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Date April 26, 1999
ABSTRACT

There is a need for a comprehensive analysis of community food programs within the context of a sustainable food system and long-term food security. There seem to be no studies that identify the range of community food programs attempting to respond to hunger, or what they respectively offer. There is also a second gap in the literature in regard to analysis that respects the inter-relationship between food insecurity from a hunger perspective versus a sustainability perspective. Comprehensive approaches to food security that consider hunger and access to food as well as the production and distribution of food are necessary to ensuring an evolution toward food security. This thesis attempts to identify the various types of community food programs that have been developed, in part, to help alleviate hunger, as well as to assess their effectiveness and respective differences in terms of empowerment and sustainability criteria.

This thesis reviews the literature describing both the present industrial food system, and sustainable food systems, drawing from this literature various criteria that are posited from different perspectives for what an ideal food system should seek. Second, the thesis reviews source documents from reports, journal articles, and various organizational materials describing the various community food programs in order to identify a comprehensive list. Third, it applies the criteria drawn from the literature to the various community food programs, analyzing which criteria are satisfied by each of the different programs.

The literature identifies a number of criteria that help assess whether a specific production or distribution program is sustainable. Each community food program meets only a limited set of criteria. But as a package, community food programs help transform the food system into a system that is more sustainable. They provide people with a variety of options and they also help foster food security by empowering people to buy food or enabling them to grow food. Environment, society and economy are respected to varying degrees by each program, and to a large degree by all of them together.
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT
Since the exchange of money for food is the norm in Canada, if people do not possess adequate funds to purchase a nutritional diet, then it is likely they will incur difficulty securing a sufficient food supply. Poverty, defined as low income, is therefore the root cause of hunger for many people. When people are unable to buy or depend on charity for sufficient amounts of high quality food, they receive insufficient nutrition. This nutritive insufficiency, or its threat, creates physiological, social, psychological, and political effects, all of which negatively impact a person’s quality of life. While there are valuable actions being taken by different players in different parts of the food system, the Vancouver Food Policy Organization purports that presently there is no holistic picture of local food security in Vancouver. In their opinion, “[w]ithout a more complete and holistic picture of the state of our local food system, or even a better awareness of where the gaps in our knowledge and understanding lie, we cannot accurately decide where are energies are most needed and will be most effective” (VFPO, 1997:7). In Vancouver, many people, both adults and children, suffer from hunger due to their inability to secure appropriate amounts of nutritional food.

During 1994, over 608,000 people received food from food banks in British Columbia, including 280,000 children (Heart Health Coalition, 1997). Presently, the Vancouver Food Bank feeds approximately 7,000 people per week, 2500 of which are children (Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society, 1997). In addition to food banks, Vancouver citizens are also receiving food assistance through soup kitchens, missions, meal programs, and subsidized community kitchens (Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society, 1997). As with many other Canadian cities, there is great need within Vancouver to help alleviate food insecurity.

Hunger, a form of food insecurity, should be an unacceptable consequence given that the Declaration of Human Rights is designed, in part, to protect people from hunger. Written in 1945, the Declaration prohibits government actions that harm food security, guaranteeing everyone the right to food. Present statistics detailing the use of food banks, as well as documented dependencies on other charitable food programs provide strong evidence that Vancouver, along with other Canadian communities, is in direct violation of one of the principle tenants of the Declaration of Human Rights. People in Vancouver are hungry.
One way to help people secure sufficient amounts of nutritional food involves improving their financial situation. Unfortunately, governments seem unwilling to make the financial changes that could improve an individual’s ability to secure food. Currently, governments appear unwilling to increase the assistance upon which many of its residents depend, even though a significant number of people are unable to afford nutritious food. Unemployment rates continue to be high, leaving a great number of people dependent on insufficient employment insurance, and eventually, inadequate social assistance. People earning minimum wage also struggle to make ends meet because full-time work at minimum wage does not provide enough money for households to meet their basic needs. The ability to make ends meet is becoming more difficult for a great number of Vancouver residents. Consequently, a growing number of people are unable to meet their food needs in a manner that ensures sufficient, nutritious, personally acceptable food that is obtained through normal food channels.

Instead of enhancing employment opportunities, providing living minimum wages, and supplying social assistance recipients with an adequate income, governments are turning to programs based on charity models to meet the basic needs of its citizenry, as evidenced by the institutionalization of food banks. According to Riches, this trend “…is a clear sign that the right to a guaranteed social minimum is an illusion, and that the public safety net is in tatters” (1997, pg. 169). Government is increasingly relying on private and corporate donations of food, money, time, and energy as a way to alleviate the food insecurity of its citizens, completely disregarding their commitment to ensuring basic food needs are satisfied, as outlined in the Human Rights Declaration of 1945. While governments continue not to ensure that all of its citizens receive an adequate, livable income (either via assistance or employment benefits), communities are taking on larger roles, increasingly expected to buffer the ill effects of people living on inadequate incomes.

One of the ways that communities are participating in the fight against hunger and food insecurity is through the implementation of community food programs. Community food programs are programs organized at the community or local level that focus on the provision of safe, nutritious food. They provide communities with options that attempt, in part, to deal with food insecurity. Unlike food banks, these community food programs attempt to combat hunger in two ways: 1) by enabling people to produce their own food, and/or 2) by empowering people to buy food. These locally based programs attempt, in part, to increase food self-reliance, and are fundamental to the process of change.
In order to address the long-term goal of food security, it is also necessary that community food programs be understood within the context of sustainability. Long-term food security requires that the overall food system, including community food programs, be sustainable so that food is available for both present and future generations. If the food system produced enough food to feed the entire population but did so in a manner that depleted the soil and polluted the water, then the food system would be unsustainable because the ability of the natural environment to sustain such levels of production would be limited. Thus, a sustainable food system is one that organizes the production and distribution of food in a way that maintains long-term economic, ecological, and social health for all generations.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT
There is a need for a comprehensive analysis of community food programs within the context of a sustainable food system and long-term food security. There seem to be no studies that identify the range of community food programs attempting to respond to hunger, or what they respectively offer. There is also a second gap in the literature in regard to analysis that respects the inter-relationship between food insecurity from a hunger perspective versus a sustainability perspective. Often, anti-hunger groups and sustainable food system groups focus on different aspects of food insecurity. When identifying the primary problem, anti-hunger groups point to the lack of access to food (or stores), or to the lack of income or jobs necessary to provide the means to purchase food. Sustainable food system advocates concern themselves with the way in which food is produced, including the negative effects on the soil, air, water supply, and the quality of life of rural communities (Lawrence, 1996). Comprehensive approaches to food security that consider hunger and access to food as well as the production and distribution of food are necessary to ensuring an evolution toward food security.

Therefore, this thesis attempts to identify the various types of community food programs that have been developed, in part, to help alleviate hunger, as well as to assess their effectiveness and respective differences in terms of empowerment and sustainability criteria.

1.3 SCOPE
Typically, there are two responses to hunger in Canada: food-based responses and income-based responses. This thesis identifies and discusses food-based responses to hunger in Canada, within a sustainability framework. Although integral to obtaining food security, responses associated with
income, such as increasing social assistance, providing local employment, or increasing minimum wage, are beyond the scope of this thesis. This thesis focuses on the experience of Vancouver communities and residents. In some instances, data and examples will be used from jurisdictions outside of Vancouver. It is suggested that Vancouver is similar to other cities since the programs come from community members with values that members of other cities share - but it will be left to others to determine the situation in other cities. This thesis concentration is on identifying a framework that can be used elsewhere.

1.4 METHOD
This thesis will review the literature describing both the present industrial food system, and sustainable food systems, drawing from this literature various criteria that are posited from different perspectives for what an ideal food system should seek. Second, the thesis will review relevant source documents from reports, journal articles, and various organizational materials to identify a comprehensive list of community food programs. The identification of community food programs will occur separately from the identification of sustainable food system criteria. Third, the thesis will apply the criteria drawn from the industrial and sustainable food system literature to the various community food programs, analyzing which criteria are satisfied by each of the different programs.

1.5 THESIS FORMAT
Chapter 2 provides background information, examining the degree to which food insecurity exists within the city of Vancouver (as supported by data from local food banks and several Canadian studies). This section outlines which groups experience hunger, what is meant by the term hunger, how Canada measures hunger, and why hunger is an important issue. The consequences of living with an inadequate income and food insecurity are also discussed, including the identification of physical, social, psychological, and political effects of poverty-induced hunger. The relationship between social assistance, unemployment, and the working poor, and food insecurity (expressed as hunger) is explored. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the merits of charity versus justice as perspectives for responding to poverty and hunger, a discussion that informs the selection of various community food programs. The intent of Chapter 2 is to provide the reader with an understanding of the perspective brought to the balance of the thesis.

Chapter 3 describes the present industrial food system, identifying its principles, goals, and the negative effects on the natural environment and community. It discusses the commodification of
food, linking food consumption to poverty and one’s ability to pay for food. Following a critique of the industrial food system, principles guiding a sustainable food system are introduced. This section includes a description of what constitutes a sustainable food system, including identification of goals and principles. The benefits of this system are discussed. Both the literature describing the industrial food system and the sustainable food system inform the identification of criteria describing an ideal food system.

Chapter 4 identifies various community food programs that seek, at least in part, to improve the food security of participants. The goals and strategies of each program are described. This chapter concludes with a matrix that applies the criteria from chapter 3 to each of the different community food programs. The content analysis of documents describing the different community food programs is used to inform the application of the criteria to the various programs.

The matrix developed in Chapters 3 and 4 is discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5, according to whether each program satisfies the sustainability criteria. Synergistic properties amongst various programs are also noted. This section allows the reader to understand how each community food program impacts the evolution toward a sustainable food system.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, includes a summary of the thesis’ major research findings.
CHAPTER 2 – HUNGER AND FOOD

2.1 INTRODUCTION
When considering whether community food programs can help alleviate hunger, it is important to understand the context of hunger. This chapter defines hunger and describes how it is typically measured in Canada. It also shows who is hungry, the consequences of hunger, and some of the reasons why people are hungry. The relationship between income and hunger is explored, including the relationship between people living on low income and the use of food banks and other charitable food programs. The adequacy of the BC Benefits Program, employment insurance benefits, and minimum wage rates, is discussed. The eruption of food banks and other charitable food assistance programs is linked to the failure of governments to provide adequate social benefits and the consequent need for private citizens to subsidize through charity the food needs of a growing number of people. It is argued that food banks and other charitable food assistance programs suffer many shortcomings.

This chapter provides a selective literature review establishing a theoretical perspective on what should be done to help alleviate hunger. It does not attempt to make an original contribution in this regard.

2.2 WHAT IS HUNGER?
According to the Bread for the World Institute, hunger can be defined in a literal sense as “...a condition in which people lack the basic food intake to provide them with the energy and nutrients for fully productive, active and healthy lives” (Riches 1997: 47). Davis and Turasak (1994) add that the experience of hunger also includes a lack of desire to eat as well as situations of widespread famine, starvation or chronic food deprivation leading to under-nutrition. Such definitions focus on the physiological aspect of hunger, how the functions and the processes of the body relate to food intake. Although the physiological aspect of hunger is significant, it is important to realize that hunger is multidimensional, that it also has social, psychological and political dimensions.

The social and psychological aspects of food acquisition and consumption broaden physiological-based definitions of hunger by adding risk of hunger as well as inability to secure food that is appropriate in terms of quantity, quality, and type. Consequently, Davis and Turasuk (1994:51) define hunger as “...the inability to obtain sufficient, nutritious, personally acceptable food through
normal food channels or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so”. According to this definition, if an individual can only secure food by visiting the food bank (an abnormal food channel) then this person is experiencing the social and psychological dimensions of hunger. Their definition broadens our understanding of hunger to include the effects of inadequate, inappropriate, and insecure access to sufficient, nutritious, and personally acceptable food.

The fourth dimension of hunger is the political dimension. As a political issue, hunger is also a function of poverty and inequality, whose abandonment is a matter of distributive injustice (See Riches: 1997, DeLing: 1994). According to Black (1994), while currently there is enough food to feed the world’s population, 800 million people per year are unable to secure appropriate amounts of nutritious food for themselves. Davis and Tarasuk (1994) also state that sufficient amounts of safe food exist within Canada, and that hunger is associated with impeded access, through normal food channels, to that food. Many support the notion that the present distribution of wealth precludes a significant number of people from securing their own food (Riches: 1997, Kneen: 1993). In their view, governments must choose to make food security a high priority, including by redistributing wealth, so that all individuals possess the means to secure appropriate amounts of food for themselves and their families.

This thesis adopts a multidimensional definition of hunger that includes its physiological, social, psychological, and political aspects. Although most people tend to focus on the physiological aspects of hunger, the non-physiological aspects are just as relevant. In order to illustrate the extent of hunger comprehensively, it is important to adopt a broad definition that reflects the full experience of hunger.

2.3 HOW DOES CANADA MEASURE HUNGER?

There is one indicator of hunger in Canada according to Davis and Tarasak (1994): usage of food banks and other charitable food assistance programs. When trying to ascertain through this indicator the extent of hunger suffered by a particular population, three important limitations must be considered. First, one cannot assume the absence of hunger simply because individuals do not seek the services of food assistance programs. Second, it is incorrect to assume that because an individual has used a food assistance program, their hunger has been alleviated (Davis and Tarasuk: 1994). Third, not only hungry people may be using the food bank. Despite these limitations, food assistance data are presently considered by Davis and Tarasuk (1994) to be the best indicators of
hunger in Canada. Consequently, this thesis depends on such data to establish the presence of hunger in British Columbia.

2.4 WHO EXPERIENCES HUNGER?
Contrary to the popular view that Canada is a land of plenty, hunger is a serious and growing problem. According to Davis and Tarasuk (1994), following World War II and prior to the 1980s, there existed small-scale food relief programs, with little evidence to suggest widespread hunger in Canada. Canada's first food bank, in Edmonton, Alberta, opened in 1981 (Riches: 1986, Riches: 1997). In 1982, Vancouver opened its first food bank, with a single distribution to 225 people (Food Bank News: 1997). In the early 1980s, food bank operators believed the development of food banks to be an emergency food assistance response to the needs of hungry Canadians. The short-term, emergency approach to feeding the hungry in Canada soon became an institutionalized food assistance program. In 1986, approximately 70,000 British Columbians per month received some food bank assistance (Levens: 1986). By the end of 1991, there were 292 food banks in Canada, "...operating and supplying over 1200 grocery programmes and 580 meal programmes in more than 300 communities" (Riches, 1997, pg. 49). Now, there are over 450 food banks in Canada, and in British Columbia over 70 (Food Bank News: 1997).

In 1994, food banks in British Columbia fed 608,000 people, of which 280,000 were children (Heart Health Coalition: 1997). Between 1996 and 1997 the number of people receiving food assistance from the Vancouver Food Bank increased by 20%. In 1997, this food bank, through 17 distribution centres, was feeding 7,000 people per week, 2,500 of which are children (Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society: 1997). In addition to those receiving food directly from the food bank, the food bank also provides over 80 support agencies with food, feeding thousands more people visiting missions, shelters, soup kitchens, meal programs, and community kitchens (Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society: 1997). Vancouver Food Runners, a prepared and perishable food recovery program, supplies food to 46 agencies assisting approximately 2500 to 3000 people each day, and provides between 30,000 and 40,000 meals and snacks each month (Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society: 1997). The need for school meal programs provides further evidence of child hunger in Canada. "[I]n Vancouver, in 1990, 8500 children in 40 low-income elementary schools were benefiting from an expanded lunch programme" (Riches 1997: 51).
Studies illustrate that many communities within Canada experience hunger, affecting their well being and quality of life. The Edmonton community food needs assessment, the Surrey food bank survey, and the BC food bank users study all provide insight regarding the experience of hunger and food insecurity in Canada.

2.4.1 Hunger and the Edmonton Community Needs Assessment

In 1990, the Edmonton Food Policy Council received a two-year grant to conduct a community food needs assessment. In an effort to describe the level of food security among low-income Edmonton residents, the council interviewed 460 low-income people about their food needs (Olson: 1992). Random telephone calls and agency referrals were used to identify the 460 low-income people. Of these 460 people, 113 were identified using a random telephone interview, 124 were identified using a random face-to-face interview in public housing complexes around the city, and 223 were identified using a face-to-face interview through agency referrals. During the random telephone interviews, it was necessary to screen for income since only about 20% of Edmonton households are low income. Percents quoted in the report are based on the 237 random interviews done either by telephone (113) or in various public housing complexes (124). The agency referral statistics (223) are referred to separately because the agency sample is considerably worse off as a group. Riches (1997) believes that the results of the Edmonton Food Policy Council’s needs assessment are applicable to the rest of Canada.

In addition to assessing the three low income groups (general population, those living in public housing complexes, and those using agency services), the Edmonton Food Policy Council also examined whether households in each group were receiving social assistance, and whether they had members that were working or living in low income housing. Different family structures were also examined (Olson: 1992).

Interviews with the 460 low-income Edmontonians showed that three quarters of them had trouble securing a healthy diet on a regular basis. The low-income people having the most difficulty with food security are people living on social assistance or 57% of the 460 interviewees; families with children (including single parents) or 54% of the 460 interviewees; and working poor families or

1 When putting together a profile of low-income Edmonton residents, researchers asked respondents about their family structure. The following options were provided: single-no kids; married-no kids; single parents; or 2 parent families.
42% of the 460 interviewees\(^2\) (Olson, 1992:2). Based on the hunger scale, the agency sample group was found to be much worse off than the two random sample groups (the telephone interviewees and the housing complex interviewees).

In response to the hunger scale questions asked of low-income Edmonton residents, 60% of the sample said they worried about running out of food, and 49% actually have run out of money to buy food. When there wasn’t enough money to buy quality food, many of the random sample group respondents cut back to buying a few kinds of cheaper food (57%), ate less food than they felt they should (30%), or went without food for a day or more (13%). The agency sample was even hungrier with 85% worrying about running out of food, 77% having run out of food, and 34% having gone without food for a day or more (Olson, 1992).

Three-quarters of this low-income sample were having trouble getting enough healthy food on a regular basis. Forty-one percent were found to be 'hungry' or 'very hungry' with another one-third (34%) 'at risk' of hunger (Olson, 1992, pg. 8).

In response to the Child Hunger Scale Questions: one-half of families cannot afford to give their children a variety of food; one-third cannot afford to give their children good quality food; 13% cut the size of their child’s meals because there is not enough food; and, 12% of households reported their children are hungry, but none of them go completely without food (Olson, 1992, pg. 10).

The survey results of the Edmonton study show that low-income groups are particularly vulnerable to the incidence of hunger, often reducing the quantity or quality of their meals, or missing them altogether.

### 2.4.2 Hunger and the Surrey Food Bank Survey

In 1993, the Surrey food bank conducted a survey of its users, assessing, in part, their opinions regarding positive ways to change the operation of the food bank while simultaneously working toward the goal of long-term food security. This study revealed that most people (83.1%) using the food bank were dependent on social assistance, typically earning less that $15,000 per year, and that 50% of the people using the food bank have children (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz: 1993).

\(^2\) When putting together the profile of low-income Edmonton residents, researchers asked respondents to describe their work status. The following options were provided: no workers; working poor; minimum 1 part-time; or minimum 1 full-time.
One-third of their users were single parent families (over 90% headed by females), living well below the poverty line. Children made up 43.7% of Surrey’s food bank clientele; most of who were under 12 years of age. The study also revealed that sixty-two percent of food bank survey respondents skip meals because they do not have enough money to buy sufficient food (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

2.4.3 Hunger and the BC Food Bank Users Study

In 1986, the Provincial Food Bank Task Force asked the Social Planning & Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC) to undertake a study of food bank users in British Columbia. Consistent with the 1993 Surrey study, 78% of the 425 interviewed food bank users were on income assistance with more than 50% having been on welfare for two or more years. The median monthly income of food bank users, in household size categories, was also well below Statistics Canada’s low-income cut-off³ (Levens: 1986). According to Statistics Canada, in 1996 there were 2,794,000 Canadian families and unattached individuals living below the LICO, with 24.3% experiencing a total income deficiency of $10,000 or more. A majority (56.1%) of the low-income group experienced an income deficiency of at least $5,000 or more (Statistics Canada 1997: 196). Approximately 35% of the food bank users were families with children at home, and an estimated 76% of the children were below the age of 12 (Levens: 1986).

2.5 POVERTY AND FOOD

Poverty is considered by many to be the root cause of hunger⁴ (Heart Health Coalition: 1997, WHY Magazine: 1996, Davis and Tarasuk: 1994, Kalina: 1993, Olson: 1992, Marquis: 1990). Lack of an adequate income significantly affects one’s ability to secure sufficient, nutritious, personally acceptable food because buying food with money is the primary way in which people in Canada obtain food. “The poor are hungry because they do not have the assets to produce enough food, or do not earn enough to buy the food they need. And this points to the solution: to fight hunger, we

---

³ The low-income cut-off (LICO) is a measure used by Statistics Canada to identify those who are substantially worse off than the average. “In the absence of an accepted definition of poverty, these statistics have been used by many analysts who wanted to study the characteristics of the relatively worse off families in Canada” (Statistics Canada, 1997: 16).

⁴ Alternative causes of hunger include constraints on one’s time or explicit personal choice (Davis and Tarasuk: 1994). Since money is the main prerequisite to accessing food in Canada, this thesis limits the discussion of hunger to that arising from poverty defined in money terms.
have to enable the poor to produce food or empower them to buy food” (WHY Magazine 1996: 3). Unfortunately, food banks do neither.

Because money is the main prerequisite to accessing food through normal channels in Canada, economic deprivation, as characterized by acute or chronic financial insecurity or poverty, is a major risk factor for hunger (Davis and Tarasuk 1994: 51).

If an individual is unable to “purchase” an adequate diet, then it is likely they will encounter difficulty securing appropriate amounts of food for themselves. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes humanity’s dependence on food by declaring that food security is a basic human right, many people are unable to exercise this right simply because they do not possess the funds to do so (Ritchie and Brooks: Winter 1996).

2.6 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THERE ISN’T ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY FOOD?
Living without enough money to buy food, and suffering from constant food insecurity is a growing reality for more and more British Columbians. Many charitable food programs have arisen as a response to the growing number of hungry people.

Low-income households have developed multiple coping strategies. For many, it is common to visit food banks, soup kitchens, and other charitable feeding outlets as a way of securing food (Kalina: 1993, Olson: 1992). Many households choose to buy cheaper food, borrow money from family and friends, get food from friends, use food vouchers (an option if you are receiving social assistance), or, pawn or sell possessions (Olson: 1992). It is a common occurrence that families exhaust all assets prior to the receipt of social assistance, thereby limiting the assets exchangeable for cash to buy food. Also, households that borrow money to buy food often only delay the inevitable shortage of food, if they are required to pay back the borrowed money the following month.

The use of food banks and emergency feeding programs as a coping strategy may stave off hunger in the short term by providing calories. However, often those receiving food aid continue to suffer from food insecurity since food from food banks and emergency feeding programs often lacks quality, quantity, or choice (Kalina: 1993). According to a food bag analysis conducted by the Boundary Health Unit in Vancouver, “[i]f one person were to use the contents of the bag as his/her sole diet for two weeks, the food bag would only supply 61% of recommended calories, 60% of protein, 70% of calcium and 64% of iron” (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz 1993: 23). It is
important to note, that this analysis was conducted over one time period and that donations of food change each day, thereby varying the content of the food baskets. Also, it is incorrect to assume that because an individual received a food basket, she has consumed all of the contents. Often, people are allergic to certain items, do not like the taste of certain foods, are unfamiliar with the required preparation, or receive food that is no longer fit to eat (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz: 1993). The analysis suggests that food bags provide an inadequate nutritional diet to those people solely dependent on them for food.

2.7 NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Hunger and the inability to secure appropriate amounts of nutritious food significantly impact health and well being. Inadequate nutrition reduces the body’s ability to protect against diet-related disease and reduces the ability to recover from illness and surgery (Heart Health Coalition: 1997).

Lack of adequate food can weaken the body’s defences against infection, leading to an increase in the number, severity and duration of infections. Learning problems, fatigue, shortened attention span and increased irritability also accompany poor nutrition. Pregnant women who are malnourished have a higher incidence of stillbirths, low birth weight babies and babies with birth defects. In addition to maintaining health, a nutritious diet is linked to prevention of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers (Marquis 1990: 8).

According to the Heart Health Coalition, diet is related to the three leading causes of death in British Columbia – cancer, heart diseases, and cerebrovascular diseases (Heart Health Coalition: 1997).

Hungry children run an increased risk of suffering from cognitive and health disabilities.

Children are particularly vulnerable to hunger, as even moderate levels of malnutrition can pose significant health risks with long-term consequences for their development. In the first few years of rapid physical and cognitive development, undernutrition can lead to permanent cognitive damage affecting the ability of children to learn, reducing their resistance to infection and stunting their growth (Heart Health Coalition 1997: 5).

Improper types of food and eating patterns impact school-age children, affecting their attention span and learning, growth and development, reaction to stress, and resistance to illness (Heart Health Coalition: 1997). The health of their immune system is also impacted by inadequate nutrition (Heart Health Coalition: 1997).
2.8 OTHER CONSEQUENCES

In addition to the negative health effects of improper nutrition, many people identify loss of self-respect and pride as a consequence of using charitable feeding programs.

What clients view as the demoralizing distribution of essential food (long line-ups in all kinds of weather, often abrupt service, cramped facilities, poor quality of food, etc.) destroys their self-respect and sense of belonging – conditions of human flourishing. Those receiving support from the Food Bank, including children, suffer humiliation (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz 1993: 44).

This loss of self-respect and dignity impacts the well being of many British Columbian families. It is unfortunate that the dependency on emergency feeding programs and charity facilitates a loss of self-respect and self-esteem – the very qualities necessary when advocating for social change. If one does not believe that they have a right to sufficient, nutritious, culturally appropriate food, then one is unlikely to advocate for such a right. Kalina (1993) argues that when unemployment rates rise and the incidence of low income increases, rates of infant mortality, suicide, homicide, spouse and child abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, family breakdown and stress-related illnesses also increase, further reducing an individual’s or family’s overall health.

According to Davis and Turasuk (1994), the distribution of food is based on one’s ability to pay for it as opposed to one’s level of need. Income becomes a significant determining factor for securing a healthy diet. They state the following:

Finally, the apparent institutionalization of charitable food assistance programs in Canada has meant that for the first time, this country is faced with an obvious two-tiered food distribution system – one tier for those with adequate money and another for the poor. This trend towards charitable food support rather than protection against hunger through the traditional income ‘safety net’ makes visible the division of the population into the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ that the early influencers of Canadian social policy wished to avoid (Davis and Tarasuk 1994: 54).

Poverty and the concomitant effects on a person’s health and well being are a problem for many British Columbians.

2.9 INCOME AND FOOD SECURITY

“A community enjoys food security when all people, at all times, have access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable and culturally appropriate foods, obtained through normal food distribution
channels (not food banks)” (Kalina 1993: 6). This definition recognizes the need to maintain balance within the food system, ensuring at all times that there is an adequate supply of safe food and appropriate means to obtaining that food. If either of these conditions is not met, then food insecurity exists (Kalina: 1993). If access to food is limited or uncertain because income is low, transportation is lacking, or food distribution and thus, choice are inadequate, then people do not have food security (Kalina: 1993).

Over 90% of Surrey food bank users responding to a survey indicated that lack of money makes obtaining food for themselves and their families difficult. In addition to lack of money, Surrey food bank users indicated that physical disability, illness, expensive grocery stores, a lack of stores in the neighbourhood, too little time, and limited access to child care also make getting food difficult (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz: 1993). The Edmonton Food Needs Assessment confirms this finding, noting 62% of respondents indicated it would take more money to ensure they had enough good food to eat (Olsen: 1992). Insufficient knowledge of nutrition and low-cost, healthy food preparation skills, as well as irrelevant job skills are other barriers to securing appropriate amounts of quality food (Olson: 1992).

According to Riches and Kalina, there are three factors that help explain why income levels for a growing number of people are too low: 1) social assistance benefits fall well below low-income line cutoffs, 2) unemployment rates continue to be high while eligibility requirements for employment insurance tighten, and 3) the number of minimum wage jobs continues to increase (rather than jobs paying greater than minimum wage) (Riches: 1997, Kalina: 1993). An increasing cost of living, including the cost of housing, transportation, and service taxes, further reduces the purchasing power of low-income households (Kalina: 1993).

2.10 ARE BC BENEFITS (SOCIAL ASSISTANCE) INADEQUATE?
Before October of 1996, the province of British Columbia provided social assistance according to the Guaranteed Annual Income Act (GAIN). Presently, the Province provides social assistance through the BC Benefits Program. The mission of this program is to provide basic economic assistance to people in need (Goldberg: 1997). A definition of the level of economic assistance required when financing an individual’s or family’s basic needs is not provided under the new legislation (Goldberg: 1997). Several studies claim that the level of economic assistance provided

According to Goldberg’s analysis, the financial support granted under the BC Benefits Program is insufficient to provide for the basic needs of BC residents. Goldberg uses five types of households to analyze the adequacy of provincial social assistance benefits: single adult; single parent and a five-year-old child; two adults and no children; single parent, a sixteen-year-old child and a fourteen-year-old child; and two adults with a five-year-old child and a six-month-old infant. In all five instances, the provincial financial support falls short of that required when purchasing one’s basic needs (See Table 1).

### Table 2.1: The Gap Between Monthly Costs And Social Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Maximum BC Benefits</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>$ Gap</th>
<th>Percent Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Adult</td>
<td>500.00</td>
<td>1,048.67</td>
<td>548.67</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent and Five-Year-Old Child</td>
<td>982.00</td>
<td>1,534.54</td>
<td>552.54</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Adults and No Children</td>
<td>811.00</td>
<td>1,553.71</td>
<td>744.71</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent, Sixteen-Year-Old Child and Fourteen-Year-Old Child</td>
<td>1,175.00</td>
<td>2,059.80</td>
<td>844.80</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Adults, Five-Year-Old Child and Six-Month-Old Infant</td>
<td>1,239.00</td>
<td>2,272.16</td>
<td>1,033.16</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Goldberg 1997: iii)

Under the BC Benefits Program, income assistance rates are broken into two separate components: the support allowance and the shelter allowance. The support allowance is a fixed monthly allowance, based on family size. It is intended to cover costs for food, household supplies, clothing, personal care, transportation, and other costs “...which are required if recipients are to have adequate nourishment and supports necessary to seek training and/or employment, and to be able to participate in the daily life of their community” (Goldberg 1997: 5). The shelter allowance is the second component of income assistance. It is based on actual shelter costs, including rent and utilities, up to a maximum that is based on family size (Goldberg 1997: 5).
Even within the lowest 25th percentile of the rental market, shelter costs in Greater Vancouver are too high for income assistance recipients (Goldberg: 1997). In order to obtain a rental accommodation, many individuals and families use money from their support allowances to supplement their shelter allowance. This further reduces the money they have available to secure their basic needs. Since food is a variable expense, many households use some of their food money to offset the costs of housing.

Even before a household supplements its shelter allowance with part of the support allowance, it is hard pressed to acquire a healthy basket of food. Goldberg (1997) estimates that it costs $557.73 per month to feed a household of four - two adults, one child age 5, and one six month old infant. He estimates the total support costs for such a family, including food, household supplies, clothing, personal care, transit, and other daily living costs, were $1445.71 per month in 1997. The BC Benefits Income Assistance Support Allowance, in that year, provides this same family with only $589.00, 41% of the estimated support costs (Goldberg: 1997). Once this family of four pays for its food, it only has $31.27 left to provide for all other basic support needs.

The inadequacy of social assistance benefits is not a new phenomenon. The BC Nutrition’s Council documented this inadequacy in 1992. In that year, the cost of feeding a family of four (a two-parent family aged 25-49 with a boy aged 13-15 and a girl aged 7-9 years) in Vancouver was $117.15 each week, or $503.75 per month (BC Nutrition’s Council: 1992).

The average monthly cost of the Thrifty Nutritious Food Basket for the family of four was $527.95. If we consider the new support allowance, which started in February 1992, a family of four would receive $542.00. After buying the minimum food contained in the Thrifty Food Basket, the family would have $14.05 to spend on transportation, clothes, personal care, school supplies, household supplies...in fact everything else except shelter costs. This family would not be able to make ends meet by the end of the month (BC Nutrition’s Council 1992: 30).

In 1990, BC Nutrition’s Council documented that support allowances were inadequate. Support allowances fell short of the cost of food by $18.30 every month, even before considering the costs of clothing, transportation, toiletries, etc. (Marquis, 1990).
It is clear that for years the level of income assistance provided by the provincial government has not been enough to provide British Columbians with basic financial assistance, assuming basic assistance was meant to include food, clothing, and shelter.

As of 1992, approximately 10% of the population received [social assistance] benefits... – an increase of 81% over the past decade. In no province do benefits provide income as high as the low income cutoffs or ‘poverty lines’ and in most cases they fall well below these cutoffs (Davis and Tarasuk 1994: 53).

2.11 HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE WORKING POOR
Unemployment rose during the 1970s, peaked at 11.8% during the recession of the 1980s, declined towards the end of the economic recovery of the late 1980s, and then rose again during the 1990s. Unemployment has continued to rise during the 1990s, and has remained at about 11% (Davis and Tarasuk: 1994). High levels of unemployment have led to an increase in the number of people dependent on social assistance.

Marguis (1990) argues that the declining real value of wages and the increase in part-time work as opposed to full-time work weakens the ability of British Columbians to secure appropriated amounts of food for themselves and their families. This group of wage earners is often referred to as the “working poor”.

The working poor of British Columbia experience similar problems in their ability to buy an adequate diet. If the family of four were supported by one parent earning $5.00 per hour, the family would be put in the position of spending over 68% of its income to purchase the food in the Thrifty Nutritious Food Basket. Middle income Canadians spend approximately 15% on food (Marquis 1990: 7).

The increase in numbers of people dependent on social assistance, high unemployment, growing income-disparity between the rich and the poor, and an increase in the percentage of part-time and short-term work has been accompanied by a growing utilization of charitable food assistance programs.

Food assistance functions as a form of income transfer; as such, it supplements the low incomes of those who access it, lessening the severity of their poverty. The proliferation of charitable food assistance programs may thus facilitate an erosion of publicly-funded targeted programs by buffering the impact of policy shifts (Davis and Tarasuk: 1994: 54).
2.12 IS OUR CHARITY REALLY HELPING?

Poppendieck (1994) distinguishes two basic models competing as responses to poverty and hunger: charity and justice. A charity model is associated with voluntarism, neighbourliness, localism, spiritual good, and personal involvement. A justice model is associated with dignity, entitlement, accountability, and equity.

Proponents of a charity model support the evolution of the emergency food system as an appropriate response to hunger and poverty. This support includes food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens and food rescue programs. Soup kitchens typically provide people with prepared foods to be eaten on site or at home, whereas food pantries usually provide people with groceries for preparation at home. Food banks may provide people directly with groceries, or they may support a network of feeding programs, such as food pantries and soup kitchens. A food rescue program obtains unused food from restaurants, caterers, and other institutions for distribution to soup kitchens, missions, and other on-site feeding programs (Poppendieck: 1994). In all four instances, the people receiving food are completely dependent on the voluntarism of the giver, having little or no control over their food supply.

Advocates of the justice model do not support the emergency food system as a long-term solution to food insecurity. In order to deal directly with food insecurity, they advocate that governments provide adequate social assistance to its citizens, as well as create employment opportunities and secure livable minimum wages. These responses allow individuals and households to control their own food security.

Self-help differs dramatically from classical charity. The help-myself approach puts the consumer in command. The help-you approach puts the non-consumer, usually professionals and so-called experts, on top. The superior/inferior, powerful/powerless relationship reinforces historically potent myths that help trap the poor in their place (Webber: 1992: 84).

The essence of Poppendieck’s justice model is the creation of moral and legal rights. It is based on the notion of fairness, and is concerned with limiting inequality.

2.13 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS OF AN EMERGENCY FOOD RESPONSE

The emergency food system, the primary response to poverty and hunger, has many strengths and weaknesses. From a purely technical standpoint, emergency food programs do provide food to
people in need. Clients in New York preferred to use emergency food outlets rather than deal with
government bureaucracy because they perceived the service as kinder and gentler (Poppendieck: 1994). For many people, emergency food programs, such as soup kitchens, provide an opportunity for affiliation and social interaction. Emergency food programs also provide an opportunity to do outreach and monitoring activities. Several food banks in Canada take advantage of their organization as a gathering place for people suffering from food insecurity by providing information to their clients. Advocacy organizations also work with users to educate and advocate for social change. Organizations also monitor the use of these programs, using the data as a barometer of poverty.

Emergency food programs prevent waste. In the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that 20% of food goes to waste each year (Riches: 1986). By diverting some of this food to emergency food programs, the amount of food ending up in landfills is reduced. Food diverted to emergency food programs includes imperfect looking fresh fruits and vegetables, prepared food leftover from restaurants and caterers, inaccurately labeled cans, products nearing their expiration date, products with damaged packaging, and market failures (test marketed products that fail to sell) (Poppendieck: 1994).

Some argue that giving nourishes compassion and provides contact points between the affluent and the destitute (Poppendieck: 1994). Also, charity provides an opportunity for citizens to get involved and to give back to society. Volunteering also helps people do something useful, and it can help reduce one’s sense of loneliness and isolation (Webber: 1992).

While there are clearly some benefits to operating an emergency food system, there are also several important costs associated with such a system. First and foremost, emergency food systems based on charity operate in the absence of legally enforceable rights (Riches: 1997, Poppendieck: 1994, Webber: 1992). If, for example, an individual is denied access to food at a food bank, there is nobody that regulates the fairness of this decision. Furthermore, dependence on food banks for food is not equivalent to having a legal right to the food that they supply. This lack of enforceable legal rights is intricately related to the fragility and dependency of food banks on charitable donations of food and money. In most instances, food banks do not receive government funding. They are thus dependent on the donations of private individuals and corporations. If food banks do not receive enough food or money to satisfy the demand for food in a given month, there is no legal recourse for
dependents. They must go without (Poppendieck: 1994, Webber: 1992). Emergency food programs are also dependent on leftovers provided by either private individuals or the market. The leftovers provided to food banks, including damaged cans, products nearing their expiry date, or inaccurately labeled products, is not necessarily related to the food needs of food bank recipients. The food may also bear little relationship to the foods that are most desirable from a nutritional or consumer-preference point of view (Poppendieck: 1994, Webber: 1992). If Safeway has extra pickles, then food baskets will have pickles, regardless of whether you like pickles, need pickles, can eat pickles, or whether they are nutritious.

In the opinion of Webber (1992), emergency food programs circumvent national or provincial standards. There are no guidelines to assure families receive food they like, can eat, and that respects their ethnic or religious dietary restrictions. Medically proscribed diets are also not respected. Charitable food programs are also inconsistent because not all communities that need a food bank necessarily have one. There is no system for allocating programs on the basis of need (Poppendieck: 1994).

Charitable food programs perpetuate inequality, creating the illusion that people’s food needs are being met (Riches: 1997, Webber: 1992). In addition, they also undermine the welfare state, helping to cover up the government’s legislated and moral responsibility to the people (Riches: 1997, Poppendieck: 1994, Webber: 1992). The voluntary donations of time, money and food on the part of private individuals and corporations support the food needs of a significant percentage of the population, even though government has a legal responsibility to provide for the basic needs of its citizenry (Goldberg: 1997).

Charitable emergency food programs divert the energy of advocates. The time and energy that emergency food providers have to spend on advocating fundamental approaches to poverty and hunger is limited by their involvement in providing the emergency food program itself. This slows, if not halts, the process of social change. (Poppendieck: 1994, DeLind: 1990) Furthermore, dependency on the corporate sector for important food and money donations affects the lobbying activity of many food emergency programs. The Bread For The World Institute surveyed 71 food banks, and learned that many food bank staff members would like to increase the level of advocacy activity but “many do not have boards that currently support this type of activity” (Poppendieck 1994: 74). Many emergency food programs have corporate representation on their boards.
A primary characteristic of charitable giving is the aggrandizement of the giver and the minimization of the receiver. It is often the giver whose self-worth is valorized (DeLind: 1994), not the receiver whose self-esteem is often low. Further, the Surrey and Edmonton food bank surveys indicate that food bank users are often treated abruptly by food bank staff (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz: 1994, Olson: 1992). This charity dynamic creates a relationship of power and dependence rather than of equality and respect (Webber: 1992).

Table 2.2: Strengths and Weaknesses of an Emergency Food Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They provide food to people in need.</td>
<td>Emergency food programs operate in absence of legally enforceable rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They provide an opportunity for affiliation and social interaction.</td>
<td>They are dependent on variable sources of food, creating the potential for food shortages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They provide an opportunity to do outreach and monitoring activities.</td>
<td>They are dependent on leftovers, which may not reflect the food needs of recipients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They prevent food waste.</td>
<td>Donated food may bear little relationship to food that is most desirable from a nutritional or consumer-preference standpoint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some argue that giving nourishes compassion and provides contact points between the affluent and the destitute.</td>
<td>Emergency food programs circumvent national or provincial standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity provides an opportunity for citizens to get involved and to give back to society.</td>
<td>There is no system that allocates feeding programs on the basis of need (some communities are without such programs even though they are needed).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering can help people feel useful and reduce one's sense of loneliness and isolation.</td>
<td>Charitable food programs perpetuate inequality and undermine the welfare state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering can help people feel useful and reduce one's sense of loneliness and isolation.</td>
<td>Charitable food programs divert the energy of advocates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The charity dynamic creates a relationship of power and dependence rather than of equality and respect (Webber: 1992).
According to a study of Surrey food bank users, “Only 21 people, or 4.0%, agreed that the number of food banks should be increased as a means to helping reduce the problem of hunger (Levens 1986: 30). According to advocates of the justice model (including this author), and to food bank users, charitable emergency food programs do not provide long-term solutions to the problem of hunger and food insecurity. As the name suggests, emergency food programs were originally designed to meet the short-term, “emergency” food needs of Canadians. This is very different from the present institutionalized charitable feeding system, often depended upon by low-income Canadians as a long-term supplement to their inadequate incomes.

2.15 SUMMARY

The use of food banks and other charitable food assistance programs reflects the fact that many adults and children in Vancouver suffer hunger physically, psychologically, socially, and politically. The consequences of hunger include cognitive and health disabilities, diet-related diseases, a reduced ability to recover from illness and surgery, stress-related illness, low self-esteem, and loss of pride and self-respect.

Although the link between poverty and hunger has been clearly established and accepted by many anti-hunger advocates, governments are unwilling or unable to eliminate the shortcomings of their programs and policies. These shortcomings include inadequate social assistance and employment benefits, unacceptable high levels of unemployment, and low minimum wage rates. Although food banks and other charitable food assistance programs attempt to supplement the shortcomings of government assistance, they do so inadequately. As charitable programs, they operate in the absence of legally enforceable rights. Donated food does not necessarily relate to people’s nutritional or consumer-preference needs. Furthermore, charitable food programs create a relationship of power and dependence.

While there is an “emergency” role for charitable food assistance programs to play, it is important that solutions to hunger focus on the principles of a justice model, including dignity, entitlement, accountability, and equity. In addition to providing effective income-based responses to hunger (such as employment opportunities, adequate assistance, and livable minimum wages), solutions to
hunger must enable the poor to produce food or empower them to buy food. As will be shown in Chapter 4, community food programs address these demands to varying degrees, while providing a diversity of ways to help in the fight against hunger that respect the principles of a justice model.
CHAPTER 3 - FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SYSTEMS

3.1 INTRODUCTION
The ability to pay for food does not change the fact that everyone needs food in order to survive. Food security is based on this fact. It is a term used to describe a state of being that recognizes the importance of providing everyone with safe, nutritious food. It is based on the principle of balance, requiring that all food demands be met by sustainable food systems that maintain economic, ecological, and social stability. Food security is about long term universal access to a nutritious, safe food supply, now and in the future; making sure everyone has nourishing food, regardless of circumstance.

In 1949, Canada ratified the Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms, prohibiting government actions that harm food security, guaranteeing everyone the right to food. By signing the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, Canada reaffirmed its legal and binding commitment to achieving food security for all Canadians (Webber, Fall 1997). Canada also signed the World Declaration of Nutrition affirming that “access to nutritionally adequate and safe food is a right of each individual” (FAO, 1992; cited in Riches, 1997: 61). Unfortunately, as established in Chapter 2, many Vancouver citizens presently experience food insecurity. In order to achieve long-term food security in its truest sense, Vancouver, as part of Canada, must transform its food system to reflect these commitments.

The predominant industrial food system, in addition to other contributing factors, is unable to meet the long-term goals that bring about food security. In order to understand food security and its relationship to food systems, this chapter will begin by identifying the key components of food security. It will then describe two types of food systems, the predominant industrial food system and a sustainable food system, linking each system to food security. Identification of the limits of the industrial food system will illustrate that in order to achieve food security the industrial food system must change, moving toward the creation of a sustainable food system. As will be shown in the third part of this chapter, by definition, a sustainable food system is a requisite element of food security.
3.2 WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

Food security describes the relationship between the demand and supply of food. It considers the quantity and quality of food obtained by people, the manner in which food is secured as well as food production and distribution. According to Riches (Fall 1997: 2):

A community enjoys food security when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life. Food security is a right and includes at minimum: a) an available, adequate, dependable and sustainable food supply and b) an assured ability to acquire nutritious and culturally acceptable foods through normal food channels.

As a concept, food security enables that good, nutritious food is always universally available, and that the supply of food is guaranteed for future generations.

3.3 WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT FOOD SECURITY?

It is important to be concerned about food security for several reasons. The economy is changing in ways that make it harder for people to make ends meet. High housing costs, the loss of well-paying, full-time jobs, and the growing gap between rich and poor people creates an environment where more people are unable to meet their food needs (e.g. buy or grow their food) (Biddle, 1995).

According to an internal Alberta government report, “Alberta Social Services estimates that 66 per cent of welfare households in the province were forced to dip into their food money to pay for rent and utilities last year” (Vancouver Sun, 1998: A10). As in Alberta, Vancouver is also experiencing increasing poverty.

The food supply is also at risk because the industrial food system does not take care of farmers, the land, water, or seeds. The numbers of farmers and farming communities is decreasing, soil is eroding, ground water and soil are becoming contaminated with pesticides and fertilizers, plant varieties and species diversity are decreasing, and the safety and nutritional quality of our food is at risk (Biddle, 1995). For example, according to Farm Aid, “over the past 15 years, more than 350,000 [American] farmers have lost their farms and their livelihoods. Today, 500 farms go under every week, as farmers continue to face low crop prices and rising production costs” (Farm Aid, 1998). Eating habits are also changing, and many people are consuming too much fat and not enough fruits, vegetables, and grains. These eating habits are linked to many diseases, including cancer, diabetes, and obesity (Biddle, 1995). The stability of our economic, ecological, and social systems is at risk.
3.4 THE GOAL OF FOOD SECURITY

Achievement of food security is based on linking sustainable food system groups with justice-oriented anti-hunger groups, thereby joining concerns such as environmental protection and preservation of local farming with urban based concerns such as reducing hunger and expanding access to affordable food. “When effectively applied, a food security approach builds and coordinates public and private institutions at all jurisdictional levels to ensure access and availability to an acceptable and adequate diet for everyone” (Winne, 1996: 8). A holistic approach to food security will allow everyone to exercise the right to food.

3.5 KEY COMPONENTS OF FOOD SECURITY

In order to understand the term food security, it is helpful to identify the various components comprising the term. Below is a comprehensive list of food security components based on a review of the literature. It is important to note that not all authors define the term in exactly the same way, identifying all of the noted components. Some authors focus on issues of access while ignoring the safety or sustainability of the food supply while others focus more on the latter. There are authors that take a more holistic view of food security, identifying the need to fulfill food demands universally while securing a safe, sustainable food supply. The following list is a compilation of the many components of food security, based on a gleaning of the literature.

Food security requires that:

a) all people have access to food (Riches, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Heart Health Coalition, 1997; Davis and Tarasuk, 1994; Aiken, 1994; Kalina, 1993; Olson, 1992; Davis, 1988; Campbell, 1988);

b) the food supply is dependable (Riches, 1997; Davis and Tarasuk, 1994; Aiken, 1994; Kalina, 1993; Davis, 1988; Campbell, 1988);

c) information about food is easily accessible (Campbell, 1988);

d) the food supply is safe (Riches, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Aiken, 1994; Kalina, 1993; Davis, 1988);

e) the food supply is secured in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner (Riches, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997);

f) people have skills to prepare and grow food (Kalina, 1993);

g) sufficient amounts of food are obtainable (Riches, 1997; Heart Health Coalition, 1997; Davis and Tarasuk, 1994; Aiken, 1994; Olsen, 1992; Davis, 1988; Campbell, 1988);
h) food is nutritious (Riches, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Heart Health Coalition, 1997; Davis and Tarasuk, 1994; Aiken, 1994; Kalina, 1993; Olson, 1992; Davis, 1988);

i) food is personally and culturally acceptable, respecting dietary restrictions (Riches, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Heart Health Coalition, 1997; Davis and Tarasuk, 1994; Aiken, 1994; Campbell, 1988);

j) people obtain food using normal channels (non-charitable), in a manner that maintains dignity and self-respect (Riches, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Heart Health Coalition, 1997; Aiken, 1994; Kalina, 1993; Davis, 1988);

k) people are provided sufficient incomes enabling them to buy food (Riches, 1997; WHY, 1996; Kalina, 1993; Olson, 1992; Campbell, 1988); and,

l) the achievement of food security in the North does not diminish its possibility in the South (Oxfam Canada).

In order to achieve food security it is necessary to fulfill the demands of each component. For example, if the food supply is safe and agricultural practices are sustainable (e.g. chemical pesticides and fertilizers are appropriately utilized) but people are unable to access the food supply (e.g. food is not available in their neighbourhood), then that community suffers from food insecurity. Or, if a community has access to high quality foods but the food supply is not culturally appropriate, then that community suffers food insecurity. All of the components of food security must be met in order to establish long-term food security.

The next two sections of Chapter 3 will examine two competing types of food systems: an industrial food system, and sustainable food systems, noting their effects on food security. It will argue that the present industrial food system is unsustainable, requiring transformation to a sustainable food system.

3.6 AN INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEM

The term food system refers to “the deliberate organization of the production and distribution of food” (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997: 36). The organization of the food system also establishes patterns of accumulation and deprivation, in essence, who can have food and who cannot (Kneen, 1993). Presently, the dominant food system is the industrial food system, or agri-food industry, a global food system that is highly integrated, including everything from farm input suppliers to retail outlets, and everyone from farmers to consumers (Kneen, 1993). It is a
commercial food system that is economically driven, providing food at the least economic cost only to those who are able to pay for it (Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997).

The primary goal of the industrial food system is the generation of profit and the accumulation of wealth (Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997; Kneen, 1993). According to Wilkinson and Van Seters (1997), in order to generate profit and create wealth, labour is replaced with capital, throughput is maximized, nature is controlled with technology, fossil fuel and chemicals, and tasks are specialized and routinized. In 1995 it is estimated that about 4.7 billion pounds of pesticides were used worldwide as a means to control yield losses due to pests (Altieri, 1998). Operating within an economic growth paradigm, the system also emphasizes the continuous movement of product (Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997; Kneen, 1993). Moreover, by focusing only on the economics of food, food becomes commodified (Kneen, 1993).

The industrial food system, predicated on economic growth, provides no guarantee of food security. Peter Rosset (1996: 5) states the following:

[We]n the world as a whole, we now have 15 percent more food available per person than we did in the mid-1970s, yet there are 100 to 200 million more hungry people. Simply producing more food does not end hunger. Clearly it is the distribution of food and wealth that is important for achieving food security and eliminating poverty.

3.7 THE EXTERNALITIES OF INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEMS

The industrial food system limits itself to including only food production, processing, distribution, import, and export, excluding many environmental and social costs. Altieri (1998: 64) states that “based on the available data, the environmental costs (impacts on wildlife, pollinators, natural enemies, fisheries, water, and development of resistance) and social costs (human poisonings and illnesses) of pesticide use reach about $8 billion each year”. Such costs, in addition to the availability and quality of land (including soil), water, and air, and the disposal of waste, are excluded from the industrial food system. According to Kendall and Pimentel (Cited in Suzuki, 1997: 100), modern farming methods employed by the industrial food system deplete topsoil “16 to 300 times faster than it can be replaced. Worldwide soil erosion has caused farmers to abandon about 430 million hectares of arable land during the last 40 years, an area equivalent to about one-third of all present cropland”. Erosion and salinization continue to remove millions of hectares of
soil from agricultural production each year (Quayle, 1998). Other important costs externalized from the industrial food system include energy depletion, deforestation, and loss of genetic resources (Kneen, 1993).

The social costs externalized from the system are also enormous, and include

...heavy indebtedness, high stress, increased substance abuse and domestic violence, and the disintegration of rural communities. The latter has a direct effect on Vancouver proper as this disintegration leads to an urban influx and increased pressure on an already overloaded system (Vancouver Food Policy Organization, 1997: 5).

Suicide within the farming community is a social cost of the industrialized food system (The Forum of Farmers Organisations on Globalisation and Agriculture, 1998). Malnutrition is an externalized cost of the industrial food system (Kneen, 1993). According to the Vancouver Food Policy Organization (1997), it is ironic that farmers are unable to earn a decent living based on the proceeds from farming while simultaneously many people are unable to afford to pay the food prices demanded in stores. In BC, 56 per cent of farm households depend on off-farm jobs as their major source of family income (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997).

3.8 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEM

3.8.1 Distancing

Distancing means increasing the physical space between where food is produced and where it is consumed. Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen provide an example of how distancing in food production occurs. “In 1994, Canada Safeway closed its Vancouver bakery, throwing 89 employees out of work. Since then, bread for Safeway stores in British Columbia has been baked in Calgary while buns come from Bellevue, Washington” (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997: 18). By choosing a non-local supplier of baked goods, Safeway increased the distance between where a product is produced and where it is ultimately consumed.

Distancing also includes “…the extent to which the finished product is removed from its raw state by processing” (Kneen, 1993: 37). The separation of raw food production from the consumers of the final product happens in many ways. The effect of all of them is to increase the distance in the food system:
1. by breeding and engineering stability, durability and ‘shelf-life’ into a commodity;
2. by physically increasing the distance between where food is grown and where it is consumed;
3. by processing and product differentiation which increases the distance between the raw food and the end-product;
4. by adding preservation techniques and substances so that the time between when the food was alive and when it is consumed is increased;
5. by packaging technologies that permit longer storage and greater handling and shipping; and,
6. by urbanizing a population so that it no longer has a rural or farm experience, regardless of physical distance from the land.

(Kneen, 1993: 39)

Distancing alienates people from the sources of their nutrition. Each act of distancing also increases the opportunity to accumulate wealth because every value-added step (a form of distancing) adds a cost (and profit) to the food item (Kneen, 1993). Ironically, “the public may ostensibly pay less for their food, but at the same time the farmers, the primary producers get less for their ‘product’” (Kneen, 1993: 39). Furthermore, the low cost of food doesn’t represent the various ecological and social costs of the industrial food system, such as air pollution, water loss, soil degradation, salienation, and isolated rural communities.

Distancing also reduces the real nutritive value of food. A freshly picked tomato is higher in nutrition than a tomato that was picked four days prior to travelling 1000 miles. “Anything picked fresh, and virtually still alive when eaten, is going to be of different nutritive value than something that has been dead or dying for days, refrigerated, and /or gassed” (Kneen, 1993).

3.8.2 Uniformity

Monoculture, a prerequisite to industrial agriculture, requires three types of uniformity: uniformity in the type of crop (a single crop); uniformity in maturity; and, uniformity in size and shape. Such uniformity is quite unnatural, requiring chemical and genetic intervention to maintain such rigid standards. Uniformity demands reducing inter-cropping - the growing of complementary plants. The use of machines for harvesting requires uniformity in the size and shape of the food item, as well as uniformity in maturity. Since the capital cost of machinery is high, the use of machines also demands that the size of the farm be large enough to earn sufficient revenue to finance the cost of the
machinery. Processing, packaging, and the transportation of food also require that the food be uniform in size and shape (Kneen, 1993).

Although supermarkets and superstores create the allusion of diversity, actual diversity is decreasing, with uniformity taking its place (Altieri, 1998; Kneen, 1993). “In Canada, four varieties of wheat produce 75% of the crop grown on the Prairies and more than half of it comes from a single variety, Neepawa” (Kneen, 1993: 81). According to Thrupp, many fruit and vegetables listed by the USDA in 1903 are now extinct. “Of more than 7,000 apple varieties grown in the U.S. between 1804 and 1904, 86 percent are no longer cultivated, and 88 percent of 2,683 pear varieties are no longer available” (Thrupp, 1997: 5). The genetic variety, both in the number of species and in varieties within species, is reducing in an industrial food system. Most of the world’s food comes from approximately 20 species, a significant reduction from the 3000 species used for food throughout human history (Kneen, 1993).

### 3.8.3 Continuous Flow

Since the industrial food system’s primary goal is the maximization of profit and its ethic is growth, it is necessary that the food system continuously move food goods from the producer to the consumer (Kneen, 1993). Such constant movement is central to the logic of the industrial food system, the result of which is an increase in the quantity of food produced and distributed (Kneen, 1993). At the end of the day,

> [T]he product must move and if the customer will not buy it, the product must move away: to another store, to the sanitary landfill, to the food bank. That is why the big chains support the food banks which provide a socially acceptable dump or ‘outlet’ for the products that are not moving and defray, through tax write-offs, the costs of those that have to be dumped…[S]ince…the early 80s food banks have become sophisticated and integrated elements of the food system. Those who have been marginalized by being deprived of buying power are reintegrated by those willing to be surrogate customers on their behalf. Sales, cash flow, and the very health of the economy demand it (Kneen, 1993: 128).

Consumers play an important role regarding the continuous movement of food products because they are responsible for buying and consuming food. In order to maintain economic growth, profit maximization, and wealth accumulation, one or more of three things must increase: 1) the number of consumers, 2) the number of goods purchased by each consumer, or 3) the number of interventions
associated with the production of each food item. If any or all of these conditions occur, then the economy will grow, profit will increase, and investors will accumulate more wealth.

3.9 TRANSFORMING FOOD INTO A COMMODITY

Food is defined as “any substance, especially a solid, taken in by a plant or animal to enable it to live and grow”, including, as part of its definition, “anything that nourishes” (Webster’s Dictionary, 1975: 238). If food is characterized by its ability to nourish living beings, then it is logical to assume that a food system would also produce nourishing food. However, the nutritive value of food produced in the industrial food system is declining, an indication that the industrial food system is failing (VFPO, 1997; Kneen, 1993). Thrupp (1997) also supports that nutrition is adversely affected by the industrial food system (due to its reduction in diversity of crops and varieties).

Since the room for profit increases as the level of real nutrition in food decreases, and since the industrial food system’s primary goal is to maximize profit, there is a built-in financial incentive to produce food with less nutritive value. As a result, the industrial food system is working at cross-purposes with the primary characteristic of food: to nourish (Kneen, 1993). For example, if Cargill can sell more low-protein wheat at a lower price compared to high-protein wheat at a higher price, then Cargill will demand that farmers produce the low-protein wheat that is less nutritional. Cargill trades in volume, not nutrition. Its goal is to make money, not to make high protein bread (Kneen, 1993).

Unfortunately, food is no longer primarily viewed as a substance providing nutrition to living beings. Within the industrial food system, food is now seen as a commodity, with exchange-value replacing use-value. The industrial food system is part of the market economy that is based on commodity exchange. In order for food to become a business, our understanding of it must be transformed from food as food to food as a commodity. This transformation includes separating food from its function of providing nutrition, focusing instead on its ability to make money. The value of food as a product is then based on trade and speculation. As a product, it makes sense that food be marketed because it no longer has any intrinsic value of its own (Kneen, 1993). By referring to food as a product, it is neutralized, its use-value being replaced with its exchange-value (Kneen, 1993).

Once food has become only a commodity or a raw material, the notion of adding value also becomes reasonable. If the point is to make as much money out of the commodity as possible before it is finally consumed or thrown out, then it also becomes reasonable to
process, transform, and transport the product as much as possible in order to maximize the spread – the profit opportunities – between the cost of the raw material and the final product on the grocery store shelf (Kneen, 1993: 27).

The reduction of food to a product, commodity, raw material, or feed stock is a description of the meaning of food within an industrial food system. The function of food is no longer to provide nutrition. It is now a product or commodity to be sold, a raw material to which value is added, or a feed stock that produces edible and non-edible products. In all instances, the primary goal is the creation of wealth.

3.10 PEOPLE ARE CONSUMERS OF COMMODITIES

The industrial food system views people as consumers whose primary role is to purchase food and food products. They are the last stage of the profit-production process, purchasing more and more product and, supporting the accumulation of profit. Similarly, farmers are also viewed as consumers, however, they are consumers of agricultural inputs such as agro-toxins, farm equipment, and seeds (Kneen, 1993).

The industrial food system values consumers based on their ability to pay for products, in other words, their ability to become a ‘customer’. “The value of consumers is directly related to their function as a means of getting rid of product” (Kneen, 1993: 31). If a person does not have money to become a customer of food, then they will be dependent on alternatives such as welfare and food banks as a way to survive. “It then becomes the responsibility of those who do have money to pay their taxes and either donate money to charity or become surrogate customers on behalf of the deprived” (Kneen, 1993: 31). Private citizens, either by paying taxes or giving to charity (such as food banks), finance the basic needs of other citizens that do not have enough money to participate as consumers.

Food producers benefit from this situation when individuals ‘purchase’ food items for donation to the food bank. Charitable food models also divert energy away from advocating for social change, including development of a food system devoted to feeding people nutritious food (Kneen, 1993). Since it is far more efficient and good for a corporation’s image to have food banks get rid of product then to sell it at a discount or dump it in a landfill, charitable food systems become an extension of the corporate distribution system (Kneen, 1993; Webber, 1992; Riches, 1986). According to Kneen (1993), it takes a significant amount of time to find discount stores interested in
damaged product, and it costs money to dump food in a landfill. Food systems that generate charitable food systems turn many low-income earners into non-consumers because they do not possess the money to buy food (Knight, 1991). “Food produced and controlled as a commodity, results in consumers forgetting that food is a right and that everyone is entitled to eat” (Knight, 1991: 11.).

3.11 IS THE INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEM WORKING? YES, BUT...

The industrial food system is an unsustainable food system. As evidenced in Chapter 2, it has been unsuccessful in providing sufficient, safe, quality food for all citizens in a manner that respects their dignity and self respect. Also, it negatively impacts the environmental and social health of communities, the costs of which are externalized from the market cost of food.

John Jeavons, a biointensive farmer, notes the following effects of conventional agriculture on the environment, the economy, and farmers:

1. The world continues to deplete its soils approximately 7 to 80 times faster than resource-conserving agricultural practices.
2. Seventy-five percent of all the seeds ever used in agriculture are estimated to have become extinct by 1990.
3. Ninety-five percent are expected to be extinct by the year 2000.
4. Conventional agriculture uses 100 times the energy in mechanical and human forms per pound of food produced (a result of heavy dependence on chemicals and machines).
5. Agriculture accounts for 80 percent of all the water used by people on this planet, and dozens of countries already have insufficient water for growing all the food needed for their populations.
6. Economically, the US produces on the average up to $100 per sixteenth of an acre; the net return on a $500,000 investment on the average 500-acre farm is about $12,000, or a little over 2 percent.
7. The average age of the US farmer is 55, with few young people entering farming, depleting the nation’s skill base.

(Jeavons, 1995: 36).

Air and water pollution, soil erosion, land degradation, deforestation, salination, the destruction of rural communities, under-nutrition and malnutrition, and inadequate incomes for farmers are all examples of why the industrial food system is unsustainable. In order to achieve long-term food
security, the food system must nurture the environment in which food is produced as well as nourish the people dependent on it for their survival.

3.12 VANCOUVER’S ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT – FOOD CONSUMPTION

The “Ecological Footprint” is a concept developed by Wackernagel and Rees (1996) at the University of British Columbia’s School of Community and Regional Planning. It is a tool that measures the amount of ecologically productive land required to sustain varying levels of consumption, including the use of natural resources and the assimilation of waste, for a defined human population or economy. The ecological footprint tool seeks to answer the following question: How much land would be necessary to support a defined economy sustainable at its current material standard of living? This tool is useful in understanding the present food footprint of the city of Vancouver, a city dependent on the industrial food system to produce its food.

Wackernagel and Rees (1996) estimate that the average Canadian requires 4.27 hectares of productive land in order to sustain their total consumption, including food, housing, transportation, consumer goods, and services needs. In order just to sustain an individual’s food consumption, 1.30 hectares of productive land is required, representing 30.4% of the 4.27 hectares of total productive land (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Food Consumption & Land-use for the Average Canadian (1991 Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecologically Productive Land in Hectares Per Capita</th>
<th>Energy</th>
<th>Degraded Land</th>
<th>Garden</th>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Pasture</th>
<th>Forest</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food – Total</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit, Vegetables, and Grain</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Products</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Wackernagel and Rees, 1996: 82-83)

The ecological footprint of Vancouver’s food consumption illustrates the dependency of cities on the land base of their rural neighbours.
Table 3.2: The City’s Ecological Footprint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological Footprint of an Average Canadian’s Food Consumption</th>
<th>Population of the City of Vancouver (1996 Census)</th>
<th>Total Land Area Required to Support the Cities Food Consumption</th>
<th>Total Land Available to Support Food Consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 hectares</td>
<td>× 514,000</td>
<td>= 668,200 hectares</td>
<td>= 11,340 hectares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The land area of the city of Vancouver is only 11,340 hectares in comparison to the 668,200 hectares required to produce the food and assimilate the waste of an average Vancouver citizen. The ecological food footprint of Vancouver citizens is 59 times the city’s land area.

By engaging in sustainable agriculture, emphasizing the importance of local food production, and by focusing on community food security, Vancouver residents and their rural neighbours could slowly move toward a more sustainable food system that naturally reduces one’s ecological footprint. By using biointensive agricultural practices, Jeavons (1995) estimates that only 3,043 square feet (0.02826 hectares) are required to produce a complete year’s diet for one person. For example, using Jeavon’s “footprint” estimate of 0.02826 hectares per person, the total amount of land required to support Vancouver’s food consumption is 14,525.64 hectares. Although still above the total land available to support food consumption in Vancouver, this number represents a significant “footprint” reduction with respect to the amount of land required for food production. Reductions in chemicals, packaging and transportation also reduce pollution, fossil fuel use, and demands on natural resources (such as plastic, tin, and paper), as does the reduction of waste generated by a sustainable food system.

3.13 A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

Sustainability rests on the principle that we must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Many of the economic, social, and environmental effects of the industrial food system indicate that the industrial food system is unsustainable. Consequently, the introduction of a new food system that helps sustain long-term food security is necessary. According to FarmFolk/CityFolk (1997: 1), a sustainable food system means “both an economically viable and ecologically sustainable agriculture, and a distribution system which guarantees an adequate and acceptable diet for all British Columbians.” In the opinion of Kneen, a sustainable food system is a non-linear, wholistic food system that considers the following factors: production, processing, distribution, access, use, and, recycling and
composting. It considers these factors within the boundaries of natural resources, society and culture, and technological systems (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997: 37). By introducing a sustainable food system, special attention would be paid to the three pillars of sustainability - economic, environmental, and social – with emphasis on environmental and social values (Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997).

3.14 THE GOALS OF A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

A sustainable food system organizes the production and distribution of food in a way that maintains the social, economic, and environmental health of the system. Ideally, a sustainable food system provides universal access to nutrition, whereby all people have access to appropriate amounts of quality food that is culturally and personally appropriate, and is obtained through normal food channels (VFPO, 1998; Kneen, 1993). A sustainable food system also ensures that people working within the food system, growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing, and serving food, receive a living wage for their work (VFPO, 1998; Kneen, 1993). The environmental integrity of the natural systems upon which food production is dependent is also maintained, including the quality of land, air, and water (VFPO, 1998, Kneen, 1993).

A just and sustainable food system protects the land which produces the food, supports the local economy through local production, processing and distribution, empowers communities through self-reliance, and gives them increased food system security, enhances community well-being through increased health, [and] decreased illness, increases sense of community, and increases environmental health because of reduced transportation of food (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997: 36).

A sustainable food system guarantees food security by demanding that the production and distribution of food maintain the ecological, economic, and social health of communities, now and in the future. As such, the system links together the concerns of anti-hunger groups with those of sustainable food groups.

3.15 A VISION OF SUSTAINABLE FARMING

Mark Winne (1996), in his article entitled, "Choosing a Better Food System," provides the following sustainable farm typology as an example of how food could be produced and distributed within a sustainable food system:

- two dozen farms (5 to 100 acres) each grow 50 to 60 varieties of produce and other farm products
• farms are located within 100 miles of major cities
• farm equipment is modest in size
• farms are certified organic or are working towards a reduction in the use of chemicals
• the owner of the farm runs the farm
• products are trucked to farmers’ markets’, nearby schools or other institutions, or they are distributed through community shared agriculture programs
• low-income neighbourhoods have access to this fresh, locally produced produce
• safe and fertile land is available to urban gardeners and small farmers.

3.16 PRINCIPLES OF A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM
A sustainable food system is based on three primary characteristics: proximity, diversity, and balance. These characteristics are principles that describe the logic, or method of operation, of a sustainable, equitable and locally controlled food system (Kneen, 1993). According to Kneen, a food system is sustainable only when it operates in a manner that respects these three primary characteristics.

3.16.1 Proximity
The principle of proximity is simple: food should be consumed as close to the point and condition of production as possible. Maximum nutritional quality, maximum food security, maximum energy efficiency, and maximum return to those who contribute most to the food production process can be achieved in this way (Kneen, 1993: 178).

Based on the principle of proximity, the number of interventions in the food system is reduced. This minimizes the cash flow, an objective that is contrary to that of the industrial food system. In a sustainable food system, there is also limited opportunity for chemical, mechanical, technological, or speculative intervention (Kneen, 1993). Breast-feeding is the epitome of proximity in the food system (Kneen, 1993). It does not require the application of toxic chemicals, nor does it require the use of heavy equipment; the producer “naturally” supplies the equipment. A mother’s milk is also the closest and most readily available food source for a baby, unaltered in form upon consumption. Furthermore, it’s consumption maximizes both the mother’s and the baby’s health, using minimal energy. Expressions of proximity include farmers’ markets, local bakeries making ‘real’ bread, organic grocery stores, and, most significantly, community supported agriculture (Kneen, 1993).
By demanding that the production and consumption of food be as close to the source as possible, proximity encourages local food systems, reducing the need for food to travel long distances. This reduction in the distance food travels minimizes durability and shelf-life demands, naturally reducing the need for processing and packaging. Such reductions lessen the strain on natural resources, such as paper, tin, aluminum, and plastic (Garnett, 1996; Kalina, 1993). They also lessen the production of garbage or waste, including glass, plastic, and paper (Garnett, 1996; Kalina, 1993). By decreasing air and road transportation, fossil fuel consumption is reduced (Garnett, 1996; Kalina, 1993). This reduction can occur when food is produced locally since travel distance is decreased (Garnett, 1996).

Furthermore, by changing durability and shelf life demands, the standards against which food are measured changes. For example, it becomes possible to make nutrition the primary concern of food producers, rather than the durability of a food item intended to travel thousands of miles. Planting hardy indigenous crops because they are suited to the ecology of the area rather than because they are suited to processing and packaging standards becomes the standard (Kneen, 1993).

3.16.2 Diversity

The principle of diversity requires that communities increase the varieties of locally and regionally grown produce, including traditional polyculture and historic methods of food production as well as increasing the stock of genetic resources (Kneen, 1993). The greater the diversity, the greater the protection, the greater the independence, and the greater the security.

A sustainable food system must reduce its dependency on external supports to a minimum, and this can be achieved by maximizing diversity so that the food system as a whole is interdependent. Genetic diversity is the basis of a healthy population, and it provides the resources to respond to and interact with a constantly changing environment (Kneen, 1993: 183 -184).

Diversity also involves planting different fruit and vegetable varieties at different times, thereby extending the season (Bird, 1990; Kneen, 1993). The principle applies not only to genetic resources, but also to processing, to the ways of preserving and distributing food, and to the human talent required to organize the production and distribution of food (Kneen, 1993).
The Chinese 4,000 years ago, and the Mayans, South Americans, and Greeks 2,000 years ago all depended on small-scale agriculture to produce their food. Presently, John Jeavons and Ecology Action in California are utilizing bio-intensive farming, a miniaturization of agriculture that focuses, in part, on growing a diversity of open-pollinated seeds in order to preserve genetic diversity (Jeavons, 1995). Included in their definition of diversity is the notion of maintaining a diverse skill base so that everyone can participate in the building of farming skills (Jeavons, 1995).

3.16.3 Balance

Balance, the third principle of a sustainable food system, implies equity and is a prerequisite to sustainability.

In the case of a sustainable and just food system, the balance must exist between those who grow the food and those who prepare it, those who distribute it, and those who eat it. There must be some balance between the resources used to produce the food and the replenishing of those resources (Kneen, 1993: 185).

For example, a balanced food system recognizes that all food workers deserve and have a right to a livable wage. Paying a grower a fair wage, while simultaneously paying a food-processing worker an unfair wage would reflect an imbalance in the system. Labour must receive a balanced return for its contribution to the food system. A food system based on linear processes, such as the industrial food system, is incapable of providing such balance (Kneen, 1993). This is evidenced by the reduction in soil necessary for the production of food. The industrial food system fails to replenish the very resource upon which it depends.

3.17 CRITERIA OF A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

A sustainable food system is defined by several criteria against which food programs can be evaluated. This section identifies and describes these criteria which will then be used in Chapter 5 to evaluate multiple community food programs. Sustainable food systems include the following criteria:

Fresh produce:

Fresh produce describes food items in their natural state, prior to any form of processing. Examples include fresh fruits and vegetables, and unprocessed grains. The fresher a food item, the higher its
nutritive value. In addition, by minimizing the number of interventions between when food is produced and finally consumed, the consumption of fresh produce maximizes energy efficiency, minimizes the strain on natural resources, and reduces the production of garbage. (Heart Health Coalition, 1997; Salitan, 1996; Garnett, 1996; Kneen, 1993;)

**Locally produced**

Locally produced food minimizes the distance and time food travels between producer and consumer before it is consumed. By producing foods locally, nutritive value and energy efficiency is maximized, the demand for natural resources is minimized, and the production of waste is reduced. (Heart Health Coalition, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Kalina, 1993; Ritchie and Brooks, Winter, 1996; Winne, 1996; Salitan, 1996; Hamm, 1996; DeLind, 1994; Garnett, 1996; Berry, 1997; Kneen, 1993; VFPO, 1997; Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997;)

**Organically grown**

Growing food organically means growing it either without the application of chemicals or with minimal amounts of appropriately applied chemicals certified by an organic food certification organization. Food is allowed to ripen naturally, without the application of chemicals to keep it unnaturally fresh (VanCity, 1996-97). The reduction and elimination of the use of chemicals helps maintain the availability and quality of land, air, and water. (Ritchie and Brooks, Winter, 1996; Winne, 1996; Garnett, 1996; Berry, 1997; Kneen, 1993;)

**Growth and consumption of a diversity of foods**

Growing and consuming a diversity of foods includes a diversity of species, and diversity within species. The potential for good health is maximized when individuals consume a variety of foods. Environmental health and long term food security are also maintained by growing a diversity of crops. (Health and Welfare Canada, 1992; Winne, 1996; Garnett, 1996; Kneen, 1993; Feenstra, Ingels, and Campbell, 1997;)

**Seasonal Eating**

An individual eats seasonally when she consumes food according to its natural cycle of production. Eating seasonally requires that one consume food produced locally. For example, if an individual only eats strawberries in June when the local ecology produces them, then she is eating seasonally. Such eating habits bring an individual in touch with the natural growing patterns of her locality. (Ritchie and Brooks, Winter, 1996; Kneen, 1993;
Livable wages for food producers and all other workers within the food system

It is necessary that the wages paid to workers within the food system be sufficient so that they may purchase the items necessary to ensure their quality of life. It is unacceptable that food producers be dependent on any form of social assistance due to unsustainable incomes within the food system. (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Ritchie and Brooks, Winter, 1996; Kneen, 1993; Farm Folk City Folk, 1997 (economically viable); VFPO, 1998; Feenstra, Ingels, and Campbell, 1997;)

Generation of economic activity

Local economic activity will occur when food is produced, processed, and distributed locally, because jobs and profit are kept within the local community. (Garnett, 1996; Hamm, 1996; Kneen, 1993;)

Provision of universal or equitable access to food

All sustainable food systems must ensure that all people have access to appropriate amounts of culturally and personally acceptable food in a manner that maintains their dignity and self-respect. (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Kalina, 1993; Winne, 1996; Garnett, 1996; Kneen, 1993; Farm Folk City Folk, 1997; VFPO Pamphlet; VFPO, 1998;)

Environmental health improvement

The availability and quality of air, land, and water must be maintained in order to ensure long term food security for all generations. Minimizing fossil fuel use, reducing the dependence on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, lessening the demands on natural resources and decreasing the production of garbage all work toward maintaining and enhancing ecological health. (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Kalina, 1993; Ritchie and Brooks, Winter, 1996; Garnett, 1996; Kneen, 1993; FarmFolk/CityFolk, 1997; VFPO, 1998; Feenstra, Ingels, and Campell, 1997;)

Community health and well being improvement

Improved access to food and to information about food improves community health by allowing individuals to make better food choices. Improving nutrition reduces diet-related diseases. (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Garnett, 1996; Kneen, 1993; VFPO Pamphlet;)

Facilitation of communication between rural and urban communities

By reducing the distance between food producers and food consumers, the opportunity for communication between the two local populations is increased. Communication can help break
down barriers between rural and urban communities, as well as educate consumers about nutrition and how food is produced. (Hamm, 1996; DeLind, 1994; Garnett, 1996; Kneen, 1993;)

**Diversity of growers**

A diversity of growers includes a diversity of farmers growing food on a diversity of farms. It also includes a diversity of urban growers growing food in community gardens or urban gardens. Diversity also includes a variety of ownership arrangements, including leasing land, community supported agriculture, and individually and communally owned small and medium sized farms. A diversity of human talent is also part of a sustainable food system. (Hamm, 1996; Vallianatos, 1996; Kneen, 1993;)

Satisfaction of some or all of these criteria will move communities toward the creation of a sustainable food system. This movement enhances a community’s food security, helping it make safe, nutritious food available to all people, regardless of circumstance, in a way that respects ecological, social, and economic systems.

**3.18 SUMMARY**

A community enjoys food security when good, nutritious, personally acceptable food is always universally available, and when the supply of food is guaranteed for future generations. The achievement of food security is multifaceted. It requires that all people have access to a safe, dependable food supply that is secured in a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable manner. Food must be nutritious, personally and culturally acceptable, and available in sufficient amount. People must also be supplied with sufficient incomes that enable them to secure food through normal food channels, as well as with information and skills related to food preparation and nutrition.

Presently, the dominant food system is the industrial food system. This system is a highly integrated, global food system that is economically driven. Its goal is the generation of profit and accumulation of wealth with little emphasis on guaranteeing food security. By externalizing many costs, primarily social and environmental, the industrial food system fails to protect the health of farming communities, the quality and quantity of clean and productive land, air, and water, and the many components of food security.
By focusing on the principles of distancing, uniformity, and the continuous flow of goods, communities have suffered economically, socially, and environmentally, and food has been transformed into a commodity available only to those who can afford to buy it. The pollution and depletion of natural resources provides evidence that the industrial food system is not a sustainable system for the production and distribution of food.

The costs of the industrial food system suggest that a new, more sustainable food system is necessary in order to help bring about long-term food security. By focusing on the principles of proximity, diversity, and balance, a sustainable food system organizes the production and distribution of food in a manner that maintains the social, economic, and environmental health of the system. By emphasizing the production and distribution of food, this food system links together the concerns of anti-hunger groups with those of sustainable agriculture groups.

In order to move towards the creation of a sustainable food system, the production and distribution of food must begin to respect a new set of criteria: A diversity of fresh produce must be readily available, locally produced, and organically grown. People must be encouraged to grow and consume a diversity of foods, respecting the seasons as much as possible. Living wages must be provided for food producers and all other workers within the food system. Sustainable food systems must emphasize generating local economic activity in addition to improving social and environmental health. Finally, a sustainable food system must focus on providing universal and equitable access to food. Food programs that attempt to meet these criteria will help the present food system move towards one that is more sustainable. The next chapter will describe several food programs - community food programs –attempting, in part, to help improve food security by changing the present production and distribution of food into a more sustainable food system.
CHAPTER 4 – COMMUNITY FOOD PROGRAMS

4.1 INTRODUCTION
Community food programs, typically organized at the community or local level, are programs that focus on the provision of safe, nutritious food. Food, while the centre of community food programs, is also a vehicle for empowerment (Wheeler, Wiley, and Winne, 1995). A common objective shared by these programs includes lessening food costs while improving the nutritional quality of the food participants consume, and their access to such food (Davis and Tarasuk, 1994). By reducing food costs, food becomes more affordable, thereby improving access to food. In addition to providing quality food at affordable prices, community food programs also seek to improve the social environment in which food is obtained while encouraging more sustainable forms of food production and distribution. Although individual community food programs are unique, all programs attempt, in part, to enhance food security to varying degrees.

According to the Heart Health Coalition, programs addressing food access must seek to increase the capacity of individuals to provide for themselves in order to ensure all citizens have dignified access to adequate, affordable, culturally appropriate, nutritious foods (Heart Health Coalition, 1997). It is therefore important that community food programs also work toward actively involving those in need, creating an opportunity for participants to enhance their social networks, build their self-esteem, and help develop a sense of community (Davis and Tarasuk, 1994). Self-sufficiency and participant control are two very important goals of many community food programs.

As part of a local food system vision, community food programs attempt to put the consumer back into the food system (Wheeler, Wiley, and Winne, 1995). Creating and supporting community food programs gives people an opportunity to become involved with food production. According to Wheeler, Wiley, and Winne (1995), past experience illustrates that “...people who are engaged in some way with food production, even if it's only buying vegetables at a farmers' market, will be less alienated from their food supply and more likely to choose the system that is local, personal, and sustainable”.

46
The following list is a compilation of various programs recognized by several sources as community food programs:

- community kitchens,
- community gardens,
- urban household gardens,
- community supported agriculture,
- farmers’ markets,
- trips to farms,
- food cooperatives,
- community dinners,
- good food bag programs,
- food cooperatives, and
- bulk buying groups.

(Van En, 1995; Davis and Tarasuk, 1994; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; Kalina, 1993)

According to the Surrey Food Bank survey, few food bank users participate in community food programs (referred to in the study as alternative food programs) (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). However, there was interest in taking part in these alternatives. The Surrey survey indicates that at least one third of all respondents are interested in community food programs, with interest ranging from 35.1% to 50.3%, depending on the program. Food co-ops (50.3%), pick-your-own farm trips (46.9%), and community kitchens (44.8%) are the top three preferred programs out of the eight that were presented to respondents (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993: 17).

According to this study, interest in community food activities for securing food declines with age (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). Overall, community food programs represent an opportunity to help people help themselves with respect to providing and preparing healthy, nutritious food.

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5 Home delivery programs deliver fresh produce (usually organic) and other food products door to door. Although home delivery programs have increased significantly in British Columbia over the last two years, a discussion of them is beyond the scope of this thesis.
This chapter identifies and describes several community food programs, providing a definition of each program and a level of understanding, as well as identifying each program's goal(s) and benefits. The chapter concludes with a matrix that attempts to rank each community food program against the sustainable food system criteria identified in Chapter 3.

4.2 COMMUNITY KITCHENS

Definition
A community kitchen is a community food program that involves several people coming together regularly to cooperatively cook low cost meals. Participants choose to prepare and then eat food together, to prepare food and then take the food home to their families, or they choose some other arrangement (Community Kitchens Pamphlet, 1998; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Kalina, 1993; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; FoodShare Metro Toronto). The average price range for a meal prepared in a community kitchen is between $1.50 and $3.00 per meal (Barnard, 1997). Anyone can participate as a member of a community kitchen. Within Vancouver, community kitchens represent people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, and various incomes (Community Kitchens Pamphlet, 1998). Although community kitchens are open to everyone, they are typically driven by need (Barnard, 1997). This includes anyone that has ever suffered from food security, including single parents on social assistance, working poor, students, and seniors (Kalina, 1993).

Each community kitchen is usually comprised of a small number of participants, however, the actual number of people participating in a community kitchen varies depending on the individual kitchen (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). The number of times members cook also varies. However, most kitchens require that members meet twice per month. Most community kitchens are housed within a church or other religious institution, a community center, or a school (Kalina, 1993).

The first community kitchen meeting is usually a planning session where members select recipes, plan a shopping list, and divide up the tasks for their next meeting (e.g. who will pick up the groceries). The second meeting is a cooking session where members prepare the foods selected during the previous planning session (Kalina, 1993; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

6 The limitations of the various community food programs are not articulated in this chapter because the literature describing the programs tends only to highlight their benefits.
Goal of Community Kitchens

Community kitchens are based on self-help and mutual-aid approaches that enable people to feed themselves and their families in a dignified manner. They are based on empowerment as opposed to dependence on charity (Kalina, 1993). In Vancouver, the Community Kitchens program “aims to teach ways to act locally in providing good nutrition, skills in food preparation and community support for one of life’s most common bonds: food” (Robertson, 1997: 10). Common goals shared by many community kitchens include providing low cost, nutritional meals, improving self reliance, reducing social isolation, and restoring a sense of community (Webber, 1992).

Benefits of Community Kitchens

Community kitchens provide a myriad of benefits to the individual community kitchen participants, and to the community at large, including the following:

- saving time preparing meals because meal planning, shopping, and meal preparation and cooking are shared responsibilities (Robertson, 1997; Kalina, 1993; Webber, 1992)
- saving money because budgeting tips are shared, food items are purchased in bulk form, and people learn to eat seasonally (Robertson, 1997; Genaille, 1996; Kalina, 1993; Webber, 1992; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
- providing a supportive environment where participants share their stories and make new friends (Genaille, 1996; Kalina, 1993; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
- providing kitchen facilities to people that would otherwise have no or insufficient cooking facilities in which to prepare their meals (Genaille, 1996; Kalina, 1993; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
- developing the participants skills by sharing cooking abilities, recipes, and nutrition information (Robertson, 1997; Genaille, 1996; Kalina, 1993, Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
- breaking alienation and isolation by providing a safe social environment for people to interact (Genaille, 1996; Kalina, 1993; Webber, 1992)
- increasing the participants confidence, self-esteem, and sense of commitment (Barnard, 1997; Genaille, 1996; Kalina, 1993; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
- empowering and energizing individuals to learn to deal with issues in new ways, including making positive lifestyle changes (Robertson, 1997; Genaille, 1996; Kalina, 1993)
• generating advocacy work and a desire to become involved with community issues through empowerment, which consequently fosters a greater sense of community (Robertson, 1997; Kalina, 1993; Webber, 1992)
• increasing the self-sufficiency of participants and reducing their dependence on food banks (Robertson, 1997; Genaille, 1996, Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
• providing people with nutritious food, thereby improving their level of nutrition (Robertson, 1997; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; Webber, 1992)
• facilitating exposure to other cultures through food (Robertson, 1997; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)

Community kitchens help alleviate the food insecurity of participants by providing improved access to nutritious food that is culturally and personally acceptable, in a manner that maintains both their dignity and self-respect.

4.3 COMMUNITY GARDENS

Definition
Considered a self-help project, community gardens involve neighbours voluntarily getting together to plan and grow a garden (Cosgrove, 1998; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; FoodShare Metro Toronto; Stokes, 1981). Most often, the land for the garden is public land provided by the City or by Parks and Recreation. In some instances, the gardens are located on vacant, private land (Stokes, 1981). In either case, land is either donated or rented (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

Community gardening combines food production with urban greening and community development (FoodShare Metro Toronto, November 1997). The gardens also incorporate other projects, such as composting projects, greenhouses, canneries, and marketing (Stokes, 1981). By providing green space, recreation, and food production opportunities, community gardens act as important building blocks for neighbourhood revitalization (Stokes, 1981).
Goal of Community Gardens

Community gardens are multi-purposed community projects that provide food, foster a sense of community, promote individual achievement and purpose, and place the production of food back in the hands of the consumer (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). When New York gardeners were asked what activities occur in community gardens, they indicated gardens provide space for:

- meeting friends,
- neighborhood gatherings,
- nature education,
- recycling and composting,
- parties,
- board games,
- playgrounds,
- religious activities,
- weddings and performances,
- art classes,
- sports, fitness, and yoga, and,
- child care.

(Nemore, 1997)

They also stated that community gardens provide a place to relieve stress, for senior citizens to rest, to host annual harvest festivals, for community youth services, for botanical garden classes, and for scenic tours (Némore, 1997). The various activities taking place within community gardens is testimony to the fact that they are much more than just “gardens”. There is an important socialization component to the gardens, where people gather and identify together as residents of a neighborhood (Nemore, 1997).

Benefits of Community Gardening

Community gardens provide much more to members and the community than simply space for urban gardening. The various benefits community gardens provide to their members and the neighbourhood, include:
- providing an opportunity for people to connect with nature (Nemore, 1997; DeLind, 1994; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
- providing an opportunity for members to connect with the processes of growing one's own food, allowing members to acquire new skills, including learning how to care and grow a garden, about natural cycles, and about food seasons (Nemore, 1997; Suhanic, 1997; DeLind, 1994; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
- providing an opportunity to reassert food preference and socio-cultural preferences through food (DeLind, 1994)
- an exercise in self-provisioning, where individuals grow food for personal consumption (Stone, 1995; DeLind, 1994; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
- encouraging a spirit of cooperation as people collectively use and share local resources (DeLind, 1994; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
- increasing one's level of physical activity, a healthy way to deal with stress (Garnett, 1996; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
- stimulating a sense of common ownership and solidarity, creating a sense of community (Nemore, 1997; Suhanic, 1997; Garnett, 1996; Stone, 1995; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; Stokes, 1981; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
- encouraging citizens to become further involved in their communities, taking collective action on important local issues (Garnett, 1996)
- creating places where people exchange information, breaking down barriers of age, class, race, gender, and broaden people's understanding of different cultures (Garnett, 1996)
- providing space for humans, animals, and plant life, facilitating the evolution of ecosystems (Nemore, 1997; Suhanic, 1997; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
- providing an opportunity for accommodating cultural and social events, an important socialization component (Nemore, 1997)
- providing scenic beauty, contributing to neighbourhood beautification (Nemore, 1997; Suhanic, 1997)
- transforming unsafe places into safe places by increasing neighbourhood monitoring of the garden and by encouraging people to inhabit and use new places (there are more eyes on the street) (McKay, 1998; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
- promoting individual achievement and purpose, instilling a sense of pride in accomplishment (Stone, 1995)
Community gardens help alleviate the food insecurity experienced by members by providing skills and land for individuals to grow fresh, nutritious, safe food, that is accessible to every member in a way that maintains dignity and self-respect.

4.4 URBAN HOUSEHOLD GARDENS

Definition
Household gardens include back and front yard gardens, terrace or balcony gardens, and windowsill gardens. Urban growers tend to plant their favorite vegetables, such as tomatoes, beans, and onions, but other gardens contain a variety of fruits and vegetables. Herbs are also another favorite, especially for gardeners confined to small spaces, such as a terrace or windowsill (Stokes, 1981).

According to Stokes (1981), the popularity of gardening follows the economic cycle. During times of recession, the number of home gardens tends to rise. This is probably because of their ability to curb the effects of inflation by supplementing the costs of store bought food. For some households, food grown in home gardens is an important dietary supplement.

Benefits of Household Gardens
The benefits of household gardening are similar in many respects to those of community gardening, recognizing that household gardening is more individualistic. The various benefits of household gardening, include:

- providing an opportunity for people to connect with nature (Nemore, 1997; DeLind, 1994; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
• providing an opportunity for people to connect with the processes of growing one’s own food, allowing people to acquire new skills, including learning how to care and grow a garden, about natural cycles, and about food seasons (Nemore, 1997; Suhanic, 1997; DeLind, 1994; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
• providing an opportunity to reassert food preference and socio-cultural preferences through food (DeLind, 1994)
• self-provisioning, where individuals grow food for personal consumption (Stone, 1995; DeLind, 1994; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
• increasing one’s level of physical activity, a healthy way to deal with stress (Garnett, 1996; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
• providing space for humans, animals, and plant life, facilitating the evolution of ecosystems (Nemore, 1997; Suhanic, 1997; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
• providing scenic beauty, contributing to neighbourhood beautification (Nemore, 1997; Suhanic, 1997)
• promoting individual achievement and purpose, instilling a sense of pride in accomplishment (Stone, 1995)
• providing people with a wide selection of fresh produce, improving the level of household nutrition (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)
• providing low cost food that acts as a buffer against the rising cost of food (Suhanic, 1997; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; Stokes, 1981; FoodShare Metro Toronto)
• saving substantial amounts of non-renewable energy (Stokes, 1981)

The biggest difference between household gardens and community gardens, since household gardens are a more private form of gardening, is their ability to foster a sense of community. The opportunity for resource and information sharing, as well as community socializing is reduced in a household garden setting. Nonetheless, household gardens help improve the food security of household members by providing fresh produce.

4.5 COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Definition
The meaning of community supported agriculture (CSA), otherwise referred to as community shared agriculture, is quite simply the literal translation of the name: agriculture supported by community
CSA is a partnership between farmers and consumers that provides a direct link between the production and consumption of food (Van En, Manes, and Ross, 1998; Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997; Ripley, 1997). In practice, CSA represents a social and economic alternative to the conventional market (DeLind, 1994; Kneen, 1993). Consumers or CSA members enter into a contractual arrangement with a farmer, purchasing a share of the farm's produce (Ripley, 1997; DeLind, 1994; Kalina, 1993). A CSA share can be purchased in one lump sum, or regular installments can be made. What is important is that the share is purchased prior to the harvesting season (Van En, Manes, and Ross, 1998; Ripley, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; DeLind, 1994; Kalina, 1993). By providing farmers with revenue prior to the harvesting season, farmers are guaranteed a revenue stream that helps pay for seeds, fertilizer, water, equipment maintenance, and labour during a financially difficult time (pre-harvest) (Van En, Manes, and Ross, 1998).

Significant to CSA is the sharing of risk between the farmer and the CSA member. In addition to sharing the risks of farming (such as reduced harvest from heavy rainfall), CSA members also reap the rewards of a bountiful harvest (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998; Ripley, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; DeLind, 1994, Kneen, 1993). Risk sharing between the farmer and the CSA member is the greatest difference between CSA and conventional markets (Van En, Manes, and Ross, 1998).

Typically, members receive seasonal, fresh produce, such as fruits and vegetables, on a weekly basis. Some CSA farms also supply their members with flowers, honey, herbs, eggs, dairy products, and meat (Van En, Manes, and Ross, 1998; Ripley, 1997; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; Kalina, 1993). Produce is usually organic, however, many CSA farms choose not to become organically certified. Since members know their farmers and the growing processes used on the farm, the need for certification is reduced (Van En, Manes, and Ross, 1998; Kneen, 1993). Each week, the shares of food vary by size and type of produce, reflecting local growing seasons and conditions (Van En, Manes, and Ross, 1998). In addition to providing the CSA weekly boxes, many BC farmers also market their produce at local farmers' markets (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997).

CSAs are known to have a variety of members, including low-income families, homeless people, senior citizens, and differently-abled individuals. Some CSA's also provide home delivery for an
extra fee, and working shares are also an option (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998). Property arrangements also vary, and include private ownership, leasing of land, and holding land in some form of trust arrangement (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998). Estimates indicate there are nearly 600 CSA farms in North America, and the number is growing at 12% per year (Van En, Manes, ad Ross, 1998; Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997).

**Goal of Community Supported Agriculture**

By focusing on the local and direct relationship between farmers and consumers, and between production and consumption, CSA seeks to facilitate local food self-reliance and democratic process, countering the dominate agricultural policies of the central state (Cosgrove, 1998; DeLind, 1994). By connecting local farmers and consumers, CSA seeks to develop a regional food supply and local economies, maintain a sense of community, encourage land stewardship, and respect the experience and knowledge of local growers and producers of food (Van en, Manes, and Roth, 1998). By getting a share in a farm’s produce, CSA also works toward decommodifying food because there is no direct dollar value being placed on food, and there is also a non-quantifiable social component involved (Kneen, 1993).

**Benefits of Community Supported Agriculture**

Community supported agriculture provides a variety of benefits to individual members, to farmers, and to the overall community, including the following:

- Farmers are guaranteed a prepaid fair salary, representative of a fair return on their product, that covers all or most of their costs. This income is received pre-harvest, often the most difficult time financially for farmers (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998; Ripley, 1997; Van En, 1995).
- The prepaid shares provide financial credibility to farmers seeking financial assistance (e.g. a loan). Prepayment also reduces the need to seek loans, thereby decreasing the money spent on interest (Van En, 1995; Kneen, 1993).
- The sense of social responsibility and community relationship of CSA provides incentive to bring the highest standard of land stewardship practices to farming (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998; Van En, 1995).
The risk sharing and guaranteed market provided by CSA allows small farmers to continue farming. By maintaining a healthy group of small farms, CSA supports biodiversity because a greater diversity of farmers plants a diversity of crops on each of their small farms (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998; Ripley, 1997; Van En, 1995; Kneen, 1993).

The level of nutrition of CSA members improves as they eat a greater diversity of foods that are vine-ripened and chemical free (Van En, 1995; Kneen, 1993).

Chemical free, organic farming practices reduce the harm to the local ecology (Kneen, 1993).

CSA supports a local agriculture that supports a regional food system and agricultural integrity, keeping food dollars in the local economy (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998; Van En, 1995).

CSA builds community by providing an opportunity for dialogue between CSA members and between rural and urban groups (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998; Van En, 1995). Farmers are also encouraged to communicate and cooperate with each other, sharing information and equipment (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998).

CSA helps bridge socio-economic gaps by bringing together a variety of people, ranging from people on assistance to people paying extra for home delivery (Van En, 1995).

Produce grown and processed on a CSA farm is approximately $30 cheaper than store bought vegetables (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998; Kallins, 1995).

CSA farms provide a link to the earth for city folk, increasing their understanding of how, where, when, and by whom food is grown (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998; Ripley, 1997; Kneen, 1993).

Due to smaller scale harvesting practices, local markets, a reduction in the travel time of food, and a change in consumer attitudes toward natural cosmetic imperfections, loss and waste of harvested produce is minimized, and the need for long-term storage is reduced (Van En, Manes, and Roth, 1998).

By getting a share in the farm, there is no direct dollar value placed on the food (although one can calculate this value), and there is also a non-quantifiable social component involved (Kneen, 1993). By decommodifying food, individuals are reminded that everyone needs and has a right to food, regardless of their ability to pay for it.

CSA helps reduce the food insecurity experienced by some members by providing a local source of fresh or processed food that is safe and nutritious. It is accessible to a wide variety of people, is cheaper than purchasing food directly from stores, and is obtained by people in a manner that protects their dignity and self-respect.
4.6 FARMERS’ MARKETS

Definition

Farmers’ markets bring the farming community and urban consumers together, allowing for the direct sale of food (East Vancouver Farmers Market Newsletter, June, 1997; Kneen, 1993; Kalina, 1993). They also provide a safe place for people to come and meet their neighbours, and people interested in various food issues (e.g. local poverty) (East Vancouver Farmers Market Newsletter, June 1997). The two main factors attracting people to farmers’ markets include the fresh local produce and the socializing (Kneen, 1993). Since farmers sell their products directly to consumers, farmers’ markets are an expression of proximity. Farmers also benefit by keeping more of what the final consumer is paying (Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997; Kneen, 1993). In addition to selling local produce, local crafts are almost always a part of the farmers’ market (Kneen, 1993).

Although farmers’ markets do not challenge the notion of food as a commodity (as most farmers grow what they think will sell at the market), they are an important venue for direct marketing of local food products. For example, as a supplement to membership demands, many CSA farmers direct market their food products through the farmers’ market (Kneen, 1993).

Goals of Farmers’ Market

The goal of a farmers’ market, as captured by the East Vancouver Farmers’ Market, is:

to foster community health and local economic development through the creation of a venue where community members have greater access to safe, healthy, locally produced, environmentally friendly food and where B.C. growers and craftspeople can market their goods directly to urban consumers (East Vancouver Farmers Market Newsletter, June 1997: 2).

Benefits of Farmers’ Market

Farmers’ markets provide many benefits to farmers, consumers, and the surrounding communities. The following is a list of the various benefits.

- Farmer’s markets increase the production of local food by providing a market for the food products (Oland, 1997; Kneen, 1993; Kalina, 1993).
- Food provided by farmers at the farmers’ market is fresh because it does not need to be transported days in advance of its sale. The nutritive level of fresh foods is higher and thus, more nutritious (Oland, 1997; Kneen, 1993).

- By directly purchasing food from the farmers at the market, participants can save between 25% and 50% off the retail costs of food, making high quality food more affordable (Kalina, 1993).

- Local production creates a communication link between producer and consumer, where questions can be asked about how, when, and by whom food is grown (Oland, 1997).

- By bringing the farmers to the city, farmers’ markets increase access within the city to nutritious food that is affordable (Oland, 1997).

- Local markets, such as the farmers’ market, can create a sense of community (consumers get to know farmers and other people interested in securing safe, high-quality food) (Oland, 1997).

- Farmers’ markets support the production of local food, thereby supporting local employment (Oland, 1997).

- Farmers’ markets provide a fun shopping environment, emphasizing a social atmosphere (Oland, 1997).

- Farmers’ markets supply local produce to local consumers, significantly reducing the travel time and the need for processing and packaging. This means a reduction in the demand for fossil fuel. A reduction in processing and packaging also conserves natural resources (paper, tin, aluminum, and plastic) and lessens the production of garbage. These savings are then passed on to the consumer (Kalina, 1993).

The growth of farmers’ markets is a reflection of their benefits to communities. In Kneen’s opinion (1993: 200),

The growth of farmers’ markets in Ontario is indicative of what is happening across the continent. In 1989 there were 60 farmers’ markets in Ontario, and by 1993 there were 120. Curiously, the organizing initiative is coming from the community, not the farmers. Of the 60 new markets in Ontario, only two were farmer-initiated.

The farmer’s market in east Vancouver is also growing annually. However, unlike Ontario, the expansion of the number of markets is made difficult due to zoning complications.

As an expression of direct marketing of local food, farmers’ markets help improve community food security. They provide increased access, both physically and financially, to safe, high quality food.
While facilitating communication between urban and rural groups, farmers’ markets also maintain the dignity and self-respect of all participants.

4.7 TRIPS-TO-FARMS

Definition
Farm trips are organized trips to a local farm for the purpose of picking fresh fruits and vegetables for personal consumption. Pick-your-own farm trips require that a group of people meet at a pre-arranged place in order to travel together to the farm (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). People picking fruits and vegetables at a farm pay for the produce that they pick. Typically, farmers charge a small fee for picking produce, making the price of the fresh produce much cheaper than in conventional stores and retail outlets (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

Goal of Pick-Your-Own Farm Trips
The goal of farm trips is to give people more direct access to local produce at reduced prices, making the cost of fresh food less than in conventional stores while supporting local farmers.

Benefits of Pick-Your-Own Farm Trips
The benefits of picking your own fresh fruits and vegetables from a local farm include the following:

- The price of the produce is typically much cheaper than prices charged in conventional food stores and retail outlets (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).
- Farm trips encourage the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, which are higher in nutritive value than non-fresh foods (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).
- Since you can only pick fruits and vegetables that are in season, people participating in farm trips learn about the seasons of their local environment.
- While picking fruits and vegetables, people get fresh air and exercise (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).
- By participating in a group farm trip, participants become involved in a community project (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).
- Farm trips support local farmers.
Road-side stands are similar to farm trips because the consumer comes to the farm or near the farm to buy food. Both distribute food directly to the consumer, eliminating distribution costs for the farmer (Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997):

By reducing the price of fresh, high quality food, farm trips help build food security. However, it takes a certain amount of effort to organize a group trip, complicating the process of obtaining sufficient amounts of food. Transportation limitations further complicate the process.

4.8 COMMUNITY DINNERS

Definition
A community dinner occurs when “[c]ommunity volunteers get together in a warm and welcoming atmosphere to organize and prepare a dinner for the whole community” (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). Often the food is donated, and is prepared by a volunteer planning group (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). It is important when hosting a community dinner to emphasize that the dinner is for the whole community, and that it is not another “hot meal” for the down and out. It must be emphasized that every one is welcome (Bell; Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

Since community dinners are broadly defined, it is possible that they be linked with food security and sustainability themes. For example, organizers of community dinners could choose to plan a dinner that emphasizes local produce. Community kitchens could prepare a community meal for their community. Also, a dinner could be co-organized between community members and rural farmers, emphasizing local produce. There are many ways community dinners can further a communities concern for and understanding of food security and sustainable agriculture.

Goal of a Community Dinner
The goal of a community dinner is to provide people with an opportunity to get out, socialize, and meet people within their communities.
Benefits of a Community Dinner

Community dinners tend to have a small impact on nutritional status or food security, but they have great social benefits. People get out and meet others in their communities, socializing in a pleasant setting (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). They also provide an opportunity to educate community members about food security.

4.9 THE GOOD FOOD BAG PROGRAM

Definition

Good Food Bag programs are a food delivery service where participants pay for a box of fresh produce to be delivered on a regular basis. Usually, the food box is paid for at the beginning of the month, and participants receive the food box toward the end of the month, often during the third week. The prepayment is designed to protect people from food shortages that usually occur toward the end of the month when food and money are in short supply (The Good Food Box, February, 1998; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997). Programs emphasize purchasing local produce directly from local farmers, thereby supporting the local economy (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997; FoodShare Metro Toronto). Since the programs emphasize local produce, seasonal eating is also respected (FoodShare Metro Toronto). Also, seasonal eating is typically less expensive. Although the food items vary with each monthly delivery, all participants receive the same items in their food bag (Healthiest Babies Possible Fact Sheet).

Vancouver and Toronto each offer a Good Food Bag/Box program. However, each program is slightly different from the other. The Vancouver Good Food Bag program is a pilot project that provides food assistance to 43 participants, all of whom are either pregnant or parenting women (The Good Food Bag, February 1998). These women receive individual nutrition and lifestyle counseling, supplemental food, peer group support and referrals to community resources (Healthiest Babies Possible Fact Sheet). Participants pay $5 per month for their food bag, which is made up of food that is either donated or purchased directly from wholesalers and local farmers (Healthiest Babies Fact Sheet).

Last April, the Toronto program delivered food to 4,207 households, an audience much broader than the Vancouver program (Greey, 1997). The fee charged for a box of produce varies, as the Toronto program offers five different food boxes, including The Good Food Box ($15), The Small Box
($10), The Caribbean Box ($20), The Organic Box ($25), and the Reach for 5 Basket ($10) (FoodShare Metro Toronto). The value of the Good Food Box produce ranges from $20 - $25, depending on the store and time of year, compared to the cost of the food box which is $15 per box (FoodShare Metro Toronto). Unlike the Vancouver program, the Toronto Good Food Box charges for all box contents, thereby not depending on donations (FoodShare Metro Toronto). The only form of subsidization the program receives is volunteer time and energy for packing food and delivering it to drop-off sites (FoodShare Metro Toronto).

Good Food Box Program Goals

In Vancouver, the goal of the Good Food Bag program is “to provide low-income pregnant or parenting women dignified access to fresh, nutritious, safe, locally produced fruits and vegetables” (Healthiest Babies Possible Fact Sheet). The goal of the Toronto Good Food Box program is similar except that it provides its service to a wider audience instead of limiting it to pregnant or parenting women.

Benefits of the Good Food Box Program

In Vancouver and Toronto, the Good Food Bag/Box programs offer many benefits to the members of the program. The following is a list of the benefits:

- The program supports buying locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables, thereby by supporting local farmers and the local economy (Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997).
- An emphasis is placed on purchasing food directly from food producers or wholesalers, keeping the cost of food down (Healthiest Babies Possible Fact Sheet; Food Share Metro Toronto).
- The program provides people with dignified access to safe, nutritious, fresh food during a period when food and money are often in short supply (Healthiest Babies Possible Fact Sheet; FoodShare Metro Toronto; Kneen, McDougall, and Kneen, 1997).
- Participants receive information on how to store and prepare a variety of foods, enhancing their food and nutrition skills (Healthiest Babies Possible Fact Sheet).
- The nutrition of participants improves. According to a recent evaluation, 70 per cent of the Good Food Box respondents said they now eat more vegetables, 21 per cent said they have more variety in their diet, and another 20 per cent said that they enjoy a healthier diet because of the box (Greey, 1997).
• The program "promotes self-reliance since participants are required to pay for all or part of their food (FoodShare Metro Toronto).
• Participation in the Good Food Box program builds community (FoodShare Metro Toronto).
• People learn about food seasons and the production of food (FoodShare Metro Toronto).
• Since food is purchased locally, directly, seasonally, and from wholesalers, the price of food is less than in conventional stores (FoodShare Metro Toronto).
• Waste is minimized because the number of buyers is known when food is ordered (FoodShare Metro Toronto).

Good Food Bag programs represent successful examples of bulk-buying groups that secure safe, nutritious, affordable food for their members. They help improve the food security of participants by making food more accessible physically (based on a delivery system) and financially (food is more affordable). By emphasizing fresh, local produce, participants’ level of nutrition also improves as they eat a diversity of fresh fruits and vegetables. The manner in which food is acquired also maintains the dignity and self-respect of participants.

4.10 FOOD COOPS

Definition
Food coops are local, non-profit stores that are community owned and managed, designed to provide food directly to members at lower prices (Kalina, 1993; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). Food is purchased directly from wholesalers, making it possible to save 40 to 60% on the price of groceries (Kalina, 1993). Food coops require permanent space, and staff members are either paid or volunteer. Often members volunteer a small amount of their time to the store each month. Because the stores are member owned, they keep capital in the community (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). Food coops allow members to be involved in the operations of the store, as well as provide an opportunity to meet new friends, try new food, trade recipes, and support local growers (Kalina, 1993). The Edmonton Food Policy Council encourages the formation of food coops as a way to improve the capacity of low income groups to purchase, prepare, and store economical, nutritious food (Olson, 1992).
Goal of Food Coops

Food coops seek to provide safe, nutritious food to their members at a low cost (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

Benefits of Food Coops

Food coops offer the following advantages to their members:

- Food prices offered to members are lower than conventional stores, making food more affordable.
- Since local members own the food coop, capital is kept in the community.
- Food coops create local employment opportunities.
- High quality food can be made available, emphasizing local growers and producers.
- Nutritional information can be shared in the group setting.
- Members gain control of their own food source, facilitating self-reliance.
- Because members ‘own’ the store, it can be tailored to fit their needs.
- Food coops can provide forums for social, political, and educational activism.
- The group provides a sense of community as members get to know one another, volunteering and shopping at the store.

(Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993)

Although a considerable amount of overhead is required to establish a food coop, once set up, they can improve the food security of their members. Neighbourhoods have improved access to safe, nutritious food that is made available at affordable prices. Volunteering and shopping at the coop also maintains the dignity and self-respect of members, while facilitating a sense of community and self-reliance.

4.11 BULK BUYING GROUPS

Definition

Typically, bulk buying groups, often referred to as food buying clubs, involve a number of people getting together to buy their food, purchasing it directly from food coops, wholesalers, and growers (Dittmar, 1997; Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; Kalina, 1993). In some cases, buying groups also buy loss leaders – items that a grocery store sells
at a discount or at a loss to attract people into the store – that can be resold to members of the buying group. If the size of the loss item is quite large, the buying group can repackage the item in smaller sized packages, allowing single people to buy the item at a cheaper price (Kalina, 1993). Generally, the buying groups shop for bargains, sharing transportation costs, time, skills, and money (Dittmar, 1997; Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). Usually one member acts as a coordinator for the entire group (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

Both the Edmonton Food Policy Council and the Surrey Food Bank support encouraging and facilitating the formation of food buying groups as a way to enhance the capacity of low income groups to purchase, prepare, and store economical, nutritious food (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993; Olson, 1992).

Goal of Bulk Buying Groups

Bulk buying groups or food buying clubs seek to provide food to group members at a low cost, improving their access to safe, nutritious food (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

Benefits of Bulk Buying Groups

- Bulk buying groups provide food to members at lower prices. Based on the results of a Hartford consumer survey, members of food buying clubs saved 20% on their groceries (Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997). According to the Surrey food bank, by participating in bulk buying groups, food costs for a family of four can be reduced from $115 per week (at a regular supermarket) to $45 per week (when purchased from a wholesaler) (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993). Such savings are significant, especially for people living on low incomes.
- When purchasing food from local growers and processors, or food coops, capital is kept in the community (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).
- Depending on the buying habits of the bulk buying group, high quality food can be made available to members (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).
- Nutritional information can be shared in the group setting (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).
Participants gain control of their own food source, becoming actively involved in the search for safe, high quality, nutritious food that is affordable (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

Bulk buying groups can provide forums for social, political, and educational activism (Bell; Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

By shopping together, and by sharing transportation costs, time and skills, bulk buying groups provide a sense of community (Bell, Wood, Bell, Gerlett, and Schultz, 1993).

Bulk buying groups build food security for their members by making available a variety of safe, nutritious foods at an affordable price. They also encourage self-reliance, maintaining the dignity and self-respect of members.

4.12 SUMMARY

The creation and implementation of community food programs helps enhance the food security of program participants. These programs improve an individual’s or family’s access to food by reducing its cost, or by increasing the number of access points that make purchasing or producing food possible. For example, by becoming a member of a community kitchen, a person can learn how to select and prepare raw ingredients that are purchased in bulk, with the possibility of supplementing some ingredients from a local community garden.

Community food programs also encourage skill development, educating participants about food planning, purchasing, preparation, processing, and production. Many programs include education about nutrition and healthy eating. They also teach people how to grow their own food as a means of supplementing their diet. Information about how, where, and by whom food is grown is shared, helping create a more informed and empowered citizenry. Community food programs also help break down ethnic, gender, and age barriers by bringing together a diversity of people to share in the production or consumption of food. Common to all community food programs is their focus on helping people obtain food through channels that respect their dignity and self-respect.

Program participants also learn about the ecological, social, and economic impacts of food production and consumption, while simultaneously being encouraged to take social action. By engaging people in some way with food production, their sense of alienation from the food supply is lessened, increasing the likelihood that they will choose a food system that is local, personal, and
sustainable. Community food programs foster long-term universal access to nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate food within an ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable context.
CHAPTER 5 – COMMUNITY FOOD PROGRAMS AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

5.1 INTRODUCTION
Each community food program is unique in its impact on the sustainability of the food system. In order to understand how each of the community food programs identified in Chapter 4 contributes to creating a sustainable food system, each is evaluated in this chapter against the set of sustainable food system criteria identified in Chapter 3.

In order to analyze each community food program, each criterion is phrased in this chapter as a question, to which there are three possible answers: yes, no, and potential. Each answer represents a response that is based on the literature review of the community food programs. The community food programs, sustainable food system criteria, and the responses to the criteria are analyzed through the matrix entitled “Table 5.1: Community Food Programs and Sustainable Food Systems” and discussed in the text.
Table 5.1: COMMUNITY FOOD PROGRAMS AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

In what ways do community food programs contribute to the creation of a sustainable food system?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainable Food System Criteria</th>
<th>Community Kitchens</th>
<th>Community Gardens</th>
<th>Household Gardens</th>
<th>Community Supported Agriculture</th>
<th>Farmers’ Markets</th>
<th>Buying Clubs</th>
<th>Food Cooperatives</th>
<th>Good Food Bag Programs</th>
<th>Community Dinners</th>
<th>Pick-Your-Own Farm Trips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is fresh produce used, grown, purchased or sold?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is food locally produced?</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the program encourage growth of a diversity of foods?</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the program encourage consumption of a diversity of foods?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the program respect seasonal eating?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are living wages provided to food producers and other workers within the food system?</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the food program generate local economic activity?</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is universal and equitable access to food emphasized by the program?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is environmental health improved?</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is community health and well being enhanced?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the program facilitate communication between rural and urban communities?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the program support a diversity of growers?</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the consumer gain economically?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the food producer gain economically?</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the food program improve access to food?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is food commodified?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes = Program meets the demands of the criterion.

No = Program does not meet the demands of the criterion.

Potential = It is possible for the program to meet the demands of the criterion.
5.2 ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY FOOD PROGRAMS

1. Is fresh produce used, grown, purchased, or sold?

All of the community food programs focus on using, growing, purchasing, or selling fresh food, including fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Community kitchens, buying clubs, food cooperatives, good food bags, community dinners, and pick-your-own farm trips all focus on fresh foods because obtaining it is usually cheaper than buying processed food (processed food involves greater intervention and the opportunity to add profit to a product). Significant to each of these programs is the desire to reduce the cost of food for program participants. Community gardeners and household gardeners prepare gardens, in part, to provide access to fresh produce. CSA and farmers' markets direct market fresh produce to consumers, allowing farmers to earn a fair return that is 100 percent retained by the grower (as opposed to sharing the revenue amongst growers, and processors, wholesalers, and retailers). In general, all of the community food programs focus on using, growing, purchasing, or selling fresh food.

2. Is food locally produced?

Community gardeners, household gardeners, CSA farmers, and farmers that sell produce at farmers' markets or offer picking opportunities, focus on growing fresh food, that is by definition locally produced. Gardeners grow food for personal consumption on land that is either at or near their place of residence. CSA farmers, and farmers that sell food at farmers' markets or offer picking opportunities, grow food on or near the urban periphery, requiring that food travel short distances between the grower and the consumer. It is optional whether community kitchens, buying clubs, food cooperatives, good food bag programs, and organizers of a community dinner purchase locally produced food. However, it is likely that they would during local growing seasons because locally produced food is usually cheaper at this time, or at least cost competitive with other non-local food. Also, if these groups establish a relationship with local buyers, setting up on-going, seasonal, bulk orders, it is likely they will secure local food at reduced prices (direct buying reduces the number of profit-making interventions).

3. Is food organically grown?

Growing food organically is typical for CSA, but is optional for all other community food programs. Although organic food is cheaper when produced locally and purchased directly from growers, it is
still more expensive than conventionally grown foods. If members of community food programs are primarily interested in lowering the cost of food, and members are unable to afford the price of organic food, then it is likely that conventional foods will be purchased. However, it is optional for these programs. By buying foods in bulk, members of food programs, such as buying clubs, food cooperatives, and the good food bag program, might be able to obtain affordable prices, making the option to buy organic foods more feasible. In the case of community kitchens, it is unlikely that members would purchase organic food because their primary goal is to keep the price of meals low. The number of members also tends to be quite small (on average, 3-5 people per group), reducing their buying power in the market. Although community dinners may feed a significant number of people, they too are bound by the need to keep food costs low, reducing the likelihood that organic food would be purchased. Although organic produce may be financially unobtainable for many program members, it is important to remember that there are times throughout the year when organic produce is equivalent to the price of non-organic foods. In these instances, the opportunity to purchase organic produce is broadened.

In the case of organized farm trips, it is entirely up to the individuals participating and whether they prefer or can afford organic produce. Like participants of organized farm trips, it is up to the members of each community garden as well as individual household gardeners to decide if they prefer to grow their produce organically. Most community gardens in Vancouver are organic, chemical-free gardens.

4. Does the program encourage growth of a diversity of food?

Community gardens provide land to members, often increasing the space available to grow food. This increase in space provides an opportunity for gardeners to grow a wider variety of plants. The same is true for household gardens in that the larger the area available for planting, the greater the opportunity to plant a variety of plants. In either case, it is up to individual gardeners what they choose to plant. CSA is committed to planting a diversity of plants as part of its overall philosophy. CSA encourages food producers to grow a diversity of plants that are tailored to local growing seasons. This allows the farmer to provide a variety of foods to its members for the duration of the local growing season, maximizing the total yield. The critical difference between CSA farms and other farms is their commitment to providing their members with a diversity of locally grown foods, rejecting the merits of monoculture.
Farmers’ markets provide an opportunity for local farmers to sell their produce. By planting a variety of plants, farmers can stretch the amount of food they produce over the local growing season, extending the life of the market, while also attracting a variety of consumers with different food tastes. Although farmers’ markets provide consumers with a variety of foods, they do so by bringing together a variety of farmers. There is no guarantee that each farmer is producing a variety of foods on their individual farms. This is a critical difference between produce available at a farmers’ market versus that available from a CSA farm.

If the number of members of buying clubs, food cooperatives, and good food bag programs is large enough to demand certain food items from farmers, or if the groups establish a strong relationship with local farmers, then an opportunity may exist to encourage farmers to plant a diversity of foods. If consumers demand a variety of food from the market, farmers will attempt to fulfill their demands.

Due to the intermittent nature of community dinners, the supplementary role of u-pick farm revenue, and the small size of community kitchens, community dinners, u-pick farm trips, and community kitchens contribute minimally to the growth of a diversity of plants.

5. Does the program encourage consumption of a diversity of food?

Generally, consumption habits and production patterns are interrelated. If consumers choose to eat a diversity of foods, and they purchase these foods (as opposed to growing them), then farmers will respond by growing a variety of foods to sell at the market. A key production issue is whether individual farms grow a diversity of foods, or whether a group of farms provides diversity, with each one only growing one or two types of food. Ideally, the goal is to encourage individual farmers to produce a diversity of foods, reducing dependency on monoculture. There are merits, however, to having a small number of small farms each growing single food crops.

In general, all of the community food programs encourage program participants to eat a variety of foods. Since most food programs aim to make food more affordable to participants, and buying food locally, in season and fresh tends to reduce the price of food, food programs end up encouraging the consumption of a diversity of foods because what is available locally changes as the season changes.
By educating participants about the benefits (including economic benefits) of eating a variety of seasonal foods, community kitchens encourage their members to eat a diversity of foods. Buying clubs, food cooperatives, and good food bag programs purchase food as it is available and affordable from the local market thereby encouraging the consumption of a variety of food items. Gardens provide growers with an opportunity to plant their own food. However, the decision to plant a diversity of foods is up to the individual gardener. The size of the garden space also impacts the ability of gardeners to grow a diversity of food. By providing members with a diversity of fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs that changes weekly, CSA also encourages its shareholders to consume a variety of foods.

Simply by making a diversity of fresh fruits and vegetables available to individuals, farmers’ markets encourage diversified consumption (where diversity may mean fresh produce versus canned or processed food). Farmers’ markets reflect what is available from local growers, while educating consumers about local growing seasons. Unlike CSA, farmers selling produce or food items at a farmers’ market choose food items based on what will sell, with less emphasis on the principle of growing a diversity of food.

By offering a variety of foods at community dinners, and by organizing trips to farms producing a variety of fresh foods, both programs can encourage consumption of a diversity of foods. However, their impact is less significant when compared to the other food programs.

6. Does the food program respect seasonal eating?

Since many food programs aim to reduce the cost of food, most respect seasonal eating because buying food when it is in season is generally cheaper than buying food when it is not. By definition, CSA, farmers’ markets, community gardens, household gardens, and u-pick programs respect seasonal eating as local seasons limit what they can grow. Community dinners are slightly different from the other programs because they often receive donated items for the dinners. If local growers and food producers donate the food, then it is probable that the food will be in season. However, if food is donated by a wholesaler, or by the food bank (that may have received leftover produce from Safeway), then it will not necessarily be reflective of what is in season since wholesalers and major retailers receive their produce from all over the world. There is potential, however, for community dinners to focus their efforts on obtaining seasonal, fresh, local produce.
7. Are living wages provided to food producers and other workers within the food system?

Food producers and other food system workers are guaranteed a living wage when their efforts are part of CSA. Labour costs for the farmer and all other workers are included in the price of the share prepaid by CSA members. The contractual arrangement between the farmer and the consumer/shareholder is unique to CSA, and is the best example of how food producers can be ensured a living wage. No other food program provides a similar arrangement.

Farmers selling their food directly to consumers (direct marketing) at the farmers' market typically receive a better return on their food items than do farmers selling their food items indirectly (e.g. to a wholesaler, or food processor). This direct marketing relationship allows farmers to earn a higher return on the food items they produce. Similar to CSA, food cooperatives are community and member owned operations that tend to pay their non-volunteer staff a fair wage, always conscious of the delicate balance between keeping the price of food down and paying fair wages to workers.

Good food bag programs, buying clubs, and community kitchens all consist of cost-conscious consumers seeking to reduce the cost of food. However, they all differ with regard to living wages. Good food bag programs tend to be run by individuals or organizations that are conscious of the need to pay growers and food workers a living wage. Although paying farmers and food workers living wages increases the cost of food, buying food locally, seasonally, directly, and in bulk are strategies that reduce the overall cost. Also, like buying clubs, good food box programs provide standing orders for a set number of buyers (consumers), thereby reducing wastage. This cost saving is often passed on to the consumer in the form of a reduced price. Buying clubs vary in size with each individual club, and so does their ability to affect price. Smaller buying clubs are less likely to be concerned with living wage issues because their ability to affect price is reduced by their size. Community kitchens are unlikely to be concerned with providing farmers a living wage (although they can choose to be) because their primary goal is to provide low cost meals to program participants. Their small size also means that they are probably not purchasing their food directly from farmers, reducing their contact and thus, connection with the need to pay farmers a living wage.
U-pick farms typically charge a minimal fee for picking fresh fruits and vegetables. This income is understood to be supplementary to the farmer’s primary source of income. The focus of community dinners is primarily social, with little emphasis placed on food system wages.

In the case of community gardens and household gardens, the gardeners themselves are the growers and food producers. Since growing food in these instances does not require the exchange of money for fresh produce, the issue of providing growers with a living wage is not applicable.

8. Does the food program generate local economic activity?

All of the community food programs generate local economic activity to varying degrees because all of them tend to purchase or sell locally produced foods at some point during the local growing season. In addition to selling local food to local consumers, CSA, farmers’ markets, and food cooperatives also provide local employment opportunities, conscious of the need to pay food workers and growers a living wage. Since all three of these programs are locally owned and operated, the capital they generate stays within the local community, increasing local economic spin-offs.

Community and household gardeners have the potential to generate economic activity by selling fresh or processed foods supplied by their gardens. Even though there is potential, it is unlikely that community gardeners will sell their produce since most gardens require that their members grow food for their own and their families consumption. Furthermore, the volume of food each community gardener produces is probably too low to generate significant economic activity. However, as a group, community gardeners might be better able to generate economic activity. For example, members of community gardens with fruit orchards could sell canned fruits or jams made from the orchard produce. Household gardens are similar to community gardens with respect to their ability to generate economic activity. Most often community kitchens affect the local economy through purchasing habits. However, community kitchens could consider cooking and selling low cost meals to other members of the community as a way of generating an income.

Community dinners may be the exception with respect to impacting local economic activity. If food for the dinner is donated from non-local sources (i.e. Safeway imported products), then there will be
less of an economic impact on the local community as profits are not kept within the local community.

9. Is universal and equitable access to food emphasized by the program?

Most community food programs emphasize the importance of universal and equitable access to food. Community dinners provide food to all members of the community, regardless of one’s ability to pay. Community kitchens are open to all members of society, tailoring the kitchen to the specific needs of each group, and paying particular attention to affordability issues. All members of a community are invited to apply for a community garden plot, on a first-come-first-serve basis.

CSA farmers usually offer installment payment plans, reduced rates, and/or work options as a way to keep the food they produce accessible to all members of the community. Farmers’ markets bring fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetable to urban areas, increasing the availability and accessibility of these foods to urban dwellers (e.g. people without vehicles who are unable to travel to a local farm).

Buying clubs, food cooperatives, and good food bag programs tend to increase universal and equitable access to food by making food more affordable and thus, more available to a greater number of people. Neither the u-pick program nor household gardens emphasize universal and equitable access to food.

10. Is environmental health improved?

All community food programs that focus on local produce, fresh produce, and/or organic produce help maintain the health and integrity of the natural environment. Local produce reduces the fossil fuels required to transport food, as well as the natural resources necessary for durable packaging. Fresh produce reduces the need for packaging, lessening the demands on natural resources. It also reduces the energy demands and wastage associated with processing, and thus further transporting, food. Organic food production eliminates the application of artificial chemicals to plants, maintaining the health of the air, the water, and the land.
Community supported agriculture most strongly maintains environmental health because it focuses on providing fresh, local, and organic produce. When food cooperatives, farmers' markets, buying clubs, and good food bag programs choose to purchase fresh, local, organic produce, they also have a significant effect on maintaining environmental health. However, the focus of these four programs on the three criteria varies. A healthy environment is maintained when community and household gardens choose to grow organic food. By definition, they provide food that is local and fresh.

Community kitchens have the potential to help maintain a healthy environment, especially when the kitchens focus on buying fresh food that is often locally produced. The opportunity to buy organic food is less likely due to its cost. U-pick trips also provide patrons with fresh, locally produced food, but the decision to pick organic produce varies with each picking group. Community dinners are probably the least likely to positively affect the natural environment due to their sporadic occurrence, and the lack of control over the source of food. This having been said, it is still possible for them to affect a healthy environment by using fresh ingredients, and, when available, locally grown food.

11. Is community health and well being enhanced?

All of the community food programs enhance community health and well being. Food programs that make food more accessible to people (in most cases by making it more affordable) improve the health of community members because people are given the opportunity to consume a greater quantity and variety of food. Food programs also improve the health of community members by encouraging people to eat a diversity of foods, as well as organic and transitional food, thereby increasing the level of nutrients consumed while reducing their chemical intake. Diversification of plants grown by farmers also improves the health of the local ecology, as does growing food organically (reduces the application of toxic chemicals). Communication between rural and urban groups, and communication between members of a local community or neighborhood also improves when people participate in community food programs, building a greater sense of community. Emphasis on local consumption of locally produced foods benefits the environment by reducing fossil fuel use, chemical application, demands on natural resources, and pollution. This contributes to a healthy community, while simultaneously helping generate local economic activity that creates local employment.
Community kitchens, community gardens, CSA, farmers’ markets, community dinners, food cooperatives, and buying clubs all provide an opportunity for people to come together, helping break feelings of isolation, and helping build a sense of community.

**12. Does the program facilitate communication between rural and urban communities?**

CSA provides a direct link between farmers and urban communities. At the beginning of the planting season (pre-harvest), farmers and CSA members (urban folk) meet to discuss farm costs, maintenance issues, the types of plants to be grown, and other farm-related issues, providing an opportunity for CSA members to become better acquainted with the challenges of farm life. By offering working options as a way to partially or wholly pay for share costs, CSA farmers provide another great opportunity for members to become intimately involved with how farms operate, and how food is grown. This communication is very important because it educates “non-growers” about the risks and complexities of farming, and about where their food comes from, subjects to which many urban dwellers are never exposed.

Farmers’ markets also provide an important link between growers and non-growers, allowing people visiting the market to meet local farmers, and to learn more about where food comes from, how it is grown, where it is grown, and by whom. The social component of most farmers’ markets is also conducive to communication between the two groups. U-pick trips to local farms do provide an opportunity to communicate with the farm community, however, the emphasis of such trips is the picking experience.

If a buying club is large enough, and it buys directly from a farmer(s), then the program can successfully facilitate communication between urban and rural communities. However, if the group is small, focusing it’s effort on bulk buying from wholesalers, or purchasing large items in major retail outlets, then the opportunity for cross communication is minimal, if it occurs at all. Good food bag programs provide an opportunity for organizers and volunteers to communicate with farmers however, the opportunity for all of the members of the program to get to know members of the rural community is minimal. Their education about rural life and farming is probably secondary, provided by those more directly in contact with the community (i.e. volunteers and organizers). This is not to say that secondary information, or indirect communication, is not significant. Program organizers and volunteers have a tremendous opportunity to pass on what they learn to their members,
maintaining part of the rational for why members commit to purchasing food directly from local farmers. The communication facilitated by food cooperatives is similar to that of the good food bag program.

Community kitchens do not facilitate communication between rural and urban communities. They typically focus on budgeting, shopping, and cooking strategies that help reduce the cost of meals. Rural and urban issues are tangential to their primary purpose. Community gardens and household gardens also do not facilitate communication between rural and urban communities, since most gardeners are urban dwellers growing their own food. Nonetheless, their participation in growing food provides them with experience that is similar to the experience of rural growers. This shared experience provides an important link between the two groups. In general, community dinners provide little opportunity for communication between rural and urban communities (unless, for example, the dinner where sponsored by a local farmer or farming community).

13. Does the program support a diversity of growers?

By definition, community gardens and household gardens support a diversity of local growers with each garden varying in size, location, growing methods, and plant life. By definition and clear intention, CSA and farmers' markets also support a diversity of growers. CSA typically involves a small to medium sized farm, growing food for a relatively small number of people (e.g. 50 to 250 members). If all Vancouver residents were to receive fresh produce during the local season from CSA farms, a large number of small and medium sized farms could be supported.

Depending on their size, food cooperatives and good food bag programs support a diversity of growers. During the local growing season, these two programs depend heavily on various local growers, ranging in size from small to large farms. The larger their membership, the greater the likelihood that they source their food from a greater diversity of growers. Bulk buying clubs operate the same way, their size dictating whether they support a diversity of growers.

The ability of community kitchens to support a diversity of local growers is constrained by their size and financial limits. However, it is possible for them to support a diversity of growers (finances permitting) by purchasing food through a CSA farm, good food bag program, or farmers' market. They would also be supporting a diversity of growers, if each member had access to a community or
household garden. In regard to U-pick trips to local farms, the diversity is dependent on the number of farmers choosing to offer u-pick opportunities. It is unlikely that food provided for community dinners is purchased from a variety of local growers. Even if it were, the frequency of community dinners is intermittent, making its affect minimal.

14. Does the consumer gain economically?
All of the community food programs reduce the cost of food, providing an economic gain to all program participants. Since purchasing fresh produce is cheaper than processed food, and all of the programs emphasize using, growing, purchasing, or selling fresh produce, all program participants gain economically. Also, buying clubs, good food bag programs, food cooperatives, and community kitchens all purchase foods in bulk, reducing the per unit price of food. When community gardeners plant from seed, the costs of gardening are kept to a minimum because most community gardens only charge a small fee (around $10.00 per year) for use of community garden space. Household gardens and community gardens are an excellent way to provide fresh, healthy foods to people at a low cost.

CSA offers a variety of fresh foods at competitive prices that are generally lower than retail prices. Also, CSA provides members with work options as a way to reduce the economic cost of their food basket. Farmers’ markets also provide food at prices lower than retail prices. U-pick trips provide fresh produce at a low cost because typically farmers only charge a small fee for picking. When attending a community dinner, there is no charge to participants.

15. Does the food producer gain economically?
CSA is the strongest consumer and producer arrangement, guaranteeing farmers a living wage while spreading the risks of farming across all members of the CSA. Producers also gain by receiving their share of revenue during the pre-harvest season, typically the most financially difficult time of the year for farmers. CSA and farmers’ markets also provide economic benefits to farmers because they are direct marketing programs that allow growers to keep a higher percentage of the final price paid for food (direct marketing minimizes the number of interventions, or profit making steps, between the grower and the final consumer). Household and community gardens also direct market their food to the final consumer. In this instance, however, there is no financial exchange because
the grower and the final consumer are the same. Gardening can also provide economic benefits to the final consumer (the grower), by reducing the cost of food, depending on the gardening methods used.

If buying clubs, good food bag programs, and food cooperatives buy their food directly from individual farmers then farmers will gain economically (as explained above). However, the opportunity to buy food directly from the farming community may depend on the size of the buying group. Food cooperatives add an extra intervention between the grower and the final consumer, as they are a retail-like operation. However, most cooperatives are non-profit, member-owned organizations that do not add a profit margin to the price of food. The only charge added to food would be that required to maintain the cooperative arrangement.

U-pick trips are usually not a farmer’s main source of revenue. Typically, farmers charge a small fee to people that pick their own produce, the revenue being supplementary to the farmer’s main source of revenue. Although the revenue is supplementary, farmers do benefit economically from u-pick programs. Community kitchens and community dinners provide the least economic benefit to local food producers because they are least likely to contract directly with them.

Whenever community food programs emphasize local food, however intermittent, the local farming community benefits economically simply because program members are providing them with a market for their product. All of the community food programs provide, at the very least, the option to secure food from local markets during some point in the year.

16. Does the food program improve access to food?

All of the community food programs provide greater access to food because all of the programs, to varying degrees, reduce the price of food to consumers. Most programs provide food to participants at a price below the retail price of standard grocery stores, making it more affordable to a greater number of people.

Buying clubs, food cooperatives, and good food bag programs buy food in bulk, often directly from farmers, respecting local growing seasons. These actions combine to lessen the cost of food. Generally and to a point, the larger the buying group, the larger the discount they are able to secure.
Guaranteeing local food producers a market is another way that buying groups are able to secure reduced prices for food.

By providing a delivery service, either to individual households or to local community and neighbourhood centres, CSA improves one’s physical access to food. This is significant for people that lack transportation (public or private) to food outlets, or have difficulty travelling (e.g. seniors, differently-abled persons, and single parents with children). Good food bag programs also deliver food to community and neighbourhood centres, similarly improving physical access to fresh, high quality food. By bringing the farmers to the city, farmers’ markets provide access points for local consumers to buy locally produced food.

Community kitchens provide greater access to food because groups buy food in bulk, reducing its price. They also learn to prepare foods from fresh, or minimally processed foods, which also reduces the per unit price of meals. In addition, community kitchens allow members to share low cost recipes, low cost cooking techniques, and budgeting and shopping strategies. All of these actions help reduce the price of prepared meals, making food more affordable to kitchen members. Community kitchens also encourage shopping to be shared by members, presenting the opportunity for individuals to receive help with their shopping (e.g. seniors and different-abled persons), and creating a chance for members to share transportation costs and, when available, private transportation (e.g. sharing a car). Community kitchens are important community food programs that go a long way in making food more accessible for a variety of people.

CSA farms provide high quality, nutritious food to members at a cost that is competitive with retail prices. The key with CSA arrangements is that members take a risk with farmers. Some seasons may yield a harvest that is less than originally expected, whereas other seasons may produce a bountiful crop that exceeds the expectations of members. In general, CSA provides food at a reasonable cost, with installment arrangements and work options making food more financially accessible to members of the community. CSA also delivers food to various neighbourhood drop-off sites, improving physical access to food. Home delivery is also offered for a fee.

Community gardens and household gardens improve access to food for gardeners by supplementing food budgets during the local growing season, buffering the cost of food purchased from standard
grocery stores and other retail outlets. Community gardens are often available to members at a very low price (e.g. $10.00 per year).

U-pick trips can improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables since the fee charged by farmers is generally low. However, there are transportation challenges associated with u-pick trips, as well as organizational demands to coordinate a group of pickers. Community dinners improve access to food on a very intermittent basis, but they are not a long-term solution to food insecurity.

17. Is food decommodified?

CSA provides an opportunity for decommodifying food. CSA members agree to buy a share in the farm produce as opposed to paying the farmer a unit price for each unit of food grown on the farm. By not directly placing a value on each food item grown on the farm (i.e. carrots are 99 cents per pound), food is partly decommodified. There is also a social component to CSA that is non-quantifiable. Community gardens and household gardens also provide an opportunity to decommodify food because food is usually personally consumed as opposed to being sold on the market for a price. There is no exchange value associated with the food produced. Gardeners garden for a variety of reasons, including relaxation, stress relief, physical exercise, to be outside, and, in the case of community gardens, to meet members of their community. Although an important part, food producing is only part of a gardeners experience.

All other community food programs are based on the need to exchange money for food. This relationship makes it difficult to decommodify food. If the program makes education a part of its program, then an opportunity exists to discuss and work toward the decommodification of food.

5.3 SYNERGISTIC PROPERTIES OF COMMUNITY FOOD PROGRAMS

Community kitchens work well in conjunction with community gardens. The gardens can supply seasonal fruits, vegetables, and herbs to members of the community kitchen. This relationship reduces the food costs for participants, and is an excellent example of self-provisioning. Participants learn how to grow and then prepare their own food. Household gardens and community gardens that grow fruit trees or other bulk food items (i.e. nuts) also work well with community kitchens. The kitchens can provide the opportunity to learn how to can, pickle, or preserve bulk food that might
otherwise be wasted. This arrangement minimizes waste, is cheaper than buying food already canned, pickled, or preserved, and improves nutrition (less additives and preservatives in the food). Community kitchens also work well with food cooperatives. If one or all of the community kitchen participants become a member of a food cooperative, then they have the option to purchase their food from the cooperative which tends to offer food at reduced prices. Food cooperatives also have established relationships with local farmers and CSA farmers, providing an indirect link between them and the community kitchen community.

CSA, good food bag programs, and community kitchens also work well together. During the local growing season, kitchens could plan their menus according to box contents. During the off season, participants could plan meals according to contents of the good food bag. CSA farmers and the good food bag both provide a variety of fresh, safe, nutritious foods at affordable prices (usually below retail). Farmers’ markets and CSA work well together. Often CSA farmers direct market their produce through farmers’ markets, providing another source of income for CSA farmers.

Community dinners minimally affect food security and the creation of a sustainable food system. However, they represent an excellent opportunity to create community, and are easily combined with other community food programs. For example, food for the community dinner (that is usually sponsored) could be obtained from local farmers, especially CSA farmers. A dinner could be made using seasonal and locally grown foods, expanding a neighbourhood’s definition of community to include both rural and urban members. In this sense, community dinners bring local people together to consumer locally grown, in season food, simultaneously celebrating food and community.

Community dinners could also consider getting food from local farmers by organizing a community gleaning day. This requires that community members glean leftover fruits and vegetables from the fields of local farmers (usually at no cost or for a small fee). This would bring community members together to collect food, providing an opportunity to get to know local farmers while reducing the food costs of community meals. Connections are also made with respect to the timing of local seasons. The participating farmers could also be invited to the meal, furthering the needed communication between urban and rural groups.

5.4 SUMMARY

Community food programs all share a common goal: help provide people with safe, nutritious food in a manner that helps break down access barriers. Community kitchens, community gardens,
household gardens, bulk-buying clubs, good food box programs, organized farm trips, food cooperatives, farmers’ markets, community dinners, and community supported agriculture all help improve food security to varying degrees. Although some focus more on the production of food while others focus on its consumption, each community food program helps create a more sustainable food system.

Participation in one or many community food programs is important to the evolution of a sustainable food system because it provides a more intimate opportunity to learn about food: specifically, how it is produced and consumed. Whether one participates by growing food in a community or household garden, or by purchasing a basket from a CSA farmer, they learn more about how food is grown, what its seasons are, and where it is produced. Community food programs also allow people to meet members of their community, urban and rural, sometimes sharing food that they have either grown or prepared. A link between environment and food is also nurtured when people participate in community food programs, as evidenced by people helping out at their local CSA farm. Community food programs also address the issue of universal access to nutritional food, recognizing the importance of making sure food is available and affordable to all people. The diversity of community food programs provides a variety of opportunities for people to get involved with their community through food. Such involvement helps improve the food security of many people while simultaneously transforming the food system into one that is more sustainable.
CHAPTER 6 - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

6.1 SUMMARY.
In Vancouver, as in the rest of urban Canada, the norm for securing a sufficient diet is through the exchange of money for food. If an individual does not possess enough money to purchase a nutritional diet, then s/he will likely incur difficulty in securing a sufficient food supply. Poverty, defined as low income, is the root cause of hunger for many people. When unable to purchase an adequate diet, many people become dependent on charity as a means to supplement their nutrition. This often means dependence on food banks and other charitable food organizations.

Currently, governments are not making the necessary financial changes to important government policies (such as employment insurance, minimum wage, and social assistance) that affect a person’s ability to purchase an adequate diet. The income insufficiency provided under these policies makes it increasingly difficult for many people to obtain adequate, nutritional diets. Concomitantly, governments are increasingly relying on charity as a way to compensate for income insufficiency. As a result, a growing number of people are being forced to depend on the generosity of the donor without the legal protection of their right to food.

In order to help improve food security, food systems must function in a manner that supports universal access to safe, nutritional, culturally appropriate food. The current production and distribution system, the industrial food system, fails to provide long-term food security, ignoring the Canadian government’s commitment to guaranteeing everyone the right to adequate amounts of nutritional food regardless of personal circumstance. By emphasizing the principles of distancing, uniformity, and the continuous movement of goods, the industrial food system seeks instead to generate profit and accumulate wealth. The results include a food system that pollutes air, water, and soil systems, breaks down the link between rural and urban communities, decreases the quality and quantity of natural resources, and distances people from their food source. By transforming food into a commodity, the value of food has become dependent on its exchange value rather than its use value. If an individual cannot afford to buy food, then they must either go without or depend on the donations of others. The impacts of the industrial food system on the environment, economy, and society suggest that a more sustainable food system is needed.
In order to be comprehensive, a sustainable food system must take into consideration the concerns of anti-hunger groups as well as those of sustainable food system groups: It must consider both the production and distribution of food. Thus, a sustainable food system recognizes the importance of universal access to safe, nutritional food, while also taking into account the health of the economy, the environment, and society. Focusing on the principles of proximity, diversity, and balance, it offers a holistic production and distribution system.

The literature identifies a number of criteria that help assess whether a specific production or distribution program is sustainable. These criteria consider whether fresh food is used, grown, purchased or sold, and whether it is locally and/or organically grown. They examine the diversity of the production and consumption of food, seasonal eating patterns, and whether the program generates local economic activity. The criteria also assess whether: environmental and social health is improved, consumers and producers gain economically, and communication is facilitated between rural and urban communities. The intent of the criteria is to identify how different food programs contribute toward the creation of a sustainable food system.

Taken together, community food programs address many of the criteria defining a sustainable food system. Each program meets only a limited set of criteria. But as a package, community food programs help transform the food system into a system that is more sustainable. They provide people with a variety of options and they also help foster food security by empowering people to buy food or enabling them to grow food. Environment, society, and economy are respected to varying degrees by each community food program, and to a large degree by all of them together.

Community food programs help alleviate some of the food insecurity suffered by many people while simultaneously helping transform the production and distribution of food into a more sustainable system. Second, they help build community by creating important contact points for people to come together to grow, purchase, sell, and prepare food. Such community building also provides an opportunity for communication to occur between rural and urban communities. Third, many community food programs break down ethnic, gender, and age barriers by bringing together a diversity of people to share in the production or consumption of food. Fourth, the programs place emphasis on local production and consumption of food, helping reduce the pollution of natural resources, such as air, water, and soil, and developing programs that respect the limitations of the natural environment. Fifth, community food programs also provide an important education function.
Participants are given an opportunity to learn more about how, when, and from where their food is grown. Cooking and food-buying skills are also shared amongst participants, helping empower them to buy their own food and provide a healthy diet. Finally, community food programs also provide an opportunity to educate people about ecology, nature, and the seasons, fostering a reconnection with natural systems and food.

Currently, the BC government provides social assistance to those in need through the BC Benefits Program. This singular program attempts to meet the diversified needs of a large group of society. Some research suggests that the programs are failing in their attempt to provide for the basic needs of social assistance subscribers. It has been argued that the social assistance program also fosters dependency, disempowering those people receiving the assistance. If the government were to support a variety of programs for people needing assistance, people would be given a choice that may help reduce their sense of dependence and disempowerment. Variety allows people to select a program based on their personal needs rather than offering only one program: By supporting a variety of programs, policy makers could provide for multiple societal objectives.

It is also more robust to offer a diversity of programs. If government has several programs in place and one of them fails, the likelihood of the entire system of programs breaking down is saved by the operation of several remaining programs. If government only offers one program and it breaks down, then the entire group dependent on that one program will suffer. A multiplicity of programs can help safeguard against the failure of singular programs to provide for all of society's needs.

By creating government awareness of and encouraging local support for various community food programs, the likelihood of their being developed within communities would increase. Public and local government education about the positive effects of developing and supporting a diversity of community food programs as a way to help alleviate hunger in British Columbia is necessary. By expanding and supporting the development of community food programs, an increasing number of people would have the opportunity to learn how to produce their own food and/or to be empowered to buy it, helping reduce or eliminate their food insecurity.

6.2 BENEFITS OF A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

In addition to reducing the demand for natural resources and the generation of pollution, local community food programs also generate economic activity. For example, the economic activity
from urban agriculture could include horticultural enterprises, compost, seed and tools suppliers, or retail outlets, such as cafes and restaurants, selling food provided by the urban gardens. Jobs and skills training could also be generated by community gardens. Non-profit making agencies, such as cooperatives, bartering exchange systems, and credit unions, could also be generated by urban agriculture (Garrett, 1996). According to a study by Wilkinson and Van Seters, the benefits of a sustainable community food system include allowing farmers to bring home a greater share of the consumer food dollar.

At present, farmers receive only $22 for every $100 that consumers spend on food. However, under a sustainable community food system it is possible for the farm value to increase to $30 because such a system has lower marketing costs. It also returns more cash to post farm labor, which improves community prosperity (Wilkinson and Van Seters, 1997, pg. 9).

Local food-growing projects, such as community gardens, can provide access to affordable, fresh, organic produce, particularly fruits and vegetables (Garnett, 1996, pg. 305). “Exchange of information…can help break down barriers of age, class, race and gender and broaden people’s understanding of different cultures” (Garnett, 1996, pg. 305). Community gardens and community kitchens both bring people together over food, providing opportunities for communication between people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, and gender.

Locally grown food maximizes the nutritional quality of food. The potential to eat fresh food is increased. In addition, nutrition is more likely to be the primary goal of production as opposed to the durability of a food item. A local food system makes it easy to see the consequences of food production and distribution practices. This increases the potential for communities to respond to negative outcomes, such as pollution of water sources. It also allows growers to plant crop varieties suited to the local ecology, as opposed to the packaging and processing standards of such companies (Kneen, 1993). A local food system also increases community control.

6.3 RATIONALE FOR MUNICIPAL INVOLVEMENT

Community food programs and sustainable food systems are atypical issues for municipal governments to address. But, the majority of British Columbians live in cities where the consequences of food insecurity manifest themselves. Furthermore, except for rural areas, the incidence of low income is highest for families and unattached individuals in urban areas with more than 500,000 people. Thus, many city people suffer from food insecurity.
Second, population growth within cities places more pressure on local government to develop land for residency purposes, reducing the amount of land available for agricultural purposes. This pressure for land development occurs at exactly the same time that farmers need greater amounts of agricultural land to produce food for a growing number of people. Council members, and therefore, planners, make important decisions affecting the use, tax rates, and availability of land upon which many community food programs depend. By making informed, long-range decisions, planners can positively impact the evolution of community food programs, helping Vancouver create a sustainable food system.

Finally, in order for a City to achieve its goal of a healthy and sustainable city, it needs to understand the relationship between community attempts to help alleviate hunger and the objectives of sustainable food systems and long-term food security. It is also important that municipal governments become involved with food insecurity because many of the responses to food insecurity occur at the local level, as evidenced by the diversity of community food programs. Furthermore, sustainable food systems advocate for local production of food for local consumption.

### 6.4 THE NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY

By identifying and then evaluating a group of community food programs against a set of sustainable food system criteria, this thesis provides insight into how community food programs affect food security and sustainability. The complementary and potentially synergistic properties of complementary programs are also noted. Assessment by local governments of the present inventory of community food programs within their communities and of public interest in the operation of such programs would enhance society's understanding of where specific programs are operating and where expansion of existing programs or introduction of new programs might be needed. It would also be useful for local governments to study various public education tools and implementation strategies, helping both the public and the government expand desired community programs.

### 6.5 IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

There are many ways to introduce community food programs into urban environments, helping create a sustainable food system for all members of the community. A thorough consideration of the issue of integration is beyond the scope of this thesis. This section merely serves as an introduction to community food program integration as a basis for future discussion.
There are many ways for all levels of governments to get involved in the creation of a sustainable food system that meets the food needs of all members of society. Municipal governments could require that developers set aside land for community gardens or other forms of urban agriculture, during the design stage of new residential developments. Neighbourhood concept plans could allocate space for community gardens. Official community plans could identify urban and rural agriculture as important community objectives. When designing social housing, all levels of government could encourage land designation for community gardens. New multifamily residential developments (including market and non-market) could also incorporate communal cooking space for use by various community kitchen groups. These groups could be comprised of members of the multifamily unit, of the surrounding community, or a combination of the two groups. Government landholders could also consider introducing fruit tree planting policies, planting and maintaining various native fruit trees in public parks throughout the city. The food produced by the fruit trees could be used by the public in general, and by community garden and community kitchen participants. The above examples illustrate how small changes to government policy can make a big difference to achieving long-term food security.


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