



# Everybody

# Eats

**A Discussion Paper on Food Security  
in Newfoundland & Labrador**

November 2015



**Food First<sup>NL</sup>**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper has been developed by **Food First NL** in partnership with the **NL Public Health Association**.

Food First NL, formerly the Food Security Network of NL, is a provincial non-profit organization established in 1998 in response to growing concerns of hunger in Newfoundland & Labrador. Since that time, the organization has grown significantly and runs a diverse set of programs designed to improve access to healthy food across NL. The mission of Food First NL is to actively promote comprehensive, community-based solutions to ensure access to adequate, healthy food for all. [www.foodfirstnl.ca](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca)

The NL Public Health Association (NLPHA) is an independent, voluntary, non-profit provincial advocacy group comprised of health professionals, community members, and affiliated organizations who promote and support public health. The mission of the NLPHA is to be an active voice to promote public health in Newfoundland & Labrador and to enhance and support public health capacity guided by the principles of disease prevention, health promotion and protection, and healthy public policy. [www.nlpha.ca](http://www.nlpha.ca)

## PURPOSE


Food First NL and NLPHA have partnered to develop a provincial roadmap for the future of food security in Newfoundland & Labrador. This paper is the first step of this process, and is intended to start a provincial conversation on the issue.

Using this paper as a discussion tool, Food First NL and NLPHA will partner with organizations across the province to host regional forums, convening leaders to discuss local food security issues and opportunities. Accompanying this discussion paper is a discussion guide for individuals and organizations to use to join the conversation. This guide can be found online at [www.foodfirstnl.ca](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca).

Following the regional forums, Food First NL and NLPHA, along with over 20 other partner organizations, will host a provincial food security assembly. The assembly will build upon what was heard at the regional forums to develop a roadmap for the future of food security in NL.

Behind the scenes, supporting all of this work, is a provincial advisory committee made up of more than 20 organizations representing a diversity of sectors and interests in food security.

For more information, to get involved, contact Food First NL at [info@foodfirstnl.ca](mailto:info@foodfirstnl.ca) or call 709-237-4126



**Food Security** means that all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate food to maintain a healthy and active life.

**Food Security** is dependent on a healthy and sustainable food system that ensures healthy food is available now and for future generations.

# INTRODUCTION

Everybody eats. A simple statement, but a complex challenge in Newfoundland & Labrador.

Newfoundland & Labrador relies heavily on outside food sources. Numerous communities lack full grocery stores, leaving residents dependent on local convenience stores or transportation to the closest grocery store to buy food. Many households struggle to afford enough healthy food and depend on food banks or family and friends where emergency food programming is absent. Residents living in remote regions of the province also face barriers to accessing healthy wild food.

With so many challenges facing the people of this province, it is not surprising that the province has the lowest rate of consumption of vegetables and fruits in Canada, as well as the highest rates of diabetes and obesity. These factors highlight the current food security challenges faced in Newfoundland & Labrador.

That said, the province has rich food traditions of eating

from the land and sea, including gardening, fishing, hunting, and berry picking. These traditional food ways, which are still practiced across the province today, represent a great strength upon which we can build to improve food security in Newfoundland & Labrador.

In recent years, there has been incredible growth in interest and action on food security in the province. With more community organizations, businesses, governments, researchers, and citizens working on this issue, the time is right to have a provincial discussion on food security in Newfoundland & Labrador.

This paper aims to build upon this current momentum to support an informed discussion on, and to create a common vision for, the future of food security in Newfoundland & Labrador. If our province is to be food secure, we must better understand how we can individually and collectively contribute to shaping and sustaining a healthy and sustainable food system.

# WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?<sup>1</sup>

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally-appropriate food to maintain a healthy and active life. At the core of food security is access to healthy food and optimal nutrition for all.

Achieving food security depends on the success of the food system. The food system includes the production, distribution, access, consumption and disposal of food. Each element in the food system is connected to others in the system and challenges to any of these elements can impact food security. Disruptions to food production or distribution, for example, will directly affect the availability and affordability of food in stores.



**PRODUCTION**  
FISHING, FARMING,  
PROCESSING &  
PACKAGING FOOD



**DISTRIBUTION**  
TRANSPORTING  
& WHOLESALING  
FOOD



**ACCESS**  
GROWING, HARVESTING  
& BUYING FOOD



**CONSUMPTION**  
PREPARING,  
PRESERVING  
& CELEBRATING FOOD



**DISPOSAL**  
COMPOSTING,  
RECYCLING  
& DISPOSAL OF FOOD

Food security exists when all elements of the food system are functioning together effectively to support environmental, economic, and social wellbeing. A healthy and sustainable food system involves these three characteristics.

## IT IS ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE

A healthy and sustainable food system preserves and enhances the natural environment. The food system is healthy and sustainable when food production, distribution, access, consumption, and disposal is carried out in such a way that the use of resources from the earth does not exceed the environment's capacity to replace them. This ensures that the food system is able to make healthy food available for us and future generations.

## IT IS ECONOMICALLY VIALE

A healthy and sustainable food system ensures that food production, distribution, access, consumption, and disposal is economically viable for people and businesses. This means that people working in the food system earn a living wage, and that businesses in the food system are successful. A healthy and sustainable food system also stimulates broader economic development, through business development and job creation.

## IT CONSIDERS HUMAN HEALTH & SOCIAL EQUITY

A healthy and sustainable food system ensures the wellbeing of its population; that healthy food is available, affordable, and can be accessed in a respectful and dignified manner; and that people have opportunities to build basic food knowledge and skills to grow and harvest food, identify healthy options, and prepare healthy and safe meals. A healthy and sustainable food system also ensures the health and social equity of people involved in the food system globally and locally.



# Healthy Food For All

# WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT FOOD SECURITY?

*When the food system is challenged, access to healthy, safe and culturally appropriate food can be compromised. The following examples illustrate how breakdowns along the food system can affect our everyday lives.*



## PRODUCTION

**A drought in Alberta causes low levels of grain production**, with estimates that crop yields could be 25-30 per cent lower than the average of the past five years. This drives up the price of feed, increasing the cost of Alberta's meat production, as well as meat production in provinces that rely on Alberta's livestock feed.

**So what?** People across Newfoundland & Labrador would see higher beef prices at the grocery store.



## ACCESS

**A senior in rural NL without access to a vehicle or transportation lives a 45 minute drive away from the closest town with a full service grocery store.** The only place to buy food in his/her community is a convenience store, which offers some staple items, but mostly sells highly processed items with a long shelf life.

**So what?** Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in similar circumstances would have fewer healthy and affordable food options available to them.



## DISTRIBUTION

**A winter storm disrupts land and water transportation.** The ferry from North Sydney to Port Aux Basques gets stuck in ice. Transport trucks leaving Quebec are delayed in arriving at Happy Valley-Goose Bay. In both cases, shipments of fresh food to the province are delayed.

**So what?** Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would face food shortages at the grocery store.



## ACCESS

**As a result of an economic downturn, people lose their jobs and household budgets are stretched.** Food is one of few flexible budget items, so households spend less on groceries.

**So what?** Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in similar circumstances likely would buy less and lower quality food.



## CONSUMPTION

**High school curriculum in Newfoundland & Labrador does not include a mandatory home economics course**, which teaches practical food preparation skills.

**So what?** Unless students are taught these basic skills at home, many leave high school with limited understanding of how to prepare healthy meals, thereby increasing reliance on processed, ready-to-eat foods, when they move away from home.



## DISPOSAL

**A family throws away their food waste** in the garbage along with all other household waste, because they don't compost and there is no community compost program in their area.

**So what?** Municipalities and service districts across the province have to spend more on the cost of disposal. Keeping organic materials, like food waste, out of landfills reduces greenhouse gas emissions resulting from methane gas and protects our surface and groundwater from contamination.

Healthy eating is vital to overall well-being and reduces the risk of chronic diseases and obesity. These stories reflect disruptions to the food system that impact people's ability to access sufficient, healthy food, which is essential for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and engaging in social, recreational, and work activities.<sup>2</sup>

# HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY IN CANADA

Since 2004, Statistics Canada has monitored rates of Household Food Insecurity across the country. Household Food Insecurity is defined as inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints.

In 2012, four million Canadians, including over one million children, lived in households that struggled to afford the food they needed. In 2014, about a million Canadians accessed food banks each month.

Household Food Insecurity poses a significant risk to the health of Canadians.

Household Food Insecurity impacts children's physical and mental health, and can manifest into chronic diseases experienced in adolescence and early adulthood.

Adults living in Household Food Insecurity have higher rates of chronic illnesses, including depression, diabetes and heart disease.<sup>3</sup>

Being able to afford food is incredibly important, and a determinant for food security, yet it is only one piece of the puzzle. It is part of access in the Food System depicted above.

# FOOD SECURITY IN NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

*Key facts about food security in our province.*

*Newfoundland & Labrador*  
**RELIES GREATLY ON OUTSIDE  
FOOD SOURCES**

Only 10% of the fresh vegetables available through major wholesalers is produced in the province, meaning that 90% of fresh vegetables are imported.<sup>4</sup> While we are described as being self-sufficient in dairy, chicken and egg production, these industries are primarily dependent on imported grains for feed. Our largest food industry—the fishery—is mostly for export; more than 80% of the province’s seafood products are exported.<sup>5</sup>

*Newfoundland & Labrador has*  
**AN AGING FARMER POPULATION  
& NEW FARMERS FACE BARRIERS  
TO STARTING FARMING**

In 2011, the average age of farmers in the province was 55 as compared to 46 in 1991.<sup>6</sup> The vegetable industry has been experiencing a decline in the number of farms and acreage used for production. In Newfoundland and Labrador there is approximately 0.06 Hectares of farmland per capita, while the national average is 1.19 hectares per capita.<sup>7</sup> In addition, new farmers face obstacles to entering the sector, including access to land, capital and labour.

*Many Newfoundlanders & Labradorians*  
**FACE ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO  
ACCESSING ENOUGH FOOD**

In 2015, over 25,000 individuals in the province used a food bank—40% of this population being children.<sup>8</sup> From 2007 to 2012, Newfoundland and Labrador was the only province in the country showing a constant drop in rates of Household Food Insecurity. The rates dropped from 15.7% in 2007 to 10.6% in 2011. However, the rates increased in 2012 to 13.4%.<sup>9</sup>

*In the event of a disruption to food supply,  
Newfoundland & Labrador has an*  
**ESTIMATED TWO TO THREE DAY  
SUPPLY OF FRESH VEGETABLES**<sup>10</sup>

Disruptions to the food supply can be due to major environmental events, labour strikes, snow and ice conditions, or mechanical issues on vessels. In the spring and summer of 2014, communities along the north coast of Labrador experienced prolonged food shortages due to poor weather and mechanical issues, and in March 2015, grocery stores in southern Labrador ran out of fresh milk and produce for two weeks due to ice conditions in the Strait of Belle Isle.<sup>11,12</sup>

*Many communities face*  
**HIGH COST, POOR QUALITY, AND  
INCONSISTENT AVAILABILITY OF  
HEALTHY FOODS**

Food has to be transported long distances to reach retail outlets in communities across the province. Not only can this increase the price and impact the quality of food, disruptions in distribution can limit consistent availability of food options. The challenges of high cost, poor quality and inconsistent availability of fresh food are experienced across the province, but intensify in more remote and northern areas.

*Newfoundlanders & Labradorians have*  
**LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHIER  
FOOD & EASIER ACCESS TO LESS  
HEALTHY FOOD**

As a result of our geographically dispersed population, 84% of the 684 communities in the province do not have a grocery store.<sup>13</sup> This leaves residents dependent on convenience stores or transportation to neighbouring communities to purchase food. Additionally, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have greater access to less healthy foods as compared to healthier options. For every 10,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, there are 14 fast food outlets, eight corner stores, four gas stations with stores, but only three grocery stores.<sup>14</sup>

*Newfoundland & Labrador*  
**GENERATES MORE WASTE THAN  
OTHER PROVINCES**

On average, each person in Newfoundland and Labrador generates 4.5lbs of waste per day. 400,000 tonnes of garbage is tossed to the curb each year in the province - weighing as much as 80,000 elephants. 30% of our daily waste in Newfoundland and Labrador is made up of organic material, much of which can be composted in a backyard or community compost.<sup>15</sup>

*Northern, Remote Communities face*  
**BARRIERS ACCESSING  
TRADITIONAL, WILD FOODS**

Traditionally, Inuit in Nunatsiavut subsisted on locally-available, wild and traditional food, which provided a nutrient-rich diet and other health benefits through hunting and harvesting on the land. Changes in climate and wildlife availability have made accessing wild food increasingly challenging in Nunatsiavut. Climate change has caused weather and ice patterns to shift, making harvesting on ice and land unsafe and unpredictable. As well, changes in plant availability and wildlife have significantly influenced access to wild food --there are fewer berries and wild plants, and significant decreases in caribou herd populations have led to a 5-year ban on hunting caribou.

*Newfoundland & Labrador is*  
**RICH IN FOOD TRADITION &  
HERITAGE**

Newfoundland & Labrador has strong traditional knowledge and skills such as gardening, fishing, hunting and berry picking, as well as food preservation by canning, freezing and storing food in root cellars. Although this knowledge still exists across the province, traditional food practices are not as prevalent as they once were, and many people do not have the opportunities to learn basic, healthy food skills.

*Newfoundland & Labrador has*  
**LOW VEGETABLE AND FRUIT  
CONSUMPTION**

Since 2007-08, vegetable and fruit consumption in this province has decreased. In 2014, only 25.7% of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians consume fruit and vegetable five or more times per day, compared to the national average of 39.5%.<sup>16</sup>

## SO WHAT?

These many and varied challenges to food security impact the environmental, economic, and social wellbeing of the province.

As a geographically dispersed, isolated province that relies on outside food sources, the food available in retailers travels longer distances to get to our communities. Increased transportation of food leads to greater emissions and food spoilage, which impact the environmental health of our province and planet.

Purchasing from local food businesses supports the local economy and

creates jobs locally along the food system. Relying on outside food sources supports businesses and jobs outside of the province, some of which could be based within Newfoundland and Labrador.

Considering these challenges to accessing healthy food, and the importance of a healthy diet to good health, it is not surprising that in 2014, Newfoundland & Labrador has the highest rate of obesity among adults (30.4%), and the highest rate of diabetes (9%) of all the provinces in Canada.<sup>17,18</sup>

# HOW DO WE IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY?<sup>19</sup>

*How everyone has a role to play in advancing food security.*

There are many approaches that can be taken by different sectors to improve the food system. Four primary sectors influence elements of the food system:

## **PUBLIC SECTOR**

The public sector includes municipal, regional, provincial and federal governments, as well as government funded and/or run institutions that provide government services such as hospitals and health care facilities/institutions, public schools and post secondary institutions.

### **How does the public sector influence the food system?**

The public sector develops and implements policies and programs that impact all elements of the food system. This includes policies on agricultural land preservation, fish quota, fisheries and wildlife conservation, health, food safety, institutional food procurement and poverty reduction. The public sector is also responsible for running basic services such as health care and education, and managing basic infrastructure such as roads and ferries to ensure safe and uninterrupted transportation.

## **PRIVATE SECTOR**

The private sector includes businesses operating across all elements of the food system, including farmers, fishers, processors, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, chefs and waste management companies.

### **How does the private sector influence the food system?**

The private sector plays a lead role in producing food and getting it to our plates. The approaches they take to growing vegetables, raising livestock, and catching or farming fish all influence the cost, quality, and sustainability of food production. Similarly, the routes and means of transportation in distributing food impact the cost, quality and availability of food in our stores. The purchasing decisions of food retailers, including grocery stores, convenience stores, and restaurants influences the degree to which they support the local economy.

## COMMUNITY SECTOR

Primarily active in the access and consumption elements of the food system, the community sector includes local organizations such as community centres, family resource centres, local citizen groups and provincial networks.

### **How does the community sector influence the food system?**

The community sector delivers local, innovative and responsive food programming to address food security issues and improve access to healthy food, build healthy food skills and create alternative food markets. Programs include community gardens, community kitchens and cooking programs, community freezers, bulk buying clubs and farmers' markets.

## CITIZENS

All of us can play a role in influencing the food system and improving food security through our daily choices and actions.

### **How do you influence the food system?**

The decisions you make at the grocery store and restaurants provide an opportunity to vote with your fork. In choosing to purchase more local, fair trade, sustainable, and organic products, you are encouraging stores and restaurants to carry these items. In choosing to purchase more food directly from local farmers, through a farmers' market or community supported agriculture program, you support local farmers in continuing to produce food in your area. Engaging your family in food practices such as gardening, cooking, preserving and composting helps build healthy food skills in your household. Learning about food issues and talking about them with family, friends, store owners and elected officials can help to influence change in your community, region, and the province.

## A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY

As a complex and cross-cutting issue, food security requires a strong, collaborative, and multi-sectoral approach. Only through working across these four sectors to develop and implement innovative solutions, will improvements be made to the food system and food security in Newfoundland & Labrador.

There is an incredible amount of action being taken across all four sectors in Newfoundland & Labrador in order to enhance food security in the province.

Provincial, Regional, and Municipal Governments, Researchers, Businesses, Industry Associations, organizations within the Community Sector, and People across the province are becoming increasingly engaged in advancing food security in Newfoundland & Labrador.

Appendices A and B provide a highlight of different food security initiatives currently in operation across sectors and regions of the province.



PHOTO CREDIT: JOHN BROWN

## CONCLUSION

Food security is important for achieving a healthy lifestyle, facilitating social inclusion, and building healthier communities. Food security demands that we produce and process food sustainably in order to ensure that our children and our children's children will have the food they need.

Although significant progress has been made to strengthen food security in Newfoundland and Labrador, evidence indicates that there is need for continued focus on addressing the immediate impact of food insecurity on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as well as on finding long-term solutions. The public, private, and community sectors must work together with citizens to improve food security by ensuring policies, programs, and initiatives take into account all five elements of the food system from food production, distribution, access, consumption, and disposal.

In recent years, there has been an incredible growth in interest and action on food security in Newfoundland and Labrador, making it the right time for a provincial dialogue to catalyze collective action on this important issue.

Be a part of this provincial dialogue on food security in Newfoundland and Labrador. Attend a regional forum in your area, or host a conversation with your family, friends, or co-workers using the Everybody Eats Discussion Guide. To learn more about how to get involved and to find the discussion guide, visit [www.foodfirstnl.ca](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca)

# HIGHLIGHT OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Provincial Government has implemented a number of strategies and initiatives that address elements of food security, including those highlighted below.

## POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

A key determinant to food security is having adequate economic resources. Policies that reduce poverty (e.g., increased income support rates, improved access to education and training opportunities, and reduced barriers to employment) contribute to reducing economic barriers to accessing food. In 2006, the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador developed the long-term, comprehensive, and government-wide Poverty Reduction Strategy.

In the 2014 Poverty Reduction Strategy update, it highlighted that all low-income measures show a large reduction in the percentage of people living in poverty in the province and that 36,000 have moved out of poverty since 2003. As well, the number of people living on income support is at an all-time low. In 2011, the incidence of low income in Canada was 8.8%, while in Newfoundland & Labrador it was 5.3%.<sup>20</sup>

The prevalence of Household Food Insecurity, the national measure of economic access to food, fell from 2007 to 2011 in Newfoundland & Labrador.<sup>13</sup> Research on this data collected through the Canadian Community Health Survey sought to identify potential drivers of this unprecedented decline. The research revealed that the decrease was primarily experienced among those in receipt of income support. While Household Food Insecurity rose in the province overall in 2012, it continued to decline among households receiving income support, possibly reflecting the cumulative impact of changes introduced through the province's Poverty Reduction Strategy, which targets households receiving income support.<sup>21</sup>

## HEALTH & WELLNESS INITIATIVES

The Provincial Wellness Plan (2006-2008)<sup>22</sup> was designed to address a set of wellness priorities that contribute to improving health and wellness, including healthy eating. **Healthy Students, Healthy Schools** is the school health promotion initiative supported under the plan, which aims to create and maintain school environments that support healthy living and learning opportunities for students and foster healthy lifestyle choices. As an example, provincial school food guidelines outline recommendations for healthy food and beverages to sell and serve in school cafeterias, canteens, vending machines and at school-related events.<sup>23</sup>

**Eating Healthier in Newfoundland & Labrador**<sup>24</sup> was created in response to government and citizens indicating for the need for a provincial food and nutrition framework. Recognizing that food and nutrition is complex, an interdepartmental committee was formed to address this opportunity, with the Department of Health and Community Services serving as lead. The collaborative efforts of this committee resulted in the development of a draft food and nutrition policy document. As part of the final revision, *Eating Healthier in Newfoundland & Labrador*, was changed from a policy to a framework to better reflect its intent—working towards the goal of all residents of the province having access to adequate, nutritious and safe food and a supportive, comprehensive network of food and nutrition services.

## AGRICULTURE & AGRIFOODS INITIATIVES

The provincial agriculture industry is diverse, from small organic farms to some of the largest dairy and poultry farms in Canada, and there is great opportunity for growth in the industry, particularly in berry and vegetable production.

**Our Farms, Our Food, Our Future** is a strategy designed to shape the future of the province's agriculture and agrifoods sector. Elements of the strategy include attracting new entrants to the sector and providing the necessary support to establish new farm operations, protecting agricultural land, and supporting the production of a safe and high-quality food. The strategy aims to support a reliable food supply for people of the province, as well as support a profitable and renewable industry that employs Newfoundlanders & Labradorians into the future.<sup>25</sup>

**Growing Forward 2** is a five-year (2013-2018) policy framework for Canada's agriculture and agrifoods sector designed to help position Canada as a world leader in this sector. In Newfoundland & Labrador, Growing Forward 2 will provide \$37 million to the agriculture, agrifoods and agri-products industry to promote innovation, competitiveness, market development, and industry capacity. Funding is available to producers, processors, agricultural organizations and others that undertake eligible agricultural activities.<sup>26</sup>

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## FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE INITIATIVES

**The Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy** was developed in 2014 to address sustainability by committing to the implementation of a provincial fish health management plan, as well as encouraging improvements to existing regional management plans. The strategy has a focus on capacity building by committing to help industry players enhance communications with the public, secure and develop human resources, and pursue international market opportunities. The strategy outlines the provincial government's intent to work with industry to support projects that prevent and reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species.<sup>27</sup>

In October 2015, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture released updated regulatory amendments to the Fish Inspection Act and Food Premises Act **to permit direct sales of fish from harvesters to consumers and restaurants**. These changes are consistent with the recommendations made in the 2010 Report of the Review of the Regulations and Policy for Direct Fish Sales in Newfoundland and Labrador. This regulatory change promotes the local procurement and consumption of seafood, which enhances the local food system through improved support for and access to this healthy, local food supply.<sup>28</sup>

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# HIGHLIGHT OF CURRENT INITIATIVES

The following provides a snapshot of some of the varied programs and initiatives underway in the province to address food security. These initiatives highlight the incredible potential we have as individuals, communities, businesses, researchers, and governments to strengthen food security for today and future generations.

## ATLANTIC LOBSTER AND HALIBUT TRACEABILITY PROJECT

In response to consumer interest in a more transparency in fisheries the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union is helping consumers trace their seafood from ocean to plate. Harvesters tag their catch with a unique code that consumers can scan or enter on the website [www.thisfish.info](http://www.thisfish.info)

Over 300 small boat harvesters from the many coastal communities along Newfoundland & Labrador's shores provide traceable Atlantic Lobster and Atlantic Halibut to tables worldwide. Using the online traceability tool, consumers can learn about the harvester, the gear method used and where their catch was landed, as well as leave feedback.

## BRIDGES TO HOPE FOOD PANTRY

Bridges To Hope is committed to reducing the effects of poverty on individuals and families in the St. John's region. Their **Food Pantry** assists the community with the basic need of food by distributing food hampers that are responsive to the nutritional requirements of their patrons. The hampers include fresh baked bread, soups and stews from the community kitchen, milk, fruit, and produce. The food hampers are prepared to last four to five days, however Bridges to Hope also distributes emergency hampers that last 24 to 36 hours.

The Pantry's clients are diverse and include, individuals and families living in poverty and/or who are working but on low income, seniors, and/or those

who are homeless/at risk of homelessness. Clients access food assistance once a month at no charge. In 2014, The Pantry served over 8500 clients—over one-third were children.

Bridges to Hope also runs a community kitchen, which is organized as a learning classroom that offers individuals a cooking experience that is both instructional and empowering. The learning classroom teaches people how to cook healthy, cost effective meals, and also creates an environment that celebrates team building, communication, and socialization. Learn more at [www.bridgestohope.ca](http://www.bridgestohope.ca)

## COMMUNITY AND FARMERS' MARKETS

In recent years, there have been many new farmers' and community markets established around the province. This trend has been driven by many elements including, increased consumer interest in fresh, quality and local produce, the desire of small farmers to access better pricing through direct marketing, and municipalities recognizing the economic development opportunity.

These markets contribute to food security and strengthen the local food economy by promoting and supporting local food production, facilitating access to a greater diversity of available local food, and supporting smaller scale growers.<sup>29</sup>

In 2015, there were six farmers' and community markets in operation across the province: the St. John's Farmers' Market, the Some Good Market (multiple

locations), the Torbay Community Market, the Grand Falls-Windsor Farmers' Market, the Wonderful Find Market (Corner Brook), and the Community Outdoor Market (Happy Valley – Goose Bay).

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## **COMMUNITY FOOD HUB**

The Community Food Hub is a non-profit organization in the Upper Lake Melville region of Labrador focused on food security. Their initiatives are geared toward food access, education and engagement, and food skills. The Community Food Hub hosts community kitchen programs on a regular basis and delivers a Good Food Box program connected with local farmers to source eggs and in-season vegetables. They are also working to secure a permanent location for their Community Outdoor Market, which began in the summer of 2011.

The Community Food Hub supports the education of children through their Seedling Program with grade 4 students at a local school, and Children's Community Garden, where they transplant the seedlings in the spring and harvest the vegetables from in the fall. The vegetables are then used to prepare a large soup with the help of the students, and enjoyed together.

The Community Food Hub was born out of a Community-led Food Assessment that was hosted in 2010 in partnership with Food First NL. Learn more at [www.facebook.com/communityfoodhub/](http://www.facebook.com/communityfoodhub/)

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## **COMMUNITY FOOD SHARING ASSOCIATION**

The Community Food Sharing Association works to ensure that hungry people have access to food, and has the long term goal of ensuring that no one goes hungry. The Association acts as a collection agency and facilitates the distribution of food for food banks across the province.

It does this through organizing food drives and fundraisers, purchasing food in bulk for equitable

distribution to food banks, maintaining a warehouse of donated and purchased goods, and distributing food across the province. The Community Food Sharing Association also supports groups in the development of new food banks, upon request. For more information, visit [www.cfssa.nf.net](http://www.cfssa.nf.net)

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## **COMMUNITY GARDENS**

Community organizations, municipalities, schools, universities, and health facilities, among other agencies, have established community garden programs aimed to build gardening skills, encourage physical activity, create a social gathering place, and improve access to fresh, healthy vegetables and fruits. Across the province, community gardens of different shapes and sizes are being established in order to build on local strengths and address local needs.

The Clarenville Age-Friendly Park Community Garden is one of the community gardens in the province. Clarenville's Age-Friendly Park was formally opened in 2014. In addition to accessible walking trails, park benches, green spaces, horseshoe and fire pits, and gazebos the park has a community garden, which creates a space for networking, learning, and sharing. The garden has grown from its initial 10 raised beds to 30 in 2015. The beds are available free of charge to all Clarenville residents. Participants contribute some of their harvest to the Community Garden Committee, which hosts a celebratory dinner for all involved.

The Exploits Community Garden located at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre is another example of an innovative community garden in the province. Launched in 2011, the Exploits Community Garden is an initiative of the Botwood Boys and Girls Club, Legion Action Committee, Central Regional Wellness Coalition and Central Health. The garden brings together community members of all ages to grow their own vegetables. Residents living at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre use the garden with the support of the Therapeutic Recreation Department

staff. Vegetables are grown through the season and harvested in October, at which time a year-end harvest feast celebration is held with the Botwood Boys and Girls Club. The Exploits Community Garden promotes healthy food, exercise and wellness, as well as intergenerational relationships and learning through connecting seniors with youth.

In 2008, the Community Garden Alliance was established aimed to connect community gardens in Newfoundland & Labrador. Find a community gardens in the province at [www.communitygardensnl.ca](http://www.communitygardensnl.ca)

## RESOURCE

Food First NL has created Best Practices Toolkits to support groups in establishing and running Farmers Markets, Community Gardens, Bulk Buying Clubs, and Community Kitchens. These resources can be found online at [www.foodfirstnl.ca](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca)

## EAT GREAT AND PARTICIPATE

Eat Great and Participate aims to promote healthy eating to children and youth, and to increase access to healthy food and beverage choices in recreation, sport, and community facilities across the province.

In 2014, Eat Great and Participate piloted the Community Participation Project in 11 communities across NL. Participating communities were provided with a \$1,000 grant to purchase healthy food and beverages, small kitchen equipment and marketing/promotional materials; one piece of commercial-grade food service equipment; a whiteboard and project poster for marketing/promotion; and a resource kit that included menu planning resources.

The results of the pilot illustrated that many rural and remote communities do not have year-round access to affordable fresh vegetables and fruit. The pilot gave communities better access to fresh produce and provided suggestions for healthy alternatives including

frozen and canned vegetables and fruit that are more affordable and readily accessible in rural areas of NL. Learn more at [www.livinghealthyschools.com/eatgreat.html](http://www.livinghealthyschools.com/eatgreat.html)

## FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRES

Family Resource Centres throughout the province deliver a range of programs and activities that support and promote food security.

The Northern Peninsula Family Resource Centre has a community garden and greenhouse located on the Grenfell properties in St. Anthony. Seeds are started in the resource centres in April and by mid-May the parents and the children transfer the growing plants to the greenhouse. The community garden begins in June. Families oversee both the greenhouse and the garden and food from both are harvested in the fall. A meal is then prepared for the participating families, who also are provided any leftover produce.

The Conception Bay Family Resource Program runs Busy Bakers for children aged three to six and their parents. In this program, children build basic kitchen skills as they work together to create a weekly healthy meal. This program both enhances the children's self-confidence and helps them to develop an appreciation for trying new foods.

The Burin Peninsula Brighter Futures runs a Level Best Bulk Buying Club, in which parents and staff participate in workshops on nutrition, taste tests, label reading, pricing, and creating healthy shopping lists. Participants all contribute a small amount which is used to buy goods in bulk and then shared among the group.

## RESOURCE

To find a Family Resource Centre in your area, use the Early Learning and Child Care Directory Map offered by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: [childcare.gov.nl.ca](http://childcare.gov.nl.ca)

## FARM INNOVATIONS

Farmers across the province are implementing innovative strategies to increase production and sales, address labour market challenges, and respond to changing consumer tastes and demands. Here are two examples of on farm innovations in the province:

The new **robotic milking system** at the Pure Holsteins Farm located in Little Rapids, is the first of its kind in Newfoundland & Labrador and is being used to improve milk production. The innovative system uses two milking robots that cows visit freely throughout the day. This results in less stress on the cows and a higher milking frequency which translates into increased milk production for the farm. In addition, labour that would have been required for milking cows can now be devoted to other tasks around the farm such as herd management. This technology will help ensure that dairy farms continue to operate in this province and that the public have access to fresh local milk. This on farm innovation was supported by Growing Forward 2, which invested \$345,000 into its establishment.

A new **commercial aquaponics facility** that will support both a tilapia fish farm and greenhouse is being established at Lesters' Farm Chalet located on Pearltown Road in Mount Pearl. This closed loop system is the first of its kind in the province. The system will farm fresh-water tilapia, and the nutrient-rich water from the fish will go through an extensive filtration process and circulate through floating vegetable beds to support the growth of vegetables in an attached greenhouse. There will be six large tanks that will be equipped to produce 300lbs of tilapia per week, and it is expected to likely produce large quantities of vegetables. The system will run year round and it planned to begin production in early 2016.

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## FARM TO SCHOOL NL

There is increasing interest and action among schools in Newfoundland & Labrador to bring healthy, local

food into schools, and provide students with hands-on learning opportunities that foster food literacy and strengthen the local food system. The following highlights two new Farm to School programs in Newfoundland & Labrador.

A **Farm to School salad bar program** was launched at St. Bonaventure's College in April 2015. The program offers a self-serve, all-you-can-eat salad bar that allows students to pick from a variety of vegetables and fruits, with as much local as possible, according to season. The Farm to School salad bar was established in partnership with the school, Food First NL, Lester's Farm Market, and Chartwells Food Services.

**The Farm to School Learning Lab Series**, aimed at increasing the amount of healthy, local food in schools is being hosted by the School Lunch Association in partnership with Food First NL. Representatives from the School Lunch Association, Eastern Health, NL English School District, Service NL, FJ Wadden Inc., and others are at the table. The group is discussing how to make cafeterias better champions of healthy eating.

Both these initiatives are part of a growing network of Farm to School Programs championed nationally by Farm to Cafeteria Canada. They are part of the Nourishing School Communities project funded by the Canadian Partnership against Cancer and Health Canada. Learn more at [www.foodfirstnl.ca](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca)

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## FOOD SECURITY RESEARCH AT MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Memorial University is a key player in advancing food security in Newfoundland & Labrador, and has two new initiatives that are fulfilling this role.

**Food Advocacy Research @ Memorial (FARM)** was convened in March 2013. It began with a meeting of faculty members interested in food studies in its various dimensions who wanted to create an opportunity to meet and exchange research and teaching ideas on the various dimensions of food studies. Some of the

food-related research underway by FARM members include: research on water access and quality in southern Labrador, exploring food security and food practices among seniors and single parents in St. John's, identifying policy levers to strengthen the food system in the province, and understanding the value of fish for food security in Newfoundland & Labrador. FARM created a bibliography in the spring of 2015, and hosted a research symposium in May 2015, to understand what is already known about NL's food system and what still needs to be investigated. Next steps for FARM include looking into the feasibility of a food studies programme. Learn more at [www.mun.ca/farm](http://www.mun.ca/farm)

The **Boreal Ecosystem Research Initiative (BERI)** was officially opened in March 2014 at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University in Corner Brook. This 500 square-metre, \$8.1 million research facility includes four laboratory facilities and has a particular focus on soils, plants, air and water. It enables the university to expand academic programming and research in the areas of forestry, agriculture and environmental industries, which in turn will support and/or inform federal, provincial, university and private sector research priorities in these three sectors. BERI will spur innovation, enhance co-ordination and collaboration, and attract and train graduate students to build on that knowledge base.

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## FROM THIS ROCK

Each fall, since 2011, the **From This Rock culinary tour** sends teams of chefs across the province to offer multi-course dinners prepared with local produce, meats, and seafood. The tour builds relationships between chefs and producers, while introducing consumers to the diversity of locally available food.

This event has expanded from one dinner in 2011 to 12 in the fall of 2015, including the inaugural event to Labrador. This initiative supports collaborations between farmers and chefs and as such, supports

farmers' efforts to grow and diversify; showcases the variety of local food in our province and the many ways in which these can be used; offers menus based on fresh, local foods so consumers are inspired to buy local and be creative; and enhances business in the shoulder season for the rural restaurant industry.

From This Rock is an initiative of the Restaurant Association NL, in partnership with the Canadian Culinary Federation (CCFCC)—St. John's Branch, and is supported by the provincial Agrifoods Agency and the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Learn more at [www.facebook.com/fromthisrock](http://www.facebook.com/fromthisrock)

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## HEALTHY CORNER STORES NL

**Healthy Corner Stores NL** is a new initiative designed to make good business sense for corner stores to improve their selection of high quality, affordable food, and to help more people to access fresh produce or healthier prepared food items without having to make a trip to the nearest grocery store. The goal of the initiative is to work with small business owners to think through their business models and make changes at the store and policy level that will positively impact both the store owner and the community. This initiative is a collaboration between Food First NL, Eastern Health, and the Food Policy Lab at Memorial.

Careen's Convenience located in Branch has been identified to participate as the pilot store for this initiative. Health Canada seed funding is supporting a store makeover, including physical changes, marketing support, food and nutrition education and technical assistance. The project is providing team of leaders in the food, health, policy and community sectors to work with Careen's Convenience as the first Healthy Corner Store in NL. Learn more at [www.foodfirstnl.ca](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca)

## KIDS EAT SMART FOUNDATION NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador is a registered charity that supports the education, health, and well-being of school age children in Newfoundland and Labrador through healthy school food programs. Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador supports 244 Kids Eat Smart Clubs in schools and community centres across the province.

The clubs are run with the support of almost 6,000 volunteers, who serve over 22,000 meals every school day. Kids Eat Smart Clubs are universally run so every child is welcome and there is no cost to children or their families. Learn more about by visiting [www.kidseatsmart.ca](http://www.kidseatsmart.ca)

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## LITTLE GREEN THUMBS

Agriculture in the Classroom NL (AITCNL) connects youth with agriculture and helps them increase their awareness of where our food comes from, how it is grown and why our food system is essential in society. Little Green Thumbs is AITCNL's flagship program where K-6 classes in schools across the province are provided with all of the tools and training necessary to grow a garden inside the classroom. Students plant and maintain the gardens and ultimately share the harvested vegetables. They also document the activities and progress of their gardens in journals. The program creates a sense of ownership over the students' classroom gardens.

The garden is linked to class curricula (e.g., Math, Science and Language Arts) and complements learning concepts such as how to grow healthy plants, sustainable food systems, community interdependence and nutrition in a fun, interesting and relevant way. In 2015, the Little Green Thumbs program hosted 70 gardens across Newfoundland & Labrador. Learn more at [www.aitcnl.ca](http://www.aitcnl.ca)

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## NIKIGIJAVUT NUNATSIYAVUTINNI: OUR FOOD IN NUNATSIYAVUT

The communities of Nunatsiavut face unique food security challenges, including social, environmental, and economic factors impacting access to traditional, wild foods, as well as high cost, limited availability, and poor quality of store bought food. The **NiKigijavut Nunatsiavutinni (Our Food in Nunatsiavut)** project focuses on overcoming these challenges to ensure Nunatsiavut residents have access to food that is both culturally appropriate and healthy.

The project works to achieve this goal in several ways. The Project's Community-led Food Assessment (CLFA) model for remote, northern communities is used to engage local residents in Nain, Hopedale, and Rigolet, Nunatsiavut in a process of identifying local food challenges and opportunities in their communities.

The participating communities are now running innovative, community-driven programs to address the challenges and opportunities identified through the CLFA. Notably, Gardening Programs in Hopedale and Rigolet, Traditional and Contemporary Cooking Programs in Nain and Hopedale, a Good Food Box Program in Rigolet, and a Community Freezer Expansion Program in Hopedale have all been established.

The project is led by Food First NL in partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government, the Inuit Community Governments of Nain, Hopedale, and Rigolet, and Trent University, with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada. Learn more at [www.foodfirstnl.ca](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca)

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## ORGANIC MUSSEL PRODUCTION

In the global seafood marketplace, sustainability is important to buyers and consumers. A growing number of retail and food service operators in Newfoundland & Labrador are adopting procurement policies to ensure the seafood products they purchase are grown, harvested, and processed in a manner that is sustainable and environmentally responsible.

Blue mussels are a type of shellfish that grow quickly in the province. Newfoundland blue mussels are high in protein, low in fat, and a source of heart-healthy Omega-3 fatty acids. Blue mussels are grown by independent, environmentally conscious farmers who produce only 100 per cent natural mussels, minimizing environmental impact and maximizing sustainability. NL blue mussels are the first to be certified organic in North America.

As of 2014, eight mussel producers and four processors have met the Canadian Organic Aquaculture Standard as well as the international Best Aquaculture Practices certification standards. These producers represent about 90 per cent of the province's mussel production. The organic aquaculture standards prohibit the use of antibiotics, herbicides and genetically modified organisms and set measurable requirements for practices that minimize the impact of waste.

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## REGIONAL WELLNESS COALITIONS

Regional Wellness Coalitions across the island undertake and encourage food security-related initiatives including, community gardens, community kitchens, and workshops.

As an example, with support from Central Health, the Central Regional Wellness Coalition and other partners, the summer Food and Fun Camp Program is working to help reduce barriers to healthier living for children aged 8 to 10 and their families. The program includes activities that develop basic skills for preparing nutritious food, as well as try new healthy recipes and sharing the healthy meals they prepare with their camp leaders. The program also involves fun physical activity that teaches the children how to live an active, smoke-free life. Included in the week's activities are demonstrations, activities and games, grocery store tours and outdoor hikes. The summer camp runs for five to six hours a day for five days, often repeated with new participants several weeks in a row.

There are six Regional Wellness Coalitions across the province, located in: Avalon-East, Eastern, Central, Western, Northern, and Labrador regions.

## RESOURCE

All the Coalitions offer resources and community grants that can support food security initiatives. Learn more about by visiting their websites at:

[labradorregionalwellnesscoalition.ca](http://labradorregionalwellnesscoalition.ca)  
[northernwellnesscoalition.com](http://northernwellnesscoalition.com)  
[westernwellnesscoalition.com](http://westernwellnesscoalition.com)  
[centralwellnesscoalition.com](http://centralwellnesscoalition.com)  
[easternwellnesscoalition.com](http://easternwellnesscoalition.com)  
[wellnesscoalition-avaloneast.ca](http://wellnesscoalition-avaloneast.ca)

## ST. JOHN'S FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

The St. John's Food Policy Council is taking a systems approach to policy and planning—bringing together all parts and players of the food system. In December 2013, the City of St. John's supported a recommendation that Food First NL establish a **St. John's Food Policy Council** (SJFPC) to bring together citizens, community organizations, industry and government to discuss issues of local relevance, and provide ideas and recommendations for new and improved policies and programs to enhance the regional food system.

At an assembly in June 2014, 29 people representing food system stakeholders gathered to discuss the Council's purpose, priorities and membership. In June 2015, the SJFPC's founding membership came together for its inaugural meeting, identifying transportation and distribution of food as the top priority issue. Learn more at [www.sjfpc.ca](http://www.sjfpc.ca)

# NOTES

# END NOTES

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[Count2015\\_singles.pdf.aspx](https://www.foodbankscanada.ca/getmedia/01e662ba-f1d7-419d-b40c-bcc71a9f943c/Hunger-Count2015_singles.pdf.aspx)

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Everybody Eats has been developed by Food First NL and the NL Public Health Association. It is intended to spark a provincial discussion on food security in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Be a part of the conversation by attending a regional forum, or by hosting a discussion with your family, friends, or coworkers using the accompanying discussion guide.

To access the discussion guide, visit [foodfirstnl.ca](http://foodfirstnl.ca)

**For more information contact Food First NL at:**

[info@foodfirstnl.ca](mailto:info@foodfirstnl.ca)  
tel: (709) 237-4026  
fax: (709) 237-4231  
44 Torbay Rd., Suite 110  
St. John's, NL  
A1A 2G4  
[www.foodfirstnl.ca](http://www.foodfirstnl.ca)