

Strengthening Yukon Local Food

A Research Report

October 2010



This report has been prepared by Melisa Zapisocky with Mike Lewis, Director of the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal. Funding for this project has been made available through the Community Development Fund and supported by the Fireweed Community Market Society.

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The Canadian Centre for Community Renewal

The Canadian Centre for Community Renewal [CCCR] has a significant history in the Yukon. Under the name of Westcoast Development Group, from the mid-80's to mid-90s we worked in every community in the Yukon and collaborated with many territory wide organizations.

CCCR is once again engaging in the Yukon. The Teslin Tlingit Council (TTC) invited us back in 2007 and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in recruited us to develop an Aboriginal Mining Guide in 2008 (see www.miningguide.ca) We continue to work with TTC and Tr'ondëk and are selectively accepting other work that aligns with our priorities.

One area of interest for us in the Yukon is strengthening food system resilience. Our interest in transforming local and regional food systems is derived from our mission statement as follows:

The Canadian Centre for Community Renewal is committed to crafting solutions and adaptations to the critical challenges stemming from climate change and peak oil. Our priority is working with communities to increase their resilience, especially their capacity to equitably meet their needs for food, energy, finance, shelter, and sustainable livelihoods. Employing a wide range of organizing, planning and enterprise ownership formats, CCCR emphasizes strengthening the self-reliance of local and regional economies as a key task of transition.

Fireweed Community Market Society

The Fireweed Community Market Society officially formed in 2005 after the successful operation (5 seasons) of the 'Yukon Made



Market' on the Hot Springs Road. As well as a vibrant outdoor seasonal market, the society operates a year-round store, office, and community kitchen as well as a popular 12 Days of Christmas market.

The society has successfully completed a number of additional projects funded through the Agricultural Policy Framework, Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food, Growing Forward, Community Development Fund, and Canadian Agriculture Adaptation Program including the creation of the Celebrate Yukon Food cookbook, the 2008 Farm Products guide, support for attendance at food conferences and events, a survey to gauge needs of Yukon producers in terms of a permanent market space and a study exploring possible scenarios.

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Along with Stephane Aucoin of the Fireweed Community Market Society and Christine Spinder (Project Coordinator), the Project Advisory Committee or PAC consist of the following organization/individuals:

- Dawson Region Farmers – John and Sarah Lenart
- Agrologist, Yukon Agriculture Branch – Matt Ball
- Dawson Community Greenhouses and Community Gardens – Chris Clarke
- Community Project Adaptations Manager, Northern Climate Exchange – Ryan Hennessy
- Lands & Resource Officer, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation – Bill Kendrick
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- Potluck Co-op
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Melisa Zapisocky

INTRODUCTION

FOOD & SECURITY: A SILENT BUT LOOMING CHALLENGE

by Mike Lewis; Director, Canadian Centre for Community Renewal

Somebody told me there is three days food on the shelf to feed Yukoners. Whether this is completely accurate, or not, the thrust of the point is clear. The Yukon is near the north end of a continental supply chain that is linked to a complex planetary web that miraculously delivers a multitude of *cheap* food right to Whitehorse. Consumers here can go to a big box store and buy food at prices competitive with Calgary.

But does dependency on a global supply chain delivering cheap food mean a secure food future? Not likely! “The end of the 3000 mile Caesar salad is over” is the humorous but macabre depiction John Kuntsler coined to illustrate the predicament of communities and regions that stretch far beyond the Yukon.¹

We Eat Oil

Wondrous in its flexibility and possessing uniquely high energy values, cheap oil has replaced human labor, fueled the so called “green revolution” and greased global supply chains to deliver food that costs Canadians 50% less of their disposable than 50 years ago.²

Every part of the food system is soaked in oil.³ From the plowing of the fields to the weekly big box grocery run, food travels along a global supply chain soaked in fossil fuels. Fertilizers, pesticides, manufacturing and the use of machinery of all kinds— pumps for water hungry irrigation schemes, processing equipment, plastic packaging and right through to the energy sucking open freezers of big box supermarkets— all are links in a chain feeding the global cafeteria.

The Hollowing out of Local Food Systems

The change cheap oil has wrought is staggering. If one climbed to the bell tower of most European village churches in 1789, one could approximate a bird’s eye view of a local landscape which produced 95% of the food necessary to sustain local villagers. Even 150 years later as the Second World War was breaking out most food consumed was produced locally or regionally.⁴ So where are we now only 70 years later?

¹ Kunstler, James H. 2005. *The Long Emergency*.

² In 1961, the average Canadian spent 19.1% of their living expenses on food; in 2005 this number bottomed out at 9.3%. *Food and Agriculture Organization*, 2006
<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000448/index.html>.

³ Tudge, C. 2007. *Feeding People is Easy*, Pari Publishing.

⁴ Illich, I. 1978. *The Right to Useful Unemployment*, Marion Boyars.

On Vancouver Island only 5% of the food consumed by the 750,000 inhabitants is now produced there.⁵ As in most parts of the globe, cheap food from oil fed commodity agriculture has hollowed out local and regional food production. The infrastructure critical to functioning local and regional markets has largely disappeared

The Yukon with a population of 35,000 people is even more vulnerable. Of the \$110 million spent annually on food in 2006, only \$1.7 million is produced in the Yukon, less than 2% of market expenditure, and this figure includes bedding plants and hay.⁶ A much larger percentage of the food needed to feed the 30,000 people during the gold rush era was produced in Dawson long before oil existed in the territory.

**Why Worry? Look around.
The world is changing – Fast!**

One might argue that why worry, the system is working so why fix what is not broken? The answers are simple at the core, yet how to address them is complex in the extreme.

First, demand for oil is exploding in China and India and supply is increasingly flat. Production from the

world's mature oil fields is declining 6.7% each year.⁷ More and more wells must be drilled every year yielding smaller and smaller volumes. Add contrary geo-political factors that constrain production (i.e. Iran, Iraq, Nigeria) and the 2008 price spike at \$147 per barrel is not at all surprising. Jeff Rubin, former Chief economic for CIBC World Markets predicts \$225 per barrel as being entirely probable, punctuated with falls in price due to the recessions when prices will fall.⁸

Second, about 10 to 15 calories of fossil fuel energy are used to create 1 calorie of food in the US. This means that it requires about 1,500 litres of oil equivalents (20.3 barrels of oil) to feed each American per year.⁹



Figure 1 Greenhouse and Produce c.1915 Dawson City Museum

⁵ Taken from Vancouver Island Heritage Food Coop Based Analysis of Statistics Canada data.

www.heritagefoodservice.coop/aboutislandsgoodfoodinitiative.htm.

⁶ "Multi-Year Development for Yukon Agriculture and Agri-Food: 2009-2012"

⁷ International Energy Agency 2008 annual report

⁸ Rubin, Jeff. 2009. "Why your World is about to Get a Whole Lot Smaller." Rubin charts very convincingly that 5 of the last 6 recessions have corresponded with a spike in the price of oil, including the 2008 financial melt down exacerbated by the sub-prime mortgage debacle.

⁹ Hendrickson, J. 1996. Energy use in the U.S. food system: a summary of existing research and analysis. Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison. 'Implications of Fossil Fuel Dependence for the Food System' by Jay Tomczak <http://www.energybulletin.net/node/17036>

Third, fertile land is drying up. Countries that make up **two thirds** of global production (China, Australia, South America, United States) are experiencing unprecedented drought conditions.¹⁰ This year (2010) the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization predicts that exports from drought stricken wheat producers who make up 30 percent of world wheat production will be cut to ensure domestic food security.¹¹

Fourth, water shortages are decreasing yields. California, part of the Yukon vegetable supply, has thousands of acres of row crops fallowed with more expected. Seventy percent of all freshwater goes to irrigated agriculture, which, on 20% of cultivated land accounts for 40% of global food production.¹²

Fifth, energy intensive commodity based agriculture is estimated to make up 18% of total greenhouse gas emissions; 9% of global carbon dioxide emissions, 37% of global methane emissions and an astounding 64% of nitrous oxide emissions due to fertilizer use.¹³ The emissions of these latter two greenhouse gases are particularly disturbing. Nitrous oxide has 296 times the Global Warming Potential of CO₂, mainly from manure. Methane is 23 times more potent.

These converging trends are not going away any time soon. What is obviously a growing global problem cannot be addressed for any community or region without strategic, focused, long term, co-operative action.

Thus the need to focus on strengthening local food systems. Before proceeding into the body of the report it is important to describe very simply what we mean by a local-regional food system.

What is a Value Chain and the Components that make up a Food System?

CCCR utilizes the **analytical tool** of a value chain in its food system work. A value chain is defined as *a mechanism that coordinates operations to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in relation to an identified market opportunity, identifies and removes bottlenecks, and drives out unnecessary cost.*¹⁴

¹⁰ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=12252>. This site provides a map and an annotated listing of all the food production impacts in countries where drought is a serious problem

¹¹ "Grain shortage drives up price of bread," <http://www.rnw.nl/english/article/grain-shortage-drives-price-bread>, 2010.

¹² UNESCO (2009) – World Water Assessment Programme
3rd UN World Water Development Report: Water in a Changing World
Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr/wwdr3/> and
Stockholm International Water Institute (2009)

Available at: <http://www.siwi.org/sa/node.asp?node=159>

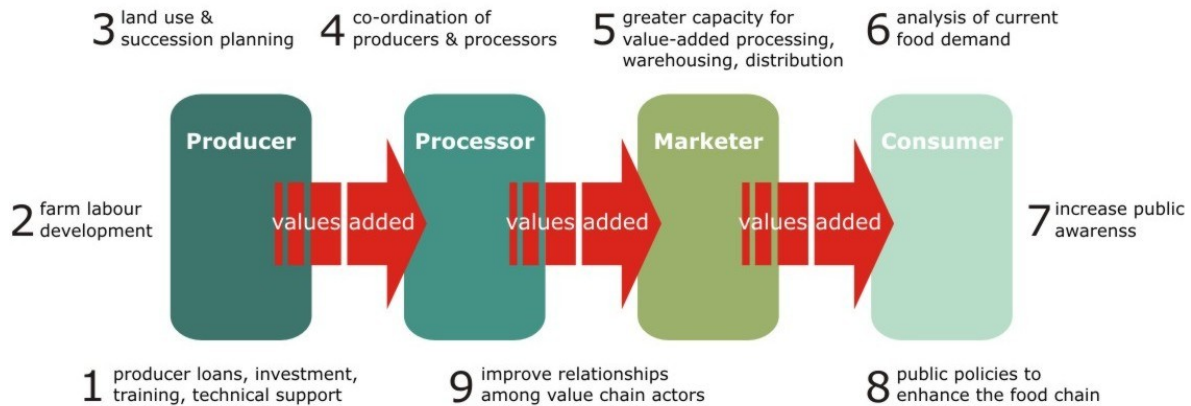
¹³ FAO, 2006, <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000448/index.html>

¹⁴ Gooch, Martin. 2006 "Value Chain Drivers". George Morris Centre.

Ensuring all of the components of the chain are effective and efficient remains a core focus. By strengthening individual components, resilience of the overall local food system is enhanced and local and regional self-reliance in food is elevated.

Below is a schematic showing a value chain for the food sector. A brief description of each is found in Table 1 (p. 5).

Figure 2: Food Sector Value Chain



Preliminary Findings About the Yukon System before We Started this Research

Before CCCR initiated the research project that led to this report, we did some homework to try and learn from the various studies and plans that have been done. We used this graphic as a way of organizing the information and our very preliminary analysis. We present it here as a way of orienting the reader to the findings we report later in the report and some of our recommendations that concretely might move things onto a more strategic and generative path. (See Table 1 on pages following.)

Table 1: Yukon Food System Value Chain Observations

Food Chain Elements	Preliminary Findings/Issues
<p>Make loans and investment, as well as training and technical support more readily available to farmers and value-added producers.</p>	<p>There appears to be a wide array of programming supports but limited capacity to deliver technical assistance, best practice models and extension services aimed at producers and processors</p>
<p>Increase the supply of farm labor, as well as the working conditions and terms of employment.</p>	<p>Labor is a difficult problem for even moderately sized producers. Given the geography and demographics of the Yukon and the limited agricultural experience in the labour market, this is a strategic constraint.</p>
<p>Preserve and increase the supply of prime farmland while reducing the impact of its high cost on production and succession.</p>	<p>Several producers (no one knows how many) are approaching retirement age in the next decade with no plans for succession.</p>
<p>Co-ordinate farm production and value-added processing so they can satisfy higher demand.</p>	<p>To grow markets and production, and to fill gaps and strengthen other components of the value chain to favor a resilient local food system requires persistent, consistent, entrepreneurial capacity focused on linking and coordinating elements. This function has not been discerned to this point in our review, though there are groups oriented to move in this direction. It is also apparent that there is some resistance among some producers to any approach they perceive would compromise their independence.</p>
<p>Increase the capacity for value-added processing and for warehousing and distribution, and make more effective use of current capacity.</p>	<p>Infrastructure related to efficient small scale food processing, cold storage and warehousing is weak to non-existent. For producers this creates a bottleneck that combines a short, intense growing season with markets that are sometimes unable to absorb high volumes of product at the time it is available. For example, though farmer markets are growing, we have heard from some producers that they take home produce, for example on bad weather market days, and that much produce remains unharvested because of lack of labour. It is also clear that methods for</p>

	<p>extending the growing season (greenhouse production) and expanding food preservation and cold storage are very important.</p>
<p>Analyze and quantify the current demand for local food and the food imports for which there is a viable local substitute.</p>	<p>The Yukon imports almost all of its food from the south and distributes it through large out-of- territory owned markets. Only about 2% of the Yukon’s food is homegrown i.e.\$2m out of \$110m. The number of registered/reporting farms [currently 170] is in slow decline. Analysis of product specific demand is very limited. Expenses are slightly more than revenues meaning producers are subsidizing consumers at this time.</p> <p>Outlets for local produce are limited.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supply for large sellers are dominated by, and rely on, out of territory suppliers. 2. Where local retailers, such as exist in Dawson, are approached by local producers, they will not pay more than their landed costs from Whitehorse wholesalers. 3. There appears to be no systematic assessment of how the MUSH sector (municipalities, universities and colleges, schools and hospitals) could play in expanding capacity of local food production 4. Farmer markets have been expanding in Dawson and Whitehorse. However, they are labor and time intensive to the producers. <p>While statistics suggest a market size of \$110 million for food in the Yukon, the analysis is unclear as to the market size and characteristics that could drive import substitution aimed at reducing vulnerability and increasing food security.</p>
<p>Increase public awareness of the importance and availability of local food</p>	<p>Demand for local food is growing, demand outstrips supply, distribution channels are seasonal and, for producers, labour intensive. Greenhouse produce is in high demand. However there are few producers that extend their season by taking advantage of cutting edge technology. Power for heat and light is a key constraint</p>
<p>Design and advocate public policies that enhance one or more components of the local food value chain</p>	<p>There appears to be a number of policies that recognize there are gaps and provide supports but capacity to strategically strengthen the value chain is limited in the industry and government.</p>

<p>Identify and improve relationships amongst the various actors in the local food value chain.</p>	<p>Strategies which are proving to be successful in expanding food production for local and regional food markets elsewhere are underdeveloped or non-existent in the Yukon - community supported agriculture, MUSH sector procurement (municipal, university, schools and hospitals), local household distribution systems, etc. However, it is also very apparent that there are a range of groups working on issues and through networks that are relevant to increasing local food system resilience.</p>
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Building a Yukon Food System?

Whereas many local and regional food systems have been hollowed out by globalization, in the Yukon, as revealed by the table, many of the requisite components are barely visible.

Our subsequent research and this report is not a comprehensive guide to building such a system. However, we believe that the recommended strategies could realistically test whether there is the mettle and capacity among Yukon people to get better organized to take a strategic step forward.

In the Yukon, confronting the problems of an oil addicted food supply requires building the connective tissue close to home through what we call a values added strategy that links fair price, ecological sustainability, radical reduction in fossil fuel dependence, restructuring of distribution systems and collaborative, multi-stakeholder approaches to investment and market development. A long-term strategic vision that will strengthen the linkages between the multiple food system ‘pieces’ with firm and aggressive steps towards immediate and focused action are needed. Already, proactive consumers—the so called engaged eaters are finding meaningful and intentional ways to access local, regional and organic food. Many are working to build new options and partnerships from the grassroots up including farmers markets, buying clubs, a food co-op and community gardens/greenhouses. We hope this research and the models it offers will benefit those on the ground who already are in the thick of it and will help further build momentum around building a sustainable, Yukon food system.

This report is both ‘stand alone’ and as a step evolving a broader strategy to strengthen the resilience of the Yukon local food system and the food security of Yukoners. Numerous pieces, players and values exist and each actor will draw on a different piece of the picture. We do not address every piece of the Yukon food puzzle nor provide ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions. Rather, we hope the report contributes to understanding the current situation and provide some models and ideas of a way forward that will be strategically useful.

1.0 BOTTLENECKS & OPPORTUNITY: THE PRESENT CONTEXT

As an outsider studying Yukon food and agriculture one learns quickly that this far North Western part of Canada presents a unique challenges. Strengthening the resilience of the food system is possible but there is nothing simple about it given the particular features that make up the Yukon foodscape, the dominant one being a small remote population hooked on a food chain extending thousands of miles away and where local food production remains small and marginal.

Growing in the Yukon environment is not for the faint. Yet, many stick with it and love what they do. In addition to Yukon's short growing season, political, cultural and environmental factors variously influence (or could influence) production. In this section we elevate key aspects of the current context that help us understand where Yukoners are starting from.

Distribution of Farms and Sales ¹⁵

2% of the land in the Yukon is deemed to have agricultural potential and is located generally along major river valleys in the south and central regions of the territory. Yet, because of the need for water and adverse local climate conditions, land suitable for farming is much less. In total there are approximately 25,000 acres in agricultural production of which 16,000 is natural land used for pasture, woodland or wetlands.

The majority of farms are concentrated around Whitehorse, yet the most productive regions surround Dawson, Pelly-Mayo region and Watson Lake. Being close to market and the dependence of many small farmers on off-farm income (more available near Whitehorse) are two key reasons.

In 2006, 148 farms operated in southern and central Yukon – the majority are mixed, with multiple farming activities¹⁶. The average size farm is 60 acre and vegetable.

According to the Multi-Year Development Plan (MYDP), “the industry largely serves the local territorial markets for food and feed and is led by hay and forage producers,

Vegetable Production

In 2006, over 30 different vegetable producers in the Yukon were reported to produce 20+ types of vegetables:

- 37 acres in vegetable production;
- 59 acres in potatoes;
- 2,122 square meters greenhouse production

According to the MYDP, these figures may overestimate production area as many producers have less than one acre in production. The actual field acres may be closer to 20 – 25 acres in vegetables and 45-50 acres in potatoes.*

*MYDP p. A21

¹⁵ The following is a brief representation of Yukon agriculture and food systems derived from the “Multi-Year Development Plan for Yukon Agriculture and Agri-Food: 2008-2010” or MYDP.

¹⁶ MYDP p. A9-1 & State of the Industry 2005 – 2007:15.

animal production and vegetable farming.” Most local produce is sold at the farm gate or at farmers markets. Marginal amounts are available through some local food retailers including grocery stores and restaurants.

While total sales of all Yukon products in 2006 were \$4.19 million, the cost of production was \$4.75 million. In short, producers are subsidizing consumers, a burden that needs to be equitably held by the market. Of the current 148 farms, only 9 reported sales of more than \$100,000.

Figure 3 Yukon Vegetables



According to Yukon agricultural Branch website:

The Yukon is one of the few places in Canada where Crown land can be obtained for agricultural purposes. To qualify for Crown land, an applicant must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada, must be at least 19 years of age, and must have lived in the Yukon for at least one year.¹⁷

To acquire Crown land for agricultural purposes is a significant achievement. For example in 2005, 10 agreements for sale were issued from 38 agricultural land applications and in 2006; the branch issued another 10 agreements for sale, from a total of 25¹⁸. For those who are successful, the process to apply for land can take upwards of eight years. Other applicants have walked away frustrated by the YESAB review process (Yukon Environments and Socio-economic Assessment Board).

¹⁷ http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture/agriculture_land.html

¹⁸ State of the Industry 2005 – 2007: 7

Ironically, significant land that has been granted is not being used to grow human food; much arable land is undeveloped, underdeveloped, unavailable and/or underutilized. For example during interviews, participants pointed to the high portion of acreage devoted to growing hay for horses and the fact that historically agricultural lands were given away to applicants who subsequently did little or no farming. Ironically, there are also complaints about land being used for the Takhini Elk herd; some argue it be used for agriculture rather than a feeding ground for these non-native species.

Meanwhile, the high cost of private land is prohibitive to most new entrants and the application process leaves many participants empty handed. And yet there are still people who want to farm.

Over the years, the agricultural review process has been tightened up. Those who want to farm require a realistic business plan and up front capital to carry the business through the initial years when production is low and input costs are high. Developing a property for agriculture has high costs – it might take 3 years before any on-farm income is generated.

Applicants are encouraged to look towards Haines Junction, Stewart and Mayo for land. Trends show fewer and fewer people want to live and farm in remote places. The farmer's income and amenity needs keep many close Whitehorse, even though the land is less productive.

A tangled situation emerges. New people express interest in farming but land prices are discouragingly high. Land that is available is remote and undeveloped. The new entrant must amass a high debt load during the first few years with little on-farm earnings in sight – they clear land, build roads, enrich soil, put in irrigation and build a house. To keep from sinking, they keep their day jobs and become 'part-time' farmers. Without deep pockets, few are able to find ways to quit their day job and become fulltime growers.

Carrying the debt load – farming's inconvenient reality

According to Canada's National Farm Union, the family farm is under serious threat of extinction. Canadian farm debt is massive and rising. For each net income dollar farmers earn, they must shoulder an average 23 dollars in debt.*

* MYDP, p. A13

Wild Blue Yonder and Great Green Growers Co-operative: High Costs and High Debt

Perhaps an idea before it's time, the Community Supported Farm described below, rallied tremendous interest and support. People came together to create an alternative model for sustainably grown, local food.

In 2002, at Crag Lake, near Carcross, Yukon, Heidi Marion and Garret Gillespie established **Wild Blue Yonder** (WBY) to grow field vegetables. Soon, they added a 100-member Community Supported Farm (CSF) program to existing retail, restaurant and hotel customers.

In 2005, the pair relocated near Tagish and expanded their vegetable operation, adding a greenhouse, a herd of 30 beef cattle, and a herd of goats. High land costs and competition from subsidized US food made servicing their farm debt difficult. WBY customers rallied, forming the **Great Green Growers Co-operative** (GGG Co-op). The Co-op's goal was buying agricultural land and equipment to alleviate that cost from their farmers.

Heidi and Garret and their two children left farming in 2007, but not before bringing over a half a million pounds of food to market, training dozens of farm volunteers, employing farm hands and a manager, and hosting many community food education events at their farms.*

*Email correspondence with Marion, H. September 2010.

Soil Quality

Yukon soils are deficient in nutrients, which need to be built intentionally over time. Horse manure, cover crops, experimenting with bio-char and making compost teas are a few ways growers increase soil fertility without costly inputs, like chemical fertilizers. Given it takes years to build soil and maintain its capacity – growing food requires a long term perspective and an outlook that includes economic, environmental and social components of wellbeing.

Water: A Challenge that is not Going Away

The Yukon is a semi-arid climate, with certain regions prone to drought. Water is a top of mind issue for vegetable growers. Only farms with consistent and ready access to water (i.e. irrigation) are able to increase vegetable



Figure 4 Preparing soil for planting

production over time. In some instances farmers have to truck water supply to their gardens and are severely limited by how much they can water. An irrigation system has high costs, at \$60,000 plus, it's an expense that must be justified by the production capacity of the farm.

Technology, Labor and Scale

More than half of Yukon Farmers rely on off-farm income. Meanwhile, Yukon farms are highly labour intensive. Seldom can qualified staff be found, that is if it can be afforded. WOOFERs (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) are a well-used network of volunteer travelers that many farms tap into. In exchange for labour, farmers provide room and board. Volunteers are not always ideal, but many farms could not operate without their help.

Small scale producers are competing against scales of economies that cannot be reproduced easily in the Yukon. While mechanization and specialization improves efficiencies – large fields can be seeded and harvested by one person operating specific equipment – the capital requirements can be significant. To date, only hay farmers and one vegetable producer have invested in mechanized equipment. One way to justify specialized equipment is to concentrate on one or two crops as the main income generators.

Lifestyle Farming: A Contribution but not a Solution

According to the MYDP, “the statistics indicate that farming in the Yukon continues to be a hobby or lifestyle choice for many producers.” The ‘lifestyle’ farmer provides a noticeable (although minimal) portion of Yukon food. These people sell at farmers markets, are politically active and in Whitehorse, are recognized members steering local and ethical food initiatives. As educators and ‘movers and shakers,’ these people play an important role in ‘getting the word out’ about issues surrounding food consumption and production. However, their capacity or interest to increase production is minimal. Essentially, this type of grower can maneuver in or out of

Impact of Climate Change on the Growth of Yukon's Agricultural Industry*

In the Yukon climate change is expected to cause temperature and precipitation changes. The mean annual temperature is expected to rise approximately 4 degrees in the southern areas of the Yukon, 5 degrees in the central areas and approximately 6 degrees in the northern areas. Annual precipitation increase is expected to be 20 - 30 %. Yet, because Yukon is a semi-arid climate, increases in precipitation will be offset by greater increases in potential evapo-transpiration such that crops will need additions of water through the growing season. Although Yukon's warming climate will present conditions that may expand current food production, water management and allocation will be extremely important.

* Tarnocai C., Smith C.A.S & Beckman, D. *Agricultural Potential and Climate Change in the Yukon*. p.182.

farming fairly smoothly; their investment in overhead costs are relatively low because their core business is not farming.

Larry Lundquist, a visiting farm-business analyst¹⁹ (who met with a handful of Yukon producers to review their farm business plans) sees tremendous potential for producers to be competitive in the Yukon market. He says there are opportunities here that do not exist in other parts of Canada. The biggest challenge he sees in the Yukon “is the market issue; there is a disconnect between production and sales”. His recommendation to producers who want to expand their sales is to “grow the right thing and find your market” which isn’t established.

Community Food Projects

Interestingly, given the challenges of existing farmers to expand production, increasing interest in local food is leading to an explosion of backyard gardening, community food projects and interest in Master Gardener workshops. People are finding creative ways to bring more control to their food supply. The following are a few examples:

- Dawson Community Garden and Greenhouse
- Haines Junction Greenhouse Program and Job Training
- Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Greenhouse and Community Garden
- White River Cold Storage
- Northern Backyard Garden Series – Lorne Mountain Community Association

A profile of several community food projects is found in Appendix 1.

Cold storage and Processing

Certain crops do especially well in the Yukon, for example root crops and crucifers (including kale, broccoli and cauliflower). The majority of these crops come full on at



Figure 5 Lorne Mountain Farm Tour participants learn about northern gardening from Sheila Alexandrovich of Wheaton River Gardens

¹⁹ Mr. Lundquist will present on “Why do a Farm Business Assessment” at the North of 60 Agriculture Conference this winter. According to the Agriculture Branch, in the presentation “he will be using a Yukon specific scenario of a newer farm family looking to expand their small poultry operation to an operation that is slaughtering 2000 birds every two months to be frozen and sold to the retail and institute market. This scenario is used to tell the story of why do a Farm Business Assessment Plan and how it works.”

much the same time. Yukon's growing season is intense and concentrated – farmers do not have the luxury of a lengthy growing season. Some of these crops store especially well, like cabbage, carrots and potatoes. However very few farmers have on farm storage capacity and there is no collective storage facility to extend the season.

For some, farmers markets end a few weeks too soon: goat cheese and root crops are available throughout the fall and into winter. With few venues to sell after the farmers markets close, vendors plan ahead and simply scale down their operation to what they are able to sell fresh.

As food moves along the value chain from raw goods through processing, packaging and marketing, the dollar value on the item increases. Potato chips, goat cheese, marinated, skinless chicken breasts or pre-packaged snack size carrot sticks build a higher price into the basic product. These added steps also require time, energy and equipment. Without appropriately scaled processing in place extending beyond seasonal field-to-market sales is not possible.

The difference can be significant. For example, consider Sunworks Farm, based near Edmonton Alberta. Online sales of their boneless, skinless organic, chicken breast sell for \$8.75 per half pound (www.eatlocalfirst.com). In the Yukon, organic chicken is sold whole, from the farm gate for \$5 - \$5.50 a pound. When asked why producers did not coordinate farm gate sales with a butcher, most said they didn't have the time to invest in this extra step or it was too complicated.

Serving mining companies, another market that has expressed a willingness to contract with local producers may be even more complicated, even though it appears to have very real potential. However they require a pre-washed and pre-packed product. It appears that the absence of capacity in this part of the food system leaves Yukon production expansion with the proverbial questions of what comes first – the chicken or the egg.

Commercial Growers Cooperative and Cold Storage Studies

In the late 1980s, the now defunct Commercial Growers Cooperative commissioned a feasibility study aimed at:*

- Production development
- Product storage design
- Grower extension
- Strategy for marketing and development.

The key message from a second report commissioned to “Establish the Feasibility of a Vegetable Storage Warehouse” in 1988 commented that to be successful, the cooperative “must establish a viable industry in the Yukon, not just set up a storage facility.”

In 2004, the need for Cold Storage was again revisited. The report concluded, that cold storage infrastructure would not increase production, farmers need an “equitable marketing system that can ensure fair return for farmers”. Rather than invest in production, farmers were described as scaling back their operation to be compatible with a sure thing – a day job.

*Deloitte Haskins & Sells, 1987. *The Feasibility of Fruit and Vegetable Production and Storage in the Yukon*. p.2.

Inspected Meat Processing: More than a Decade of Trial and Error

The MYDP identifies red and white meat production as an area for industry growth. The report indicates the meat market could increase by 200 head of cattle (as well as over 10,000 chickens and turkeys on an annual basis). In reality, these numbers and the supporting infrastructure appear to be something different.

If meat is to be available for retail sale, it must be processed in a Territory inspected facility. In 1998, Yukon's first abattoir (no longer in operation) was built at Partridge Creek Farm, near Stewart Crossing in central Yukon. This infrastructure would allow producers to enter retail meat sales if they chose to do so. This facility is currently not in operation.

From 2005 to 2006 approximately 20 cattle and 1000 birds were slaughtered. The Partridge Creek abattoir was too far from the majority of farmers and the Whitehorse market. The limited scale of individual production did not justify the cost of processing and farmers abandoned it.

A few years later, a mobile abattoir facility was built to provide inspected slaughtered services to southern Yukon. Again scale, high costs and time involved in coordinating production became issues that limited use.

Although some have demonstrated that processing red meat and selling value-added product such as bison smokies and hamburger is profitable, other say they lose money in the process.

“Although useful” concluded the report, the mobile abattoir “ did not appear to be the breakthrough piece of infrastructure required for growth of the sector²⁰”

What comes next is an evaluation by the Agriculture Branch on this current infrastructure²¹. This summer, the Agriculture Branch hosted 2 pilot days to test the effectiveness of the mobile abattoir, which is currently underutilized, even though producers indicate a need for off-farm processing. Questions put forward by the Agricultural Director is can or does this equipment meet short term needs and if not, what measures need to be taken to meet producers needs if they gear up production.

²⁰ 2009. *Discussion Paper: Meat Processing Infrastructure in Yukon.*

²¹ Kevin Bowers (Agriculture Development Officer and Supervisor) will generate a report on the pilot days and present his findings at the North of 60° agriculture conference this winter.



Figure 6 Chicken processing pilot with mobile abattoir at M'Clintock Valley Farm
(Photo courtesy of Joanne Jackson Johnson)

Multi-Use Facility Solution; An Unlikely Solution at this Stage

The Multi-Use facility is another project designed to increase local production, primarily of red and white meat as well as extend the season through cold storage. The process has included a three-phase feasibility study commissioned by the Yukon Agricultural Association followed by a separate Discussion Paper titled "Meat Processing Infrastructure in Yukon (2009)".

The facility would require significant financial contribution and land from the Yukon and or Federal Government. The idea of a Multi-Use facility has not moved forward. Some feel this has been a lost opportunity to develop the industry and others are not convinced this model would increase production, as the scale it proposes to operate on is larger than Yukon's production capacity.

A complex situation emerges. Many producers say they want a place to deliver birds to for processing that would free them up from having to process themselves. With the right infrastructure, it would be easy for many to increase current capacity from 100 or 200 birds to 400. As one farmer near Whitehorse said in an email:

Right now I have the potential capacity, with a bit of added infrastructure, to produce a lot more chickens, if we had larger abattoir capacity. I have plenty of field space, could build additional brooders and mobile pens for relatively little cost. But I can't process all those chickens by myself or with volunteer labour.

Meanwhile, if the infrastructure is not responsive and adaptable to producer needs or accessible they won't use it, and production will not increase.

The Appetite for Local Food: An Outstanding Question

Some farmers think demand for local food produced in the Yukon is high. The majority of vendors say they sell out quickly at the Fireweed Community Market, reinforcing the idea they have hardly touched the demand that exists. "Anything you can produce here, you can sell," is a common expression. Others say, however that "sales is not the issue, rather there are very few people who actually produce anything in quantity." The appetite for local food is unknown. The reality is closer to the vendor who commented, "we don't know what demand is. Is the market demand huge and growing or is it the same people going around to all the places that have local food and buying it."

Meanwhile, vendors like Mary and Rolland Girouard of Rivendell farms say they "are taking less to the [farmers] market and are taking more stuff home" than in years prior.

The Girouards operate a 3 acre, organic market garden and berry U-pick on Takhini Hot Spring Road (near Whitehorse). Their land base, knowledge and irrigation system could support more – in the past they've grown upwards of 15 acres of vegetables. Currently, Rivendell

New Entrants Hopeful

Up and coming market gardeners, like Enrica Nadalini of Earth Wisdom Farms indicate they plan to sell at Fireweed Community Market in the near future. They are encouraged by what they see at the market.

Earth Wisdom farm was started 2 years ago near Mendenhall. Slowly they are developing their organic operation – trialing crops and cautiously investing in infrastructure.

"This year", says Enrica, "we went further to try to increase the possibility of growing more. For us a challenge here is that it is too cold too long and the warmth not enough.... So we are working, all summer on creating 4 greenhouses and low tunnels where certified organic crops can grow during an extended season."

The actual planting area is currently about ¼ acre and the couple hopes to increase their overall fenced garden area to roughly 3 acres. If all goes as planned, Enrica "hopes to take a lot of food to the market for next summer."

She is encouraged to sell at the market as it "sounds like Yukoners have been very supportive of the market and local growers...the farmers I've talked to seem happy with what they sell, and seem to be appreciated by the market's visitors."

If there is too much food in the market and not enough shoppers, Enrica wonders if producers could mobilize to collectively access funding (i.e. as members of GoOFY) to help promote the market.

Farms can support 100 families picking vegetables, herbs and berries through the summer months and into fall. Yet, they only sold 12.5 shares,²² even after promoting the U-pick week after week at the Fireweed Community Market. Rolland wonders about the 'real' demand for local food – the demand is there, but only if purchasing local foods is relatively convenient for consumers.

Despite these outstanding questions, in Whitehorse the majority of produce is sold through the Fireweed Community Market. A limited amount is sold to small businesses including the Fruit Stand and Riverside Grocery. A couple of growers sell to local restaurants. Only one grower sells at a commercial level and has invested in both specialized equipment and on-farm cold storage. All other sales are through the farm gate. Few, (if any) express interest (or are able) to gear up current production for commercial or retail sales based on financial limitation, energy and a lack of confidence in the market.

In Dawson, a local grower sells 90% of his produce to grocers and restaurants (3 deliveries a week) and cannot meet demand. A very small handful of market gardeners operate near Dawson and no others show interest or capacity to produce for a retail market. One grower expressed not wanting the hassle of working with a retail customer and would only produce enough to sell to the farmers market.



Figure 7 Rivendell Farm



Figure 8 Preparing a delivery for retail customers in Dawson

²²Rivendell Farm U-Pick members pay a yearly access fee (\$150) and are asked to pre-purchase \$200 of vegetables upfront (pay for harvest by weight) to help with spring start up costs. Members are asked to volunteer 6 hours/household at the farm. With little public interest in the U-Pick, the Girouards will need to harvest more, try to find alternative places to sell their produce to (likely at lower prices) and plough the remainder under.

Yukon Farmers Markets

Favourable growing condition, better returns and the support of a handful of well established growers helps create a strong Saturday market in Dawson. For the past 10 years producers lease a section of grass from the City, across from Main Street to sell field and greenhouse vegetables, bedding plants, fruit trees, ornamental plants and herbs. Three, and sometimes four producers sell at the market and people buy armfuls of produce. One vendor commented that although he only sells 10% of his volume through the market, it accounts for 20% of their income.

Local businesses and the City are slow to support the market – the message has been that in Dawson, selling local food takes away from the established businesses. In actuality, markets enhance local commerce by drawing more people out and overtime; can grow into vibrant community events that attract locals, tourists and more vendors.

With municipal and community support, some infrastructure (including a funded market manager) and a designated location at Shipyards Park, the Fireweed Community Market has become a permanent fixture on the landscape and in people's minds. However, the evolution and impact of the Fireweed Community Market must be taken in strides. Since the 1970s farmers have been setting up produce stands in Downtown Whitehorse: a vendor commented they used to keep a farm stand open in town 6 days a week to meet demand. However, until recently these impromptu 'markets' moved around season to season and were without a consistent venue.

The 'Yukon Made Market' maintained a presence for a number of years on the Hot Spring Roads. With momentum and building interest, vendors took the market back into Whitehorse and the Fireweed Community Market Society (FCMS) was formed in 2005. Today the FCMS organizes a permanent outdoor, seasonal market, operates a year-round Yukon Made Store and community kitchen.

Economic Impact of Farmers Markets in Canada

In 2009, the combined national economic impact of farmer's markets in Canada is estimated to be up to 3.09 billion.*

This impact study, produced by Farmers' Market Canada also found that:

- Farmers' markets remain strong contributors both to the economy and to the fabric of Canadian communities;
- Farmers' markets continue to show growth on an annual basis;
- Farmers' Markets play a key role in the marketing of Canadian agricultural products
- Strong growth opportunities in this sector focus on more aggressive marketing and promotion for markets; on encouraging additional vendors and vendor capabilities; on improved access to labour; and on the development of more and improved facilities.

**Farmers Market Canada, Final Brochure 2009.*

Creating a permanent space for producers and consumers to interact has real impact. “Over the years there has been real change in people’s attitudes to local production and local foods” reflect Brian Lendrum a vendor who sells goat product. He has seen “a complete reversal in public opinion, now people are going out of their way to for local product.”

Kelly Douglas Distributor – A better time for growers or a rosy view of the past?

During the research Kelly Douglas Distributors continued to come up. For example, a paper from 1980 reported that a Dawson producer would ship 1200 pounds of cabbage through the distributor into the Whitehorse market (with another shipping as far as Inuvik).*

Kelly Douglas Distributors operated out of Whitehorse from 1973 until the day the office closed in 1995. Bruce Silva, an employee at the time said they “bought local produce when we could, when it made sense” to do so for a large profit-driven distributor.

During interviews, some lamented over the Kelly Douglas-era as the best time for vegetable growers in the Yukon.

When asked about the past (whether it was being idealized or not) and the role Kelly Douglas played for the local market, Bruce had the following to say:

“It was a better time for growing in the Yukon. Some of these people did have avenues to sell their product—a one delivery bang. People still say ‘gosh we miss you’, especially the out of town people and the restaurants...everything now is corporate. Yeah, I think we are going back to the good ol’ days but in reality they were good.”

However, he also adds that many growers lacked consistency and did not have a good understanding of the market. At times, Kelly Douglas extended themselves and supported the local producer when it didn’t “make good business sense” for the company.

*McCracken C., & Revel, D. 1982:396. Domestic & Commercial Vegetable Growing in Dawson City, Yukon Territory 1980. *Arctic* 36(3):395-402.

Summary

Small farms, higher costs, limited infrastructure, lack of economies of scale, availability of cheap food from the south and an undeveloped local food distribution capacity renders existing producers in a tough squeeze. Even with the small production base there are still labour supply problems that constrain producers already confronted with high costs and short growing season. In such a context, there appears to be little incentive within the local food system to reinvest in closing the gap between the size of the market and the slim production base.

2.0 BUILDING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS: PATHWAYS WITH PROMISE

This section begins with examining solutions being employed elsewhere. The contexts are very different but the principles and strategies underlying successful innovation are important to consider. As will be seen, co-operation and strategic coordination to effectively weave together producers, organize and expand local and regional markets is of central importance. So too is appropriately scaled regional food production and market infrastructure. We then present emerging points of innovation in the Yukon.

There are some pathways being pursued in the Yukon that hold some promise. They may not yet be solutions but they represent steps in the right direction. Certainly, leveraging synergy where it already exists is a useful point of departure. Building a local and regional food system takes a lot of time and effort; starting from where some synergy exists is common sense.

Finally, in this section, we present some of the key findings derived from our various surveys and interviews.

Innovations from Away

The Seikatsu Club Consumer Co-operative, Japan: The Organization of an Ethical Market

Seikatsu, meaning “living people” is one of the most celebrated models that links consumers to an ethical market for local food. It successfully organizes the market and seeks social and ecological change. Thus the coop itself is a “living instrument” and people are more than *just* consumers— they are engaged and active participants in co-producing a sustainable food system.

In its simplest form, Japan’s Seikatsu movement, is a collective purchasing model of 300,000+ members of 30 autonomous Seikatsu Consumers Co-operatives (SCC). Taken as a whole, the movement is a keystone to transforming Japan’s local food system. It also contributes to strengthening community and environmental wellbeing.

It began from humble beginnings. In 1965, a group of women, concerned about the quality and safety of their food contracted a local farmer to supply their families with ecologically grown produce and milk at a fair price. The farmer guaranteed that if the women could organize and guarantee a consistent market able to buy his production, then he would do it. Together, the women mobilized their purchasing power to contract volume sales with the farmers.

The basic building block of Seikatsu is the ‘Han’ (meaning a small group). Today, there are over 120 000 Han groups (each made up of 12 or 15 people) who collectively plan and purchase food for local areas by aggregating demand within the Seikatsu

Consumer Cooperatives (SCC).²³ Members see themselves as employing their collective purchasing power to secure goods for their 'use value' not as 'commercial goods.' Each month, a Product Committee meets to determine those items to purchase collectively based on members' demands and philosophical views. Sweat equity is an important component of the model. The Hans volunteer their time, which reduces overhead costs and lowers food prices.

Membership fees are reinvested into the co-op. Money generated from co-op members has been used to help develop infrastructure that packages, processes and distributes food to high ecological standards and fair prices.

From a small group contracting with a local farmer, Seikatsu is generating almost \$1 billion per year in food related sales.

For more information go to www.seikatsuclub.coop/english/ or contact Mike Lewis at ccelewis@xplornet.com

Good Food Box, Edmonton Alberta: Adapting the Community Supported Agriculture Model as a Strategic First Step

In 2009, a pilot project based in Edmonton Alberta made up of several community based organizations contracted 8 (somewhat skeptical) farmers for their production. Like the Seikatsu model, the intent was to guarantee and coordinate volume sales in order to grow the local market. The initial farmers were selected to maximize product complementarities and secure a diverse line of fresh produce. Rather than the farmers organize the membership (the case in most CSAs), the local groups contracted a non profit to organize distribution (CCCR). Within 10 days 500 potential members came forward to participate in the 6 week pilot project named the 'Good Food Box. The pilot went ahead with 290 members selected on geographic proximity (a matter of some importance given the pilot coordinated household delivery).

Each week, farmers delivered their product to a central distribution point (a warehouse partner). Volunteers consolidated the produce from the 8 farms into 'boxes' that were then delivered to 297 customer door steps by the non-profit contractor. Pricing was at \$40/box delivered in reusable coolers with a percentage (10%) of the boxes reserved for low income people at a lower price.

The pilot was a significant success. The farmers indicated this was a quality market that generally yielded their best prices and achieved significant efficiencies over selling through farm gate or farmers markets. Members receiving the weekly 'box' highly evaluated the produce and service (including home delivery). Results from the project indicate a collaborative approach to production and marketing could yield incentives for producers to specialize and coordinate mutually beneficial production to a greater degree.

²³ Lewis. M. 2009. *Seeking Strategic Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems* (chapter 6).

In 2010, the pre-assembled 'box' is being phased out by an online grocery. Farmers and value-added food entrepreneurs set their prices and the group, now called Eat Local First²⁴ adds 25% to cover their costs (same as with the Good Food Box). Jessie Radies, manager of Eat Local First felt it was easier to start as a 'box' service and then shift towards online sales once consumer demand was concentrated. A strength of the project she says is that it builds a local food system owned by producers and end users.

www.eatlocalfirst.com

Appendix 2 offers a description of *how the On-line store works* and suggests a several *Best Practices and Lessons Learned* from the Good Food Box.

Ontario Food Coops: Adapting a Successful Model from South of the Border

In Ontario, some of the most innovative local food projects are being led by cooperatives, all of which are using the Internet and face-to-face meetings to organize, plan and co-ordinate their local markets. Some refer to this movement which seeks social, economic and environmental well-being as "domestic fair trade."²⁵

Over the last five years nearly a dozen local Food Co-ops have developed in communities across Ontario (see Appendix 6). They are different from the traditional store front food co-op model popular in the 1970s. Many have been adapted from the Oklahoma Food Cooperative model. It is pretty simple.

*Each month, our producer members post at our website what they have available. The monthly order opens on the 1st day of each month at 8 AM, and closes on the 2nd Thursday of each month at midnight. On the third Thursday of each month, the farmers come to Oklahoma City and the coop's volunteer crew sorts everything into customer orders, which then later in the day go out to our 32 pickup sites across the state.*²⁶

This new breed of co-ops minimize risk and lower costs with a cooperative approach to coordinating customer demand with production delivery distribution depots that operate across an entire state.

Russ Christianson, an Ontario co-op consultant, describes the Oklahoma approach as a 'free market' model. "Whatever you put up on the Internet," he says, "the consumers decide if they will buy or not, there is no guarantee". Some Ontario co-ops are using this approach.

²⁴ <http://www.eatlocalfirst.com>.

²⁵ May 2010. Ontario's *Local Organic Food Co-operatives, Baseline Market Research*.

²⁶ <http://www.oklahomafood.coop/welcome.php>.

Others are approaching it a “bit more like supply management” says Christianson. They determine what basket of goods will be sold to members on a weekly or even monthly basis. It provides a bit more control for the producer and, in theory at least, has more potential for setting the stage for a deliberate approach to negotiating fair price. Christianson states this model is “based more on collaboration, more planning and more potential income for farmers...but it really depends on the people and the farmers and what they want to do”.

Without the customers on board, Russ warns that a co-op will not work. The point of the co-op is to show farmers there is a commitment to the local food market.

“Most people”, says Christianson, “want to buy food locally. There is an emotional connection people are looking for and they want to have a relationship of trust with the producer”.

He’s learned if there is good quality and standards are being met, people are willing to pay more to support local food and projects that develop local food systems.

‘Foraging’ for Vancouver Island’s Pocket Markets

The idea of a **‘forager’** has been discussed in the Yukon. A forager is a person or organization whose job is to collect local produce from the producers and bring it to a central distribution point. Rather than farmers bringing produce to a single sorting depot, the forager goes out and collects the produce. Given the close proximity of many farms around Whitehorse and considering labor is a limiting factor, a partner to coordinate food pick-up would mean less time spent by individual farmers on travel and marketing.

Canada’s Food Coops

A recent study by the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) found 2,300 local food initiatives in Canada and twenty-four umbrella organizations that promote and support these various initiatives.^{*} The research also found 227 co-operatives involved in the production, marketing, retail, processing and distribution of local food:

“Membership in these local food co-operatives varies from one type of member (usually farmers) to co-ops involving a combination of stakeholders such as farmers, consumers and community organizations. The latter is called a multi-stakeholder co-operative. Examples of innovative local food co-operatives are web-based ordering systems, a produce auction, customized basket programs, all of which are tool useful to rebuilding of a regional food system through co-operative action”. (Ontario’s Local Organic Food Cooperatives, Baseline Research 2010)

* Lasley, P., E. et al. 1993:135. Is sustainable agriculture an elixir for rural communities? *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* 8: 133-139.

One of the great challenges of buying local healthy food is finding it! Most of our local grocery stores offer imports from around the world. Smaller local farmers who cannot compete with imports, or provide the quantities required by large supermarkets, have looked to farm gate sales, farmers markets, selling to local restaurants and farm box programs. For the average busy individual or family it is difficult to access fresh local foods on a consistent convenient basis.

FoodRoots Distributors Coop works with local farmers and community groups to set up a network of Pocket Markets. FoodRoots buys as much product as possible from local farmers and food producers to distribute through Pocket Markets. Across Victoria, Pocket Markets are held every day of the week. Having a weekly market to buy from that is just down the street, at your recreation or community center, or where you work, makes it much easier to eat healthier and support local food enterprise.

For farmers, well they can spend more time growing and have less headaches related to marketing. The markets guarantee to sell what the farmers grow, which encourages them to grow more. The Markets also endeavor to sell genetically diverse varieties to help promote and maintain seed diversity. To help consumers know where their food comes from, Pocket Markets provide information on the farmers who are periodically invited attend market day.

For more information see The Pocket Market tool kit
www.foodroots.ca/pmtoolkit_index.htm

Building the Brand: Local Campaigns to Connect the Pieces

Buy-local campaigns are one way to ‘connect the dots’ by actively promoting the benefits associated with eating local foods, supporting those who grow and sell them and ultimately getting more people to think about buying local. These campaigns, which take many forms (i.e. eat local challenges, product guides, outreach and education events to name a few) direct local spending to support a web of local economic activity that in turn, make for healthier and more prosperous communities.²⁷

The Yukon Farm Product guide, produced in 2008 is a first step to building support for local foods and is the closest thing to a ‘local campaign.’ Given that a number of respondents indicate they do not know how to find farms and access local foods, more information needs to be available on where food is grown, how to access it and what’s available.

For example, Circle Farm Tours, out of British Columbia is a marketing partnership between 6 different communities, geographically linked in the Fraser Valley. With

²⁷ Sustainable Seattle. 2008. *Why Local Linkages Matter: Findings from the Local Food Economy Study*.
<http://www.sustainableseattle.org>.

funding in place, the group designed a website, built their brand and created a model to promote the regions' local foods through a self-guided driving map. Each community tailors their own 'Farm Tour' to include a map, list of farm stops, food related businesses as well as accommodations and stops of interests. The regions maintain their individuality; yet, the shared branding they operate under provides support (financial, information sharing between regions, etc) and a broader reach.

In Yukon, communities such as those around Dawson, Annie Lake Road or Hot Springs Road may be positioned to support a driving tour as these areas boast a number of farms, unique eateries, accommodations and cultural and recreational activities within close proximity.

www.circlefarmtour.ca

Abbotsford Circle Farm Tour
A self-guided farm tour of the "City in the Country"

1. Granny & Grumpa's Antiques
Our farm is located in the heart of the Fraser Valley on Sumas Prairie. We believe that we house the largest single private collection of antiques in the entire province of British Columbia. If you feel like bringing your lawn chair & a picnic basket you are more than welcome coming with a large group please phone ahead.
Daily 10 - 4. 37736 Wells Line Rd | 404.854.1033 or 404.300.1716

2. Birchwood Dairy
Join us for our own old fashioned gourmet ice cream, gelato, frozen yogurt, milk products and fresh cheeses. "NEW" foxy cheese curd! Fresh produce, deli, an animal display and outdoor seating area for birthday parties, school tours & regular tours.
Jan 1 - Jun 11 & Sept 1 - Dec 31 9-4
Jun 12 - Aug 31, Thu - Sun 8-4 Mon - Wed 8-6
1154 Fadden Rd | 404.867.1315 | www.birchwooddairy.com

3. Bakerview EcoDairy
Let your natural curiosities run wild! The Vanderkooij family invites you to discover Bakerview EcoDairy, the first demonstration farm of its kind, offering a unique, first-hand farm adventure for you and your family. See how we care for our cows, learn about sustainable and innovative farm practices, enjoy the animal exhibit and experience the fun-filled, hands-on educational nature, healthy and local products can be discovered.
Opening March 2010
1154 Sumas Way | www.ecodairy.ca

4. Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery
Catch the fun! We offer self-guided and guided tours, educational programming, birthday parties, fishing instruction, and summer camps all related to BC's freshwater ecosystems.
Feb 7 - June 19 Tues - Sat 10-3, Jun 20 - Sept 6, Mon - Sun 9-3, Sept 7 - Nov 22 Tues - Sat 10-4
34345 Vye Rd | 404.504.4714 | www.gotfishbc.com

5. Neufeld Farms
Come to our family farm and enjoy the valley's 'one stop chicken shop'. You will find a lot more than just chicken. With a focus on fresh and local products we display a wide variety of frozen meats, and many local products. Our 'Berry Barn' is open June-September. Here you can find our home grown berries, pumpkins, corn and local fruits and vegetables. Stay awhile and enjoy a soft ice cream cone. We invite you to come out and discover our niche.
Mon-Fri 9:30-5:30, Summer Hours: Mon-Sat 9:00-6:00 & Sun 11:00-4:00, 32215 King Rd
404.897.2827 | www.neufeldfarms.ca

6. Campbell's Gold Honey Farm & Meadery
Our country style and commercial meadery offer a wide variety of delicious honey wines, flavoured and natural honey, berry-based candies, foxy honey comb, soothing ointments, honey soaps, hand creams, hand crafted gifts, and other sweet treats for the soul. Workshops, Educational tours(Lune-Aval) by appointment, and other special events.
Store hours: Tues-Fri 12-4, Sat 10-5, open Sun 12-5.
Store closed Mondays, January & Holiday Holidays.
2595 Leleuve Rd | 404.856.2125 | www.honeyfarm.com

7. Tanglebank Country Gardens
Visit our cottage-style family nursery with our many themed display gardens to trendy home and garden décor, annuals, perennials, trees and unusual plants. By our gourmet food items, soaps and candle products. Cultivating 'the art of living' beautifully.
Feb - Dec, Mon - Sat 10-4
27155 Sowans Rd | 404.856.9339 | www.tanglebank.com

8. Mt. Lehman Winery Ltd.
We are a family owned boutique winery creating natural wines through the use of rigorous organic growing standards. Our passion for growing grapes and winemaking is apparent in the freshness and quality of our wines. Come by our tasting room & discover our unique wines.
Thurs - Sun 1-5, or by appointment.
5074 Mt. Lehman Rd | www.mtlehmanwinery.ca

9. Rockwell Farm
We raise SPCA certified, certified organic fed, medication free chickens & eggs. We sell whole birds 4-7 lbs or well as chicken pieces. Our birds are federally inspected and air chilled. We also carry our own chicken sausage, which are gluten free.
Mon to Fri 10 - 5:30, Sat 9 - 5:30.
34205 Lowsaltine Rd | www.rockwellfarm.com

10. Lepp Farm Market
Come & meet the farmers themselves! Bob & Charlotte Lepp are sure to be around to answer your questions or show you the local produce at pantry farms. Our locally raised meats feature no-sodium hormones or antibiotics & these some meats are used to make our sausages & other table ready items.
Mon - Sat 9-4, Sun 10-4, 33955 Old Clayburn Rd
404.831.3272 | www.leppfarmmarket.com

11. Clayburn Comforts Soap & Body Works
Enjoy a fragrant escape in historic Clayburn Village. Delight your senses with a stroll through our cottage gardens to the studio where we make Clayburn soap bricks, foxy foxy 3-in-1 bars, solid hand cream & unique face, body & baby care products. Discover our natural alternatives for you, your home & family.
Tues-Fri 12-6, Sat 12-4, Check website for closure dates in Jan & Sept. 34844 Clayburn Rd
404.746.2633 | www.clayburncomforts.com

12. Restaurant 62
At Restaurant 62 our menu is in harmony with the seasons. We source products from the local area farms and incorporate them in our menus. We are boutique restaurant with private seating for 22, ideal for private and corporate groups. Our catering services extend beyond our doors to any location in the Fraser Valley.
101 - 2001 McCallum Rd
404.856.3545 | www.restaurant62.ca

seasonal locations on next page ->

A. Mason Farms
Come visit award winning Mason Farms & start your new family tradition in Summer enjoy U-pick, We-pick (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, plus local veggies, corn, GGI, fresh berry pie & ice cream. In Fall, try your luck at Papa Jo's corn maze. We feature wagon rides, pumpkin patch & farm animals. Family fun & farm animal centre is open daily from - mid Jun. to Oct 31. School & group tours by pre-booking.
Mid Jun - Sept 5 Mon-Sun 9-4, Sept 4 to Oct 31, Fall Hours: Call to confirm. 1508 Taveline Rd.
790 McKenzie Rd | 404.300.2251 | www.masonfarms.com

B. The Apple Barn Pumpkin Farm
Enjoy U-Pick Apples & Pumpkins, farm animals, pumpkin cannon, corn gun, hay and pony rides, and concession on weekends from Sept 1 - Oct 31. Our unique on-farm store is open daily in the fall, Sept 1 - Oct 31, Mon - Sat 9:30am - 11:50pm.
333 Gladwin Rd | 404.853.3108 | www.applebarn.ca

C. Abbotsford Farm & Country Market
In Historic Downtown Abbotsford Saturdays from 9-5pm, local growers with in-season produce and fruit, food processors offering an array of products from the riches of the Valley are joined by talented chefs and artists.
May & Oct 9, Mainway & George Ferguson Way
404.976.1542 | www.abbotsfordfarmandcountrymarket.com

Agricultural Events Calendar

May 1st	Art in the barn of Campbell's Gold Honey Farm www.bchoney.com
May 8th	Farmer's Market opening Day, Free pancake breakfast for the first 200 market visitors
June 19th	Family Fishing Day Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery www.gotfishbc.com
July 3-4th	Abbotsford Berryfest Festival Fresh Taste, "Hometown Fun" At the 29th Annual Abbotsford Berryfest Festival, July 3 (10 am - 4 pm) & July 4, 2010 (11 am - 3 pm)
July 29-30th	For fresh berries from the field to the mouth, fresh produce, strawberry fest & pancakes, wine tasting, live performers, giant sea shells on the street, outdoor art gallery, Aboriginal pavilion, sidewalk cafes, berry red hot parade, berryed treasure hunt, and golf, gold panning, bounce castles, much more! Esplanade & Mainway in Downtown Abbotsford 404.850.4547 www.downtownabbotsford.com
July 29-30th	Abbotsford AgFest Come celebrate our 100th Fall! Enjoy entertainment, trade shows, animal competitions & displays, award winning rodeo, medals, kitchen area and much more. Check out the upcoming excitement at 404.833.8479 or www.gotfish.ca
Aug 21st	Art in the garden of Campbell's Gold Honey Farm www.bchoney.com
Aug 28th	Campbell's Gold Family Fun Day www.bchoney.com
Sept 18-19 & 23-24th	Applefest at the Apple Barn www.applebarn.ca
Oct 14-17 & 22-24th	Pumpkinfest at the Apple Barn www.applebarn.ca
Nov 6	Art in the barn of Campbell's Gold Honey Farm www.bchoney.com

Circle Farm Tour
For more information on the Circle Farm Tours throughout the Mighty Fraser Valley please visit our website at www.circlefarmtour.ca

Welcome to our City in the Country!

Wheelchair Access **Guided Tours Available**
Bus Parking Available **Please Call Ahead**
Admission Fees Applicable

Figure 9 Abbotsford Circle Farm Tour brochure

Co-operative & Entrepreneurial Rumblings in the Yukon Food Scene

Yukoners have a reputation for being highly independent people, some would say individualistic and proud of it. However, there is evidence of co-operation and mutual aid that can be built on. .

Organic Cooperation

For example, no organic feed is available in the Yukon. The growing demand for organic eggs has led a group of farmers to collectively purchase organic feed from BC

and coordinate its travel north. Access to organic feed means a higher price for a dozen eggs (\$7) in contrast with \$3 or \$4. Organics is a way to capture a competitive advantage: consumer demand for the product is high and it appears many will pay a premium, at least in eggs and meat.

In terms of vegetable production (including 1 hay crop), upwards of 8 farms have organic certification (2 are in final stages of transition). For the most part, it is understood that the majority of market garden producers employ organic or near organic practices. Thus, organic certified vegetables do not necessarily bring a price premium as with eggs and meat since the majority of food producers do not use chemical pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers.

Co-operative Processing

The Whitehorse Chicken Processing Cooperative is a fresh example of Yukoners employing cooperation, sweat equity and appropriate technology to advance efficiencies and increase production.

Susan Ross told us her farm used to only be able to handle four turkeys a day when harvesting by hand. With a mechanized plucker in place, the number increased to eight. Add volunteers and she says a total of sixteen birds can be processed in a day. Mechanization and sweat equity significantly improve production.

In 2007 six producers got together with the idea to invest collaboratively in chicken processing equipment. As a cooperative, the group applied for funding through the Agriculture's Branch Growing Forward Fund. Since production has increased from 933 birds in 2007 to 1334 birds in 2008. Buoyed by this success, one member co-op member alone purchased 1600 birds in 2010.

The group is building their capital base through sweat equity. Each coop member factors in how much time their own processing will take and allocates a portion of their time to help other members with their processing. As the number of chickens processed goes up, so does the co-op capital. One dollar from each member bird processed and two dollars for non-member birds is invested back into the coop. Overtime, this growing equity pool can be leveraged to help a new group establish their own processing cooperative or simply can be reinvested in improving the production capacity.

Ross acknowledges that production has much room for expansions. "More people out there would be raising chickens if more small scale processing capacity was available."

Buying Clubs – Collaborative Purchasing

These cooperative arrangements form when people become dissatisfied with their current shopping options. Groups of individuals take control over their purchases (typically of bulk and/or organic items) by coordinating orders and dealing direct with a distributor (i.e. Horizons in Vancouver).

For many, ordering through buying clubs and circumventing conventional options is empowering and saves money. However, running a buying club takes volunteer time and energy. It makes sense that, that Yukon buying clubs can be hard to find, as one organizer told us, more members translates into more work.



Figure 10 A group processes 200 chickens with cooperatively owned processing equipment.

Informal estimates place the number of buying clubs in and around Whitehorse at 20-25, each of which has about 12 members per club. Monthly spending averages \$100 per household or \$1200 per club. Combined, buying club members spend an average of \$290,000 - \$ 360,000 per year.

Not included in the \$360,000 estimate is the organic produce buying club run out of the Alpine Bakery in Whitehorse. 100 – 150 members order \$70 a week through this club. Combined, the group spends \$7,000 to \$10,500 each week or approximately \$360,000 - \$540,000 per year.

Combined, Yukon buying clubs represent \$640,000 and \$900,000 per year, almost 1% of the total retail food sales in the Yukon. Considering they are intentionally kept small (there is a wait list to join the club at the Alpine Bakery) their impact could be larger.

The nature of these clubs confirms certain trends about a small, yet engaged segment of the population. People participate in this collaborative approach demonstrate a willingness to spend money upfront, schedule orders in advance, collaborate, volunteer their time and arrange for food pickups from alternative distribution points. They also tend to shop

“As democratic, innovative and community-based organizations, co-operatives are playing an important role in transforming the short-term economic self-interest of the free market system into a socio-economic system that can sustainably fulfill people’s collective needs”.

Russ Christianson
Co-operative Development
in a Competitive World
(2007)

with environmental, health and social-justice concerns in mind (i.e. an ethical and engaged eater).

Potluck Co-op, Whitehorse (www.potluck.ca)

In 2009 a group came together to organize a food co-operative in Whitehorse with a vision:

“We all want to vote with our food dollars for a healthy environment. We all want to eat the best food we can. And we all dream of eating more and more Yukon-grown organic food.”²⁸

Potluck Co-op is in its initial stages of development. What shape it takes and how the co-op reaches members will evolve as more information is collected this fall and winter. Future project development include:²⁹

- A pre-feasibility study—Yukon agricultural literature review and a local situation mapping day, funded by the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP);
- A feasibility study, funded by Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI);
- Based on findings begin the businesses planning process (Winter 2010).

This group could potentially be a key driver of some of the efforts required to move development of the local and regional food system ahead.

Entrepreneurial Energy to Expand Beef Production

Those with the most interest to expand beyond farm gate sales appear to be meat producers. Contributing factors, such as those listed below, means selling an inspected product to retail markets offers a compelling business case:

- High overhead costs to raise livestock emphasize the need for a dependable customer base.
- Demand for locally raised, inspected meat is growing (i.e. one retail owner said he'd be interested in buying 300 whole birds a week in the summer months)
- Untapped opportunity to capture a premium by value-adding (i.e. specialty cuts, jerky, etc).

Sourdough Sodbusters is an example of a farm business that sees opportunity to capture a new market by gearing up production for commercial sales.

As a family owned and operated business, Sourdough Sodbusters has over 25 years experience selling sod directly from their farm. This year the family decided to

²⁸ <http://potluckcoop.ca>.

²⁹ *The Talking Pot*, July 26, 2010, <http://potluckcoop.ca>.

diversify their business (alongside 2 other Yukon farmers, Tom McCaw & Bill Drury); they collectively bought 65 cattle from northern Alberta.

“Innovation,” says Vanessa Falle “is a polite way of saying we don’t want to wait.”

Though still a small operation by southern standards The Falle/McCaw/Drury trio now have the largest beef operation in the Yukon and they expect to sell commercially. Vanessa, the creative force behind the business says the families will invest in their own processing capacity in order to get their beef into the commercial market. They are building meat hanging and butchering facilities and will bring the mobile abattoir to their farm for the initial stage. They have a sound business plan and are ready to expand their operation.

Vanessa likes the idea of investing in their own product as it gives the group the “latitude to make ones own decisions.”

Findings from CCCR Market Research

CCCR undertook different methods to try and gather primary data that would help us better understand the context producers operate in and to try and begin getting a handle on consumer attitudes to local food.

Producer Interviews. Sixteen in-depth interviews conducted (face-to-face and over the phone) with current individuals involved in agri-food production. 4 brief, informal discussions occurred with those who used to be, still are or plan to be involved in agri-food production. (See [Appendix 1](#) for further information on [methodology, interview guide and list of participants](#)).

On-line Consumer Survey. 97 participants completed a 12 question, online survey that included multiple answer, open comment and data-oriented questions. The purpose of this survey was to two fold: first, to understand public interest and preference for models to increase access to local food (a retail food coop, a good food box and an on-line grocer) and second, to collect information on consumer habits and buying preferences. (See [Appendix 2](#) for further information on the [online survey’s](#) research questions and participant findings.)

Rapid Market Assessment. 69 people participated in a Rapid Market Assessment survey (RMA) at the Fireweed Community Market (July 29th, 2010). 5 questions were asked on shopping habits and local food consumption. Participants indicate their response on large sheets of paper using ‘dot’ stickers. (See [Appendix 3](#) for further information on [RMA survey’s](#) questions and findings)



Figure 11 Rapid Market Assessment survey in process at the Fireweed Community Market.

Some limitations need to be noted. Due to time and budget limitations, the bulk of this research is on consumers, retailers, stakeholders and farmers in the Whitehorse area. Working with three project committee members from Dawson as well as interviews with a few farmers and market gardeners near Dawson, Pelly River and Carmacks adds some information on the needs and challenges of regions beyond Whitehorse.

Also, the opinions collected by consumers (through the Rapid Market Assessment tool and on-line survey) represent the engaged and conscious eaters – those with the lifestyle, time capacity, income level and educational background to seek out, garden and purchase local and organic food (at a premium). The research did not learn more about the habits, motivations and needs of the other 99% (or so) of consumers in the Yukon.

Consumer Surveys (see Appendix 2)

This research project used online consumer surveys to assess consumer buying habits and preferred models for local food development. 97 participants completed the 12-question survey and provided additional comments when asked. The survey targeted Whitehorse and surrounding communities and relied on networks of individuals to spread it around.

The majority of survey participants represent “the converts” – those who make a point to shop for local and organic foods and grow their own. However, several participants represent those who struggle to access local and/or organic food because of their high price, limited availability to grow their own and inability to access farms.

Participants were asked to comment on the following three models in terms of their preference:

- **Multi-farmer ‘box’ club** – guarantee the market by matching complementary and diverse product from local farms and assembling into ‘boxes’ that customers pick up at a scheduled time and location throughout the season.
- **Food Co-op** – can encompass retail, online and/or box delivery services. The survey did not define a ‘co-op’ as one specific type of arrangement, rather left it open to interpretation.
- **Online-Retail** – free market arrangement where farmers, growers and value-added food entrepreneurs enter units of product into an online database at set intervals (i.e. weekly, bi-weekly or monthly). Customers ‘shop’ online and farmers fill the orders that are placed. Product is then delivered to a central distribution point where a team of volunteers assemble each custom order for scheduled pick-up.

Key Findings:

- 92% of participants support a food coop.
- 80% support an online shopping experience.
- An organized box of local goods had the least support.

Many felt a box club would create too much duplication from what participants could already grow in their backyard plots, or was too restrictive.

In the future, it will be necessary to interview a more varied audience to learn if other segments of the population might prefer a box scheme (i.e. those without gardens). It will also be necessary to learn which model farmers and food producers prefer selling into. For example, an on-line model does not guarantee sales and requires producers to enter their product into an on-line database each ordering cycle.

Participant Response – Collective Power

“Recognize we could give more power to buying clubs and streamline efficiencies. Coop as more than just shopping. They are a take off point for connecting [the] food system – packing processing, ecological sustainability, social investment, community food hub, etc.”

“There are so many of us who rely on Horizon orders – and I think a store could help reduce the huge amount of time spent organizing than in small groups.”

Emerging Themes – Participant Comments:

- **Collective Power** – buying clubs are inefficient and could have more impact if orders were aggregated.

- **Complementary and Diverse products** – participants do not want to buy more of what they can grow. For example, people said they do not want to participate in a box club if it means more greens, when they already have a garden full of greens. Participants want different options they do not have access to like regionally grown fruit from BC or placing bulk carrot orders for canning.
- **More than just shopping** – the act of ‘shopping’ is viewed by many as an extension of values. People are ‘active’ participants and what they choose to consume has positive or negative impacts on their community, their health and the local or global environment.
- **Internet Savvy** – the majority of responses demonstrate people feel very comfortable with the idea of shopping on line. Participants view this technology as a flexible tool that has lower overhead costs (than a retail store). The idea of an online-grocery generated the most interest and excitement. A handful of participants indicate using this service in other cities to buy food (www.spud.ca) or specialty items (i.e. www.etsy.com) and recommend it.
- 8% of participants were strongly opposed to online food purchasing.

Farm Gate Sales

A small yet dedicated segment of Yukon consumers are avid connoisseurs of local food – to the point that for some, it’s quite ‘normal’ to drive miles to a farm to purchase eggs, fresh meat or large quantities of potatoes. This segment of Yukoners has chest freezers and can accommodate big orders—i.e. a side of beef or several whole chickens.

Although this model presents multiple benefits

Participant Response – Agents of Change

“Yes, we need a store that brings sustainability, organics, community action together. I think this is greatly needed and would be a wonderful gathering place for ideas, people and social change”.

Price setters - Farm Gate Sales

When selling to retail partners, typically farmers are reduced to price takers: the price of locally produced food must match the tight margins of the retail sector. Farm gate sales enable farmers to become price setters: they compete on quality and value (i.e. meeting with customers) rather than quantity. Customers recognize the energy, time and expense that goes into producing local, sustainable food and are willing to (or able to) pay a higher price because they value supporting local food and connecting with producers.

Farm gate sales achieve better upfront prices for the farmer, however coordinating these sales and building a reliable market requires a certain amount of time and energy that farmers must commit.

for both consumers and growers, it also has downsides. For examples farmers spend time coordinating sales and marketing their product and consumer allocate additional time and money to commute to farms.

Of course, it's not a matter of only farm gate sales or only retail sales – both models should exist together. However, questions are raised about the nature of farm gate sales, the scale of production (i.e. unable to set up contracts) and efficiencies as both farmers and consumers must expend additional time and energy to facilitate this exchange. Some of these questions may include:

What is lost if more farm gate sales are contracted into mainstream or alternative markets? Can and do producers want to increase their scale and reach? Do consumers want the farm-gate experience or would they sooner purchase local foods conveniently in town? Who is excluded from participating in the current model and how will this change?

A Looming Challenge: Succession of Aging Farmers

The Yukon faces an ambiguous set of conditions. First, a number of farmers and land owners have more land than they can productively use or manage on their own. In contrast, many who think they would like to farm do not have access to land; it is either too expensive or difficult to access through land application process, or both. Meanwhile, the Yukon is facing its first phase of farm succession—some producers are looking to retire and want dearly for their land to remain in agricultural production. But who to sell to? Farmers are often asset rich and cash poor; they need income to retire. Ironically, those who are able to afford the land are the often the least likely to farm. Lastly, growing a good vegetable crop in the Yukon is no small feat. It can take years to develop the pre-existing land base into a climate suitable for growing.

Given the current situation, employing strategies that ensure those lands best suited for agriculture remain in production should be a top priority. Even so, it takes a lot of thought and attention to detail to bridge various gaps. We present a few innovative bridge-building examples below.

Land Link Programs in Ontario (<http://www.farmlink.net>)

In the Yukon, explorative discussions to connect those with arable land with those who desire to farm, but cannot afford to purchase land are beginning to surface. Already, the agriculture branch can identify a few people who have expressed interest in leasing unused land at a reasonable rate.

Over time, a land link program could be established to help facilitate this connection. For example Ontario-based FarmLink is one model that offers a “matchmaker tool [that] brings together new farmers who are looking for land or mentorship with farm owners who have land available or expertise to share” through an online resource directory.

The Intervale Centre, Burlington Vermont (<http://www.intervale.org>)

In 1983, 200 acres of garbage-ridden land was reclaimed in Burlington, Vermont with a vision to transform it into a productive source of local food. Two decades later close to 8% of all the fresh food consumed in Burlington, million pounds of high quality produce is grown in reclaimed bottom land.

The land is held under a community land trust managed by the Intervale Centre. It is leased to prospective farmers committed to building a local supply of sustainably produced food.

The system creates significant benefits to young farmers through capital savings and collaboration.

- Reasonable and secure leases lowers financial risk.
- New farmers do not have to buy land to farm.
- Cooperative arrangement to utilize building, equipment and irrigation systems reduce risk and cost
- Increased cost efficiencies for installed infrastructure such as irrigation pipes and out buildings.

See [Appendix 7](#) to learn more about the [Intervale Centre](#).

Indian Line Farm, Berkshire, Massachusetts – Helping Farmer Retire with Dignity
<http://www.indianlinefarm.com>

Although many farmers have a deep attachment to the land, nearing retirement few options seldom exist for the asset rich, cash poor farmer than to sell off land and assets to someone wealthy, with little intention of farming. This is the situation Indian Line Farm, a small 22 acre operation (and one of the first CSAs in the US) was coming into a few decades ago.

Devoted CSA (community supported agriculture) member relationship to the farm fed a desire to preserve the land and its ability to grow vegetables in perpetuity. Taking to action, members donated money and promoted to others the opportunity to preserve the farm– sustainably grown vegetables and a community space. Donations were made to a regional conservation trust and a broader campaign organized sufficient cash to buy a conservation easement (or place a covenant on the land that permanently protects its use as farmland). The land is leased to a farmer at a long term affordable rate. Buildings (house, barn and outbuildings) are re-sold (at their replacement cost) from the community land trust to the new farmer who leases the land.

See [Appendix 7](#) for an in-depth look at [Indian Line Farm](#).

Succession Planning in the Yukon: Applying Common Sense

There is at least one well established organic vegetable business (on an expansive land base suitable for growing) that is contemplating retirement but is falling short on suitable options. Already planning for the future, the owners have subdivided a small outlying area of the property (around 15 acres) for their retirement; the rest of the property (more than a quarter section) is left completely intact for agriculture. Hundreds of thousands worth of infrastructure are invested into the property and it boasts healthy and clean soils that at one time, “produced 15% of Yukon’s annual cabbage supply.”

According to the owner, if her last 25 years of growing food and tending the land is to mean anything, the property must remain in food production.

One strategy of turning the farm into a U-pick operation, is “to have 10 core families” that would “approach a land conservancy to buy the farm at a reasonable price so we can retire.” Meanwhile, the farm only grows half of what it used to and few people have taken to the U-pick idea.

Already Yukon is at a deficit: slim amounts of land and few people have the capacity (and know how) to grow large volumes of food. Serious steps and focused energy is needed to address the coming reality—farmers retire and without alternative options, models and policy in place; more often than not, these lands are paved over for rural residential housing and lawns. A sustainable food system must include options for transition (of both land and knowledge) from one farmer to the next to be viable into the future—both as necessity and due diligence. Succession models, as demonstrated above are required measures not only to strengthen but also to ensure Yukon’s sustainable food supply.

Piloting a strategic approach to succession in the Yukon aimed at retaining productive land to grow food and create affordable access to a new generation of potential farmers is just a matter of common sense. Given the capital, debt and land constraints facing a new generation of farmers, transitioning good land and infrastructure is a crucial stewardship issue.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Connecting the Pieces

The following steps offer a path to consciously create a resilient and sustainable Yukon food system by “connecting the pieces.” Together, these components seem worthwhile to hold real promise for concretely moving things forward if there is sufficient local buy in and support.

- **Buying clubs** combined with results of **consumer survey** offer a jumping off point for developing an **ethical and local food market** that can encourage food production in the Yukon and improve the overall security of vegetable and meat products over time.
- A food co-op in formation could become a **multi-stakeholder cooperative** that aggregates and streamlines buying club decisions on importing food and facilitates market security around local food contracting with producers.
- **An on-line grocery** concept could be a key means which, when combined with a **‘depot’** type system of food pick up (i.e. a school, church or warehouse), might create a reasonably efficient distribution channel. It could over time, also be a **market information source** that would assist farmers to gain sufficient confidence to increase production and collaboratively streamline production (with some moving to specialize their product a bit more).
- The economics of the co-op would be improved through consolidating the existing orders of buying clubs by reducing costs (increased size orders) and creating a cash flow to cover overheads costs of the co-op (i.e. administration). It also would reduce the time involved of buying club members. Like the Han (in the Seikatsu movement) or buying club coordinator, their role would then be limited to determining their groups buying preferences and collating group orders. Each buying group could also become a member of the co-op. Getting the buying clubs

Connecting the Pieces – Strategic Elements to Move Forward

A Multi-stakeholder co-operative that aggregates and streamlines buying club decisions on importing food and facilitates market security around local food contracting may be the bases of an organized market. An online grocery could be the key means which, when combined with a depot type system or food pick up, could create a reasonably efficient distribution channel. Other people interested in joining a buying club, but without a network would have a place to turn, expanding the size and impact of buying clubs. It could, over time, also be a market information source that would assist producers (i.e. cold storage or specialized equipment).

on board and extending their reach to outlying communities (new clubs) is a strategy for expanding collaboration and the markets for the on-line co-op.

- Given the high margins on **value-added meat products** and assuming freezer storage capacity can be organized, the economics of retailing through the on-line store could be improved. Individuals or buying clubs could pre-order quarters or sides of beef, for instance, or so many chickens a year through on-line orders. This would help with cash flow in the co-op as it would extend the buying and marketing throughout the year. The potential for root crops to extend the margins of the season should also be explored.
- Through the membership fee structure and with the ability to access government grants, a co-op could **address production gaps**. In Japan, Seikatsu members invested in local dairy production; in Yukon members could invest in cold storage to increase access to and scale of production of root crops.

Yukon requires a values added strategy that links fair price, ecological sustainability, a reduction in fossil fuel dependence, restructuring of distribution systems and collaborative, multi-stakeholder approaches to investment and market development.

A long-term strategic vision that will strengthen the linkages between the multiple food system 'pieces' with firm and aggressive steps towards immediate and focused action is necessary as a means to:

- Organize the market;
- Provide producers the confidence (and the means) to reinvest capacity into their production to sustainably increase volume over time.

The Canadian Centre for Community Renewal recommends the following next steps to organize the market through a depot (or warehouse) system that aggregates buying clubs and contracts with local producers through a co-op. These 'steps' were presented to the Project Advisory Committee following the September 23rd presentation:

- Need to confirm interest and volumes in buying clubs and work out margins and rhythm of ordering.
- Need to identify volume discounts through bulk ordering.

"In the future we shall need extensive long-range democratic planning, co-operatives, and for the most part relatively small or mid-sized mixed organic farms that receive significant public support and are encouraged to support each other through various types of co-operative arrangement."

- Robert Albritton,
Let them Eat Junk
(2009)

- Need to determine operating costs, depot options and establish cost of service to producers.
- Need to determine transport options and decide on best option.
- Need to determine if there is going to be any rebate for low income people – a blended market which has an equity component built in.
- Need to determine the extent to which outlying communities have buying clubs – and if First Nations are interested in potentially collaborating by sponsoring buying clubs.

All of these together imply a **feasibility analysis** which could be **part one of a multi-year phased project** to be followed concurrently by a business plan and a popular presentation of the results aimed at animating and extending the discussion. This latter point would both be educational, organizational and represent an early intervention in organizing the market. Hopefully, it would be able to be done in a timely enough manner to facilitate start up for next year.

In addition to what is outlined above, there would **need to be a determination made of whether contracting with farmers is feasible for 2011**. It should be if there is sufficient capacity that can be folded into the Potluck co-op. This could be seen as a pilot, perhaps focused on producers who have clearly advised they are willing to produce if they get a more secure market foothold. If it were too much, we would have to think about what comes first – buying club or contracting to producers. Our initial thinking is that it would be better, or so it seems to us, if they were **undertaken concurrently with one staff being focused on buying clubs and the other on organizing the contracted production and integration** into the ordering system (i.e. a local *food forager* position).

Undertaking this work will require government investment. The issue of capacity to manage the overall development process and oversee the work needs to be addressed.

The other component of a multi-year program would be to establish the possible sites for piloting a **succession strategy** similar to Intervale and Indian Line Farm. This is trickier but nevertheless necessary given the demographics in the Yukon and the emerging interest among younger people. Steps might include:

To Develop Yukon local food system will take the following:

- A broad based steering committee of invested and diverse interests.
- Technical assistance of management (i.e. could be through partnerships).
- Support/driver beyond volunteer coordination to build the market and facilitate linkages.
- Time, energy and focus.
- Regional outreach beyond a Whitehorse-centric approach.
- Willing and able producers.
- Initial funding.
- A Multi-year process.

- More detailed discussion of succession models with prospect farmers and with people interested in farming.
- Establishing a steering committee (designed with the idea that it might become the board of a future land trust).
- Pre-feasibility on pilot sites.
- Selecting a pilot site.
- Confirming interest among younger people.
- Doing a detailed feasibility study to determine all the key factors relevant to making the deal work, including the establishment of a land trust to hold the land, price and terms under which land transfer takes place, quality of land related to what crops, investment requirements etc.

Feedback from the Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

- Education is key. Ongoing need to educate all people on the importance of eating local and healthy food, growing their own and the vulnerabilities Yukon faces;
- The Potluck Co-op will host a futures mapping day (November) and indicate they will have a clear plan to move forward (i.e. collect information on consumer demand and creating a business plan for the co-op). However, as volunteer board, they recognize they cannot coordinate and implement all these pieces on their own.
- Discuss possibility (and need) to 'link up' those with unused, yet productive land with those who want to grow vegetables but are not able to purchase land (i.e. Land Link program).
- How do we all work together as a Territory? Difficult to know what other communities are working on, what challenges/opportunities they face and what potential exists to work together for mutual benefit.
- There are a lot of pieces that must come together. Working in partnerships with expertise to mobilize and bring these pieces together while also connecting with other growing regions seems desirable.
- The community will decide the best way to move forward including the need and role of additional partners and expertise.

APPENDIX 1

Yukon Community Food Projects

Site-visits and meetings were conducted with the following Community Food Projects:

Conservation Klondike Society (CKS)

CKS hosted a Community Based Monitoring meeting (July 2010) to explore issues relating to climate change and food security.

Other Motivations/Expectations beyond a 'monitoring' situation were identified as important areas to discuss and investigate into the future:

- Increased promotion/education related to local food;
- Desire for increase in the amount of arable land available for farming;
- General sharing of best practices amongst local/regional farmers, community gardens, community green houses etc. to facilitate increase in local food production in the North;
- Sharing of skills to encourage young people to start farming in order to secure the future of local food in Dawson.

Contact: Conservation Klondike Society: (867) 993 6666

www.conservationklondike.org

Dawson Community Greenhouse and Community Garden

This summer Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in worked with a community group to build a greenhouse at C4 subdivision. Through this partnership, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in provides in-kind support such as land for the greenhouse. Winter activities will include applying for grants to assist in the development of the operation – buying soil and seeds and starting food production. Darren Taylor, Director of Natural Resources, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in says growing food on First Nations land is something Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is exploring, although it will take time. More information is needed about the land and its productivity to help identify what will be the best crops to grow or livestock to raise in the future.

*Contact Darren Taylor, Director of Natural Resources,
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in: (867) 993 7145*

This summer, Dawson's community garden project organized a "Garden Hop & Harvesting Hootenanny." People 'toured' backyard gardens, listened to music and feasted on local food.

A Cold Storage monitoring project is currently underway at an old storage facility. Monitoring temperatures and humidity (for a year) will indicate whether the infrastructure can be used in the future to store root crops throughout the winter.

Contact: Chris Clarke, dawsongreenhouses@gmail.com

Haines Junction Greenhouse Program
(Haines Junction Employment Development Society- HJEDS)

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Health and Social Services, Yukon Government, Municipality of Haines Junction and Yukon College came together 7 years ago to create a community project to provide job skills and training. Approximately 50 participants have used the program administered by the Haines Junction Employment Development Society (HJEDS)– which includes developing skills working in the greenhouse and surrounding gardens, building planters and picnic tables and providing support. 2 full time staff help administer the project and run the garden.

Steve Osborne, a board member with the greenhouse project says it's approaching a crossroads. The future of the greenhouse project and how it operates may be under review: The project could:

- Expand (possibly increase community food production),
- Remain the same,
- Fold– additional programs now exist that assist with job training. There is a need to understand how the community values this project.

Steve says this project and Haines Junction are “easily on the edge of making something happen” in terms of building local food system capacity. Yet, he cautions, “growth must venture forward with support from the community”. Doing a survey might be the next steps to assess community interest and support for the greenhouse project.

Contact: Steve Osborne, HJEDS: (867) 634 8800

Carmacks Greenhouse and Community Gardens

Almost a decade ago, Yukon Community Development Fund and Agriculture Canada provided initial funding for the Carmacks greenhouse.

Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation permanently adopted the project and employs the greenhouse staff. Alice Boland has been working in the greenhouse almost from the start. She would like to see the community develop a second greenhouse as “we could easily grow more.” In August, Alice took a truckload of vegetables to sell in town and sold out, she said in no time at all.

Outreach

The greenhouse sells half and shares the rest with the community. Students take tours in June and the greenhouse donates a large portion of vegetables to September lunch programs. Alice would like other communities to visit the greenhouse so they can get ideas to develop their own. She also thinks it's important for her staff to visit Yukon farms to learn more about growing food.

For the past 6 years, Elders have been growing vegetables in a separate greenhouse, for their own use.

A community garden is another place food is grown in Carmacks. Alice tells me there are 200 – 300 pounds of potatoes waiting for harvest, but the challenge is getting to them – they are on the other side of the river and can only be reached by canoe. There is no culvert to drive across and volunteers are getting older which makes trips with a canoe full of vegetables difficult. Alice says the community needs a culvert to make the garden accessible.

Alice would like to see surrounding communities get together to host a farmers market. She suggests it could rotate from community to community each week. There is a demand for fresh vegetables in these communities and a small handful of farmers live in the area.

Contact: Alice Boland, Carmacks Little Salmon First Nation Greenhouse; (867) 335 5120

White River Cold Storage

The White River First Nation located in Beaver Creek, Yukon is concerned about potential climate change impacts on their community with respect to availability of food supplies and storage. This community does not have a local store and acknowledges they are vulnerable to food-related emergencies. The project proposal says reliance on food from outside the community may have significant implication on health and the ability to eat healthy foods should supplies be interrupted.³⁰

White First Nation plans to use an underground culvert as their cold storage building. It will be stocked with local food from the community garden and greenhouse as well as with traditional foods. With future food security in mind, White River First Nation hopes to purchase a tractor and a farm in Snag, Yukon. Here, the soil is good for farming and the proposal says in past, community elders used to grow vegetables here (circa 1940 – 1965).³¹

*Contact: Glenn Stephen, Environment Coordinator
White River First Nation: (867) 862 7044*

³⁰ *Climate Change and Health Adaptation in Northern First Nations and Inuit Communities Program 2010-2011: "To Feed Our Community Project"; White River First Nation (2010).*

³¹ *Climate Change and Health Adaptation in Northern First Nations and Inuit Communities Program 2010-2011: "To Feed Our Community Project"; White River First Nation (2010).*

Northern Backyard Garden Series – Lorne Mountain Community Association

Approximately 30 people attended a farm tour hosted in the Mt. Lorne area on August 21, 2010.

The Mt. Lorne Farm Tour, organized by the Lorne Mountain Community Association (LMCA) is part of the Northern Backyard Garden Series, which teaches people about growing in a northern climate. 4 different sites; involved in food production and sustainable rural living, were visited:

- Lera Family Farm
- Midnight Sun Alpaca
- Wheaton River Gardens
- Bob's famous Greenhouse

Yukon Agriculture Branch provided the community with funding to help coordinate the farm tour and past gardening workshops. Agnes Seitz, LMCA Recreation Director has more ideas planned for next season— all designed to keep people excited about growing and preserving their own food.

Contact: Agnes Seitz, Recreation Director LMCA: (867) 667 7083

Other community food projects:

- Valleyview community (near Whitehorse) received funding from Shell Oil to build a community greenhouse. The group is now working out details on a lease for the land and insurance coverage.
- The village of Pelly Crossing constructed a greenhouse in 2009, and hired a local farmer to help the community get started growing vegetables.
- In Teslin, First Nation Youth are engaged in a community food security and climate change research project that includes interviews with elders, Teslin Tlingit citizens, outfitters and youth.

APPENDIX 2

Good Food Box, Edmonton Alberta— Adapting the CSA model: building demand for local food

www.eatlocalfirst.com

Eat Local First coordinates online ordering:

Each farm or food business (currently there are over 40 different agri-food sellers and producers of value-added food products) is described on the website as are the food items. Food products are than listed in 21 different categories (with picture, quantity and price information).

Weekly orders:

- Farmers and other food suppliers enter their products, inventory and prices on Sunday,
- Members can order listed products (first come first serve) from Monday at 12:01am until Saturday at 11:59pm,
- After the order cycle closes the orders are sent to the farmers and suppliers who deliver the products to a central warehouse,
- Volunteers assemble the orders and schedule deliveries.

Jessie Radies, manager of Eat Local First suggested the following insights and lessons to help establish an alternative distribution channel for community local foods.

Best Practices & Insights from Eat Local First

- Create an equal opportunity for small and large scale producers:

“We are not a business getting rich off producers, we are trying to facilitate access to the market.... Virtually any size of producer or food entrepreneur can be a partner because price and volume is up to them and what the market will bear.”

- Develop key Partnerships:

“A key to running the pilot project was connecting with a warehousing partner – Alberta Hospital. We made the business case and asked, where can we leverage existing infrastructure?”

Build in diversity and you create sustainability:

“The larger the market and the more pieces we can serve, the closer we move towards being sustainable.”

“Create a place for value-added entrepreneurs”. This includes coffee roasters, local honey and teas, home made sauces as well as offering pre-pared and ready made meals, such as locally made falafels.

- Aggressively match the product with the ‘right’ market:

Extend the reach broader than those already purchasing local food from farmers markets or CSAs.

“Eat Local First targets dual income households with kids—this segment of the market appear to be less price sensitive and wants healthy and convenient options.

- Have a clear understanding of both user needs:

“Determine what the needs of the market are and what the needs are of the producers and match them up.”

Lessons learned and advice to share:

- Eat Local First felt it was easier to start as a multi-farmer ‘box’ service and then shift towards an online grocery store once demand was known and than consolidated.
- “It is a big ‘ask’ of consumers and producers”. Producers came on board only after organizers made the business case and showed this option would be economically viable. Producers were told to set their own price and the organization would mark up 25% to cover business costs.
- Maintain a high quality of goods, consistently—since food is bought online people aren’t able to see, feel or smell it. They need to trust the reputation and the quality.

APPENDIX 3

Ontario Food Cooperatives

The following information is from the 'Ontario's Local Organic Food Co-operatives' Baseline Market Research report (May 2010, pg 68).

“In the wake of the success of seven well-established organic food co-operatives – Ontario Natural Food Co-op, The Big Carrot, Karma Food Co-op, London Co-op Store, Organic Meadow Farmers' Co-op, Cooperative La Siembra, and Agri-Cultural Renewal Co-op – ten local organic food co-operatives have been started in the past five years by grassroots people in communities across Ontario:”

1. By The Bushel Community Food Co-op (Peterborough)
2. Eat Local Sudbury Co-op
3. Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op (Vankleek Hill)
4. Fitzroy Beef Farmers Co-op (Fitzroy Harbour)
5. LOFT Marketing Co-op (Cambridge)
6. Kingston Local Food Hub
7. Niagara Local Food Co-op (Niagara Falls & Welland)
8. Ottawa Valley Food Co-op (Pembroke & Killaloe)
9. Quinte Organic Farmers Co-op (Picton)
10. West End Food Co-op (Toronto)

“To date, nine of these emerging co-operatives are now in operation (Kingston Local Food Hub is in the feasibility stage), generating approximately \$800,000 in combined revenue per annum. Their farmer-members are supplying fresh food to over 1,700 consumers, all within a 250 kilometer radius from the local farms”.

APPENDIX 4

Methodology, Interview Guide, & Participants

Producer Research:

16 interviews and 4 discussions (notes were not taken) were conducted from July to September, 2010 with participants involved in agri-food production. Interviews were conducted in south and central Yukon, with an emphasis on Whitehorse area.

Interviews were conducted under the following situations:

- 11 at participants farm or market garden
On-site interviews were one hour in length upwards of several as I often spent time working on the farm while doing the interviews. This led to more depth and richness.
- 1 at a café in Carmacks
- 4 over the telephone
Telephone interviews were 20 – 40 minutes in length.
- The following four discussions were brief or informal (notes were not taken or a formal interview conducted), yet were informative and have contributed to the report:
 - A person who used to farm and was involved in a CSA
 - A current producer who raises poultry and vegetables
 - A new entrant that is developing property for a market garden and a few years away from production
 - A backyard gardeners who sells to local businesses in Whitehorse

Producer Interview Guide

Name:

The Operation:

1. How was the land acquired and how many years ago – private purchase or government land grant?
2. Please describe what is grown and/or raised throughout the season.
3. Quantity – how much food do you raise, or conversely how many households could your farm feed? How many acres in production/owned?

Probe:

- How much food (volume/revenue) is sold during the season;
 - How much is grown and not sold;
 - Where is your best market outlet and additional markets you would like to pursue?
4. Discuss growing practices (organic, certification, technology, etc)
 5. How many people are involved in this operation?
 6. Years involved in operation?
 7. How has this operation changed over the years and what is this change a response to?

Probe:

- i.e. quantity grown, cost to grow, types of things grown, distribution channels, etc.
8. What factors/obstacles prevents your business from growing more food:

Probe:

- Market?
- Labour?
- Climate
- Infrastructure
- Lack of suitable acreage?
- High costs and low point of sales price
- Lack of volume to be competitive?
- Home-use philosophy vs commercial sales?

The Market Place:

9. Discuss how your business fits into the following options.
[Researcher describes each option and provides handouts]
- Good Food Box Program – build confidence and concentrate market
 - Food Coop idea – online order/retail store
 - Public Procurement (BIP) – goods and service rebate on agri-foods if contract with public institutions (i.e. hospital or corrections).
10. If a program developed a new distribution channel that guaranteed fair prices for your product, could you produce, harvest and deliver more product? Please describe.

End of questionnaire

Research Participants (Producers):

1. Sheila Alexandrovich of Wheaton River Gardens—[Face-Face; on Farm]
2. Zakus Farm—[Face-Face; on Farm]
3. Aurora Mountain Farm—[Face-Face; on Farm]
4. Cain & Michelle Vangel—[Face-Face; on Farm]
5. Grizzly Valley Farms—[Face-Face; on Farm]
6. Susan Ross & Brian Lendrum—[Face-Face; on Farm]
7. Rivendell Farm —[Face-Face; on Farm]
8. M'Clintock Valley Farm—[Face-Face/brief]
9. Monica Gibson—[telephone]
10. Ralph and Norma Meese—[telephone]
11. John Lenart of Klondike Valley Nursery—[Face-Face; on Farm]
12. Grant Dowdell & Karen Digby—[Face-Face; on Farm]
13. Lucy Vogt—[Face-Face; on Farm]
14. Kathy Cruse of McCabe Creek Farm—[Face-Face; in Café]
15. Pelly River Ranch—[Face-Face; on Farm]

New and/or emerging entrants:

16. Matt Ball—[brief discussions]
17. Enrica Nadalini of Earth Wisdom Farm—[telephone]
18. David Clunies-Ross (backyard gardener & aspiring farmer)—[Face-Face]
19. Vanessa Falle of Sourdough Sodbusters (expansion into beef)—[telephone]

Experienced Farmer:

20. Garret Gillespie of Wild Blue Yonder—[Face-Face/brief]

APPENDIX 5

Online Consumer Survey

August 31, 2010

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5KTJ5WT>

97 participants responded to an online consumer survey that explored consumer buying habits and support for local food project developments. Their answers and comments are captured below:

1. Would you participate in a program that delivers a weekly 'box' of locally grown, top quality, seasonal vegetables and herbs to your front door (July - Mid September)?

Under \$40 - 26%

\$40 - 50 - 38%

\$55- 60 -12%

No - 30%

33 comments (some themes, including number of related comments are listed below)

- *Want diversity - not just kale - (3)*
- *Have enough in our garden - (11)*
- *Only if can opt out for certain weeks - (3)*
- *Love idea/very supportive - (4)*
- *I want to choose my own vegetables/the size - (5)*

2. A Food Cooperative (or food co-op) is a retail store that is owned collectively. Members of a food co-op may sit on the board, help develop policy or volunteer in the day to day operations. However, not all co-ops require their members to volunteer. Would you welcome a non-profit, member-based food co-operative (i.e. small store front) that supplied seasonal local food, organics, specialty and bulk items? Visit <http://potluckcoop.ca> to learn more about the development of a Whitehorse food co-op.

Yes - 92% (50 comments)

No - 10 % (3 comments)

Yes comments include:

- *Discussion around price and preferred products.*
- *Very supportive; some do not want to volunteer their time.*
- *Some healthy skepticism.*

No Comments:

- *“Not convinced it would work – too many alternatives; too much volunteer effort.”*
- *“Rather than a store, keep costs down with a warehouse and scheduled pickup times.” Food Cooperatives rely on annual membership fees to help cover operating costs. In exchange, members often enjoy cost savings as well as having a say in how the co-op runs.*

Under \$50 – 36%

\$50 - \$75 – 30%

\$100 – 13

Sliding Scale – 36%

3. Would you welcome an online shopping experience (i.e. a virtual farmers market) where you could order seasonal items, ready-to-go meals, baking, meat and eggs (if available) and other specialty items (i.e. locally made goat cheese, chocolate and falafel; Yukon roasted tea and coffee, etc).

Yes – 80%

No – 21%

Yes Comments (see examples below):

At least 5 people indicate having experience with this model in other places (i.e. SPUDS in Vancouver)

- *“Yes, I prefer this option to a food co-op.”*
- *“Yes, assuming the items could be picked up in Whitehorse.”*
- *“Great idea! Much less wastage of time and food too.”*
- *“Yes -- I would actually prefer this to a set box...picking and choosing would be more ideal.”*
- *“This is an excellent idea; I hope it would work for all kinds of good reasons.” Maybe get Beans North to run it, they have many years experience doing deliveries.”*
- *“Would probably use this service, especially for eggs and seasonal items.”*
- *“Yes, although there is something community building about meeting people face-to-face.”*
- *“Potentially great idea if enough people to make it worthwhile.”*
- *“I would be open to this idea if I could get BC produce as well throughout the year.”*
- *“Yes - the easier it is for people, the more likely they are to take advantage.”*

No Comments (see examples below):

Biggest complaint— some people aren't interested in shopping online for groceries!

4. Three options intended to help Yukon shoppers access more local food items in convenient ways have been discussed. Please indicate the option(s) you prefer:

	Thanks, but no thanks	Somewhat interested	YES! I would use this option weekly
Local Box	22.2% (12)	38.9% (21)	38.9% (21)
Co-op	6.7% (4)	23.3% (14)	70.0% (42)
On-Line Farmers Market	16.4% (9)	36.4% (20)	47.3% (26)

5. Please indicate the amount your household spends each week on the following items?

	Under 5	\$10	\$15	\$20	\$30	\$40
Veg	3.4%	6.8%	6.8%	19.9%	25.6%	33.9%
Baking	25%	47%	14%	5.3%	8.8%	0%
Meat	29.8%	14%	14%	21%	10.5%	12.3%
Eggs	52.7%	36.4%	10.9%	3.6%	0%	0%
Dairy	13.8%	31%	20.7%	17.2%	12%	5.2%
Bulk Dry	20.7%	19%	24%	20.7%	15%	0%

6. A number of factors help determine the items we purchase to eat. Please rate how the following 'qualities' effect your purchasing decisions:

	No Influence		Med Influence		Very Strong Influence
Instant/ready to cook	59.3%	28.8%	10.2%	0%	1.7%
Organic	3.3%	8.3%	20%	15%	53.3%
Spontaneous	13.3%	36.7%	23.3%	21.7%	5%
Local	1.7%	0%	11.7%	30%	56.7%
Price	3.3%	20.0%	50%	16.7%	10%

Comments (see examples below):

- *"I'm willing to pay a premium for local and/or organic."*
- *"If it is local/high quality organic, price isn't so important for me."*
- *"Our order of choice priority is 1) locally grown, 2) organic 3) local business 4) price."*
- *"I am interested in organic, local, fair-trade and carbon neutral products - especially food."*
- *"Fairly traded food, fairly compensated farmers. Exploited workers make for not very delicious food!"*
- *"Packaging is an issue for me (choose products that are recyclable)."*

APPENDIX 6

Rapid Market Assessment (RMA)

July 29th, 2010 Fireweed Community Market
Total Participants – 69

The following simple survey was used to learn about shoppers habits at the Fireweed Community Market.

(Questions may have multiple responses)

1. What limits you from eating more local food?

Response:

Price	23
Can't grow my own	12
Market is not convenient	6
Limited Selection	23
Not interested	0
Don't know where to buy local	11
Can't get to farms	13
Limited availability in stores	45

2. How do you “get” local food?

Farmers Market	49
Grow My Own	28
Hunt and Gather	32
Farm Gate	12
Other (CSA, U-pick)	18
	0

3. How much do you spend at this Farmers Market?

Under \$10	6 (avg \$30)
\$11-20	25 (avg \$375)
\$21 - \$39	26 (avg \$780)
Over \$40	4 (avg \$200)
It depends	8 (avg \$100)
*69 people spent avg. of \$1485 at the market	

4. What local items are most important to you?

Vegetables	46
Berries and preserves	14
Baking & grains	24
Cheese and Dairy	29
Pesto and Dips	1
Only Organic	5
Eggs	30
Bedding plants and herbs	11
Meat (poultry, fish & livestock)	23
Other (concession/candy)	9

5. How often do you shop at this market?

Always	22
2X a month	20
Once a month	14
Hardly ever	11
<i>Tourists/visitors</i>	<i>Several people commented they were tourists and made a point to visit market.</i>

APPENDIX 7

Succession Models – Intervale Centre & Indian Line Farm

These two cases are a small portion of the food chapter in a book Mike Lewis is working on with a colleague in the U.K. We provide it here to illustrate a couple of approaches that may be relevant to the Yukon.

Intervale Centre, Vermont

In 1983, the flood plain of Winooski River, a mile and a half from the centre Vermont's largest city, Burlington, was a mess. Garbage four feet thick, junked cars strewn across the landscape, seepage problems from the adjacent sewage plant; not exactly a setting that triggers visions of organic farming. Nevertheless, the land was reclaimed to produce local food and by 2007, just two decades later, a mere 200 acres produced more than 1 million pounds of high quality produce, close to 8% of all the fresh food consumed in Burlington.

Controlled and managed by the Intervale Centre, a non-profit trust created in the 1980's, what was once a 350 acre site of desolation is now a local ecological treasure.

The land is held under a community land trust (see chapter 4). Intervale leases 200 acres to prospective farmers committed to building a local supply of sustainably produced food. There are now 13 independent farms, most of which are directly linked to CSA (community supported agriculture) markets and the Burlington farmers market. From the smallest to the largest, the latter being only 35 acres, farmers have viable livelihoods and create 60 seasonal jobs.

This system creates significant benefits to young farmers. First, not having to buy land is a huge capital saving. Creative use of leases that are reasonable and secure lowers the financial risk considerably. Similarly, structuring co-operative arrangements to utilize buildings, equipment and irrigation reduces capital costs and increases cost efficiencies of installed infrastructure. Together, these factors frame a reasonable and realistic gateway for younger people to grow food as a viable livelihood.

Production on the land is diversified based on the interests of individual farmers, local and regional niche markets and the capacity of the land. The objective of providing a diverse food supply is a key objective of the trust. They realize this through their selection of lessees and through a variety of programs that support local market development, CSA organization, business planning and technical supports to new farmers.

The Intervale Centre has several revenue generating units which produce about 60% of its \$2.2 million in annual revenue, the balance coming from grants and community fund raising.

The first and largest enterprise of the trust, one that has been key to the Intervale transformation, was in composting. In 2008, this break-even operation had revenues of over \$800,000 and is the largest composting service in Vermont. They sell their products, packaged and in bulk, to individuals for household use, landscapers, farmers and the city. Quite apart from its contribution to the local economy and soil fertility enhancement, this social enterprise diverts over 30,000 tons annually from land fills and employs a number of marginalized people.

Other revenue generation streams include the various leasing arrangements with Intervale farmers, technical services and contracted services related to education and training and, as well, rentals for public events using Intervale facilities.

What the Intervale example does not help us with is how to respectfully transfer the land from a farmer nearing retirement to an Intervale type community land trust.

Indian Line Farm, Massachusetts

One can google land trusts dedicated to preserving land for agricultural purposes and find scattered examples. In North America they often use the legal device of conservation easements to prevent the farm land being sold off to developers. Protection, while an important first step, does not mean it will be productively farmed, however. In British Columbia, Canada's western most province, there has been a law to protect farm land since 1973. However, what is now happening is more and more people with a lot of money are buying farms. Rural estates are beginning to dot the landscape. Preserved the land might be but it is no longer producing food.

Most farmers have a deep attachment to the land. Seeing a life's work of husbanding the land maintained is a deep desire. Selling off for cash to a developer or to the wealthy may be tempting in the absence of other options, but maximizing profit is hardly the driver of people who have committed their lives to farming. Indeed, the increasingly prevalent pattern of taking on off-farm work just to support the farm suggests the opposite. Farmers want to farm but cannot sustain themselves. Herein lies part of the transition challenge: we as consumers have come to expect cheap food yet the very farmers we need to feed us in the future cannot afford to put their full efforts into doing so. Reaching the end of their work life, the aging farmer having invested for years, has assets but remains cash poor. And if the problem of retirement is not solved, the likelihood of selling off the land and assets to someone with lots of money and no intention to farm is high. As many farmers lament, you have to be either rich or crazy to buy a farm.

The first example of solving this problem in the U.S was the Indian Line Farm in the Berkshire region of Massachusetts. A creative series of transactions reveal several important pieces of the puzzle necessary to address the challenge.

First, the Indian Line farm, a small 22 acre operation, was one of the first CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farms in the US. Thus there were already a number of conscious consumers from the local area who were members of the CSA and had a relationship to the farmers putting food on their tables. In short, there was existing social capital.

Second, the CSA member relationship to the farm fed a desire to preserve it in perpetuity. They donated and promoted to others the opportunity to preserve the farm. CSA member donations to a regional conservation land trust kicked off a broader campaign that successfully organized sufficient cash to buy a conservation easement. The function of a conservation easement is to place a covenant on the land that permanently protects its use as farmland. In this case the easement also required particular ecological values on part of the property be maintained, indeed, enhanced. The cash from the campaign secured the conservation easement³² was the first step in securing a dignified retirement income for the farmer.

Third, the title of the land was placed under a separate community land trust. With technical assistance from the EF Schumacher Society, a long term (99 year) lease document was devised that required any leaseholder to farm it using ecologically sound methods for the local markets. All the core values of the various partners are intertwined into a covenant that is designed to endure.

Fourth, the next generation farmer secured financing to purchase the house, barn, outbuildings and whatever equipment was deemed useful. This was more cash into the pocket of the retiring farmer. The lease allows equity to be earned on the improvements made to the farm during their tenure, thus providing a limited but important incentive for investment. The community land trust retains an option to purchase the buildings and improvements back, and to resell them at their replacement cost to another farmer. Thus, long term affordability is maintained.

Fifth, the Community Land Trust recovered its transaction costs through the capitalization of the deal. Longer term, the lease was structured to deliver a modest but ongoing management fee as well.

³² Typically, conservation trusts get their money from a combination of public fund raising, foundations and at times, state or federal government agencies