



Challenges and Opportunities for Community Food Security: The Policy Landscape in Nova Scotia

SUMMARY

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Activating Change for Community Food Security (ACT for CFS) is an alliance between universities, community-based organizations and government with the purpose of increasing awareness and understanding of Community Food Security (CFS) and increasing capacity for policy change to create the conditions for CFS. ACT for CFS is supported through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Food security in a community means everyone has access to enough affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food, and that food is produced in socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable ways. CFS is about creating healthy, vibrant communities where there is self-reliance, social justice and nutritious food for everyone.¹ Supportive policies are needed to achieve community food security.

To better understand the policies and players in the Nova Scotia food landscape, the Policy Working Group of ACT for CFS carried out a review of reports, media news articles, and academic literature. In the fall and winter of 2011-12, they conducted 41 interviews with stakeholders in the food security movement in Nova Scotia, attempting to include a diverse range of health, anti-poverty, agricultural, fisheries, and government stakeholders. Interviews were mainly conducted by telephone.

The kinds of questions asked of stakeholders included:

1. What would your organization like to see changed within Nova Scotia's food system?
2. Has your organization developed specific positions or policies on these issues?
3. What would you identify as the key challenges to achieving the changes you seek?

This report consists of three sections. The first section is an overview of geographic, political and economic factors that constitute the broad **context** of CFS in Nova Scotia. The second section presents **constraints and enablers** to realizing various elements of a CFS vision, including a vibrant and sustainable food production and distribution system, and equitable access to healthy food for all. This section contains **economic, ideational** and **organizational** constraints and opportunities for CFS. The final section presents broad **tensions** identified through the research, and an initial list of **strategic opportunities** for achieving policy change that takes into consideration identified constraints and opportunities.

Stakeholders

Agricultural organizations and farmers (10)
Fisheries groups (4)
Youth agricultural groups (2)
Alternative distribution groups (2)
Processing, distributor, or retail groups (3)
Rural organization (1)
Health and nutrition groups (4)
Anti-poverty organizations (2)
Minority/cultural groups (2)
Nova Scotia Food Policy Council (1)
NS Agriculture (3)
NS Health and Wellness (3)
NS Fisheries and Aquaculture (1)
Municipal governments (2)
District Health Authority (1)
First Nations and Inuit Health Branch,
Government of Canada (1)

This document is a summary of a longer paper: *Challenges and Opportunities for Community Food Security: The Policy Landscape in Nova Scotia*, which can be found on the ACT for CFS website: <http://foodarc.ca/actforcfs/resources-publications/>

¹ This definition has been adapted for ACT for CFS from the work of Hamm and Bellows (2002).

CONTEXT

The context for community food security in NS includes the overarching conditions and long-term economic, social and political trends that help define how food is produced, harvested, distributed and accessed in the province.

Demographics: The population of NS is largely rural. There are about 1 million people, which limits the local market for food produced in NS. There are more people over the age of 65 (15.4%) than in any other Canadian province. The average age of farmers is 55, and there challenges for young people to get started in agriculture.

Agriculture: The dominant agricultural trend in North America - conglomeration, growth and monoculture – has been less pronounced in NS, and agriculture’s diversity is one of its biggest strengths. NS has a range of commercial vegetable and small fruit producers, growing cabbage, potatoes, onions, lettuce, tomatoes (greenhouse), strawberries and blueberries, and very successful orchard (especially apples) and cottage wine industries. The beef and pork industries have been hit hard in recent years, due to factors such as disease in cattle and the high price of feed grain for pigs. All of the milk consumed in NS is supplied by NS producers (except for organic milk). A report from the Ecology Action Center and the NS Federation of Agriculture states that only 13 cents of every dollar spent on food in Nova Scotia in 2008 was returned to NS farmers. This was down from 17 cents in 1997.

Fisheries and Aquaculture

Fish harvesting and aquaculture are not typically talked about in discussions of CFS, despite the strong history of fishing in NS. Fisheries and aquaculture are often a sector of policy conflict - between harvesters and processors, smaller operators and large fleets, between environmentalists and harvesters, and others. On the current state of the fishing industry, one fisherman observed: “It’s a battle of David and Goliath. You basically have smaller harvesters working to put food on the table for their families, versus larger fishing fleets aiming to increase their profits.” The introduction of aquaculture in recent years has been fairly controversial, but the industry has potential in terms of rural livelihoods and local food sources.

Globalization, Cheap Food and Centralization

Many people expressed that NS’s food system is dominated by cheap food and large-scale, export-oriented agriculture and fisheries, along with large scale distribution systems that are globally linked and controlled. This model is supported at the expense of smaller-scale producers and processors. Several pointed to the way that processing and distribution systems affect the food system in Nova Scotia, notably the centralization of distribution systems in the supermarket sector, with two major chains controlling about 80% of food sales. Centralization has also taken place within FEED NOVA SCOTIA, which for some stakeholders translates to less fresh food and less local procurement, although the Feed Nova Scotia website indicates that 23% of the food distributed by the organization was fresh produce donated by commercial farmers or wholesalers. The growth and conglomeration of distribution systems is taking place at the same time as local processing infrastructure is being lost. However, the movement of local producers and harvesters is growing to regain some control of the distribution of their products, using methods such as community-supported agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, truck sales, and community-owned processing facilities.

Poverty and Food Access

Stakeholders identified decreasing incomes and rising living costs as challenges for people living in poverty to afford a nutritious diet. Research on the cost of basic nutritious food in NS shows that “families living on minimum wage or Income Assistance are not able to cover their basic expenses; if they were to purchase a nutritious diet, they would end up in debt at the end of each month.” Industry collapse in urban and rural Nova Scotia and low minimum wages and social assistance rates were identified as limits to the ability of individuals and families to feed themselves and their families.

Macro-economic Conditions

Many of the shifts in agriculture, fisheries, processing, distribution, population health, and poverty in Nova Scotia reflect broader economic and political trends. Stakeholders pointed to the global economic downturn in the economy since 2008 as presenting particular challenges to CFS: declining export markets in the lobster industry (a major

employer in coastal communities), effects on the pork industry resulting from the increased cost of grain, and increased poverty in rural areas in particular with various industries closing and agriculture in decline.

Shifting Organizational Structures

Many stakeholders, from a range of sectors, talked about how their organizations had undergone, or were undergoing, changes in how they delivered their mandates. For example, the Department of Agriculture is increasingly contracting its agricultural extension services to a not-for-profit Crown entity (similar to a crown corporation) that carries out research and extension services to farmers, on behalf of the Department, at no cost to producers. Many civil society groups are also going through organizational transitions, collaborating more with national boards, with other civil society organizations, or in some cases, working with industry partners. Some stakeholders referred to philosophical shifts (e.g., from charity to empowerment) that have led to changes in the way they work.

CONSTRAINTS TO COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY IN NOVA SCOTIA

Economic constraints

Changes in the provincial economy overall: The loss of industries, decreases in farming, and increases in rural poverty have had effects on food security. Farmers and fishers often face extreme hardship due to high production costs (labour, inputs, grain for livestock feed, etc.) and low market prices, and people with low incomes are struggling to meet their needs.

Increasing regulatory demands: Farmers have experienced increased costs associated with the auditing and traceability of their products. Tighter regulations mean it is difficult to engage in cross-provincial trade, presenting barriers to increasing Atlantic collaboration. There are costs associated with environmental “best management” practices, with little or no return on this investment.

Inequitable distribution of resources: Low-income individuals and households do not have enough income for a healthy diet, and organizations working to improve equity in food and other systems (e.g., housing) are faced by a variety of funding challenges. Food insecurity is a reality for many people, including individuals and families depending on income assistance or earning minimum wage, low-income seniors, and others in vulnerable circumstances. Poverty is present in both urban and rural communities, but there are important differences in accessing food and housing in these settings. First Nations and Aboriginal First Nations communities face barriers to community food security including limited access to healthy food due to low income or geographic isolation, and loss of traditional food skills.

Changing opportunities for different scales of agriculture: Few of the emerging opportunities for small producers (such as direct marketing and niche markets) are helpful to larger scale producers whose farms are designed to achieve the greatest economies of scale in production.

Ideas as constraints

Misunderstandings and Stereotypes: Stakeholders from a variety of sectors noted a lack of understanding of their sector as a major constraint to their being able to advance their goals. Negative stereotypes towards people living in poverty were noted, along with the “inclination of most people to explain health inequalities in terms of individual behavior and not the broader conditions in which people live and work”. Farming faces negative assumptions related to animal rights, the environment, and lack of opportunities in agriculture. Media tend to focus on moments of crisis - floods, fires, or crop failures. Fishers face blame related to the depletion of fish stocks, and many feel a “lack of appreciation and awareness of the fishing industry”.

Dietary choices and food preparation skills: There is a general preference for convenience foods, and people may not have learned to prepare food or have busy schedules. From the perspective of income and access, too many people do not have enough resources to buy nutritious food, contributing to poor health and isolation.

Short-term and market-driven thinking, rather than holistic thinking: Governments emphasize short-term results (often tied to election cycles) and market-driven political-economic policies leave some groups in society behind. In agriculture, policies are still “designed to consolidate ownership – larger farms, fewer products and less diversity - so that we can compete in terms of trading and exporting foods, instead of looking at local self-sufficiency and being able to feed ourselves”.

Public knowledge of food sources and production: Negative stereotypes towards certain groups in society and the need for longer-term policy thinking suggest that public education efforts must be part of CFS. Stakeholders identified challenges related to ensuring that consumers know how to identify “local” foods, the gap in the school system around agricultural education about farming and fishing, and the need to enhance education on these industries as career choices.

Sharing research in meaningful ways: Research needs to be meaningful, relevant and interesting to support changes in thinking or practice. Some stakeholders talked about the food costing research in NS as an important enabler for anti-poverty and health groups. Others thought the research gave the impression that the cost of food is too high, which appears to put the blame on farmers. Even well-intentioned research can be perceived as a constraint if miscommunicated or misunderstood.

Organizational constraints

Lack of political will: Agricultural and anti-poverty groups identified “no political will” as a key constraint to realizing their agendas, whereas some health groups said they have been able to find support from politicians for their causes. For some stakeholders, the problem of political will was more a problem of inaction/inertia, rather than actual opposition. Lack of political will was particularly identified by non-profit organizations and a range of agricultural producers. Most would like to see government “put some strength behind forcing institutions to use products grown in NS and create authentic space for consultation and input from people working in industry and living in disadvantaged circumstances.

Lack of follow through: Both anti-poverty and agricultural groups noted an absence of follow through or enforcement once policies were created. Stakeholders observed that legislation requiring a certain amount of local product in some venues is not being enforced, even within government departments, and the provincial poverty reduction strategy is referred to occasionally by government, but has no real substance (reporting mechanisms or clear targets to measure progress).

Policies perceived as barriers to CFS: Government policies, including the decision to negotiate certain trade agreements (e.g., the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement with Europe) and food safety regulations (e.g., regulations for on-farm slaughter) were identified as barriers for some producers, and for consumers attempting to buy local. Farming stakeholders expressed the idea that “We would like to see them [government] support the scale of agricultural production changing”. Recent changes in social assistance policies have made it more difficult for people to access “special diets” to manage chronic health conditions.

Short-term policy thinking: There appears to be no recognition on behalf of elected representatives of the need for upstream investment and long-term planning. This perspective was most strongly voiced by health groups, who explained that “band-aid” and charitable solutions are inadequate to address rising chronic illness and/or food insecurity. Community development and comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategies are needed.

Policy consultation and design challenges: Real government consultation was felt to be lacking by most stakeholders, including anti-poverty and rural organizations. They also saw a changing role for government - as catalyst and

supporter, rather than leader. Government stakeholders talked about the challenges of policy development and implementation, particularly in a complex policy environment such as CFS.

The role of Federal Government: Producers especially noted challenges associated with jurisdictional divisions – not just understanding which level of government is responsible for which issue, but also the amount of control at the federal level over policy that affects local and rural communities, and the lack of local input into those policies. Staff interviewed from provincial governments also noted the effects of federal policies on provincial goals, including funding and policy priorities.

Provincial government restructuring and cutbacks: Restructuring involves two major challenges - funding cutbacks and a lack of clarity about who will be doing what. Agricultural and anti-poverty groups both noted that government cutbacks and restructuring have affected the capacities and influence of their organizations.

Working in “silos”: Lack of collaboration within government, and across sectors was the most common organizational constraint noted by organizations trying to achieve policy change to support CFS. The food system was described as “very fragmented... and it’s just not standing up well in the face of a whole bunch of challenges that are coming up.”

ENABLERS OF COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY IN NOVA SCOTIA

Economic enablers

Relatively inexpensive food in NS (by global comparison): For some people, food is relatively cheap in Nova Scotia, compared to other nations. This situation is brought about, in part, because Nova Scotia imports high volumes of (relatively) inexpensive food from other parts of the country and the world. While this reliance on imports may not help realize a vision of CFS based in self-sufficiency, it has helped to make food (relatively) affordable for those with adequate incomes, which for many people is a key dimension of how they define food security. Nonetheless, people with low incomes do not describe food as inexpensive.

Direct sales and growth of local food markets: Many farmers are seeking local markets including supermarkets and farmers markets. Niche markets (e.g., pharmaceutical crops, grass-fed beef, and organically certified cheeses) are also increasing.

Farmer control of processing infrastructure: Farmers are strengthening their role in processing and distribution, thus regaining control of the “middle point” of the supply (value) chain. For small-scale farmers, working cooperatively makes the costs of equipment and infrastructure more manageable.

Branding: Brands and labels can support local and exported products by increasing awareness of the uniqueness of NS products.

Private sponsorship: Some health, anti-poverty, and agricultural groups are supplementing government funding with private and corporate sponsorship. This strategy can have challenges in terms of ethical investment, but some groups have found funders that line up with their goals.

Ideas as enablers

Growing consumer interest in local food: The ‘buy local’ movement has “gained traction” in NS and there is more demand from consumers for local products. “People are really clueing into the fact that food is travelling so far, and it’s having an energy implication..., going to the markets and trying to support local farmers... people know things are wrong with the industrial model, they want a real connection”.

Growing public interest in children’s health: “People genuinely care about their children and grandchildren...”. There is widespread support for healthy food in schools and breakfast programs. The interest in children’s health has the ability to penetrate a variety of campaigns and draw support from a wide range of stakeholders.

Current educational programs and tools: Programs like 4-H are highly successful in NS. Other programs and tools that have been successful include newsletters, blogs, grower days, and farm tours. These communication tools enable individuals and organizations to reach out to the public and other groups.

Thinking about food security beyond poverty reduction: The shift from a narrow focus on food insecurity as a poverty-related issue, to a broader understanding of the way that “food environments”, including income, shape food security, appears to be an enabler for CFS in Nova Scotia. This shift has created an entry point for new actors to get involved in developing creative CFS solutions.

Organizational enablers

Integration with existing provincial policy priorities: Finding opportunities to integrate their priorities into existing government policies is a strategy that can help organizations move CFS-related policies forward. In relation to the provincial THRIVE! strategy, some stakeholders are “trying to figure out how we fit these types of issues [food security] into that platform... When you are talking obesity prevention, it makes sense to build a food security piece into that”, and to be “realistic” about what can be achieved in the current political and economic climate.

Opportunities at the municipal level: A number of factors appear to have come together in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) to create a climate amenable to exploring the collaboration of regional governments and health authorities in building supportive food environments. In the HRM, the regional plan provides opportunities for incorporating new actions to support food security, and is being led by planning staff who understand the importance of these opportunities. Other municipalities are also working in collaboration with regional partners to support food-related initiatives.

Policies perceived as supportive of CFS: Examples of supportive policies include the provincial breastfeeding policy, food and nutrition policies for schools and regulated childcare, policies that support the development of new markets for Nova Scotia farm and fisheries products, school positions dedicated to healthy eating and active living, small increases in income assistance and minimum wages, agricultural awareness education in schools, programs for new entrants into agriculture, and others. These strategies and policies reflect positive direction toward CFS.

(Slow) Growth of long-term strategizing: A few stakeholders saw some movement toward policy that addresses the longer term. “We are slowly starting, perhaps, to move towards solutions that won’t just cover up the problem, but that will really address the issues in a longer term type of nature”. Some of the policies listed above fall into this category.

New organizational structures: Some groups spoke about the way new organizational models and structures enable them to better achieve their goals. A stakeholder from an agricultural organization explained how the company’s new structure has enabled the company to be more flexible and more responsive to local producers. An anti-poverty group noted that a shift from a charity model in their food work has been a strong enabling factor in terms of engagement and focus. These shifts in the structure and organization of agricultural and civil society groups were noted as allowing these organizations to pursue specific aspects of the CFS agenda.

Collaboration: Many stakeholders expressed an interest in finding more avenues for collaboration, whether it be within government departments, between government departments, within and between industries, within and between civil society groups, between government and civil society groups, between industry and civil society groups, between researchers and civil society groups, or between regions and provinces. Some fruitful collaborations were discussed, but it was generally agreed that much more collaboration is needed.

Diversity as strength: Health and civil society organizations have found strength in expanding and reaching out to groups they have traditionally not worked with, for example, local farmers and businesses. Making these connections has drawn attention to similarities between issues facing different groups. Links between anti-poverty coalitions and local farmers are helping stakeholders move beyond some of the “producer versus consumer” tensions in the NS food policy landscape.

Producer cooperatives: Cooperatives have many benefits for both agriculture and fishing. Industry representatives also noted that increased collaboration between industry groups (e.g., agricultural, fisheries, processing) could be a strong force for policy change.

Collaboration among supply chain partners: Producers see the value of communicating with other players in the food supply chain. One local lamb farmer explained that “we all sit down about 4 times a year with Sobeys, with the producer, with us, the abattoir, and talk about the price of lamb and how everyone is going to make a margin, it is called communication”. Similarly, blueberry growers and beekeepers recognize their mutual dependence, and collaborate on planning and lobbying to support both industries.

KEY TENSIONS IN THE NOVA SCOTIA POLICY LANDSCAPE

Several areas of tension related to the advancement of community food security in Nova Scotia came forward through the interviews. Two broad tensions were:

Nova Scotia currently faces a tension between producers being able to make a living and access to food for all. Both producers and consumers are struggling in this tension: there are financial struggles for primary producers (farmers and fishers, who are sometimes food insecure themselves) and financial struggles for low-income individuals and families trying to meet their basic nutritional needs. Small producers, in particular, are seeking ways to increase the value of their products, which means these products may cost more in the future. Easing this tension means ensuring that local production as a whole is enhanced and that significant portions of it supply local needs, and paying specific attention to the needs of vulnerable populations in policy and community-based planning.

Another tension, for both producers and consumers, is finding a balance in the food system between imports and exports. Some producers depend heavily on export markets. Many (relatively) inexpensive foods, including fruits and vegetables, are imported and used by Nova Scotians. Community food security is not about community self-sufficiency at all costs. It means having the capacity (skills, infrastructure, links, etc.) to support a vibrant and diverse food system - including trade - to meet a variety of community needs (including income generation), and having strong local and regional links.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

1. Agriculture, Wild-harvesting and fisheries

The agriculture, wild harvesting and fisheries sectors all face challenges at all levels of the food value chain (from the high costs of input and labour, to regulatory, auditing, and best management practices that present financial challenges to producers and harvesters, even if some of these practices improve the environmental sustainability of

their operations). These constraints are made worse by a globalized food system that is dominated by cheap imports which put small- and mid-scale producers and processors at a disadvantage. The gradual loss of processing infrastructure and capacity limits the ability for local producers to maintain control of processing, value-adding, and marketing of their products. This especially affects meat and grain industries, and those with unique requirements such as organic. Producers and harvesters also face distribution challenges due to the corporate concentration of food retail and the lack of mid-scale distribution opportunities, which also limits entry to new local producers. Although small-scale producers have found relative success by marketing through farmers markets and CSAs, regulatory barriers limit local marketing and procurement, while Nova Scotia's relatively small population puts a cap on these opportunities. All of these constraints are amplified for new-entrants, who not only face high-startup costs, but are increasingly required to master a wide range of skills from agriculture, to business and marketing. Finally, agricultural supports through government and civil society groups is being reduced or restructured and doesn't necessarily meet the unique needs of small- and mid-scale producers and harvesters.

A common theme in the research was the need to support sustainable production and harvesting by increasing community economic development activity in small- and mid-scale agriculture and fisheries, as well as to (re)build mechanisms for the distribution of local and regional products, thereby increasing the percentage of local products grown/harvested and marketed in Nova Scotia. This does not mean other strategies (production for export, or production at larger scales) are inconsistent with CFS, but the interviews portrayed the greatest possibilities for synergies in this area.

There are opportunities for the agriculture and fisheries sectors to strengthen their capacity in the context of the local food movement: value-added products, niche markets (gluten-free, grass-fed beef, organics, etc.) and increased product development. However, these specialized products are often marketed at a high price, and not everyone in the NS population has the resources to enjoy them. Gaining further control over processing and distribution opens doors for producers and holds the potential to not only increase and stabilize profits for producers and harvesters, but also to increase the accessibility of local products for Nova Scotians. There is great potential through cooperatives and other forms of collaboration across industries and regions, and many organizations have shown interest in collectively improving processing and distribution.

There is potential for further action in the following policy areas identified in the research:

- Address key regulatory and supply chain barriers to local agricultural and fisheries products, including processing regulations, and environmental best management practices.
- Establish regulatory policies that are equitable and scaled to the size of the operation.
- Increase supports for producers to adjust to best management practices and regulations.
- Work to maintain supply management systems for milk and poultry, which are currently under threat, while seeking to minimize the barriers to entry that these systems represent for new or smaller-scale producers.
- Identify policy supports to help fill local processing and distribution gaps, and rebuild or prevent the loss of further capacity.
- Establish or strengthen cooperatives for processing infrastructures and distribution systems, focusing on the needs of young farmers.
- Strengthen financing for new and emerging farm businesses in Nova Scotia (e.g. The FarmWorks Investment Cooperative).
- Increase support for farmer's markets and other forms of direct sales through strengthening buy local campaigns (e.g. Select Nova Scotia).
- Support groups working to establish an "Atlantic" brand to support local producers and processors.
- Establish targets and reporting mechanisms for local and provincial procurement policies.
- Identify and implement policies and practices that address both access for those facing income-related food insecurity and fair livelihood for primary producers (e.g. "good food markets" in low-income communities; the Community Food Center model; the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP); etc.)

2. Ensuring Healthy and Accessible Foods for All

Vulnerable populations such as low income groups face difficult challenges to acquiring healthy food. Research in NS clearly shows that minimum wage and income assistance rates are not sufficient for most individuals and families to afford sufficient, healthy food. An important equity goal associated with CFS is to focus on the needs of economically and socially marginalized groups - low-income, rural, Acadian, First Nations populations, African Nova Scotians - not just in terms of health outcomes, but also in terms of building capacity to support their participation in healthy local economies.

A lack of food preparation and cooking skills, and a cultural preference for convenience foods, are challenges to healthy eating. These trends are compounded by the marketing power of supermarkets, as well as their control over the food supply chain, which influences food preference and choice. FEED NOVA SCOTIA has adopted a centralized organization structure as a way of improving efficiency and accessibility within the food bank system, but this model may present challenges to the procurement of local products, especially from smaller producers.

There is widespread support for the goal of improving the health and nutrition of children and youth through creating conditions in the built and social environments to support healthy food and activity choices. Community initiatives, such as Good Box programs, community gardens, breakfast in schools, and fundraising to support healthy food in schools, demonstrate this strong support across the province.

There is potential for further action in the following policy areas:

- Work towards ensuring that all citizens have an adequate livable income.
- Work towards ensuring that social assistance rates, minimum wages, affordability tax credits, and childcare benefits are adequate and indexed to the cost of living.
- Address taxation trends that are widening the gap between the wealthy and the poor. Examine taxation policies to increase disposable income for low-income earners, thus increasing resources for healthy eating.
- Identify and address other determinants associated with food insecurity (eg. Housing, transportation, communication).
- Establish targets to increase individual and family capacity for food literacy. Target schools and community centres as focus areas (e.g., increased cooking and food literacy, programs that allow children to know where their food comes from).
- Identify models of group buying that could increase access to local and nutritious foods for vulnerable populations and establish targets for monitoring.
- Establish incentives to encourage retail outlets to carry more healthy fresh, local products (e.g. Funding for coolers in corner stores that can carry fresh local produce).
- Establish targets for ensuring senior, female, low-income, rural and minority representation (First Nations, Acadian, and African Nova Scotians) on nutrition and CFS boards.
- Establish supports to ease the negative effects of policy transitions (eg. Assistance to schools that have lost revenue due to school food policies).

3. Collaboration Among Diverse Sectors and Organizations

Building on the above recommendations related to regaining local control of food systems and increasing capacity and self-sufficiency in urban and rural communities, there is strong support for organizations working on both food supply and food access issues and policies to work towards mutually beneficial goals. Although collaboration across diverse groups and departments offers great potential, there are challenges to be overcome. One of the greatest challenges is misunderstandings between groups and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Historical divides within and among

sectors has limited collaboration in the past and presents barriers to moving forward. “Silo” mentalities are present among and between groups and industries, and also problematic in and between government departments and levels of government. These divisions have a range of causes - from differing policy priorities to budget allocation. Challenges of collaboration at the government level are further exacerbated by a lack of political will to move beyond ‘band-aid’ solutions and short-term budgeting and policy development. Civil society groups face barriers due to decreased core funding and limited freedom to advocate for policy change.

Despite these challenges, examples of collaboration can be found within and between many different individuals and organizations, for example government departments, levels of government, community and civil society groups, universities, industries, and regions. Increasing diversity within research groups, and within civil society groups, for example including local farmers and fishers in anti-poverty groups, has presented opportunities to ease tensions and encourage collaboration. The inclusion of women, seniors, low-income and minority groups presents a unique opportunity to learn from the resiliency and strength of these groups, for example the strong social and community ties of the Acadians and First Nations.

Exploring new organizational models that encourage inclusivity and building capacity presents new opportunities. Models being used in NS range from “empowerment models” in anti-poverty groups, to cooperative agricultural enterprises, to government restructuring, to multi-level (local, provincial, national) collaboration in civil-society groups. A diversity of opportunities have been targeted to support the distinct needs of rural communities that range from economic initiatives, such as increasing local ownership and reinvestment in rural communities through supporting locally owned businesses, to cooperatives and credit unions, to social initiatives, such as developing social networks for youth and seniors. Throughout the province the food movement is moving forward by developing networks and increasing collaboration.

Areas identified through the research for increased collaboration include:

- Establish targets for increasing the procurement of local products in schools and workplaces, with the aim of supporting the goals of CFS and the agricultural community (e.g., local products in breakfast programs and workplace catering).
- Focus on the intersection between rural sustainability and CFS across the province, including both economic development strategies (e.g., support locally owned banks/credit unions and businesses) and social policy strategies (e.g., social programs for families, youth and seniors).

For more information about ACT for CFS, please visit: <http://foodarc.ca/actforcfs/>

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