

**The Future of Foods in the West Kootenay Conference
November 13-14, 2007
Nelson BC**

Executive Summary



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**The Future of Food Conference
Collaborative appreciates and thanks all
the volunteers for their time and energy!
We also thank our:**

Major Sponsors



Co-Sponsors

Regional District of Central Kootenay, Areas K and F
Kootenay Coop Radio Kootenay Co-op Nelson-Creston
Green Party Constituency Association Nelson & District
Credit Union Post Carbon Institute Metro Vancouver
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Agriculture Farm Folk/City Folk SmartGrowth BC

**Supporting Organizations and
Businesses**

Community Food Matters
Otter Books
Kootenay Organic Growers Society
West Kootenay Ecosociety
Nelson & District Community Resource Society
Au Soleil Levant Bakery
Sunnyside Naturals
SilverKing Soya Foods
Endless harvest
Earth Matters
WWOOF Canada
Oso Negro Coffee
All Seasons Restaurant
Nelson-Creston NDP Constituency Assoc.
North Kootenay Lake Community Services
Creston Valley Agricultural Society
Local Flavours Goods & Services Co-operative



**Conference proceedings can be viewed
at:
www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/**

A. Summary

The Future of Food in the Kootenays Conference was held in Nelson on Tuesday evening, November 13 and all day Wednesday, November 14, 2007. The Conference addressed the issue of food security from a regional perspective. Both days were sold out at capacity; approximately 270 participants attended Tuesday evening presentations, and approximately 170 people attended the Wednesday conference. Major sponsors were: CBT, Kootenay Food Strategy Society and Selkirk College. There were 11 co-sponsors (local and Lower Mainland) and over 16 supporting organizations and businesses.

B. Project Goals/Objectives

1. To educate community members, local and regional government decision-makers, staff, farmers and food industry entrepreneurs about future challenges to the regional food supply requiring more regional food self-reliance
2. To support an exchange of information, expertise and ideas among the groups mentioned above, in order to identify barriers and find solutions to these challenges
3. To develop a report, action plan and ongoing working group to implement the action plan

C. Evaluations

1. 75 participants submitted written evaluations on Wednesday afternoon; a high response rate.
2. Appreciations were consistently strong for scope and organization of Conference, quality of speakers, quality of (local) lunch and snacks provided, and opportunities for networking.
3. Steering committee evaluation: Workshops too large; Tuesday evening "too full"; some facility challenges. Excellent working among conference steering committee members.

D. Results of Project

1. 73 people created or signed up for 36 different networking groups for follow-up actions.
2. Recorded proceedings of the Conference as well as a number of the Power Point presentations are now available at:

<http://www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/120607.htm> and
http://globalpublicmedia.org/deconstructing_dinner_fof

3. The ongoing working group is focused on creating an interactive networking web presence for those interested or who have already signed up or created local food self reliance projects.
4. Funds generated for seed monies toward implementing an action plan are considered for maintaining an interactive website and further coordinating the efforts and aims of existing local food security groups.

5. Selkirk College offering Continuing Education agriculture focused non-credit courses and investigating Certificate Courses such as a Meat Cutting Course.
6. Approximately 200 signatures were added to the Meat Regulations petition.
7. Keynote speakers from the Vancouver area have joined forces as a result of being brought together in Nelson. They have formed the Vancouver Peak Oil Task Force <www.vancouverpeakoil.org> and are planning a regional food security conference modeled after our own.
8. Film maker and task force organizer Jon Cooksey who was in attendance along with keynotes Rick Balfour, past chairman Vancouver Planning Commission, Herb Barbolet Professor at Simon Fraser, founder Farm Folk City Folk, and Justin Roller alternative energy specialist National Research Council of Canada were very impressed and touched by the community development spirit that they encountered. Jon stated "In a community (like Nelson), people think of what their options are in terms of gathering other community members around them to work out a plan." They are concerned that people in more urban areas will think about the issue in individual terms which will not lead to building the necessary community capacity that will be required.
9. An expanded Resource Links has begun, including the following sites:
 - www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner
 - lifecycles (website for garden sharing)
 - www.ediblegardenproject.com (source: George Penfold)
 - www.kootenayfood.ca
 - BC's new Food Safety Act: http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/F/02028_01.htm

E. Implications and Recommendations

The Need for Regional Food Self-sufficiency

Professional and scientific opinion overwhelmingly point towards a collapse of the current globalized food system due to a confluence of predicted hyperinflation of petroleum costs with predicted permanent supply shortfalls to meet demand (International Energy Agency last bulletin predicts occurrence sometime 2010-11) and climate change effects on crop production. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has been quoted as calculating that 80% of the cost of food is fuel. A BC Ministry of Agriculture report predicts a 50% irrigation shortfall with respect to infrastructure without even taking into account reduced growing season hydrology .

Exacerbating factors, some of them only recently published also include:

- nations participating in the World Trade Organization having given up their right to put grain surpluses into reserves
- the running out of enormous and crucial aquifers
- increasing use of grain to meet skyrocketing demand for meat and dairy in India and China leading to the doubling of the price for grain in the last year
- President Bush's mandating ethanol content of gasoline by 2012 having a huge impact on corn availability for feed and food
- the University of Victoria Climate Study Group has been quoted as predicting outright desertification of the western prairies and Okanagan, leading to significant immigration to the Kootenays

- questions about the access to water flows from many rivers being offered up to independent power producers
- the new meat regulations and possibly heavier inspection and regulatory burden on all food establishments to include farms may drive many more small scale producers out of “business”
- eventual hyperinflation in the energy costs of transporting food even within the region
- real estate appreciation within the region with average farmland capital cost not accessible to most would-be farmers (under age 50!)

Regional Food Self-Reliance Requirements

1. Role of Government

Adopting formal policies or a charter , depending on the level of government, including:

- Minimize inappropriate regulatory burdens with respect to small scale and local food production and processing, including the presumption of human relationships, rather than anonymity, amongst the members of the food supply chain, while providing a source of technical input with respect to appropriate standards.
- Recognize spontaneous solutions to ensuring quality and safety e.g. random farmer to farmer inspection.
- Tax exemption and access to public infrastructure, facilities or lands for this great public good.
- Land use planning and zoning supporting access to viable farmland by those motivated to produce. Farmland covenants and trusts as possible tools. Planning professionals also helping to develop stakeholder consultation, legal and insurance models that reassure citizens with respect to N.I.M.B.Y. issues.
- Protection of “the commons”*: urgent reconsideration of the ongoing privatization of essential elements of it like water and sources of renewable energy. e.g. Urgent planning for climate change-affected growing season hydrology to protect or create essential local upstream micro-reservoirs for agriculture. Consideration of water management districts giving them over-all domain, including power production.
- Urgent reconsideration of interprovincial and international “harmonization” initiatives which limit local and regional governments’ ability to do the above.
- An appropriate resourcing of the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture (see BCFG resolution**) to the Canadian average of 16.4% of farm GDP from the current paltry 3.3% with reestablishment of regional field agrology and other extension services. (also see Food Production below)
- A review of local government policies restricting “backyard” food producing related activities.
- Investment in regional “post-carbon” transportation and energy infrastructure as part of re-sourcing the commons.

2. Education

- General and consumer education is required to change behaviour. This would include the revaluing of local produce leading to pressure on large retailers and support premium prices for local product. The perceived added value needs be understood as a population health issue in terms of future adequate nutrition for all of us. This is in a sense similar to investing now for the medium and long term benefits of healthier (and usually tastier too!) food, e.g. organic, local, in-season.
- Education about the low impact of state of the art agricultural and livestock facilities in terms of environmental impact to deal with N.I.M.B.Y. situations.

- Eventually, educating our children about food production knowledge and skills through didactic curriculum but initially experiential exposure of children with farm and food garden tours and hands on. Ideally we might first capitalize on existing home gardeners and intergenerational opportunities but soon some community gardens could be school based.
- Selkirk College and perhaps College of the Rockies (Creston) have indicated a willingness to sponsor continuing ed. agriculture programs. Initially mentorship (and we have a few outstanding local mentors that have already declared) but presumably some didactic and eventual core programming would emerge.

3. Market Development

- Support in whatever form for local farmers markets and more widespread “big box” supermarkets outlets offering local food certified as such. Examples which are actually under consideration by the respective boards include: the Kootenay Coop pursuing more scale (or possibly exporting their model?) and the Kootenay Organic Growers Society considering their own independent organic certification to include local provenance. Both of these strategies would pressure large retailers to follow demand, just as they have followed the move to carrying organic.
- Network/referral accessibility for farm-gate and Community Sponsored Agriculture, some initiatives e.g. KFSS underway.
- Sponsored consumer campaigns e.g. Cards for supermarkets: “I did not buy X and X today because they are from ____.” (sourced too far away)
- Neighbourhood relocalization facilitators that will serve to network their neighbours socially, communicate both ways with regional working group, further educate members and may choose to act as e.g. food buying co-ops, organize community gardens, mentorship etc; potential for deeper changes in community structure.

4. Food Storing and Processing

- Building appropriate scale capacity and season extension for these functions at regional, subregional or local levels. Farmer based co-operatives (e.g. Local flavours-Creston) but also networking and ideally local input would lead to cooperation and organization with help from local government e.g. public land, zoning to house these.

5. Regional/Local Food Production

- Access to suitable land dealing with demographic, economic and regulatory barriers. Opportunities additional to some mentioned above would include the economic/legal framework models that would support private landowners making unworked land accessible to would-be farmers including some reward for improvements; a vehicle to refer such parties to each other.
- Mechanisms to preserve, and make accessible diverse, locally sustainable (non- genetically engineered) and adapted seed and livestock. e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, Farmer organizations, academic institutions and as well, a regional cataloguing and referral capability.
- Create a program for the study, recuperation and development of small scale pre- and post-carbon agricultural technology and techniques. This may for example include horse or oxen powered equipment and techniques. There are a number of residents of the region who are actively horse farming and eager to mentor others as well as artisans interested in reproducing the equipment.
- Researching, and putting into production, regional sources for maintaining soil fertility e.g. enlisting a revitalized Min. of Agriculture and academic Soil Science/Geology support. Likewise season extension possibilities.

- Farm labour-employment referral methods with an analysis of suitable training, rewards (including part of internship within an educational stream or mentorship for example), transportation or housing as required; possibly as an extension of Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSA).
- Ensuring reliable hydrology see above.
- Primary and secondary education as well as neighbourhood level social action influencing a return to families being involved in their own food production.
- CSA model analysis and mentorship network to facilitate further development.
- Farm equipment co-operatives and see food processing/storage/distribution above.
- Ministry/Academic locally focused experimental farm research.
- Special attention to re-establishing grain production, a source of edible oils and a realistic way to deal with new meat regulations.

** Subject: Resolution bcfga (B.C. Fruit Growers Association)

Whereas

The Province of British Columbia has over 200 different and distinct agricultural commodity groups; more than any other Canadian province and

Whereas

The agricultural land base of our Province has been alienated from uses other than agriculture since the formation of the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve in 1973 and

Whereas

Agricultural production is recognized as being among the most competitive, high risk, labour and capital intensive industries in Canada and

Whereas

To develop any industry to its fullest potential often takes an additional level of infrastructure, education and expertise facilitated by government investment; as is done successfully in many of our competing jurisdictions to our detriment and

Whereas

British Columbia while having the most diverse agriculture and restrictive land use legislation of any Canadian province receives the smallest provincial government contribution toward these efforts at 3.3% of agricultural GDP according to the Stats Can Data Book 2006

Therefore be it resolved that

Our Provincial government recognize the importance and potential of this diverse industry and its contribution to our GDP, our environment and the well being of our population; and so immediately increase funding to the Agriculture Ministry in line with the average of all other provincial governments at 16.4% of agricultural GDP and use these funds to help increase the productivity and efficiency of our diverse agricultural sectors.

2/4/2008

Suggest adding to their resolution: "A renewed Ministry of Agriculture which has the resources to look at longer term strategies recognizing that monoculture, GMO's and techniques that rely on high Carbon footprints, or lead eventually to soil or aquifer depletion don't make sense and thus help BC lead the way to a sustainable food and climate future."