of the food system, which are often global in scale (318). From an environmental justice perspective, Pellow notes, "The intersection of social inequalities with ecological harm produces environmental inequality both domestically (within nations) and on a transnational scale (between northern and southern nations and regions)" (5). The human mastery over nature paradigm is relevant as mastery over nature often acts as justification for mastery over particular populations in today's capitalist context (Higgins 252). Higgins notes, "In its context of social domination, the pursuit of mastery over nature has resulted in massive environmental pollution, which disproportionately impacts minority communities" (252). Distancing in the food system is of course a significant factor in why the mastery over nature paradigm has been so successful and thus an important reason why a connection between the local and global is essential.

While all the participants highlighted their commitment to the local food movement, they are also interested in global issues such as labour, trade, and the environment and thus serve fair or direct trade and organic coffee (and sometimes other products as well). Most of the participants are very involved with their fair/direct trade decision-making and either know their producers directly or are part of a larger organization that they trust know the producers directly. Some of the participants also noted that the baseline price of the Fair Trade brand is not actually good enough so they take further measures to ensure a proper price. It was also mentioned that transparency within fair trade is a consistent struggle, especially with corporations involving themselves in the movement now.

The participants' responses are in line with what Hess believes to be fundamental to the success and mobilization of power, what he refers to as the localist movement: to truly build an alternative global economy through "global localism" (7). Practically, local businesses need to be concerned with connecting consumers in one place with products made by other independents in other parts of the world that are also dedicated to social and environmental justice. This fundamental responsibility is also critical to avoid the corporate adoption of "buy local" campaigns, which is already happening in many places. Local independent businesses need to distinguish themselves from simply "buy local" campaigns by incorporating support of social and environmental justice globally and actively resisting that which proceeds otherwise (245). Unfortunately, this final point is challenging though as many of the participants are not interested in actively resisting anything. From the perspective of the consumer, it may be challenging to distinguish between fairly traded goods from a local business with fairly traded goods from a corporate conglomerate. However it is this type of challenging yet truly influential food system problem solving that Johnston & Baker have in mind (318).

A common critique of market-based localism is that it can suffer from enclavism, where the upper class can buy local products, which can be more expensive (but not always), and consequently turn their backs on urgent global problems. Hess highlights the importance of local business commitment to social responsibility, which assumes commitment to fair trade practices and/or trading with partners in other places that are also local independents (245). This situates localism within an alternative global economy, rather than the narrow definition of only buying local goods. This is an important distinction as localism can often be associated with an unrealistic "back to the land" mentality that is far removed from today's globalized reality. Heise reminds us that rather than assume that local is "natural," and that people desire a rootedness in a particular place, it is important to consider the impact of globalization (150). Heise highlights "the challenge to reimagine our attachments to an environment whose very 'nature' may be global rather than local" (150). This concern is exemplified through the need to provide culturally appropriate foods that the food security movement encourages (Lutz 2). Hess' unwavering commitment to "the local" in the context of "the global" adequately responds to Heise's challenge.

About half of the participants are interested in supporting local because it makes sense to them; these critiques of the local movement did not resonate with them. The other half, however, provided practical insight to the theoretical local/global debate consistently cited in the localist movement literature. Some of the participants emphasized the connection between the local and the global, and the importance of not being solely connected to one or the other. Often the acknowledgment of contradictions were cited in these conversations. Many of the participants spoke of their commitment to the local supply chain wherever possible but realize, especially in the coffee industry, that a concern for an ethical global approach is a large part of their business.

Environmental justice is concerned with the implications of naturalized ideas and the ways in which such ideas become assumptions or simply the way it is and how this leads to the establishment of particular identities that reinforce the social order (Erickson 314). A conscious connection between local movements and global realities/movements is necessary for countering two often naturalized ideas. First, the environmental movement is often globally homogenized as Gosine and Teelucksingh warn of in their book Environmental Justice and Racism in Canada: An Introduction. They highlight that the image of the blue planet commonly used for environmental purposes or phrases such as "Think Global" can homogenize the environmental movement and suggest that we are all in this together equally (Gosine and Teelucksingh 108). This however is not the reality of today. Populations across the globe are in fact not equal, particularly in the globalized

market. Certain populations are more responsible and certain populations do not have a say and cannot make changes even if they wanted to regarding the environment. These concepts largely dominate the way sustainability is used in the environmental movement, i.e. to incorporate the global approach while erasing difference (Gosine and Teelucksingh 111).

On the other hand, the North / South dualism2 is often naturalized by particular solutions to growing inequality such as fair trade. One of the flaws of fair trade is that it was started in the North to help producers in the South receive a more equitable share of money for their work. This familiar style of aid however does not necessarily empower producers in the South, which is the goal of the fair trade movement, as Southern producers feel like "recipients of aid" (Shreck 25). Involving the struggles of all players affected by environmental injustices is critical to avoid victimization of Global South actors, strengthen movement building potential and disrupt the North / South dualism.

One of my research participant's, Laurie3, provided noteworthy insight regarding her commitment to fair trade and how she reconciles the connection between the local and the global. She emphasized that while fair trade is a global issue, connecting locally through supporting the local supply chain is an example of fair trade here. Fair trade should not be divided along North/South boundaries. Further, she highlighted that although fair trade is often viewed as a kind of aid from the North to the South, Southern producers offer a lot in terms of working cooperatively to the North; something that has not been promoted as part of the fair trade movement here. Laurie's acknowledgment of the partnership she believes fair trade to be about, with lots to learn from Southern producers about cooperation disrupts this common "North gives to South" aid strategy.

Pellow emphasizes that globalization in local movements must be considered such that changes in the North do not lead to worsening conditions in the South (74). He uses the example of increased regulations in Northern countries that often lead to more destructive exploitation in the South; something Pellow refers to as the "hyperspatiality of risk:" where "victories in one region do not translate into additional burdens in another region" (74). Laurie's nuanced version of fair trade is one way of avoiding this type of outcome. In some cases fair trade can become an abstract ethical choice that makes people feel good when they do not really know the repercussions of their purchases. This is somewhat frightening considering some of the participants warning of the transparency issues associated with fair trade and the unfair baseline price that the Fair Trade brand promotes. Laurie's level of commitment to fair trade in a more thoughtful way seems to be what the movement originally had in mind.

Finally, Laurie's openness to the knowledge to be learned by producing countries, particularly regarding collaboration, speaks to an environmental education goal of including different kinds of knowledge in environmental learning (marino 46; Clover 318; Haraway 195; The Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility Treaty 2.11). Donna Haraway's notion of "situated knowledges" (195) is helpful here as she speaks to the idea of having a "responsibility for difference" as well the importance of "the joining of partial views" (196). It is important to ask for whom and why different decisions are made. Haraway's ideas provide grounds for asking such questions. For instance, her idea of joining partial views is "for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible" (196). In other words, by bringing together different kinds of knowledge, new ideas and possibilities are opened up, and less are shut out of the process. The fair trade movement could either be a one-way street, where the North sets the price and decides the rules or it could be a partnership with lessons to be learned from both parties involved. I would imagine that Haraway would respond positively to Laurie's dedication to the situated knowledges of her producers.

Unfortunately, Laurie was the only participant, out of ten, to mention this kind of disruption. While the other participants are committed to fair and direct trade, their approaches may exacerbate the North / South dualism that fair trade can promote and intensify the global image (based on the notion "we are all in this together") of the environmental movement. Further, the kind of potential of the fair trade movement that Laurie's interpretation offers is disappointingly not what is promoted by the larger fair trade movement in the North.

The insight of the participants regarding connecting local movements with global realities is interesting, especially in relation to the literature on localist movements and environmental justice. Again, Johnston & Baker's notion of scales in the food system is helpful here: "To be both 'scaled out' to other local contexts and 'scaled up' to incorporate structural critiques of agricultural subsidizations, unemployment, and inequality lying within the regulatory capacity of states" (318) is a significant part of localist potential. Johnston & Baker believe that by understanding the way that a business or organization can scale out/ scale up is telling of the strengths and weaknesses of a local framework.

Those interviewed do not all practice profound acts of scaling out and scaling up as Johnston & Baker emphasize. Unfortunately only half of the interviewees seemed to show signs of incorporating structural critiques other than the triple bottom line and a modest use of fair trade into their business approach. The ability to think critically about fair trade and be cognizant of the global implications of the supply chain in one's local focus is one way to scale up. One way to scale out would be to give greater attention to the mobilization potential of socially conscious cafés in Toronto.

This is a challenge for localism, to mobilize localist leaders to adopt a strategy that extends to the global, political, social and sustainable. Although, Hess describes localism as an already established movement in some ways, that has considerable potential for greater mobilization as local owners and organizers are fundamentally against the consolidation of power within transnational and national levels and can thus be coupled with other anti-corporate/ anti-globalization approaches by playing the market-role (62). Hess thus couples wider political goals with a market-oriented approach. Local business organizations and alliances such as BALLE: the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, Hess notes, will be (and are already) fundamental in mobilizing localists (65).

Unfortunately, at different points in the interviews, a number of the participants mentioned the "cliquey" or "unwelcoming" attitude of a lot cafés in Toronto. This is disappointing for local business mobilizing potential, especially considering the massive growth of independent cafés in Toronto over the last decade. The interviewees did see this as a problem, however. If localist leaders can mobilize and find common goals based on social and environmental justice, the potential to mobilize others in that society is that much greater.

Finally, the critique of localism associated with it being catered to the wealthy elite is problematic for the cafés interviewed. The style of product offered is often one of luxury that is mostly catered to the elite echelons of society. While a number of the participants did mention their commitment to donating coffee to the local community, working with social justice organizations, trying to create a more equitable playing field between the North and South through fair trade, having a large student customer base and having a reasonably priced Americano on the menu, those that frequent trendy cafés in Toronto are generally of a higher socioeconomic status or are students that, in my experience, grew up in a higher socioeconomic home and thus feel more comfortable in such places. The products served do not cater to everyone and this is problematic for the environmental justice movement, which is very much concerned with issues of equality. This is also problematic for the local food movement which is consistently criticized for catering only to the wealthy. DeLind for example stresses the problems with using your dollar to support a movement as not everyone can afford to support it (4). These types of inequalities exacerbate the same inequalities already entrenched in the capitalist system.

In this paper I considered the responses of the participants in relation to connecting the local and the global in localist movements. Pellow highlights the importance of considering the global in localized strategies such that conditions in the South do not worsen from local Northern strategies (75). Hess also believes that local movements ought to be concerned with global economic reform if they are to be sustainable (7). Issues of enclavism and elitism in localist movements can undermine the potential of the movement and thus localism needs to be handled with care. Laurie's nuanced involvement in the fair trade movement has substantial potential for breaking down barriers between the North and the South and could be quite influential for the independent café movement in Toronto, if the cafés could work to mobilize. These messy spaces of localism however need to be extended to consumers; in the long version of this paper I explore how this can, and in some cases is happening through a process of education and leading by example.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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Food Security, Youth Diplomacy, and the G8/G20

How the Youth Voice Can Make Global Governance Work Better

By Leanne Rasmussen

The global governance of food security has expanded rapidly over the past few years. In addition to the more established organizations, concerns over the global food system have vaulted food to high priority in newer global forums such as the G8 and G20. These two forums have done a lot of discussing, but sadly, concrete results are difficult to identify. Because of the informal structures of the G8 and G20, they have been allowed to sidestep important issues and frame the success of their food security initiatives on their own terms, which typically means that real, fundamental changes get ignored in favour of feel-good, aid-based initiatives. But despite this grim assessment, not all is necessarily lost for G8 and G20 governance. This summer, I had the privilege of attending both the G8 Summit and the G8 & G20 Youth Summits, and the difference between the two was striking. Whereas the "real" summits danced around important questions, doing little to drive forward the food security agenda, the youth summits channeled the frustration for real change that many of us so often feel, and turned it into practical, ambitious policy ideas, recommendations, and frameworks.

What follows is a brief attempt to assess the strengths, weaknesses, and future prospects of these forums, through the lens of food security. It analyses the actions of the G8, G20, and the G8/G20 Youth Summits on food security, and looks at the role the youth voice could potentially play in improving G8 and G20 food security governance. The potential picture that emerges is one of more informed, action-oriented, holistic food security policy, a situation which does not have to be as distant as it currently seems.

2008 Toyako G8 Summit

2008 marked the G8's first big year in food security governance. For the first time, the G8 released an entire document dedicated to food security, entitled the G8 Leader Statement on Global Food Security. The ten-point document proposed a range of ways that the G8 would contribute to improving the global situation. But upon closer examination, the G8 either completely missed out on a number of key issue areas, or did not go far enough in proposing solutions in others.1 On price volatility, the G8 acknowledged the current problems, but did not offer anything beyond a promise to "explore options."2 Biofuel commitments were enough to indicate that the G8 understood the negative implications of biofuel production, but not enough to show that the G8 truly planned on phasing out biofuels or biofuel subsidies. There was no mention of promoting small scale agriculture (although there were a few commitments on investment and R & D for conventional agriculture), and little to nothing on supporting the long-term sustainability of agriculture. The one area where the G8 did produce substantial commitments was on developing the global governance of food security.3 The G8 laid out what institutions it expected to take charge of food security, and where improvements needed to be made. Plus, the G8 made mention of the Global Partnership for Food Security, which the G8 continues to be centrally involved in.

If the G8 communiqué failed in so many areas, then one wonders what the rest of the Leader Statement contained. Far too much of the document focused on aid. Although aid can help and is crucial in humanitarian emergencies, aid is not a sustainable solution—it ignores the systemic problems in world food production that must change in order to achieve long-term food security. It is positive that the G8 countries pledged to "mainstream" food security issues into their international development programs, but this sort of action too often ends up as a substitute for more important changes. Because the G8 lacks an institutionalized system of benchmarks and accountability, this misguided approach is able to continue. The Toyako Summit got food security on the high-level agenda, but it did not generally take the right approach.

2009 L'Aquila G8 Summit

The L'Aquila summit marked an even bigger year for food security governance, as G8 leaders released the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) that was supposed to tackle food security in a comprehensive, innovative way. While it did improve on the results of 2008's summit, the AFSI was sorely lacking in many areas as well. To deal with food price volatility, the G8 again talked about the problem, but then only promised to protect and expand free trade, an ideologically-charged solution that also crept into the Toyako communiqué. The leaders said even less on biofuels this year, and much like in 2008, the connection between food security and climate change received only a token mention, along with vague promises to support an agreement at the 2009 UNFCCC Conference in Copenhagen. On investment in agriculture, the language improved to prioritize equitable, inclusive and environmentally sustainable production, although small-scale agriculture was not explicitly mentioned.4 On global governance, the G8 pledged to advance the Global Partnership by the end of the year, as a means of improving coordination and governance.

Thus, the G8 got a bit warmer in certain areas, but it still largely missed the big picture. Too much of the communiqué focused on Official Development Assistance (ODA), and on tiny, piecemeal projects that sounded nice, but failed to have a significant cumulative or structural impact.5 One major difference with the L'Aquila summit was that it included a monetary commitment—the eight countries pledged to deliver $20 billion over three years to fund sustainable agricultural development, emergency food aid, and the Global Partnership—but again, much of this money was intended for aid-based action, and much of it remains undelivered today.

2010 Muskoka G8 Summit; 2011 Deauville G8 Summit

The two years after the AFSI were very thin on food security commitments, as countries focused on fulfilling their multi-year obligations. There were, however, a couple promising paragraphs that expanded the G8's recognition of food security issues and also demonstrated an appetite for improved accountability. More than once, the communiqué mentioned the need to promote "sustainable" agriculture through the AFSI. For the first time, the G8 pledged to focus on smallholder agricultural development. Moreover, rather than developing the governance of other international institutions, the G8 looked at itself in these two years and began implementing accountability reporting to monitor its

food security, development and health-related commitments.6 These reports are far from perfect: they are difficult to decode, and they come with all the limitations and potential biases of a self-assessment.7 But they are undoubtedly a step in the right direction, and they could represent that the political will is there to make some much-needed changes.

The G20 Contribution – Pittsburgh 2009, Toronto 2010, and Seoul 2010

The G20 has been slower to pick up the food security agenda, which can be partly explained by its relative newness—it only began meeting at the leaders level in 2009—and by its reputation as "only" a finance-minded institution. These three summits did very little on food security; most concerning is that the G20 proposed no solutions for controlling food price volatility. But there were a few notable inclusions. Beginning in 2009, the G20 called on the World Bank to "develop a new trust fund to support the [AFSI]," and also requested that the World Bank "strengthen its focus on food security." By the time the Toronto summit rolled around, the World Bank had created the Global Agricultural Food Security Program (GAFSP) in direct response to the G20 call. This is an example of how the "G" summits can be useful in mobilizing other international institutions to take action. This strength should not, however, be a substitute for action in other areas.

The only other meaningful statement the G20 has made on food security came out of the Seoul summit, where food security was incorporated was one of the core "pillars" of action in the Seoul Development Consensus.8 Promising parts of the Action Plan included greater attention to smallholder agriculture, and better policy coherence and coordination across international bodies.

It also "invite[d]" any "relevant international organizations" to develop proposals for managing food price volatility for the 2011 Cannes G20 Summit.9 As such, perhaps the role of the G20 in enhancing food security will grow in a positive direction, but it still has a long ways to go.

2011 Paris G8 & G20 Youth Summits

In May-June 2011, the G8 & G20 Youth Summits met for the sixth year running, and I was lucky enough to represent Canada at the Development Ministers' negotiations.10 Upon arriving in Paris, I was unsure what to expect, but what I found was an incredible group of passionate, progressive, and well-informed twenty-somethings serving as Ministers of Development for each of the G20 countries. These summits go beyond the Model United Nations style of shadow summitry: we spent three days in intense, sometimes frustrating negotiations to produce a communiqué that would be (hopefully) delivered to and read by the G20 governments. We followed the same flexible, informal negotiations process of the "G" summits,

but came up with significantly different results.

Measures to control food price volatility took up a significant portion of the communiqué, and not just for the Ministers of Development—Ministers of Finance and Economics also grasped the importance of such issues. These three ministries discussed an array of food security-enhancing solutions, including better information collection and market transparency, monitoring speculation in agricultural markets, and expanding regulation of destabilizing short-term capital flows. Beyond this, the Development Ministers promoted a transition away from food-sourced bio-fuel production. They gave a detailed account of how to implement sustainable farming practices, using Conservation Agriculture as its core model.11 The youth summit also had quite a bit to say on global governance reform. It named food security-specific organizations where the G20 would focus on capacity building, and then went on to improving the capacity of the G20 itself. The youth ministers deliberately opted not to add a secretariat, understanding that the G20 structure has strengths that more bureaucratized, "sticky" international institutions lack, instead outlining a plan for "intensified" coordination through a G20 Steering Committee. The plan also included a new forum for civil society participation, which would allow participants and citizens to submit proposals for consideration by the G20. By bringing a huge amount of expertise to the G20 without burdening it through over-institutionalization, these reform ideas could hold considerable potential for improved food security policy. It was only on climate change and smallholder agriculture that the youth summit contribution was a bit thin.

Overall, this youth communiqué paints a picture of "G" summitry that is less of an aid giving institution, and more of a forum for practical, coordinated, concrete changes. The mood of the youth summit was overwhelmingly about finding tangible, feasible solutions to global problems, and about not wasting the opportunity to devise meaningful, thoughtful policies. While some might assume that so-called "youth solutions" would be overly idealistic, I cannot count how many times during our negotiations someone would say, "I can't agree to that, because voters in our country would never support that." We did not lose sight of the fact that proposals were only useful insofar as they were embedded in political realities.

Who cares?

The G8/G20 Youth Summits have recently been gaining government support and wider attention.12 But as it stands, they are still fledgling institutions, and these communiqués do not have any discernable influence on the outcome of the G8 and G20 meetings. So, why do any of these great results matter if there is no connection with "real" global governance?

I believe that there is great potential to incorporate the youth summits into the G8/G20 structure. It is both feasible and carries high potential benefits. In the six years since their conception, these completely youth-driven institutions have made great advances, reaching the point this year of receiving the official support and patronage of the G8/G20 host government. Plus, as already mentioned, the G8 and G20 have recently shown a strong interest in improving effectiveness and accountability. Taking these two points together, there is a strong case for continuing the incorporation of the youth summits into the G8 and G20 process. The youth summits possess the same fluid structure of the "real" institutions, a key strength, but the youth summits perhaps have better harnessed the freedom of the agenda and the fluidity of the organization to capitalize on opportunities for change. There is an ever-present desire to cut through the political red tape and get something done, and to do it through using existing institutional tools to their full potential. As such, the youth summits could bring a well-informed civil society voice to the G8 and G20 that could work constructively within the summit process. In this way, the strengths of both could be married together, while enabling both to leave their shortcomings further behind, and potentially helping improve G8/G20 legitimacy and performance. I see a great future role for the youth voice here, so long as those who are leading this movement continue to drive this agenda forward.

Moving forward

It remains to be seen what potential solutions are put before the G20 on food price volatility when the heads of state meet this November in France.13 It also remains to be seen what the G8 will put forward on food security in Chicago in 2012, as the AFSI pledges should be wrapping up this year. All too often, issues like food security can become trendy for a while, before governments and publics get "issue fatigued" and move on.14 There is a significant risk that G8 and G20 food security governance could follow the same path.

This possibility points to another role for the G8 & G20 Youth Summits. If closer connected to the actual summit process, the youth component could help keep important issues like food security high on the agenda, thereby improving the continuity of G8/G20 work and ensuring momentum does not fade. In fact, this is where I see a role not just for the youth summits, but for any individual or organization that is motivated to act on food security issues. It is everyone's task to let our governments know that food security must remain a priority, and it is within everyone's power to help keep these discussions alive.

In many ways, the G8 & G20 Youth Summits are reflective of a growing trend towards greater, more sophisticated youth political engagement. There is a great opportunity to use these developments to improve the G8 and G20's channels of policy input, accountability, continuity, and legitimacy. There is also a great opportunity here to bring the global governance of food security to a higher, more effective level, an opportunity which is far too important to waste.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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AGRA Versus La Via Campesina

How AGRA's Use of La Via Campesina's Language is masking their profit-driven agribusiness aims

By Michaela Kennedy

Introduction

The global food system's problems are not recent phenomena. Historically, agri-business and chemical corporation Monsanto has developed and defended products such as DDT and Agent Orange and continues to cause damage to social and physical environment with pesticides, herbicides and GMOs that threaten the biodiversity of plants and animals. More recently, with patents on genes and regulations on seed saving, it has become hard for farmers to exist outside of this model of agriculture. However, around the world, people are resisting by forming grassroots organizations that challenge the industrial model of farming. The international umbrella organization La Via Campesina is among the largest of these groups, and consists of 150 peasant and small farmers' organizations representing around 200 million farmers (La Via Campesina, 2011). In September 2006, an organization called AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa) was founded with support from The Rockefeller and Bill and Melinda Gates foundations (Mittal, 2). While much of the language used by AGRA mirrors that of La Via Campesina, upon closer inspection of both its funding sources and its aims, it becomes clear that AGRA is merely co-opting La Via Campesina's language and is not working towards true food sovereignty and away from agri-food systems.

What are La Via Campesina's policies, goals and aims?

La Via Campesina is a peoples' movement that strives for a peoples' food system. According to La Via Campesina's literature, they value food sovereignty (including stopping the dumping of 'first world' agricultural surplus and limiting agricultural exports), access to land, access to unbiased information on farming emphasizing traditional knowledge, and access to biodiversity of seeds, plants, and animals (La Via Campesina, 2009 and Torrez, 51). Where many food system models today do not acknowledge peasants' existence or importance, La Via Campesina strives for a radical change in the food system that is peasant-driven. This would include:

- Unity among peasants, the landless, women farmers and rural youth
- Globalizing hope, globalizing the struggle!
- Defending Food Sovereignty : "It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector"
- A decentralized structure

(Taken from their website "What is La Via Campesina", La Via Campesina, 2011).

It is important to note that although La Via Campesina has allowed many smaller

organizations to gain legitimacy through their global network (Martinez-Torres, 157) they are not a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). La Via Campesina has been described as a bottom-up organization or a movement for globalization from below (Holt-Gimenez et al. 7, Martinez-Torres and Rosset 156). Peasants/(poor) people's organizations are able to stay true to their radical roots because they have to be accountable to the people they are serving and speaking for and thus stay true to the peoples' interests. Alternatively, In an NGO structure, the organizations are typically upwardly accountable to boards of directors and funders, and because of this financial and social pressure they often become reformist and lose sight of their original aims (Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 159). One major critique of NGOs is their lack of accountability and connection to the people they serve and speak for, an example being that their directors often live in the suburbs and drive SUVs (Desmarais: 2007). Additionally, NGOs can be a force of neo-colonialism by enforcing western cultural values and capitalist systems, or speaking on behalf of the poor and making assumptions about what is best for them without their consent or consultation (Desmarais: 2007, 22). Not all NGOs fall into this problematic model. A select few are allowed to form alliances with La Via Campesina, though they are not allowed membership because they are not peasant/peoples' organizations (Desmarais: 2007, 122-123). As a grassroots organization that does not follow the model of an NGO, La Via Campesina is able to build up a large following and gain influence, while it still remains true to the needs, beliefs and values of its founders, and the peasants /farmers themselves.

Where many food system models today do not acknowledge peasants' existence or importance, La Via Campesina strives for a radical change in the food system that is peasant-driven.

What are AGRA's policies, goals and aims?

According to the "about" section of AGRA's website, their three main goals by 2020 are to:

- Reduce food insecurity by 50 percent in at least 20 countries.
- Double the incomes of 20 million smallholder families.
- Put at least 15 countries on track for attaining and sustaining a uniquely African Green Revolution: one which supports smallholder farmers, protects the environment, and helps farmers adapt to climate change. (AGRA, 2011a)

However, discerning what these goals really signify is not very straightforward. Malnutrition and food insecurity are incompatible with the continuation of humankind. Today, farmers, even in the 'developed' world, often receive negligible incomes for their hard work. This is counterintuitive. Why do we pay the people who produce the food we need to survive so little? Drastic changes are needed to work towards a food system which distributes food more fairly. On the surface, it looks like AGRA may be doing just this. But what is a uniquely African Green Revolution?

There is much evidence that suggests that the last 'Green Revolution' did not work (for example: Mittal, Mayet, Holt-Gimenez et al, Alteri, Desmarais, Torrez and others). The term 'Green Revolution' was coined in 1968 by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and promoted (and continues to promote) a model of agriculture that emphasizes grains being produced with a technology package that involved a wide variety of chemical inputs, increased mechanization, and hybrid seeds (Mayet, 13). This first 'Green Revolution' was particularly aimed at Southeast Asia and Africa. This new 'Green Revolution', as promoted by AGRA, is focussing on Africa and "investing in the same failed regiment of 'one pest, one chemical' and replacing it with the similar 'one pest, one gene' approach" (Holt-Gimenez et al., 6).

The "FAQ" section of AGRA's website attempts to elucidate what they mean by 'Green Revolution'. According to AGRA, a "Green Revolution" in Africa

- Develops and implements home-grown solutions;
- Is led by African farmers, governments, scientists and civil society;
- Focuses on smallholder farmers, the majority of whom are women;
- Protects the environment and crop biodiversity;
- Expands the choices available to smallholder farmers through a joint focus on technologies that meet their needs and supportive, pro-poor polices;
- Works with partners to achieve its goals, and
- Is sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. (AGRA, 2011b).

However a lot of these points are vague, and upon further analysis, it appears that AGRA is merely using buzzwords like 'sustainable', 'smallholder farmers', and 'home-grown solutions' to green-wash their neo-colonial, agribusiness campaign. This is neo-colonial in that foundations like the Rockerfeller and Bill Gates foundations (which support AGRA) are imposing their views on how to modernize agriculture and the agricultural system in Africa. This is particularly neo-colonial, and can be considered culturally imperialist because it is imposing a western mode of doing agriculture on to Africa in the name of progress and an effort to modernize. AGRA is really vague in their definitions of terms like 'home-grown solution'. However, no farmers were consulted in either the review sector consulted for the foundation's agricultural stratefy or are present in their external advisory board (4, Mittal). Clearly, with AGRA the power of the organization does not lie in the hands of African farmers. There are rich African business people and academics who affect the decision-making capacity of the organization. Many of these people, like AGRA external advisory board member Ruth Oniang'o, are also featured on Monsanto's web pages supporting the need for biotechnology in Africa(4, Mittal). Because of both their ties to Monsanto and the class differences that exist between the Africans who have power in AGRA and the African peasant farmers they purport to serve, AGRA's members with power seem to seriously lack a connection with African farmers.

Similarity between La Via Campesina and AGRA

There are major similarities between the language that La Via Campesina and the language that AGRA uses, as well as an overlap in the populations targeted, affected or involved. However upon further investigation, AGRA's purposeful use of vague language ends in empty promises.

While AGRA "Develops and implements home-grown solutions" and 'Protects the environment and crop biodiversity' (AGRA: 2011b), La Via Campesina is concerned with "Defending Food Sovereignty" as they believe that, "it ensures the rights to use and manage land, territories, water, seeds, livestock, and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector" (La Via Campesina: 2011).

'Home-grown solutions' sounds a lot like using traditional knowledge, as La Via Campesina emphasizes. "The Via Campesina's alternative model entails recapturing aspects of traditional, local, or farmers knowledge, and combining that knowledge with new technology where appropriate to do so" (Desmarais 2007, 38). In regards to biodiversity of life, AGRA talks about 'protecting' while La Via Campesina aims to 'defend' biodiversity of life. 'Protect' implies a much more paternalistic relationship to biodiversity, while 'defend' implies a resistance to its disappearance. Additionally, La Via Campesina is very obviously anti-corporate, as illustrated in their quote: "...in the hands of those who protect food and not of the corporate sector" (La Via Campesina About Section), while AGRA tries to hide its ties to and financial backing from organizations such as Monsanto and the St. Louis Biotech Hub (Mittal, 2). Take, for example, AGRA's involvement with The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is the biggest donor to AGRA, with funding of $262 million since AGRA was founded in 2006 (Mittal, 2). In August 2010, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation bought 500,000 Monsanto shares for approximately $23 million (La Via Campesina, 2010, and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010). If AGRA is as interested in biodiversity as it claims to be, the conflict of interests resulting from AGRA's key funder investing millions of dollars in Monsanto ought to be considered problematic, yet this appears not to be the case.

Vitamin-fortified staple-crops are not going to solve the world's perceived food shortage, which is actually a problem based on an uneven food distribution system.

While AGRA proposes that it "Is led by African farmers, governments, scientists and civil society", "Focuses on smallholder farmers, the majority of whom are women" and "Expands the choices available to smallholder farmers through a joint focus on technologies that meet their needs and supportive, pro-poor policies" (AGRA 2011b), La Via Campesina wants "Unity among peasants, landless, women farmers and rural youth" (La Via Campesina, 2011). AGRA says they are led by African farmers and emphasizes this by putting it first, but while AGRA does hold roundtable discussions where they get input from a variety of agricultural scientists, economists and rural sociologists, no African farmers were consulted for AGRA's agricultural strategy (Mittal, 3-4). If there are no African farmers on AGRA's boards making decisions and helping to develop policy, then it appears unlikely they are meaningfully led by African farmers. La Via Campesina led by farmers and peasants, represented in over 175 grassroots organizations all over the world. In Canada both The National Farmer's Union and Union Paysanne (in Quebec) are represented (La Via Campesina, 2008). As well, they are also working to address gender inequality within their organization and their policy is to have gender parity among their representatives from various member countries (Desmarais: 2007, 161-163 and Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 101). AGRA acknowledges women involved in smallholder farming, but unlike La Via Campesina, makes no effort to incorporate gender parity into its policy.

What are AGRA's real motives?

AGRA's literature is hesitant about mentioning the use of GM crops. It states: "[AGRA] expands the choices available to smallholder farmers through a joint focus on technologies that meet their needs and supportive, pro-poor polices" and "Protects the environment and crop biodiversity" (AGRA, 2011b).

'Protecting biodiversity' seems to imply a move away from reliance on GMO's and conventional agriculture and 'expanding choices available to smallholder farmers' implies that farmers will be able to consider multiple options. This vagueness appears purposeful and attempts to distance the Gates Foundation from the millions of dollars that have been spent on vitamin-fortified GMO bananas, cassava, rice and sorghum (Mittal, 4). However, as crops such as corn have shown in Mexico, when GM staple crops get into the food system they have the capacity to tarnish thousands of years worth of biodiversity (Desmarais: 2008, 139).

Vitamin-fortified staple-crops are not going to solve the world's perceived food shortage, which is actually a problem based on an uneven food distribution system. The poorest people in the world often do not have access to food and if they do, cannot afford to buy it (Holt-Gimenez et. al, 3). However, from a capitalist perspective, it is better to keep up the illusion that the food shortage exists because than you can build the need for items like these GMO vitamin-fortified staple crops, and this is thus used to justify the continued expansion and take-over of GMO crops.

Scholars such as Desmarais have talked about the myth that peasants no longer exist because the capitalist system has gotten rid of them (2007, 19). Through organizations like La Via Campesina, peasants are not only alive, but fighting to preserve and continue their way of life. In continuing a historical trend that turns subsistence farmers into landless wage-earners, AGRA would like to expropriate them from their land. However, AGRA does not use such terms as 'removal' or 'expropriation', but prefers to refer to this act as 'land mobility', where the farmers who are not operating profitable farms will become land mobile (Mittal, 4). This language shifts responsibility away from AGRA by skirting around the fact that farmers have no choice but to relinquish their land when there is a move from smaller subsistence based farms to larger export based farms. 'Land mobility' happens and is justified because AGRA is operating under the assumption that larger farms are more productive and thus a lower portion of the population will need to farm. Many studies have shown however, that smaller farms are more productive on a per acre basis (Beauregard, 22). While AGRA has a vision that in the future, the peasantry will be more 'land mobile', there is no specification of where and how this population would be re-employed (Mittal, 5).

Conclusion

AGRA is using La Via Campesina's language of resistance and revolution to imply that their model of agriculture will bring about the change needed to end food insecurity and preserve biodiversity. Co-opting language to increase profits is a useful capitalist strategy for AGRA: the use of La Via Campesina's language is part of the green-washing that has become common with corporations since environmental issues have become more newsworthy and relevant. However, despite how common this type of subversion by corporate interests is, the power is in the people. For example, La Via Campesina has only been in existence for eighteen years and already they have grown to encompass 150 member countries and represent 200 million farmers and they continue to grow. La Via Campesina's movement for food sovereignty, peasants' rights and the right to biodiversity is only starting. AGRA's piggybacking on La Via Campesina's language quiets the resistance through assimilatory jargon and aids the continuation of a capitalist food system where profits come before people and food distribution inequality ensure that people continue to go hungry or malnourished. If we cannot distinguish between organizations that actually have things like food sovereignty, peasants' rights, and the right to biodiversity in mind in mind and those who are merely using the language, than how will La Via Campesina (and other similar movements and organizations worldwide) continue to have such a strong, united movement for food sovereignty.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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Taxing Unhealthy Food

Health Promotion or Health Inequality?

By: Julie E. Rochefort, MHSc, RD

Introduction

Over the last decade, national surveys have revealed concerning trends regarding the nutritional well-being of Canadians. For instance, results from the nutrition edition of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)- an annual survey that collects information related to the health status of the Canadian population revealed that over 50% of Canadians (12 years and older) consumed less than five daily servings of vegetables and fruits (Garriguet 5) while 25% of individuals aged 31 to 50 exceeded their recommendations for fat (Garriguet 2) and 78%1 exceeded the daily recommended intake of salt (Garriguet 47). These findings pose a concern regarding public health due to the influential role they play on the development of chronic diseases.

For instance, an inverse relationship has been established between intakes of vegetables and fruits and the risk of a heart attack (Iqbal 1933). Additionally, a high intake of sodium (salt) has been associated with an increased risk of heart disease. It has been estimated that a reduction in sodium which meets the recommended level (1500mg/day or less than a teaspoon) could decrease the prevalence of blood pressure and cardiovascular disease by 30% and 13% respectively (Health Canada 6.; PHAC, "Tracking Heart Disease and Stroke in Canada" 53). Currently, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among Canadians and has been estimated to be responsible for $22 billion dollars in health care cost (PHAC, "Tracking Heart Disease and Stroke in Canada" 5). Although the benefits of consuming a healthy diet goes beyond reducing the probability of cardiovascular disease, the current dietary trends along with increasing health care costs provide a driving force for policy makers to take action.

Accordingly, in 2004, the World Health Assembly endorsed the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. The purpose of the Strategy was to address the burden of chronic diseases such as, cardiovascular disease (CVD), type 2 diabetes and some cancers through a global commitment of promoting and formulating policies for diet and physical activity. Diet and physical activity were targeted as a result of their influence on major underlying risk factors such as: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, inadequate intake of fruits and vegetables, physical inactivity and tobacco use (World Health Organization 1). The Strategy marked the role of governments as "crucial in achieving these lasting changes in public health" (World Health Organization 6).

In Canada, the development and implementation of policies (or decisions) relating to health falls under the scope of the Public Health Agency of Canada who is responsible for "promoting and protecting the health of Canadians through leadership, partnership, innovation and action in public health" (n. pag.). While there are many ways in which government policies can promote healthier diets, one in particular that has gained global attention is the application of taxes on foods deemed unhealthy (Fieldhouse et al. 1; World Health Organization 8). The intention of such policy instruments is to discourage the consumption of unhealthy, energy-dense foods by increasing its price (Madore n. pag.; Powell & Chaloupka 236).

The purpose of this critical review is to further understand whether taxing unhealthy foods promote healthy eating behaviours and whether this approach is considered to be in the best interest of

all members of society. In order to do so, we will review the supporting evidence regarding food taxation and their implications on public health. In doing so, we can evaluate whether such fiscal policies achieve what they are trying to do (i.e. changing food purchasing behaviour). Moreover, any policy decision must take into account the best interests of all members of society results from such action (Torijman 18). In other words, who might be negatively affected by the policy?

Literature Review

The effectiveness of food taxes can be measured by the responsiveness of the quantity demanded of an item relative to its price (Madore n. pag; Powell & Chaloupka 233). This is described as the "price elasticity" of demand. In other words, if the quantity demanded for an item increases by a larger percentage than the increase in price; the demand for the item would be price elastic. For instance, if a food tax applied to butter increases the price by 10% and results in a 15% decrease in demand (total amount purchased by consumers) we would state that the demand for butter is price elastic. Conversely, if the demand for butter decreased by only 5% (less than the percent price increase), the demand for butter would be described as price inelastic. As such, in order for a taxation policy to be effective, the price of the item being taxed should be elastic.

The following section provides an overview of the evidence regarding the potential benefits and costs of taxing unhealthy foods. While there is currently no formal definition for 'unhealthy food', according to Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide people should "choose foods lower in fat, sugar and salt" (Health Canada 6). Therefore, for the purpose of this review, unless otherwise specified by the supporting literature, 'unhealthy foods' will be defined as those higher in calories (versus nutrients), total fat, added sodium and sugar.

i) Benefit of food taxes

A recent systematic literature review conducted by Andreyeva et al. investigated U.S based studies on price elasticity of food and non-alcoholic beverages (216). The authors combined the proportional change in the demand of a product (purchase) after a price increase (i.e. food tax). After grouping price elasticity estimates from 160 studies, the responsiveness to food price was determined as inelastic (218). Nevertheless, the authors suggested that a food tax may be beneficial for foods such as "meals/ food away from home", "soft drinks and juice", since the model demonstrated the highest mean price elasticity for these items (220).Conversely, results from other studies such as Beydoun et al. demonstrated that food purchases and consumption patterns were more sensitive (elastic) to an increase in price in children (2-9 years) (307). For instance, when the researchers manipulated a $1 increase in fast food, saturated fat from total energy intake dropped by 1.1% whereas calcium, fibre and fruits and vegetables increased (304).

In addition to its potential effect on food consumption behaviours, economic policy researchers state that food taxes can provide fiscal benefits. Firstly, it has been stated that revenue generated from food taxes could be used to support future health promotion programs (Kim and Kawachi 433; Fieldhouse et al. 1). For instance, a U.S based study estimated that if all states were to apply a tax soft drinks at the rate of two cents per 12-ounce can, approximately $3 billion could be raised annually (Kim and Kawachi 433). Secondly, taxes may serve as a public health education tool whereby being aware that a product has been taxed indicates that it's "unhealthy" or should be consumed in moderation (Thow et al. 612).

Although these findings highlight the potential benefits of a taxation policy, there is no guarantee that the revenue generated by the taxes will support future public health prevention education initiatives.

ii) Societal "costs" of food taxes

Common objections of food taxation policies result from its regressive nature toward individuals from low-income households (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 42). 'Regressive' in the context of food taxes refers to the additional financial constraints imposed onto individuals with a low-income. Given that low-income households already spend a larger portion of their income on food, by imposing a food tax, those with a low-income will be require to spend more money on food thus putting further financial constraints on these individuals. For instance, in a UK based study, Leicester and Windmeijer found that the very poorest of the population with incomes of less than £36 per week spent 0.7% of their total income on the food tax versus the very richest who paid less than 0.1% (15). In this example, the very poorest of the population were paying more taxes (relative to their income) and thus questions whether food taxes can achieve the best interests of all members of society.

Furthermore, a Canadian based study by Cash and Lacanilao revealed current price distortions within the food market in Edmonton. In their study, Cash and Lacanilao recorded the price difference between 56 food items across supermarkets and found a tenfold difference in the price per energy unit of fish and poultry compared to fats, sugar and oil (179). The authors concluded that the current price differences observed among "healthy" (i.e. fish) and "unhealthy" food (i.e. sugars) is already putting pressure on low income households and thus, taxing "unhealthy" food could contribute to further financial constraints. Accordingly, when Canadians were asked what influences their food purchases, approximately 50% of those with a household income of less than $35,000 stated that cost was 'very important' (National Institute of Nutrition & Canadian Food Information Council 45). Therefore, the application of a food tax on 'unhealthy' food without subsidizing 'healthy' alternatives may further perpetuate food insecurity among Canadians and thus be regressive.

"the application of a food tax on 'unhealthy' food without subsidizing 'healthy' alternatives may further perpetuate food insecurity among Canadians and thus be regressive."

In order to offset the regressive nature of taxation policies, other fiscal approaches such as subsidies2 —- which would decrease the price of vegetables and fruits, have been suggested as an alternative policy to encourage the consumption of healthy foods (Madore n.pag; Powell and Chaloupka, 2009). Cash and Lacanilao state that "if improving health is the priority, it would seem reasonable that removing the barriers to healthy diets [...] should take precedence over the introduction of new taxes" (p.181).

Research limitations

The three literature reviews highlighted in this review state that there is inadequate evidence available for informing policy-making due to the high proportion of modelling studies (Thow et al. 612; Powell and Chaloupka 234; Andreyeva et al. 220). Economic modelling studies use population consumption data in order to predict the changes in food intake. In doing so, researchers estimate the responsiveness of a price increase (i.e. tax) on the consumption of a particular food item. As such, economic modelling studies require researchers to make assumptions in order to simulate their model.

Estimating price elasticity can becomes problematic due to the variation of price elasticity observed among and within food. For instance, in the review by Andreyeva et al., the mean price elasticity estimates ranged from 0.81 for "food away from home" to 0.27 for "eggs" (219). Moreover, studies have also demonstrated that price elasticity vary among age groups family income, (Beydoun et al. 304), the interpretations of the research results may not be applicable to the general population. Accordingly, price elasticity assumptions do not account for individual attitudes such taste, nutritional value, cost and convenience which have been stated as importance factors in choosing food (National Institute of Nutrition & Canadian Food Information Council 45). Since, the effectiveness of taxation policies often depend on price elasticity, more research investigating the affect of taxes on consumption behaviours is needed in order to inform fiscal policy initiatives. Furthermore, many of the studies presented were cross-sectional in design which restricts our ability to state a causal effect.

Lastly, the studies included in this review excluded the use of alternative fiscal policy initiatives such as price subsidization. Studies investigating price subsidies of fresh fruit and vegetables have demonstrated that price reductions could increase the purchase of more healthful foods while offsetting the regressive nature of food taxes. Specifically, one study observed a fourfold increase in fresh fruit sales and a two-fold increase in baby carrots sales after a price reduction 50% was applied (French, 2003). While the data presented here doesn't provide a comprehensive review of subsidy studies, it does however enthuse further questioning whether subsidization of healthy foods with or without food taxations of unhealthy foods would indeed be an effective public health strategy.

Discussion: Implementation barriers

One of the largest implementation (political) issues with taxation policies is determining what foods will be taxed and by how much. Accordingly, a report prepared for the food directorate of Health Canada (Reza) investigating the perspectives of key stakeholders regarding the labelling of "healthy" and "unhealthy" food stated that the biggest challenge will be to reach consensus of what constitutes "healthy foods" among various stakeholders (35). Feedback from stakeholders (primarily the food industry) revealed that most opposed to a standardized definition because defining a single food as "healthy" discounted the diet as a whole and thus, does not relate to habitual eating practices (34). Conversely, proponents for a standardized definition argued that it would encourage "national brands and food manufacturers to reformulate existing products [thereby] fostering the innovation of healthier products"(33). These contrasting views demonstrate the debate that exists among various stakeholders regarding the classification of foods. Nonetheless, according to the report, the food industry demonstrated the strongest resistance to the classification of foods into healthy and unhealthy categories and thus they would also likely reject a fiscal policy aimed at increasing the price of their products.

Even if a consensus for a definition was established, the next debating question would be: how large should the food tax be?

After applying three different tax rates (1%, 10% and 20%) on chips and salty snacks, Kuchler et al. (17) found that the household demand for these products were inelastic among all three tax rates. These findings were concurrent with the author's earlier work (2004) which demonstrated no significant effect of a small tax (0.4% and 1%) on consumption and health outcomes (Kuchler et al. 10). These findings further demonstrate that consumer responsiveness to price increase is inelastic and thus a food tax policy may indeed be an ineffective strategy in promoting healthier eating patterns among Canadian. It has been stated that public policies that provide industry with positive outcomes are likely to be more effective than those in which industry resists. In addition to the aforementioned political concerns, it is difficult to implement a taxation policy on food when nutritional requirements change with age and certain disease states.

Considering the ineffectiveness, impracticality and regressive nature of taxing unhealthy foods, policy makers should consider alternative approaches which include the broader determinates of health as a means to improve the nutritional well-being of Canadians and their families.

For instance, Canadian statistics currently demonstrate that most of the population over consumes fat, salt and sugars which are dietary risk factors for cardiovascular disease (PHAC, "Tracking Heart Disease and Stroke in Canada" 39-43). Therefore, a taxing strategy would ideally target food high in these nutrients. However, taxing foods merely based on fat, salt and sugar composition sugar isn't straight forward due to varying nutrition requirements across the lifespan. For instance, certain foods that contain a high amount of fat such as whole milk (3.25%) may be a poor choice for adults, it is recommended to support the growth and development of children (Canadian Paediatric Society, n.pag). It would be impractical to tax a product based of who in the household may be consuming it.

Lastly, taxation policies overlook the influence of the collective determinants of healthy eating. Raine defined these collective determinants as an interaction between i) the interpersonal environment created by family and peers, ii) the physical environment which determined food availability and accessibility, iii) the economic environment, and iv) the social environment which may be working 'invisibly" to structure food choice (S8). All of which cannot be accounted for in food taxation policies.

Conclusion

The following paper highlights the difficulty of assessing the effectiveness of implementing a fiscal policy to improve food consumption behaviours. Nevertheless, the research presented in this review provides findings to support the opposition of the implementation of a food tax on unhealthy foods in Canada.

Firstly, in order to implement a food tax on unhealthy foods, key steps would require a standardized definition for "unhealthy" foods. As mentioned previously, this (political) step would be difficult to implement considering the varying nutrient requirements throughout the lifespan (e.g. fat) along with the resistance against a standardized definition from stakeholders. The major concern with the classification of unhealthy foods involves the deviation away from the "total diet approach" to a restrictive and limiting approach. Accordingly, the determinants of healthy eating such as the environment and social structures play an influential role in food choices thus, a food tax alone may not be sufficient in changing national food consumption behaviours.

Secondly, aside from the research limitations presented, many of the studies included in this review demonstrate that the responsiveness of food prices on purchasing behaviours were generally inelastic; regardless of the tax rate applied. Considering that the central tenet of food taxes necessitates food prices to be elastic; the implementation of a food tax as a strategy to change consumption behaviours may indeed be ineffective.

Lastly, the central ethical concern regarding taxing 'unhealthy foods' involves the added fiscal burden imposed onto low-income households. The WHO Strategy states that National food policies should be consistent with the protection and promotion of public health (World Health Organization 8); however, the implementation of a food tax may further perpetuate health inequalities thereby contradicting the goal of promoting and protecting the health of Canadians (PHAC, 2008).

It has been stated that "if improving health is the priority, it would seem reasonable that removing the barriers to healthy diets [...] should take precedence over the introduction of new taxes" (p.181). Considering the ineffectiveness, impracticality and regressive nature of taxing unhealthy foods, policy makers should consider alternative approaches which include the broader determinates of health as a means to improve the nutritional well-being of Canadians and their families.

Note to readers: the opinions expressed in this review are not representative of Ryerson University its constituents, faculty and students or the dietetic profession.

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Worth One's Salt

A Review of Canada's Sodium Reduction Strategy

Ashley Murphy, RD, MHSc

Introduction

Each year cardiovascular diseases account for approximately 17 billion deaths worldwide (World Health Organization, 2007) and more than 69, 000 deaths in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007). The leading preventable risk factor for cardiovascular disease is high blood pressure (also referred to as hypertension), which is responsible for half of all coronary heart diseases and two-thirds of all strokes (Lawes et al., 2006).

Studies have demonstrated that high blood pressure is strongly correlated with high dietary intake of sodium (World Health Organization, 2003). Sodium is an essential nutrient needed for the body's proper functioning; however, when consumed in large amounts it can have adverse health effects (Mahan & Escott-Stump, 2008). The kidneys are responsible for filtering sodium but when intake is too high they are not able to excrete adequately, leading to a rise in blood pressure (Mahan & Escott-Stump, 2008).

High sodium intake has not only been linked to cardiovascular disease but has also been shown to interfere with calcium and bone metabolism, increase risk of developing stomach cancer, and intensify the severity of asthma in men and children (De Wardener & MacGregor, 2002). As a result, high dietary intake of sodium has become a large public health concern and in 2010 a Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada was released. This review will analyze the Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada (referred to in this document as the Strategy) and will explore the impact of sodium reduction on consumers and the food industry. Additionally, gaps in the Strategy along with recommendations for future direction will be identified.

Sodium and Salt

Sodium is a vital component of salt and is found in high density in processed foods. The terms sodium and salt are often used interchangeably; however, salt is 40% sodium and 60% chloride (Mohan & Campbell, 2009). It is a crucial ingredient in food processing due to its low-cost and many beneficial properties. It plays a key role in the taste, preservation, texture, and leavening of processed food products (Abraham, 2009). It is estimated that 77% of Canadians' sodium consumption comes from processed foods, while only 11% is due to salt added at the table or throughout the cooking process (Mattes and Donnelly, 1991). Major sources of sodium in the Canadian diet are show in Figure 1.

Adapted from: Fischer, Vigneault, Huang, Arvaniti, & Roach, 2009

Currently, the average Canadian consumes 3400 mg of sodium per day (Statistics Canada, 2007), more than double the recommended adequate intake (AI). The AI for adults 31-50 years old is 1500mg and was established by the Institute of Medicine in conjunction with the Canadian and American governments. It represents the amount of sodium that is needed to meet or exceed

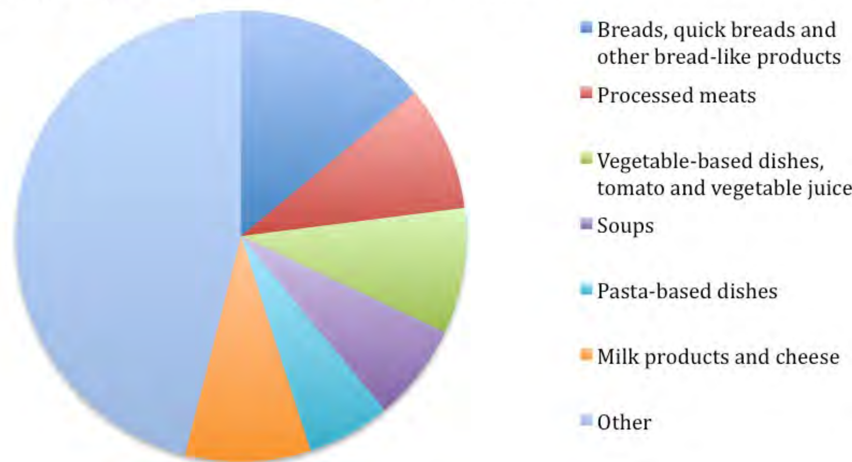

Figure 1: Major Sources of Sodium in the Canadian Diet

the needs of the majority of the population in a given age range (Mahan & Escott-Stump, 2008). The tolerable upper intake level (UL) for sodium, thus the amount that should not be exceeded each day to prevent adverse health effects, is 2300mg (Mahan & Escott-Stump, 2008). Minimum requirements for the amount of sodium needed in the diet to ensure proper functioning of the body is unknown; however, it is presumed that it could be as low as 200mg/day (Mahan & Escott-Stump, 2008).

Health & Economic Benefits of Reducing Sodium

It is estimated that if all Canadians decreased their sodium intake to the AI of 1500mg, a 30% decline in the prevalence of hypertension would be observed. Furthermore, there would be 23,500 fewer cardiovascular disease events each year resulting in reduced direct annual healthcare costs of approximately $430 million dollars. Ninety percent of this cost reduction would be attributed to the decreased need for antihypertensive medications (Joffres, Campbell, Manns & Tu, 2007).

Many studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of salt reduction to reduce blood pressure and results of this correlation have proven to be "robust and strong" (He & MacGregor, 2009). One of the most convincing studies was a European prospective study of over 23,000 people. It found that urinary sodium, a strong indicator of sodium consumption, was a strong predictor of blood pressure (Khaw et al., 2004).

"It is estimated that 77% of Canadians' sodium consumption comes from processed foods"

A small body of literature does exist, which suggests that a high sodium consumption does not contribute to an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease and that public policy would not be effective in reducing cardiovascular outcomes. However, many limitations to these studies have been identified (Mohan & Campbell, 2009). A limitation of particular importance is the affiliation some of these authors have to the food industry and/or Salt Institute (McCarron, Geerling, Kazaks & Stern, 2009).

Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada

In 2007, former federal Minister of Health, Tony Clement, announced a national initiative to reduce the amount of sodium in the Canadian diet. This initiative included the assemblage of a Sodium Working Group (SWG), which was chaired by a Health Canada representative and included stakeholders from food manufacturing and food service industry groups, health-focused non-governmental organizations, the scientific community, consumer advocacy groups, health professional organizations and government (Health Canada, 2007). The SWG's mandate was "to design a population health strategy for the successful reduction of the sodium content of the diets of Canadians to be in line with the recommendations published by the Institute of Medicine of U.S. National Academies'" (Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada, 2010). After nearly three years of extensive research and consultations with key stakeholders, the SWG submitted the Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada to the current federal Minister of Health, Leona Aglukkaq, in July 2010. The Strategy outlines twenty-seven recommendations targeted towards government, government organizations, government agencies, food industry, food service providers, non-governmental organizations and consumers.

It recommends that Health Canada work with the food industry and food service establishments to create voluntary sodium reduction targets for food categories, meals and menu items and that these targets be met in a timely manner. It calls for an amendment on government labeling laws to modify the sodium percent daily value on the Nutrition Facts table to be based on the AI of 1500mg as opposed to the current reference standard of 2400mg. It highlights the need to educate the food industry, the media, healthcare professionals, educators, government sectors, and consumers about sodium and the Sodium Reduction Strategy. It also recommends that the government provide funding for future research around important sodium issues including: the health aspects of sodium, the food science aspects of sodium, and the knowledge-to-action aspects of sodium. Finally, the last recommendations emphasize the need for Health Canada to create a monitoring and evaluation system to track the progress of the Strategy.

Challenges of a Sodium Reduction Strategy

The goal of the Strategy is to increase the health of all Canadians by providing them with better opportunities to decrease their sodium consumption through education and increased availability of suitable food options. Although much research supports the improved health outcomes that could result from a decrease in sodium consumption, it does not come without some cost to the consumer. Some areas that would be impacted include taste, choice, culturally appropriate foods, and monetary cost.

Taste is the number one attribute that influences Canadians' food choices, followed by nutrition and cost (Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition, 2008). Therefore, modifying the taste of familiar foods is a large concern for both consumers and the food industry. The preference for salt is largely influenced by the amount of salt habitually consumed. Hence, those with higher salt intakes will require more salt on their food to achieve the same taste perception as those with lower salt intakes (Durack, Alonso-Gomez & Wilkinson, 2008). Fortunately, preference for salty foods does alter over time with the gradual reduction of sodium in the diet. A Chinese study revealed that individuals did not notice a difference in the taste of bread after a 25% decrease in the amount of sodium over a 6-week period (Li et al. 2007, as cited in Jeffery and Capello, 2009). This is a significant finding since bread and bread-like products are one of the highest sources of sodium in the Canadian diet (Fischer et al., 2009).

"empowering Canadians through increased knowledge about food labels is an important step in the reduction of sodium intake."

Government efforts to change the composition of packaged and processed foods would lead to a decrease in the degree of choice consumers have over their food choices. This shift in choice could leave consumers feeling like they have little control over the foods they choose to put into their grocery cart. Thus, empowering Canadians through increased knowledge about food labels is an important step in the reduction of sodium intake. Along with education, there is also a need to improve the comprehensibility of the Nutrition Facts table. A systematic literature review on the understanding of nutrition labeling showed that while most people claimed to look at the nutrition labels on foods, most found them confusing. One of the concepts that was least understood was the relationship between salt and sodium (Cowburn and Stockley, 2005).

The effect of sodium reduction on religious and cultural practices has been an issue raised by many groups (Stakeholder and Expert Perspectives on Dietary Sodium Reduction in Canada, 2009). Jewish dietary laws promote Kosher diets, which are typically very high in sodium due to the way the meat is prepared (Stanfield & Hui, 2009). For meat to be considered Kosher it must be salted thoroughly throughout the slaughtering process and left in the salt while the blood of the animal drains (Jacobs, n.d.). When food industry stakeholders and experts raised this issue at a meeting in January 2009, it was recommended that these food preparers be taught practical ways to prepare the meat with less sodium (Stakeholder and Expert Perspectives on Dietary Sodium Reduction in Canada, 2009). While this is a viable option, it may not be culturally sensitive.

Another challenge that consumers face is the cost of low-sodium products. Due to the current higher cost of low-sodium alternatives used in processing (Abraham, 2009), low-sodium versions of products found in grocery stores are often more expensive in comparison to the regular versions. But as the demand for low-sodium products increases, the food industry will adapt and will eventually be able to offer low-sodium products at a lower cost to the consumer.

The full implementation of the Sodium Reduction Strategy in Canada will require a lot of effort on the part of the food industry; nonetheless, none of the sectors have asked to be exempt from the Strategy (Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada, 2010). According to the Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada (2010), the food industry's support for the Strategy is due in part to their understanding of the implications of sodium on the health of Canadians.

Sodium is an invaluable ingredient to the food industry due to its numerous beneficial properties (Abraham, 2009). To date, there is no other product that is as efficient as sodium in improving the taste, texture and preservation of foods. Certain products do exist that can provide some similar benefits, yet many of them do not adhere to guidelines for standardized foods in Canada (Conseil de la transformation agroalimentaire et des produits de consommation, 2009).

Both consumers and the food industry face many challenges with regards to reducing the dietary sodium intake of Canadians. Nevertheless, with the right strategies in place these challenges can be overcome. It is important that the food industry and consumers work in tandem to achieve the goals of the Strategy so that both parties will reap the benefits of sodium reduction.

Market Model: Consumers and Food Industry

The success of the Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada is largely a function of the market model and the economic determinants of demand and supply. It is of critical importance that the food industry's efforts to produce low-sodium food products be aligned with government efforts to increase education and awareness about sodium. As the public becomes more informed about the health benefits of a reduced sodium diet, the demand for low-sodium foods will increase. Additionally, as Canadians' palates adjust to low-sodium food options, the demand will increase further. Therefore, it is important for the food industry to produce more low-sodium foods so they will be able to keep up to the demand and not face a shortage. Furthermore, the inverse is also true in that as the food industry increases the amount of low-sodium food products on the market, the government must ensure that the public is receiving adequate education on the benefits of sodium reduction and is prepared to adopt new low-sodium products.

Gaps in the Strategy

The Strategy developed by the SWG is extensive. However, certain issues do not appear to have been fully explored and warrant more background information.

A suggestion put forth by the SWG was that the federal government modify the online Canada's Food Guide to include information about sodium and calories. Although this would be more cost-effective than revising the offline Food Guide, a discrepancy between online and offline information may cause confusion for Canadian consumers.

The SWG did address the fact that lower sodium foods would be more costly but they failed to address how this may influence those who are food insecure.

Since the average Canadian spends only 9.3% of total income on food (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2005), food cost is not of great concern to the majority of Canadians. However, for those who are food insecure the smallest price increase could affect their diet. As a result, the impact that the increased cost may have on low-income families and what may be done to alleviate this burden should be considered and further explored.

The health benefits of reducing sodium are evident. However, finding safe, healthy substitutes may be an issue. The Strategy overlooked the possibility that if sodium is removed from products that more sugar or fat may be added to improve the taste and texture. High amounts of sugar and fat in products could lead to even more adverse health effects. Therefore, regulations are needed to control the extent to which these ingredients can replace sodium in food products.

The SWG proposed a voluntary approach to the adoption of the Strategy since a mandatory approach would be both "costly and complex" (Rynor, 2009). Yet studies from other countries have proven that a voluntary approach is often ineffective. A study published in the journal Heart found that sodium reduction efforts in Australia could be 20 times more effective if they were mandatory and not voluntary. The authors suggest that if Australia's current sodium reduction program, Tick, was enforced for all bread, margarine and cereal products the burden of disease in the Australian population could be decreased by 18% (Cobiac, Vos & Veerman, 2010). Furthermore, the Institute of Medicine released a statement in 2010 urging the U.S. government to mandate the reduction of sodium, since current voluntary efforts were proving futile (Institute of Medicine, 2010).

The greatest limitation to a voluntary approach is that members of the food industry are hesitant to lower the sodium in their products for fear of losing consumers who may switch to another brand with a more familiar, salty taste (Stakeholder and Expert Perspectives on Dietary Sodium Reduction in Canada, 2009). This was evidenced by Campbell Soup Company USA, whom after lowering the sodium content in many of their popular soups, were forced to add salt back in to make up for their "sluggish sales" (Weeks, 2011).

Current State of the Strategy

Many initiatives supporting sodium reduction have emerged since the release of the Strategy. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, a non-governmental organization, has modified the sodium criteria of its Health Check program. Products must now contain 25% less sodium than before to bear the Health Check logo (Stakeholder and Expert Perspectives on Dietary Sodium Reduction in Canada, 2009). Food companies such as Campbells, Nestle and Kellogg Canada have reduced the amount of sodium in some of their food products (Stakeholder and Expert Perspectives on Dietary Sodium Reduction in Canada, 2009) and PepsiCo has been putting considerable effort into developing a lower sodium "crystal salt" (York, 2011). While some companies have widely publicized their efforts to reduce the sodium in their products, others have done so discretely (Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada, 2010).

Government efforts to support the Sodium Reduction Strategy have not been evident in the media, with the exception of a social marketing campaign supporting the use of the percent daily value on the Nutrition Facts table (Health Canada, 2010). Groups like the Canadian Stroke Network and the Centre for Science in the Public Interest worry about the government's level of commitment to reducing sodium in the Canadian food supply, especially after the disbandment of the SWG in February 2011 (Weeks & Galloway, 2011). The responsibilities of the SWG have been taken over by the Food Regulatory Advisory Committee, a group in which 17 of the 19 members have direct or indirect financial ties to the food industry (Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2011). Since this change, Health Canada has replaced the voluntary food industry targets with "sales weighted average" targets. This means targets will be based on individual company sales as opposed to general reductions for individual food products (Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2011).

Conclusion

Despite the challenges of a Sodium Reduction Strategy for consumers and the food industry, the benefits of a nation-wide implementation will far outweigh the costs. The implementation of the Strategy will be a tedious process that will require maximum collaboration between government, industry, healthcare professionals, non-governmental organizations, consumers and other relevant stakeholders. Current evidence suggests that although the success of the Strategy may not be evident in the beginning, the long-term health benefits and decreased healthcare costs will be significant.

The federal government must prioritize the Strategy as a means to improve population health and improve the current economic status of the healthcare system. As a result of this review, it is recommended that government:

- amplify public education strategies;
- reconsider the disbandment of the SWG;
- implement a system to monitor the progress of the Strategy; and
- make sodium reduction targets mandatory.

By following these recommendations, the government will be providing Canadians with greater opportunities to decrease their sodium intake and improve their nutritional health.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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"Eggspecting" Confusion in Food System Change

Voluntary Labels in the Neoliberal Food Regime

By Margaret Bancerz

Introduction

Social and environmental claims on food labels have increased significantly over the last two decades. This has encouraged consumers to carefully consider what they buy and what they eat or even entirely change their consumption patterns (Johnston, 2008, p. 238). This has brought on what Johnston calls the citizen-consumer hybrid, where consumers are encouraged by some food system actors to use consumption as a way of democratic voting with their dollar to show not only what they like and do not like to consume, but also support certain environmental and social causes the product endorses (2008). The consumer thus turns into an "ethical consumer" where buying something fulfills desires, while at the same time promotes social well-being in society (p. 232). Through the consumer-citizen hybrid, consumers superficially resolve their mixed feelings stemming from the conscious awareness of the social and environmental consequences resulting from increased consumption encouraged through capitalism (p. 263).

This era of capitalism where food (and other products) are promoted under environmental and social guises, is what Friedmann (2005) calls the "corporate environmental food regime" which is a collection of actors that engage in a renewal of capital accumulation under a shared social purpose. In other words, a new form of capital accumulation is being unearthed through the reorganization of capitalism under superficial environmental and social lines (p. 228). This means that the accumulation of capital under the corporate environmental food regime, or more broadly what can be called green capitalism, is reshaped under production processes that are seemingly able to reduce environmental harm while appeasing the increasing consumer desire for green commodities (p. 230).

A consequence of neoliberal transformation1 towards a green and socially responsible version is an increasingly popular use of social and environmental labels. Labels such as "biodegradable", "fair trade", "organic", "sustainable", "environmentally friendly", "green", "eco", "recyclable" and so on are found on various commodities. Most of these labels are geared towards environmental practices and increasingly in food, socially oriented labels are appearing as well, focusing on animal welfare such as "grain-fed" or "free range" for instance. This paper will be dealing with voluntary food labels, in particular egg labelling in Ontario where voluntary food labels, created either by industry or non-governmental organizations, are labels that are not required by government mandate or legally regulated under a law-enforcing body. Using the theoretical idea of green neoliberalism, it will be argued that voluntary food labelling is another form of neoliberal capital accumulation that serves to confuse rather than inform the consumer and does not create positive change in the food system, but rather

reinforces the tenants of the neoliberal food regime, what McMichael (2009) terms the corporate food regime. This neoliberal food regime is described as one holding increased concentration of transnational capital, transnational food corporations and increased barriers to national control of food policies due to the strong infiltration of global free trade norms and corporate influences on the national level (Otero, Pechlaner, 2010, p. 183).

"food production and processing regulations are being replaced by voluntary food labelling schemes, allowing consumers to "vote with their dollar" instead of taking civic action."

Voluntary Food Labeling

Under the neoliberal food regime, voluntary food labels embed environmental and social values into certain commodities. These environmental and social resorts are meant to protect a certain form of production and at the same time reap the benefits of these new value-added commodities (Guthman, 2007, p. 456). These labels allow ethical behaviour to be quantified and "...'devolve' regulatory responsibility to consumers (p. 457)." This means that food production and processing regulations[2] are being replaced by voluntary food labelling schemes, allowing consumers to "vote with their dollar" instead of taking civic action[3]. Guthman (2007) argues that voluntary labelling arose with the 'roll-out' of the neoliberal state which redirected many governance responsibilities of the state onto the private sector and other civil society bodies. The 'roll out' of the state which prompted a gentler neoliberalism termed "the third way" encouraged civil society to take it upon themselves to provide services the state no longer delivered such as the promotion of sustainable production and social welfare (p. 464-465). This form of Neoliberalism encouraged the 'increasingly voluntarist, neo-corporatist regulatory frameworks involving non-binding standards and rules, public-private cooperation, self-regulation, and greater participation from citizen coalitions, all with varying degrees of capacity and accountability (p. 466-467).' This means that the government is no longer responsible for the social welfare of the citizen; civil society provides social services while protecting the citizen. On the other hand, corporations are left to their own devices, expected to voluntarily implement responsible corporate policies that protect the citizen. Green food labelling is used by the private sector and many civil society actors due to the vacuum in government regulation and continues to perpetuate the inexistence of such public policy by privatizing food production regulation policy.

However, it is difficult to argue that food labelling is neoliberal and wicked. For better or for worse, voluntary food labelling may be the most viable and direct current alternative we have towards providing alternative food options for consumers in the Canadian era of non-existent food policy. It has forced multinationals to recognize consumer demand for more socially and environmentally acceptable production and processing practices, examples include Cadbury's new line of fair trade chocolate, Tostitos organic tortilla chips as well as President's Choice organic line of various food products and grain fed packaged meat. Nevertheless, many of these labels are not monitored by strict government regulation but rather by third party guidelines. Organic labels although not perfect are by far the most accredited alternative food labels for the reason that they are controlled by the government. While the policies or regulations may not be the strictest or the strongest, the most important part of the certified organic accreditation process is regulation and monitoring of producers which enforces a specific standard on a product (monitored by the United States Department of Agriculture in the US and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in Canada). However, this certification process can be quite costly and will exclude many producers, creating barriers to entry for producers that cannot afford pricey certification (Guthman, 2007, p. 461).

Egg labeling in Canada

The Canadian Guide to Food Labelling and Advertising states that food labels perform three major functions: delivering essential production information, delivering safety, health and nutrition information of the product, and a way of marketing a particular food product (CFIA, n.d., 1.4).

Canadian egg labelling has become more creative over the years and rather than focusing on providing more information to consumers, it has concentrated on marketing efforts. Walking into grocery stores you are exposed to labels such as organic, free range, free run, omega-3, vegetarian, vitamin enhanced. As the list of labels grows, it is becoming increasingly difficult and confusing for consumers to decipher what these labels are referring to. As was mentioned earlier, voluntary food labels are intended to guide consumer behaviour so that they are able to vote with their dollar and show producers which production processes they support. However, the only egg label that is monitored and regulated by the government is the organic label through the Government of Canada's General Standards Board. The Board put together a document entitled Corrigendum – Organic Production Systems General Principles and Management Standards (July 2011) which outlines all the standards that must be met in order for an egg to be labelled organic in Canada. Examples of policies include the requirement that layers (chickens laying eggs) must be outdoors at all times unless there are adverse weather conditions, health or safety risks. In addition to being outside, there are requirements for green pasture and enough room for chickens to exercise and go about their natural behaviour (p. 17 6.8.11.1). The organic label is not a voluntary label because it is government monitored and enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Producers must adhere to specific policies in order to be able to bear the organic label and label their eggs organic.

There is a difference however with free range, free run, omega-3, vegetarian and vitamin-enhanced eggs where unlike the organic label, they are not regulated or monitored. Nowhere in the Canadian or Ontario agricultural policy or standards policy does it mention any of these labelling schemes. There is however a guideline on these production methods developed by the Canadian Agri-food Research Council, Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets, Layers, and Spent Fowl. The guideline describes three different housing situations for layers: cage systems (layers live in stacked cages with other birds never accessing the outdoors) (4.1), free-run (layers living on barn floors not accessing outdoors) (4.2), free-range (layers living on barn floors with periodic access to the outdoors) (4.3). With more mobility, layers are able to behave as they would naturally; and this is a quality that consumers value, because such conditions provide better animal welfare conditions and produce more nutritious eggs (Harper, Makatouni, 2002 & Karsten et al, 2010). Nevertheless, the production methods they describe are mere

> *...codes of practice [that] are nationally developed guidelines for care and handling of different species of farm animals. The Codes of Practice are nationally developed guidelines for the care and handling of different species of farm animals. Codes are not intended to be used as production manuals but rather as an educational tool in the promotion of sound husbandry and welfare practices (n.d., p.1).*

In other words, this is not a binding document nor is it a state policy document that is able to monitor or regulate producers. These are not standards that are enforceable given that they are "guidelines" and "educational" not "manuals". That being said, any labels used under these guidelines are therefore voluntary labels that are not monitored and not certified by any governmental body or any body for that matter. Similarly, the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC), a group of stakeholders that draft national codes of practice on the welfare of animals has also created codes of practice that stipulate how to care and handle different farm animals including chickens. The codes of practice "... are national guidelines for farm animal care requirements and recommended best practices (NFACC, 2011, p. 1, my emphasis) and are used "...as educational tools, reference materials for regulations, and as the foundation for industry animal care assessment programs (ibid)." So although these are national codes of practice for the care and welfare of chickens, these are recommended guidelines that serve as recommendations only and are used as references for the developing of regulations for animal care. However, just like the codes of practice created by Canadian Agri-food Research Council discussed above, these guidelines that do not serve as law enforced policies, nor do they address any egg labelling ambiguities. The Codes of Practice for Chickens, Turkeys and Breeders has been set to initiate its update in October 2011, where there has been a list of priority issues generated such as stocking density, air and litter quality for example. What is important for egg labelling however, is that the NFACC will for the first time be considering organic, free-range and other "alternative systems" in each of these priority issues. This new update will generate national guidelines or recommended best practices for other methods of egg production (NFACC, 2011), which may translate into new regulation for such systems.

Thus far, the only state policy that could directly pertain to such egg labelling is found under the Food Safety and Quality Act 2001 where false advertising in accordance with quality or size of an egg is prohibited (Government of Ontario, 2011, §10). Though whether the type of housing a layer was subject to is included under the quality of an egg is doubtful, but perhaps labels such as "omega-3" or "vitamin-enhanced" could fall under such a category found in the Food Safety and Quality Act. Another regulation present for eggs can be found in the Egg Regulations of Canada 2011 that focuses on the size, grade and safety of eggs, not the method of egg production (Minister of Justice, 2011). Hence, there is no regulation that lays down enforceable rules for free range or free run eggs that could be used to develop a transparent and unambiguous egg carton label.

Without policy and monitoring, label claims lack legitimacy and reinforce the voluntarist nature of the neoliberal food system

Consequently, the Canadian egg sector's labels applied in Ontario are unclear and confusing for consumers. Without grounded legislations to monitor free-range, free-run, omega-3 or vitamin-

enhanced (or other labels other than organic), consumers cannot be sure what standards are followed and enforced under these labels. When buying organic eggs, consumers see the familiar "Canada Organic" symbol and can be sure that the eggs they bought have been produced under the organic egg standards of Canada. However, with other egg labels, consumers are left with the assumption that these eggs have more omega-3 in them or that the layers that produced these eggs saw the light of day.

Discussion

As seen in the previous section, egg labelling is unregulated unless it bears the organic symbol. Thus any claims to free range, free run, omega-3 or vitamin enhanced eggs are not monitored under law in Ontario and simply must adhere to the Food Safety and Quality Act 2001 that prohibits false advertising and the Egg Regulations of Canada that focus on the appearance and quality of the egg. One could however argue that the Competition Act Section 52.1 could enforce such standards by stipulating that:

No person shall, for the purpose of promoting, directly or indirectly, the supply or use of a product or for the purpose of promoting, directly or indirectly, any business interest, by any means whatever, knowingly or recklessly make a representation to the public that is false or misleading in a material respect (Department of Justice Canada, 1985).

However, because there are no set legal rules for what encompasses a free range, free run, omega 3, etc. egg, the labelling of eggs as such would not apply to this provision. As already explored above, there only exist guidelines which are voluntary and unmonitored setting out recommended codes of practice, or best practice methods for such egg production systems. For these reasons, I maintain that egg labels, especially ones referring to the production system of eggs are voluntary and used to create value-added commodities representing social and environmental ideas. Producers are able to appeal to the ethical consumer and thus encourage consumers to pay more for these eggs and the assumed value of animal welfare and nutrition. Through these labels consumers can be duped into spending about twice as much on a carton of eggs labelled free-run than on conventional eggs. However, these labels do not provide adequate information to support changes in the food system (Guthman, 2007, p. 472). Instead of acting as tools aimed at changing the food system, they act as value-added commodities in a neoliberal food regime, increasingly tapping into new types of capital accumulation based on ethics. Worse, often privileged consumers are able to purchase free-run, free-range, omega-3, organic or any other value-added egg cartons by again voting with their dollar. This poses severe problems for lower income consumers that cannot afford to vote in the food market, severely destabilizing the voting power of consumers. For this reason monetizing ethical behaviour is very tricky (p. 473).

Conclusion

To conclude, voluntary labels as found on food products and in this case, egg cartons, are not transparent and serve as value-added commodities (Guthman, 2007, p. 472). These new labels supporting environmental and social causes are becoming the new spheres of capital accumulation giving birth to a new corporate environmental food regime that finds new capital value in environmental and social causes (Friedmann, 2005). However, voluntary labelling may not be a completely negative development; it does open political space for future state consideration of label regulation. Though Guthman (2007) hopefully claims that there are versions of governance; ones that are not even conceived of yet that accomplish more than what voluntary labels do in terms of supporting environmental and social endeavours. The most such labels can create, she argues, are more politicized shopping experiences (p. 474), where consumers will question the difference between regular eggs and free-range or organic ones. Voluntary egg labels however do much to confuse true change in the food system by creating a smoke screen between label claims and their true processes. Without policy and monitoring, label claims lack legitimacy and reinforce the voluntarist nature of the neoliberal food system, turning food products into new green commodities that only the privileged can afford.

Local Food Plus presents itself as an interesting case of civil society intervention in unverified label claims. This organization requires that production and processing methods be verified by third parties and held accountable to a set of sustainability principles and standards (Local Food Plus, n.d.a. & Local Food Plus, n.d.b.). However, the issue remains with their "Buy to vote!" campaign that again supports a very unequal voting opportunity since many of LFP certified products are more expensive pushing them out of reach for lower income consumers. Their campaign also refers the consumer back to Johnston's consumer-citizen hybrid, voting with your dollar to support ethical issues, where food commodities with a green or social welfare twist can be used as value-added commodities to continue the capitalist treadmill.

I am thus forced to refer back to Guthman's statement that many governance systems, perhaps not yet envisaged could support social and environmental issues differently without economic inequality found between consumers and without using neoliberal principles at the risk of encouraging the system to unfold into yet another version of itself. Regardless of the governance system however, the state must be involved as a legitimate governing body that maintains citizen equality and welfare in the food system under all governance frameworks.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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Projects

Food Rescue Action! A student-run initiative

Participatory Growth and Poverty Eradication Program

By the Human Rights

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Background

The Human Rights Participatory Growth and Poverty Eradication Program (HRPGP) 1 is a joint research venture, a non-profit 'think and do tank', between York University's McLaughlin College2 and the International Centre for Eradication of Poverty (ICEP)3.

The goal of our research is to be a catalyst for poverty eradication through gathering information, sharing our findings, and facilitating partnerships among various participant sectors. Our objective is to promote the United Nations (UN) covenant on economic, social and cultural rights. In addition, our program aims to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals.

In tune with the millennium development goal to end poverty and hunger, HRPGP created 'Food Rescue Action!' (FRA). FRA is a student run initiative that is aimed at providing local community food banks, and therefore their users, with fresh produce. In Ontario alone an estimated 25 million pounds of fruits and vegetables are disposed of every year largely due to their cosmetic inappropriateness for retailers, despite being entirely nutritious (Community Harvest Ontario 1, 3). FRA formed alliances with the provincial food bank association to send volunteer members from the student body to local farms in order to harvest the leftover crop as part of the Ontario Association of Food Banks' (OAFB) Community Harvest Ontario Program. The process of harvesting the leftover crop is known as gleaning. 'FRA' works at increasing the access to fresh produce at food banks, reducing waste, and simultaneously involving university students and community members into volunteer groups in order to reduce hunger and malnutrition.

The activities of FRA are meant to be replicable at other universities and colleges and were planned with the intention of creating chapters of like-minded students who can contribute to food security and food waste solutions. This report and its extensive appendices are to serve as a manual to guide other student groups in the setting up and successful facilitation of volunteer-based food rescue/food security initiatives. The data contained in the evaluation of the pilot project at York University and the project time-line will serve as primary resources for student groups to start organizing their own food rescue groups. It is hoped that the extensive documenta-

tion of the operations and methods used during the project execution will allow other groups to learn from our trials, challenges, and success. By way of this report and materials available on the HRPGP website we intend to foster the creation of similar food rescue student groups across Canada and internationally to multiply the impact of the HRPGP 'Food Rescue Action!' project.

The Role of FRA

FRA is a student organization that utilizes the volunteerism in the student community of York University and a partnership with OAFB to collect fresh discarded produce from farms to supply local food banks; thereby, reducing food waste and providing community members with increased access to fresh produce

For its first year and launching project cycle FRA was run by a group of six student staff at HRPGP, whose responsibility was to: create a student group, coordinate with OAFB, prepare necessary documentation, raise awareness on campus, recruit volunteers, raise funds, go on gleaning trips with volunteers, produce a report and evaluation and ensure the sustainability and transferability of the group to volunteers and other campuses. For a complete project time-line refer to Appendix 1. To ensure that the project time-line is adhered to a work stream has been created to create clear expectations for all staff and stakeholders (Appendix 2).

So far, FRA at York University has worked in collaboration with Community Harvest Ontario, a division of OAFB to: (1) Engage 30 York University student volunteers in a pilot food rescue trip in October 2011; (2) Raise awareness of food security, food rescue, and food waste among the student community; and (3) Fundraise in support of food security in Ontario.

Why Was 'FRA' Created?

Project Rationale by: Ly Tran, Aimee Singh, and Robin Johnston
Research Coordinater: Virgil Haden-Pawlowski

Introduction

Common perceptions of hunger tend to encapsulate it as a phenomenon of the global South, negating its growing pervasiveness in Northern countries like Canada. The recent 2008- 2009 economic recession has rendered many Canadians unable to support themselves, increasing the numbers of those suffering from hunger across the provinces (Oliphant et al). In March 2010, food banks in Canada assisted a staggering 867,948 people, a 9 percent increase from 2009, and the highest level of food bank usage on record (Food Banks Canada). In fact, over the last two years, food bank use in Canada has risen by an unprecedented 28 percent (Food Banks Canada). Many of these individuals are faced with food insecurity as a result of mass job losses and cuts to employment hours (Mikkonen and Raphael). In particular, as Ontario emerges from the economic downturn, many in the Greater Toronto Area continue to struggle (Oliphant et al). Toronto's jobless rate has been stuck in the high range of 9.0-9.5 per cent over the past six months (Recession Relief Coalition). Such indicators point to the relationship between income and hunger. For all of those who require assistance, it is low income that brings them to a food bank (Food Banks Canada). In other words, hunger is perpetuated by poverty, and food banks continue to bear the burdens associated with this increased need.

Increased Pressure–A Growing Need

Food banks have seen a significant shift in the last ten years. First perceived as a temporary, emergency response to static levels of hunger, it has now shifted to represent an indispensable tool for responding to increasing poverty and hunger (Toronto Food Policy Council). Following the recession, in particular, mounting demands have been placed on these institutions. In 2010, half of all food banks had to make the tough decision to cut back on the amount of food provided to each household, compared to only 15% of all food banks in 2008 (Food Banks Canada). Furthermore, roughly one in every ten food banks had to actually turn away individuals and families requiring assistance (Food Banks Canada). In Toronto, such strains are highest with over 997 000 out of the 1 187 000 total Greater Toronto Area food bank visits between April 2009 and March 2010 occurring in the City of Toronto (Oliphant et al 2). A striking 15 per cent increase in overall client visits in Canada from 2009 to 2010 occurred across the Greater Toronto Area (Oliphant et al).

In response to this increased need, food banks across Canada are forced to purchase more food to maintain their inventory, and Toronto food banks account for 57 per cent of the national total, up from 32 per cent in 2008, before the recession hit (Food Banks Canada). Even with public outreach, 35 per cent of Canadian food banks report running out of food (Food Banks Canada). There is a clear need to match the recent increased demand on food banks with an increased supply of food.

The Food Bank Diet

In typical food bank arrangements, including those in Toronto, users are allotted a basket of goods filled with items dependent on the types of donations received by the food bank (Toronto Food Policy Council). A typical client hamper providing three days worth of food includes: dry pasta, rice or macaroni; pasta sauce; soup; juice; cereal; canned meat; peanut butter; eggs; dry beans; cookies; milk; and bread (Fort York Food Bank). Food bank users are left with limited choices, creating a very distressing and disempowering experience (Toronto Food Policy Council). The Stop Community Food Centre facilitated a social experiment in which participants from the media were challenged to subsist on a typical food bank diet for three days. Responses described the experience as likely to result in "the spirit... giv[ing] before the body" (Roberts). Moreover, the availability of fresh produce in such distribution systems is sporadic. The aforementioned "Fort York Food Bank food selection guidelines" does not account for the need for fresh fruits and vegetables in a healthy diet. This denotes a lack of formalized guidelines for fresh produce in typical food bank and related institutions distribution. This is of course to be expected due to sporadic availability of fresh produce in food banks, however considering the negative health implications of insufficient fruit and vegetable consumption food banks should work to acquire a regular intake of fresh produce and establish guidelines for their distribution (Che and Chen). The current response to the increasing levels of hunger across Toronto provides an incomplete solution to the problem, concentrating efforts and resources solely on increasing the quantity of food available without the simultaneous recognition of nutrition.

"The goal of our research is to be a catalyst for poverty eradication through gathering in-formation, sharing our findings, and facilitating partnerships among various participant sectors."

"Common perceptions of hunger tend to encapsulate it as a phenomenon of the global South, negating its growing pervasiveness in Northern countries like Canada."

The immediate consequence of this situation is the persistence of hunger, malnutrition and the overall poor health status among food bank users. In turn, it is crucial to recognize that poor health at the individual level has broader social and economic ramifications for society as a whole.

Health Implications of Hunger and Malnutrition

Hunger and malnutrition have tremendous effects on the physical and mental well-being of individuals. First, with regard to physical health effects, the insufficient intake of food and nutrient requirements is detrimental to the immune system and thereby increases susceptibility to infections. Particularly, insufficient consumption of fruits and vegetables can increase the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular disease (Che and Chen). It has been documented that individuals who suffer from food and nutritional deprivation are more likely to experience hunger pangs, depletion of energy, fatigue and illness as well as Type 2 diabetes and obesity (Lightman et al).

Social Implications

In line with the aforementioned det-

rimental health effects of hunger and malnutrition, research has shown the correlation between poor health and persisting poverty (Raphael). On the one hand, poor health prevents individuals from engaging in productive activities that generate income. On the other hand, poverty deprives people from access to essential requirements for a healthy life. This means that health inequality and income inequality are commonly connected in a self-perpetuating cycle, thereby also resulting in deteriorating community, public and social health. This has been articulated by Raphael as, "Some societies with greater numbers of low income people begin to show a spillover effect by which the health of those not living on low incomes begin to deteriorate as well," (Raphael 11). The underlying mechanism of this situation has been explained by Kawachi and Kennedy: "economic inequality contributes to the deteriorating of what has been termed social capital, or the degree of social cohesion or citizen commitment to society," (CSJ Foundation 10).

Economic Implications

The economic costs of hunger, poor health, and poverty are enormous. In Ontario, health care issues related to poverty cost the public $2.9 billion annually. In addition, the lost federal and provincial income taxes from loss of productivity add up to $1.3 billion to $1.6 billion (Ontario Association of Food Banks 16).

Gender Implications

Since food and nutrition within a household is typically a female domain, there is the likelihood that women compromise their own dietary and nutritional requirements for their children. A research report by the Canadian Medical Association found that women who live in disadvantaged circumstances in Canada exhibit dietary intakes below recommended levels. However, their children do not because the women sacrifice their food intake to provide for their children (McIntyre). This not only increases the nutrition-related health risks for women but also perpetuates the socially constructed roles assigned to women within the family.

As indicated, hunger and malnutrition have significant impacts on the well-being of individuals and the functioning of society. Such negative effects are on the rise due to increased levels of hunger in Toronto. Ironically, this is occurring alongside staggering amounts of food waste.

Food Waste–Systematic Inefficiencies

According to a 2007 study by Statistics Canada, "an estimated 38 per cent of food available for retail sale is wasted annually in Canada," (Statistics Canada, 2009). This waste speaks to systematic inefficiencies at every level of Canada's food production model. This highly inefficient method of production has negative implications for the environment. The production of produce depletes the soil, commonly involves use of pesticides and herbicides (unless organic) and if irrigated, uses large amounts of water. If this produce is not harvested and consumed, its cultivation is a huge waste of valuable resources. Conventional systems of agricultural production have a particularly significant environmental impact because they produce high-volumes of negative by-products, including chemical run-off (Pearson, 2007). With growing concern around the preservation of resources, the need to be efficient with the use of all crops produced becomes paramount.

While 51 per cent of this waste occurs after food has been purchased, 9 per cent is also wasted in the field (Statistics Canada in Gooch et al). While changing consumer practices is necessary to reduce waste overall, this requires long term changes to consumption habits. However, immediate steps can be taken to reduce the produce wasted in field. As articulated in previous sections, a lack of access to fresh produce is a primary cause of poor health for those who rely on food banks. The distribution of produce that is currently wasted has benefits that are twofold. Utilizing this produce would provide food bank users with access to fresh produce and reduce the amount of produce wasted in the field.

Locating the Source of Waste–Regulations and Overproduction

There are many reasons why so much food is wasted in Canada. In particular, strict quality regulations by large grocery stores and overproduction contribute to produce that is wasted in field. Aesthetics are a central focus of modern grocery store operation. Regulations are neither based on taste nor nutritional value of produce; they are based purely on cosmetic qualities. In his book Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal, Stuart provides the example of a lettuce farmer who states that, "15-20 per cent of his lettuces are [wasted] because they are either the wrong colour, too small, not perfectly round or slightly damaged, or because they have a bit of earth on them" (Stuart 118). This example highlights how strict regulations imposed by grocery stores have led to high quality produce being wasted for failure to meet aesthetic standards. Much of this could immediately be redistributed to increase access to produce for food bank users.

Strict grocery store requirements have exacerbated another common cause for crop surpluses–overproduction. Overproduction is standard practice for many farmers because agriculture is an inherently unpredictable undertaking. Crops are highly susceptible to unusual weather conditions, disease, and other inconsistencies that exist in nature. This leads many farmers to plant more crops than they expect to need as a safety net. When nothing unusual happens to a crop, this leads to a surplus. As well, farms under contract with large grocery stores have produce quotas to fill. Overproduction occurs to meet both the quantity and the quality requirements of a quota (Stuart). The surplus produce that is not sold to the grocery stores is left in the field because it is not financially worthwhile for the farmer to harvest it. The combination of strict regulations and overproduction are significant contributors to the amount of produce that is wasted annually in Canada.

Historical Solutions–Gleaning

Historically, excess produce that remains after harvest has been left for the poor to collect. This practice of collecting produce left after harvest, known as gleaning, dates back to biblical times (Badio). As British laws were passed to create individual property rights, gleaning was eventually outlawed in English-influenced societies. Gleaning has never had a significant place in Canadian agriculture but its potential is increasingly being explored. Recently, gleaning has seen a revival as groups in civil society seek to make use of produce left in fields and improve food access for everyone in society4. While fundamental changes to Canada's food production system are needed to reduce the amount of food wasted, gleaning is a grassroots initiative that can make a significant impact, both in contributing to the food supply and in raising awareness and increasing public involvement with the food system.

Conclusion

One of the main reasons that this waste is not being utilized, as stated by Stuart, is due "...not [to] the availability of quality food, but the availability of funds to redistribute it," (Stuart 221). This is largely because the social, economic and environmental benefits of redistribution may not be obvious at first glance. But upon closer inspection, produce redistribution has the potential to reduce pressures on food banks, mitigate health costs associated with hunger and malnutrition, and diminish environmental impact. By connecting local food producers and food banks these positive social changes could be realized.

Evaluation

It is in response to the aforementioned hunger and nutrition challenges faced by Canadian communities today, the needless waste produced in Canada's food system and the observed availability of university students for volunteer work that HRPGP's Food Rescue Action project supported by the OAFB was created. The project is considered to be a great success with high volunteer attendance and its first trip producing a sizable quantity of fresh produce for local food banks and shelters. The project was designed to be repeated on an annual basis and to produce materials and reports which could aid other food security student groups in the planning and facilitation of their own food rescue trips. In order to capture the lessons learned from our planning and facilitation of the project an evaluation framework was set out with details recorded on: activities, goals, expectations, strategies, and outcomes (see appendices). This allowed us to plan, anticipate problems, and record the happenings in detail so that future plans and facilitation can be improved. The evaluation and project cycle were designed according to a results-based management (RBM) framework. Operating within this framework realistic goals based on practical expectations were established. The progress towards these goals was monitored with time-line indicators deemed feasible by the planning staff. Lessons learned throughout the progress were incorporated into both the current project cycle and recommended for future project cycles. The logic model used to ensure the successful employment of RBM is located in Appendix 3.

Overall this first project cycle was successful with 86% volunteer attendance achieved for the facilitation of our first gleaning trip. The high volunteer turnout was ensured through a variety of volunteer recruitment techniques combined with regular communication to retain volunteers (Appendix 4: Volunteer Recruitment). As a result of the work accomplished summer term of the project staff made several recommendations which are fully expanded in Appendix 5.

The trip's success was contingent on our variety of enjoyment and enrichment techniques to ensure volunteer satisfaction (Appendix 6: Trip Facilitation). Problems seemed to trend in communication and documentation issues among staff throughout the project cycle (Appendix 6). Finally a complete and transparent budget is provided to give a clear idea of the costs associated with the project (Appendix 8). Though the project was a success in meeting its food rescue goals the evaluation findings highlight a need for additional attention to communication as well as volunteer recruitment and retention.

Future Goals for FRA

The ultimate goal of FRA is to go global. Our vision is to reduce systematic food waste while providing more people with access to fresh produce. By creating and promoting a replicable template for successful university student-run gleaning and food rescue initiatives our model for community action can deliver enormous volunteer support for initiatives that will increase community health and well-being across the city, province, country and globe.

*Find all references to this article on the online version **here***

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The Toronto Youth Food Policy Council (TYFPC) seeks to mobilize and engage youth to make change by building a just food system. The TYFPC provides youth with a space to network, share opportunities and learn from one another AND strives to become Toronto's leading Youth voice in sustainable municipal food policy change. Join the TYFPC at one of our bi-monthly community meetings to learn how to become a part of the TYFPC or join a committee.

For more information visit our website at **http://tyfpc.ca**
to find out more about what we do.
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