DIGGING INTO THE FARM TO SCHOOL MOVEMENT

ASSESSING THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF CONNECTING LEARNERS AND GROWERS THROUGH FOOD LITERACY AND SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT

Elina Blomley, Dina Sadeghi, Hafsa Salihue
F2SBC Conference // May 18th
GRATITUDE TO THE LAND & HOST NATIONS
CASE STUDIES

1. Elina Blomley
2. Dina Sadeghi
3. Hafsa Salihue
THE ROLE OF FOOD SYSTEM PLANNING IN FACILITATING LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT FOR SCHOOLS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Elina Blomley
MRM Simon Fraser University, BA - ESS Dalhousie University
INTRODUCTION
“WHEN WE MAKE PLANS, WE CHOOSE WHOSE FUTURES MATTER”

(Zapata, 2021, p.641)
EXPORT ORIENTED FOOD CHAIN

trapping farmers between a rock and a hard place
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FARMER INDEBTEDNESS

Canadian farmers are over 115 billion dollars in collective farm debt.

(Statistics Canada, 2021)
EXPORT ORIENTED FOOD CHAIN

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**CONSOLIDATED MARKETS & INFRASTRUCTURE**

Agri-input corporations capture 98% of Canadian farmers revenues due to the rising costs of inputs and services.

(Qualman, 2017)
**EXPORT ORIENTED FOOD CHAIN**

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**CONSOLIDATED MARKETS & INFRASTRUCTURE**

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(Qualman, 2017)

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**IMPACTS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

Increasing anthropogenically induced climate events (e.g. flooding, heat domes, early glacier runoff)

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**Introduction**

Methodology

Findings

Recommendations
OTHER END OF THE CHAIN

Rising costs, reliance on imports, increasing food insecurity

1 in 7
Canadians experiencing household food insecurity

1 in 6
Children experience household food insecurity

(Idzerda et al., 2022; Tarasuk et al., 2021)
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Legally infringing on the right to food
FEDERAL & PROVINCIAL POLICY WINDOWS
for a national school food policy

FOOD GROWERS
PROCUREMENT
YOUTH IN SCHOOLS

Introduction
Methodology
Findings
Recommendations
FEDERAL & PROVINCIAL POLICY WINDOWS

for a national school food policy

FOOD GROWERS

RIGHT TO FOOD

YOUTH + SCHOOLS

Publicly funding school food opposes neoliberalism and contributes towards the "right to food"

(O’Brien, 2014)
“Activities connecting food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management, as well as all the associated regulatory institutions and activities”

(Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000, p.113)
BRITISH COLUMBIA’S DIVERSE AGRI-SECTOR

Spatial Context

- Less than 5% of the land base
- Over 200 agricultural crops
- 2.1$ billion towards the province's GDP

(B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, 2022)
Unique jurisdictional authority & protection of agricultural land with an independent administrative tribunal

4,612,526 hectares (5% landbase)

ALR is rapidly decreasing at 600 hectares a year

(Shore, 2018)

Farmland protection alone is insufficient

(ALC, 2022)
AS THESE POLICY WINDOWS OPEN DO WE CONTINUE WITH THE STATUS QUO?
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OR MAKE A DIFFERENT PLAN?
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
1. What are planning-related barriers and opportunities to scale up local food procurement for farm to school programs?
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1. What are planning-related barriers and opportunities to scale up local food procurement for farm to school programs?

2. What is the role of planning and planners in helping facilitate local food procurement in schools?
DATA COLLECTION

Ethics approval through SFU Research Ethics Board

Key Informant Interviews
September 2021 to March 2022

Transcribed on OtterAi & analyzed over NVivo 12
Non-Profit Administrators 52%

Farmers and Food Growers 33%

Planners/Government Workers 14%

n=21
LIMITATIONS

- Small amount of interviewees
- Geographic location of stakeholders
- Agriculture as the dominant food growing practice
LIMITATIONS

- Small amount of interviewees
- Geographic location of stakeholders
- Agriculture as the dominant food growing practice

Tension between erasure and co-opting → Food systems are pluralistic
FINDINGS
1. Inaccessible planning processes
2. Lacking infrastructure
3. Farming is not financially viable
4. Gaps in communication and expectations
INACCESSIBLE AND SLOW PLANNING PROCESSES

ALR zoning was hindrance, insufficient incentives, exclusion from consultations

“... planning processes are difficult for farmers to engage in based on timelines and level of commitment and can be frustrating when key stakeholders are not well engaged in those processes. And often, when the ALC considers who is a farming stakeholder, I think most of their access to who would those people would be is through land ownership. So I also wasn't in a position of land ownership, like we weren't considered farmers under B.C. assessment”

(Farmer 6)
LACKING THE 'INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE MIDDLE'

“(...) even if we wanted to grow more food, there's not enough of a market regionally to sell that food and the transportation distribution network is a challenge (...) so we're growing on only on a fraction of our land.”

(Planner and Farmer 4)
BARRIER #3

to scaling up local food procurement for F2S

FARMING IS NOT FINANCIALLY Viable

farmland, inputs, labour, speculation, impacts of the climate crisis

“(…) when you're looking at growing on a market scale or market garden scale, and you need to have that capital input to begin with, and when we look at something like, if you're purchasing raw land, you need to have a 50% down payment, that's not necessarily accessible for a lot of folks to have that money upfront (...) there's barriers around the cost [of land].”

(Non Profit Administrator 8)
“Issues that came up there as challenges were minimum orders. So in that sense, it was the reverse - that generally those clients [schools] wanted large volumes. So small farmers typically don't have the consistency and volume available that those clients are looking for.”

(Planner and Farmer 4)
OPPORTUNITIES

1. GOVERNMENT FUNDING & SUPPORT
2. LOCAL FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE
3. CREATIVE POLICY INTERVENTIONS
4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
5. AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE REFORM
“... the government role I think would be to (...) provide sustained ongoing funding to diverse place-based program. And I think that there's also a huge risk in having these like one off 12 month, granting like pilot projects, you know, where (...) we want to see something innovative and new, and then you start something, and then it stops after a year because there's not ongoing funding.”

(Food Policy Council Member 3)
“When it comes to the actual physical location, food hubs really should not be paying rent. Like it makes no economic sense if they have to pay rent on top of trying to do much of this, which is, not many schools have that payment model (...) This needs to be public land and it needs to be publicly funded. Because this is a community asset that we're building. We're building both physical assets as well as social capital.”

(Farmer 1)
“The first one would be that policy piece, yes, make it a requirement that you buy, (...) if government can do more than that, they can also enact policy that says, ‘this much of your budget goes to food’. (...) the schools don't have a huge budget to begin with. You also make sure that you're valuing the way the school can spend their money, and then also valuing the food that's coming locally.”

(Farmer 3)
“I think it's really important that all of those people [students, public, staff, all levels of staff at school districts, community groups] are part of the conversation as well as experts in the industry (...) from the start, and not partly, (...), and then it's sort of very well organized, and facilitated (...) and if I think about the ones that were the most successful, (...) it's the ones that were people focused, people centered, and student centered, the students, they're the users, they should be part of the conversation”

(Non Profit Administrator 6)
"I think that the opportunity is that there still are stronger protections being in the ALR then there are other non-ALR land pieces and the existence of the ALR also pushes municipalities to continue to maintain agricultural land zoning. (...) But in general, the acknowledgment more recently that the ALR needs to be changed [to] allow for succession planning and new generations of farmers to access land"

(Farmer 6)
“I think that there's a **real danger in a missed opportunity** around this (...). In British Columbia, in particular, we have the opportunity to be tapping into local food (...) if we're able to couple that out with a local procurement initiative, that is going to be so much more powerful for our economy (...) there's the health outcomes associated with that better food, the economic outcomes, and also all of those intricate and relational pieces tied to that, that help move our whole food system development forward.”

(Non Profit Administrator 10)
RECOMMENDATIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Multi-year funding for procurement programs including coordinator role

2. Support and scale up economic development for food growers

3. Carrot and stick approach to support the food growers and prevent speculation

4. Invest in and support local food infrastructure
RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Support in establishing a cohesive regional multi-dimensional metric and data tracking system for F2S food procurement programs. Including mandated and embedded metrics of redistribution, justice, and equity as identified by the community.
6. Begin with community consultation, engaging and establish policy councils to identify community values

7. Undertake community food asset mapping

8. Engage across jurisdictions to collaborate and share infrastructure
9. Embed local food procurement into policies that clearly outline and assign roles to address necessary funding, seasonality, and capacities with clear and mandated minimum % local food procurement targets.
“WHEN WE MAKE PLANS, WE CHOOSE WHOSE FUTURES MATTER”

(Zapata, 2021, p.641)
THANKS : )
THANKS : )

questions? comments?
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PRESENTATION REFERENCES


CASE STUDY 2
LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMMING AS A TOOL FOR FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCY

Dina Sadeghi
B.Env, MRM, Simon Fraser University
INTRODUCTION
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- New physical barriers to food access
- Over-reliance on food production models dependent on global supply chains
- Food workers are considered “essential frontline workers”

(Raja, 2020)
COVID-19 IMPACT ON CHILDREN

- Households with children were found to be more food insecure than households without children.

- School closures disproportionately affected students who relied on school provided meals.

- Students on school food meals consumed 21% less fruits and vegetables during lockdown
Food providers need to have social, financial, natural and political resources to tap into during a disruptive event.

Resilient Food System is one that...

- Incorporate an assessment of available financial resources
- Analyses their staffing situation, and their staff to volunteers ratio

*Food System Resilience: A Planning Guide for Local Governments* (Moore et al., 2022)
Objective 1: To identify the gaps in school food related programming, through identifying the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective 2: To learn how we can strengthen our food system resiliency, to better inform planners and policy makers in emergency preparedness efforts.
METHODOLOGY
PARTICIPANT STATS

n = 15

Non-Profits 33.3%
Educators 26.7%
Government 20%
School Support 13.3%
Volunteers 6.7%

Foundations

Methodology

Findings

Recommendations
Objective: To identify the gaps in school food related programming through identifying the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic

Farm to School BC

School food programming prior to the pandemic

Initial response to school food programming at the onset of the pandemic

Changes made in the adjustment period to the pandemic

Reflection

What could have been done differently

Adjustments that could be made as part of Build Back Better

Influence of contributing factors

Role of government

Policy recommendations

Barriers identified

Recommendations

to learn how we can strengthen our food system resiliency, to better inform planners and policy makers in emergency preparedness efforts.
FINDINGS
FINDINGS OVERVIEW

Initial Response and Restrictions

Infrastructure (Physical and Social/Human)

Funding
Limited operational capacity

Policy
Integrating schools in food policy
Some educators stated they would not do anything differently due to pandemic uncertainties.

Moved food programming to online
  - Not only food education, but food preparations as well.
“...And you were instructed not to go to the grocery store. So you need to go and buy these ingredients to make this dish... So for me, it was more just trying to keep in touch with students. And if they sent me stuff awesome, if not, also fine...”

(Educator 1)
“So where we used to feed, you know, that child in that classroom...and you remember only sending food for the one child...we got to give more when a family comes to pick up food, this isn't just about feeding that one kid, it's about the family.”

(Consultant 1)
“...just always more support for teachers so that they can kind of have the ability to take on those kind of projects, which feel just sort of extra at this point to the already large workload that they have, I would say more funding for these types of food education programs...”

(Non-profit supporter 3)
“We're always struggling for volunteers; we have all the same people and they're gonna burn out.”

(Volunteer 1)

“So I think that's probably the barrier like human resources, whether they're paid or unpaid, like if they are around or not, and are there enough of them...”

(Government 3)
The need for new infrastructure, and use of existing infrastructure to its full capacity

“Some teachers that I talked to were just like, Yeah, we have, we weren't able to really take care of the gardens...”

(Non-profit supporter 4)
Lack of funding is a barrier to food program delivery

Not just funding, but continuous funding

Providing financial opportunities for teachers to support their work
“...COVID is also a catalyst to getting creative, to help break down silos, to not create this illusion that schools can do it all, because no one system can...You know, I think people were doing what they could ...and they just were in crisis mode...”

(Health and safety consultant for schools)
RECOMMENDATIONS
FOOD AND POLICY

1-2 Preventative Measures
3-4 Financial Measures
5-7 Policy Opportunities
8 Food Infrastructure

Introduction Methodology Findings Recommendations
FINANCIAL MEASURES

- Address food insecurity at the household level using financial measures such as income-based solutions for families, in order to alleviate student food insecurity.

- When possible, provide timely and detailed instructions on emergency protocols tailored to the school institution and their operations.

- Charity-driven forms of support are not long-term solutions to food insecurity in emergencies.
- Policies to address food insecurity, must be income-based solutions and not food-based, in order to address the root cause of food insecurity.
• Evaluate existing infrastructure in schools and identify new opportunities to support operations during emergencies at the school level.

• Consider the importance of the following:
  ○ School gardens/ School farms
  ○ Large open outdoor and indoor multi-purpose spaces
  ○ Industrial kitchens

• Provide compensation for educators to acknowledge additional work hours.
Consider schools as being important food hubs, and an important infrastructure for food access for communities, especially during an emergency events.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preventative Measures</th>
<th>1. Address food insecurity at the household level using financial measures such as income-based solutions for families, in order to alleviate student food insecurity.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Measures</td>
<td>3. Governments (federal and provincial) should provide guaranteed continuous funding to ensure sustainable and ongoing school food programming.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Governments (federal and provincial) should provide guidance on navigating funding resources and opportunities for educators throughout the application process.</td>
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| Opportunities for Policy | 5. Evaluate existing infrastructure in schools and identify new opportunities to support operations during emergencies at the school level. Consider the importance of the following:  
  ● School gardens/ School farms  
  ● Large open outdoor and indoor multi-purpose spaces  
  ● Industrial kitchens |
|                       | 6. Provide compensation for educators to acknowledge additional work hours. |
|                       | 7. Manage paid staff to volunteer ratio for school food programming to ensure sustainable program delivery so that educators and volunteers are working within their respective capacity. |
| Food Infrastructure   | 8. Consider schools as being important food hubs, and important infrastructure for food access for communities, especially during an emergency event. |
IN CONCLUSION...

The COVID-19 pandemic brought forth an opportunity to assess the school food structure...
THANK YOU!

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CASE STUDY 3
SCALING UP, OUT, AND DEEP: OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATING LOCAL FOOD INTO A UNIVERSAL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Hafsa Salihue, MRM. Planning
Food Systems Lab
Simon Fraser University
INTRODUCTION
WHY INTEGRATE LOCAL FOOD IN SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS?

- Public institutions have high purchasing power
- Provides local food providers with an alternative market for their products
- Provides children with access to nutritious & culturally appropriate food
- Shortens food supply chain – less vulnerable, less waste
THE CHALLENGES WITH LOCAL FOOD IN SCHOOLS

- Mismatch of growing season and school year
- Seasonal variations in local food availability
- Small-medium producers not being able to supply large quantities
- Excess cost of local food
- Varying aesthetics (size, shape, and quality)
1. To explore the challenges and opportunities of scaling local food procurement in School Food Programs (SFPs) from the perspectives of stakeholders in the school food environment.

2. To develop recommendations for scaling the integration of local food in SFPs in urban and rural schools in B.C.
CROSS-SECTORAL WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Non-profits

Indigenous food providers

Schools & Universities

Public Health

Government

Business

Introduction  Methodology  Findings  Recommendations
2 Workshops
- Urban
- Rural & Remote

45 Participants

- Government 2%
- Business 2%
- Public Health 14%
- Educational Institutions 23%
- Non-Profit 59%
FINDINGS
WORKSHOP 1: POLICY

Introduction

Methodology

Findings

Recommendations
WORKSHOP 1: INFRASTRUCTURE & LOGISTICS

**Introduction**

WORKSHOP 1 - INFRASTRUCTURE & LOGISTICS

**Methodology**

**Consequences**
- Limited local food supply
- Loss of local culture
- High dependency on imported food

**Core Problem**
- Gaps in infrastructure and complex logistics
- Lack of food infrastructure in schools for food preparation and storage
- Schools were not designed to feed children

**Root Causes**
- Gov. focus on food export instead of investing in local food
- Growing season doesn’t match up with school year
- Schools in rural and remote areas are far apart and away from town centers
- High cost of land, high cost of local food
- Local growers cannot compete with cheaper imported foods
- Small scale growers cannot meet demand for consistent and large orders

**Solutions**
- Adequate infrastructure and efficient logistics
- Food gardens on school property
- Expand food infrastructure in schools and community for food preservation (i.e., canning, drying), processing and storage (i.e., freezers) for use in school year
- Non-profits take over administration of LF2S programs to assist growers and schools that do not have internal capacity
- Access school catering services that source local food

**Findings**
- Students are food literate, mentally, physically, spiritually healthy
- Students are better able to concentrate and learn
- Students know how to grow and prepare their own meals
- More resilient food supply chains
- Sustainable, self-sufficient local economy

**Recommendations**
- Greater appreciation for agricultural land, farming and food providers
- Increased connection with food
- Minorsities can share their cultural practices and traditional foods at schools
**WORKSHOP 2: MOA**

**Motivation**
Educational and nutritional benefits for students & sustainable food supply chain

**Opportunities**
Dedicated staff and funding for programs & expanding existing programs (Feed BC and BCAITC)

**Abilities**
Training for teachers and staff on how to incorporate local food into curricula and meals
WORKSHOP 2: INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE MIDDLE

Introduction
Methodology
Findings
Recommendations
“there are organizations that are already putting in the time have the relationships, the one that comes came to mind... is the B.C. Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation. And so, they're aggregators and disseminators, of food. So really, let's build on the strengths of what's already out there.”

– University Representative U1, Rural & Remote Workshop 2
RECOMMENDATIONS
INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGY

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS

**ROUTES TO SYSTEMIC IMPACT: SCALING OUT, UP AND DEEP**

- **Scale Out**
  - “Impacting Greater Numbers”
    - Replication and dissemination, increasing number of people or communities impacted

- **Scale Up**
  - “Impacting Laws and Policy”
    - Changing institutions at the level of policy, rules, and laws

- **Scale Deep**
  - “Impacting Cultural Roots”
    - Changing relationships, cultural values and beliefs, “hearts and minds”

Strategies for Scaling Systems Change
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Scaling Up

Establish legislation that sets out clear goals, roles, and responsibilities for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the impact of scaling up local food procurement in SFPs.
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   Establish legislation that sets out clear goals, roles, and responsibilities for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the impact of scaling up local food procurement in SFPs.

2. Scaling Up & Out
   Provide stable, sustainable, and non-competitive funding for SFPs. Consider cost-sharing between federal and provincial governments and direct funding to local authorities for program implementation.
RECOMMENDATIONS

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   Establish legislation that sets out clear goals, roles, and responsibilities for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the impact of scaling up local food procurement in SFPs.

3. Scaling Out
   Invest in the local food economy and infrastructure to scale out local food procurement. Create platforms for collaboration and information sharing.

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3. Scaling Out
   Invest in the local food economy and infrastructure to scale out local food procurement. Create platforms for collaboration and information sharing.

4. Scaling Deep
   Include food literacy in school curricula. Establish place-based food culture, value for food and food providers, and reduce waste.
Thank You
References


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QUESTIONS?

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