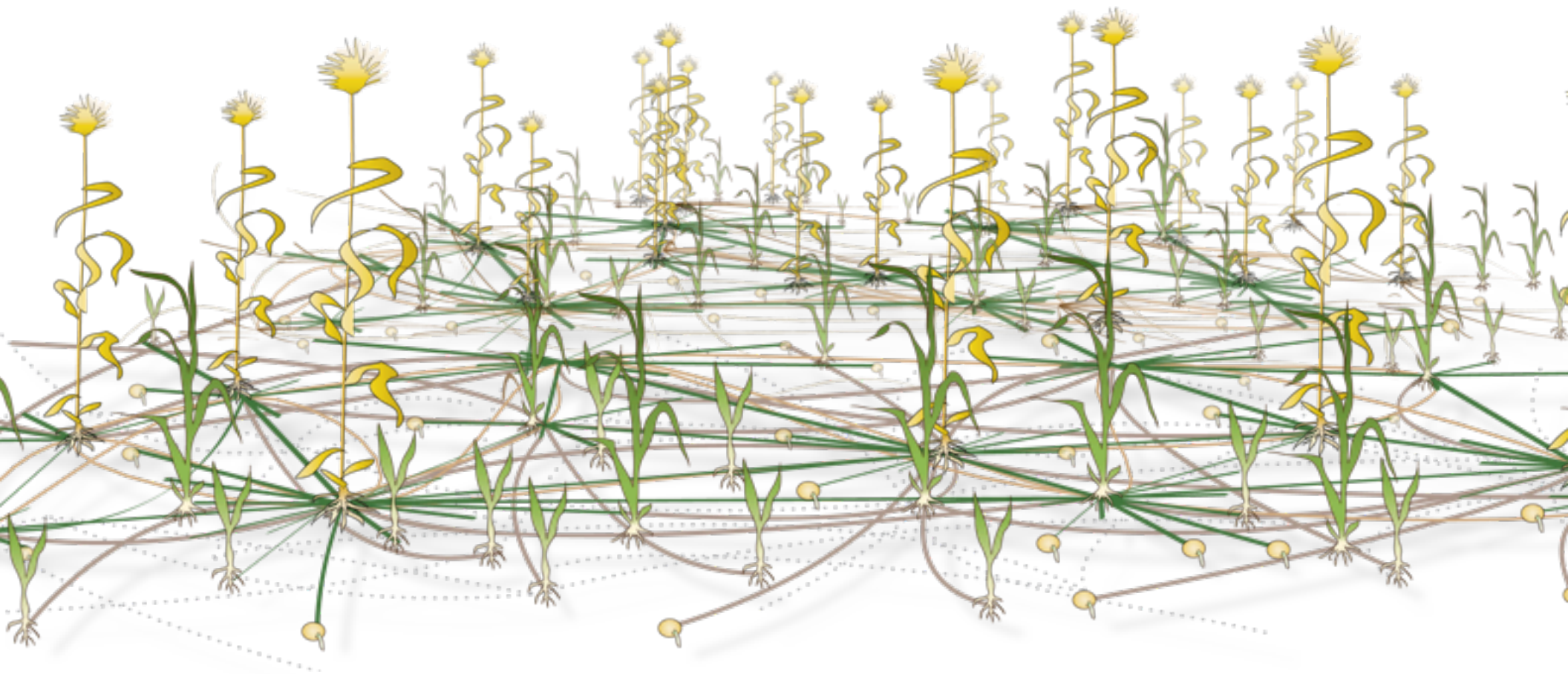


PROPAGATING THE FOOD MOVEMENT: Provincial Networks and Social Mobilization in Canada

November 2012



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I. Executive Summary

This report is part of a study that explores the structure and constitution of networks of food initiatives in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia, working in partnership with four provincial network organizations. The main purpose of this study has been to enhance our understanding of how organizations in Canada are mobilizing around food-related issues. In particular, the research explores the role that food networks, rather than individual initiatives, play in developing resistance to the corporate, industrial food system. This research also seeks to support and strengthen the activities of each provincial network by providing useful information about how they work. The report summarizes the initial findings from a network survey, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, popular education workshops, and highlights from a roundtable discussion with provincial network representatives reflecting on the research findings.

Findings from the research reveal that the participating organizations hold a diversity of core values and are collectively addressing a wide variety of issues, as opposed to focusing on one particular issue area. The majority of respondents indicate that they feel a shared collective identity as part of a broader “food movement.” Participating organizations also describe a range of relationships within the networks. Calculating the different connections within each provincial food network, the findings reveal that all four networks are decentralized with no actors who completely dominate the network. Focusing more directly on the relationships between organizations and the provincial network organizations, the majority of respondents describe these connections as moderate to strong. Charts developed in popular education workshops indicate many cross-provincial similarities as well as specific areas for future consideration.

During the roundtable session at the Canadian Association for Food Studies assembly, four provincial network representatives confirm that the research results resonate with their experiences on the ground. The discussion highlighted the way provincial network organizations have created spaces for collaboration across multiple sectors and scales along with some of the benefits and challenges being addressed. Likewise, the diverse and decentralized structure of the networks present actors with new opportunities for relationship building and engagement in food system change as well as difficulties around ensuring inclusivity and developing equitable governance structures and strategies.

II. Introduction

Since 2009, our research team has explored the structure and constitution of networks of food initiatives in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia, working in partnership with four provincial network organizations: The British Columbia Food Systems Network, Food Matters Manitoba, Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming, and the Nova Scotia Food Security Network.

The research has three primary objectives:

1. To examine the nature, extent and connectedness of provincial food networks in Canada;
2. To explore how actors within these networks understand and/or work towards a transformative food politics; and
3. To investigate the role of provincial network organizations in fostering and supporting the development of a transformative food politics on a broader level.

We are interested in the provincial network organizations because we see them as a way that people and organizations that are doing different things in different places come together around the broad goal of transforming the food system. We see the potential of this collective effort as developing a transformative food politics: that is, as the collaborative strategies and activities that attempt to address the root causes of current challenges within the corporate, industrial food system, rather than just the symptoms. A transformative food politics works to institutionalize ideas about alternative food into both policy and practice, and it encourages the development of solutions that simultaneously address social justice, ecological sustainability, community health and democratic governance in a comprehensive and contextualized way.

The main purpose of this study has been to enhance our understanding of how organizations in Canada are mobilizing around food-related issues. In particular, the research explores the role that food networks, rather than individual initiatives, play in developing resistance to the corporate, industrial food system. This research also seeks to support and strengthen the activities of each provincial network by providing useful information about how they work.

This report presents an overall summary of our preliminary research results. A draft of the report was prepared as a discussion document to guide a roundtable session at the Seventh Annual Canadian Association for Food Studies assembly in May 2012. Highlights from the roundtable session appear in the Discussion section of this report.

III. Methods

The research presented in this report has been collected using the following interconnected methods:

1. *A network survey* - An online survey was developed and sent out to all organizations involved in food-related work in the four case study provinces. The survey was used to gather information about the kinds of relationships among actors within each provincial food network. The survey was open from September to November 2010 and circulated on provincial Internet listserves. In some instances, the survey was re-sent to other regional and national listserves by recipients. The survey was completed by 207 food-related organizations across the country: British Columbia (n=62), Manitoba (n=22), Ontario (n=92) and Nova Scotia (n=31). The survey data was analyzed in three ways. First, quantitative survey responses were uploaded into SPSS and used to produce a series of summary statistics, graphs and tables to illustrate the data trends. Second, qualitative survey responses were analyzed and organized into emergent categories based on commonalities between the responses. This data is presented in the form of specific quotes and tables where possible. Third, the survey asked respondents to list the organizations or groups they are involved with most frequently and that they believed were most valuable to their organization for helping to address food issues. Results were coded and UCINET was used to complete an ego network analysis to generate values of centrality and to identify central actors using in-degree scores. NetDraw (part of UCINET software) was used to generate sociograms (network diagrams) to illustrate relations within each provincial network. This data makes up the bulk of Section V.
2. *Semi-structured, in-depth interviews* - A series of in-person and telephone interviews were conducted with the primary partners as well as with other additional organizations in each province. In all cases, the interviews were scheduled with the most senior staff available, along with an invitation to include other representatives from their organization to participate in the discussions. This data is presented as part of the histories in Section IV and in text form in Section V.
3. *Popular education workshops* - A popular education workshop was designed to explore the different perspectives of the challenges and opportunities for food system transformation within each provincial network. The workshops were held in conjunction with each provincial gathering with the exception of Nova Scotia; since there has been no provincial gathering during the course of the research, no data was collected from there. The workshops were open to all participants who had registered for the provincial gathering, and workshop participants represented a broad sample of individuals involved in each provincial network. Each workshop produced two charts representing the discussions about things that decrease and increase community food security in locally/provincially, nationally and globally. The charts have been synthesized in Section V.
4. *A Roundtable Discussion* - On May 28, 2012, a roundtable session was held at the Seventh Annual Canadian Association for Food Studies assembly. The session included representatives from each of the four provincial networks who read the report in advance and

reflected on the research results using a series of guiding questions developed by the organizers. The questions were: 1) How do the results of the research resonate with your experiences from your network?; 2) What are the strengths and weaknesses of such diverse and decentralized food networks?; 3) How has the provincial network organization connected different organizations across geographies, sectors and scales?; and, 4) How can the provincial network organization better respond to the realities of the provincial food network? Participants included Dayna Chapman¹, Chair of the British Columbia Food Systems Network (BCFSN), Stefan Epp-Koop, the Community Food Assessment and Evaluation Coordinator with Food Matters Manitoba (FMM), Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, Director of Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming (Sustain Ontario), Lauren Baker², the founding Director of Sustain Ontario, and Patty Williams³, a past Coordinating Committee member of the Nova Scotia Food Security Network (NSFSN). Dr. Sarah Wakefield chaired the session and Charles Levkoe presented the background and summary of the research. Following the roundtable discussion attendees were invited to participate in the discussion. The session was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Highlights from the discussion and selected questions from attendees are presented in Section V.

These four complimentary methods were used to derive the content presented in the following section. Each contributes to a better understanding of the structures, relations and activities occurring within each of the provincial food networks and the role of the provincial food network organizations.

IV. The Provincial Food Networks

Canada has a rich tradition of collective action for social change initiated by food-related actors. Most of these food initiatives were established as a response to economic and state restructuring and deregulating and privatizing the economy. However, Canada's geographic size, along with different languages spoken, fragmented political organizations, and urban-rural divides have complicated unified food action. In this section we trace the evolution of the four provincial-level food network organizations (in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia) as part of a collaborative response to these realities. Table 1 provides an overview of the four provincial network organizations. To provide broader context we also discuss the development of Canadian-wide food networks. Figure 1a and 1b provide an overview of the key moments of the provincial network organizations and the national food networks.

¹ Dayna Chapman is also the Director of the Bella Coola Valley Sustainable Agriculture Society and a member of the Food Secure Canada-Sécurité Alimentaire Canada Steering Committee.

² Lauren Baker is currently the Coordinator of the Toronto Food Policy Council and a member of the Food Secure Canada-Sécurité Alimentaire Canada Steering Committee.

³ Patty Williams is currently an Associate Professor at Mount Saint Vincent University, the Canada Research Chair in Food Security and Policy Change and the Director of the Participatory Action Research and Training Center on Food Security in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Table 1: Provincial Network Organization Overview

	Mandate	Type	Leadership	Role in Network	Main Activities
British Columbia Food Systems Network	To work together to eliminate hunger and create food security for all residents of British Columbia	registered non-profit organization	board of directors	convenes a provincial network, articulates desired policy changes, participates in other networks	annual provincial gathering, multiple listserves (geographical and thematic), website, Indigenous Food Sovereignty Working Group, elections toolkit, Food Policy Working Group
Food Matters Manitoba	Food Matters Manitoba engages Manitobans toward healthy, fair, sustainable food for all	registered non-profit, charitable organization	board of directors, permanent staff	convenes, facilitates, incubates, and participates in multiple provincial networks, articulates desired policy changes, coordinates programs	Manitoba Food Charter, annual Growing Local Conference, annual Grow North Conference, listserve, website, research and policy reports, 40+ community food projects, elections campaign, Our Food Our Health Our Culture, Dig In Manitoba, Northern Healthy Food Initiative, FoodShare Coop
Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming	Sustain Ontario is working towards a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable	operates as a non-profit, charitable organization under the auspices of Tides Canada	2 paid co-chairs, advisory council, steering committee, permanent staff note: the Tides Canada board has full governing, legal and fiduciary responsibility	convenes a provincial network, facilitates collaboration, articulates desired policy changes, participates in other networks, coordinates working groups	bi-annual Bring Food Home Conference (co-organizer), research and publications, listserve, website, Good Food Ideas, elections toolkit, multiple working groups, regional food events, Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy
Nova Scotia Food Security Network	To increase the proportion of Nova Scotians who have access to safe, locally produced, nutritious foods and supporting sustainable food systems in the province	informal coalition	coordinating committee	convenes a provincial network, facilitates projects, participates in other networks	listserv, Participatory Food Projects, Activating Change Together for Community Food Security

Figure 1a: Key Moments

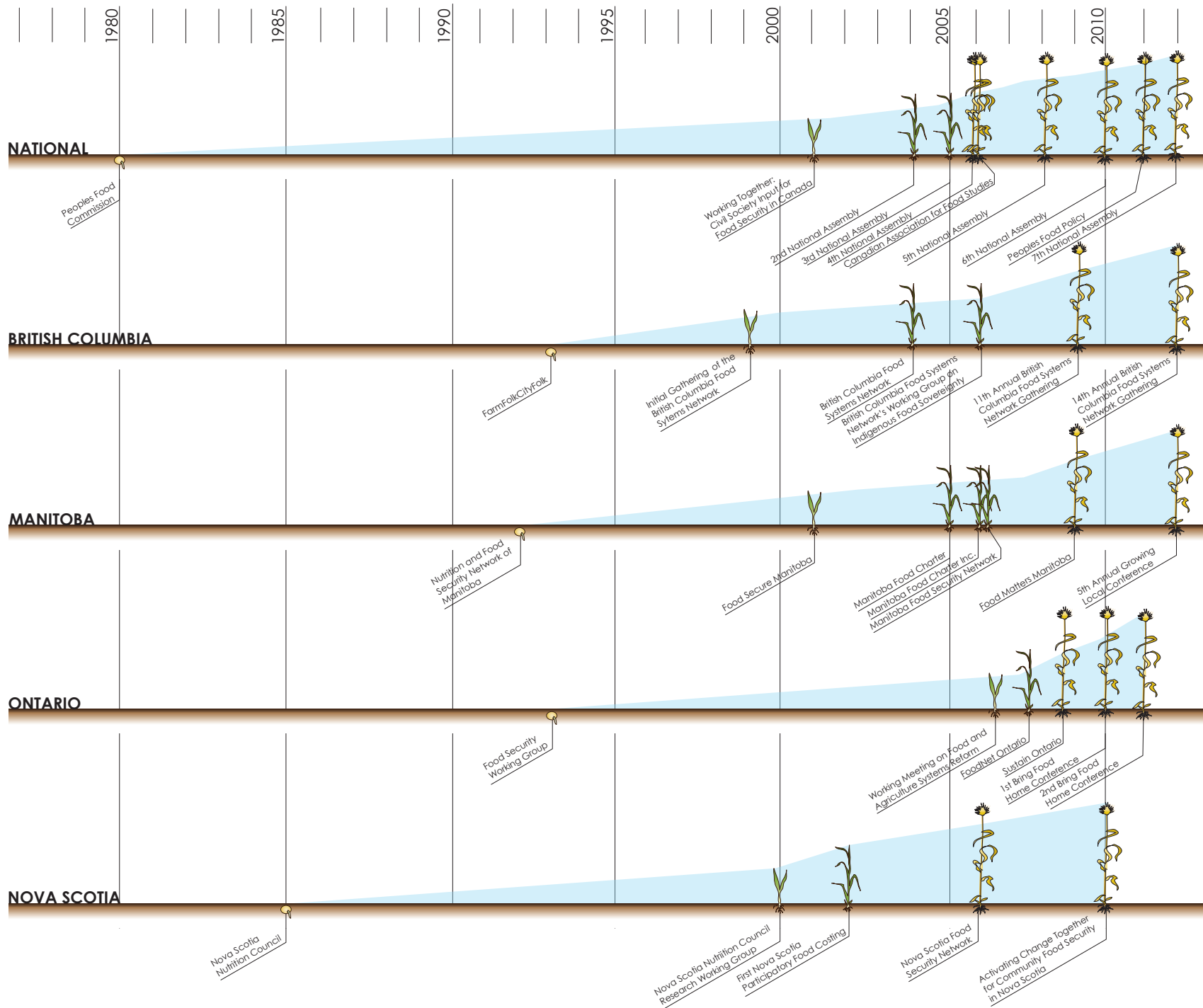


Figure 1b: Key Moments: Legend

NATIONAL	BRITISH COLUMBIA	MANITOBA	ONTARIO	NOVA SCOTIA
<p>2001 Working Together: Civil Society Input for Food Security in Canada Cross-provincial civil society gathering in Toronto, Ontario to contribute to the national response to the World Food Summit - Five Years Later; the group resolved to establish a national food security network</p>	<p>1993 FarmFolkCityFolk Established organization involved in community-based sustainable food systems that eventually supported the establishment of the British Columbia Food Systems Network</p>	<p>1992 Nutrition and Food Security Network of Manitoba Group of primarily dietitians engaged in provincial food security</p>	<p>1993 Food Security Working Group Established by the Ontario Public Health Association to advocate for a provincial food and nutrition strategy</p>	<p>1985 Nova Scotia Nutrition Council Volunteer community health organization and progenitor to the Nova Scotia Food Security Network</p>
<p>2004 Growing Together – 2nd National Assembly National gathering in Winnipeg, Manitoba agreed to establish an organization to advocate and speak on food security issues</p>	<p>1999 Initial Gathering of the British Columbia Food Systems Network Held at the Sorrento Conference Centre on Shuswap Lake; recognized the desire and need to perpetuate collaborative work and mutual support</p>	<p>2001 FoodSecure Manitoba Inter-agency, multi-sectoral collaborative group addressing provincial food security</p>	<p>2007 Working Meeting on Food and Agriculture Systems Reform Convened by the Metcalf Foundation to explore the opportunities for collaborative, cross-sectoral work</p>	<p>2000 Nova Scotia Nutrition Council Research Working Group Established group that administered a series of participatory food security projects</p>
<p>2005 3rd National Assembly National gathering in Waterloo, Ontario Ratified Food Secure Canada/Sécurité Alimentaire Canada with an action agenda based on four focus areas: research and policy development; strategic alliances and capacity building; education and outreach; advocacy</p>	<p>2004 British Columbia Food Systems Network Established as a formal society with a board of directors</p>	<p>2005 Manitoba Food Charter Provincial consultations to discuss ideas about the food system</p>	<p>2007 FoodNet Ontario Established by Ontario Public Health Association and Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition to support local and regional community food security initiatives</p>	<p>2002 1st Nova Scotia Participatory Food Costing Participatory approach to measuring the cost of the National Nutritious Food Basket as evidence to start a conversation around food security and to develop strategies to change the food system</p>
<p>2006 Bridging Borders Towards Food Security - 4th National Assembly National gathering in Vancouver, British Columbia held first annual general meeting of newly incorporated FSC-SAC</p>	<p>2006 British Columbia Food Systems Network's Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty Established to increase awareness of underlying issues, concerns and strategies impacting food security in Indigenous communities and to carry an Indigenous voice into the food security movement</p>	<p>2006 Manitoba Food Charter Inc. Legally incorporated as non-profit organization to foster the work of the charter</p>	<p>2008 Sustain Ontario Established through a Metcalf Foundation grant as a province wide, cross-sectoral alliance to promote healthy food and farming</p>	<p>2006 Nova Scotia Food Security Network Coordinating committee originally established to oversee the Nova Scotia Participatory Food Security Projects and to make connections across the province, to create space for conversation, and to identify opportunities for moving food security work forward</p>
<p>2006 Canadian Association for Food Studies Established as a national organization to connect academic and professional researchers to share interdisciplinary information and enhance the evidence base for food systems work</p>	<p>2009 11th Annual British Columbia Food Systems Network Gathering Moved from Sorrento to Chehalis, traditional Stó:lō territory, to rotate locations each year</p>	<p>2009 Food Matters Manitoba Name changed from Manitoba Food Charter to reflect the breadth and scope of their work including the goal to strengthen networks and partnerships that address food issues across the province</p>	<p>2010 Connecting Ontario Food and Farm Networks - 1st Bring Food Home Conference First biannual provincial gathering in Kitchener, coordinated by Sustain and sponsored by FoodNet and other partners</p>	<p>2010 Activating Change Together for Community Food Security in Nova Scotia Five-year grant received by a coalition of university researchers and community groups with the Nova Scotia Food Security Network as the main community partner</p>
<p>2008 Reclaiming our Food System: A Call to Action – 5th National Assembly National gathering in Ottawa, Ontario agreed to support the People's Food Policy Project</p>	<p>2012 14th Annual British Columbia Food Systems Network Gathering Held on Gambier Island in the Howe Sound (Coast Salish territory)</p>	<p>2012 5th Annual Grow Local Conference Hosted record number of attendees with keynote speaker Winona LaDuke</p>	<p>2011 Preparing the Ground for a Sustainable Food System - 2nd Biannual Bring Food Home Conference Culminated in strategic planning session and new network initiatives</p>	
<p>2010 Weaving Together Food Policy and Community Action: An Agenda for Change – 6th National Assembly National gathering in Montréal, Quebec presented a draft of the People's Food Policy Project for feedback along with the development of key policy recommendations</p>				
<p>2011 Peoples Food Policy Released Resetting the Table: A Peoples' Food Policy for Canada and 10 discussion papers as living documents</p>				
<p>2012 Powering Up! Food for the Future - 7th Nation Assembly Held in Edmonton Alberta</p>				

In Canada, the first large scale, collective and comprehensive mobilization focusing on food system issues manifested in the People's Food Commission (PFC) in the late 1970s. Beginning in 1977, the PFC brought together thousands of diverse grassroots actors to discuss the broader food system. Through informal hearings and creative presentations, the PFC's objective was to document a wide range of challenges and opportunities for change. Presenters to the PFC used multiple methods including statements, slides, songs, puppet shows, academic presentations, and informal discussions, all focusing on the experiences of deteriorating economic conditions, the connections to the food system, and possible actions that could be taken. Their final publication, a book entitled *The Land of Milk and Money*, "began with the assumption that everyday experience is a valuable source of information, and that people's stories about how things work and fit together have an important validity⁴." The PFC concluded, "Behind the rise and fall of food prices, there were a handful of corporations who controlled and profited from the food system⁵." The process of developing the PFC mobilized thousands of people and groups from across the country to articulate their concerns and suggestions around ways to transform the food system and generated significant energy and interest. Unfortunately, a lack of resources limited the ability of the PFC to move forward. Further, there was little political will to address the issues brought up in the final report. However, the ideas and inspiration that resulted from the PFC continued to permeate social mobilization around food in Canada.

By the late 1990s, there were a myriad of individuals and organizations with diverse interests and goals working on food system issues in Canada. At a local level, mobilization included small businesses (e.g. small scale and artisanal processors, grocers, cooperatives), rural farms, urban agriculture, food hubs, regional health authorities, food policy councils and other local food coalitions. These efforts along with new attempts at large-scale, comprehensive mobilization led some to refer to this period as a "second wave" of food activism⁶. At the provincial level, the focus of this report, the mobilization of local actors and organizations into regional alliances is emblematic of this period. Provincial networks play a key role in this process in terms of providing opportunities for cross-sector initiatives and multi-scale mobilization. The stories of the four provincial network organizations, which serve as case studies for this report, are briefly highlighted here to provide a snapshot of how they came to fruition.

The British Columbia Food Systems Network

The roots of the British Columbia Food Systems Network (BCFSN) can be traced back to a number of initiatives that developed in the 1970s and 1980s in response to social, political and economic changes within the food system. Throughout the mid-1990s, preliminary work on food systems policy was being undertaken by various groups and individuals across the province of British Columbia. Some of these efforts that served

⁴ People's Food Commission. 1980. *The Land of Milk and Money: The National Report of the People's Food Commission*. Toronto: Between the Lines. p. 7.

⁵ People's Food Commission. 1980. *The Land of Milk and Money: The National Report of the People's Food Commission*. Toronto: Between the Lines. p. 81.

⁶ Koc, M., MacRae, R., Desjardins, E., & Roberts, W. 2008. Getting Civil About Food: The Interactions Between Civil Society and the State to Advance Sustainable Food Systems in Canada. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition* 3 (2): 122–144.

as the foundation of the BCFSN included FarmFolk/CityFolk⁷, community nutrition networks, federal and provincial pregnancy outreach programs⁸, the widespread organization of organic farmers, allies in food retail, and an active Indigenous presence.

Between 1998 and 1999, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands established a Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries to explore the impacts of new free trade agreements and federal cutbacks in farm safety nets on the agricultural sector. A group of thirty-five individuals involved in community-level food initiatives gathered in Sorrento, in British Columbia's Southern Interior. Over the two-day meeting, the group shared experiences, began a dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of the food system, and made new connections with others from across the province. The meeting concluded with a proposal to establish the BCFSN.

Beyond the knowledge sharing at the gathering, participants recognized the importance of connecting with other individuals and groups interested in transforming the food system. Although they were only a loose alliance of individuals at the time, the group committed to meeting annually as a way to sustain relationships and encourage mutual support. In addition to the value of cross-provincial connections, gathering participants emphasized a need to foster grassroots capacity building through peer training and support. Concerned about the role of "experts" and the control of knowledge, the network adhered to the principle that expertise exists in local places and amongst those engaged in food systems work in their respective communities.

The BCFSN eventually became a registered society with a board of directors in 2004. The decision to incorporate was made with the intention to develop a more formalized structure that could be more sustainable and gain legitimacy among food system stakeholders. From the beginning, the BCFSN worked to include a diverse range of voices from across the province in discussions about the food system and setting priorities for action. Participation of Indigenous communities remains a core aspect of the BCFSN, and these efforts have been influential for other provincial and national food networks⁹.

⁷ FarmFolk/CityFolk is an organization that connects urban and rural people with a vision of a local and sustainable food systems (see <http://www.ffcfc.bc.ca>) and played a central role in developing the foundations for the provincial network.

⁸ At the Federal level, the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program is a community-based program delivered through the Public Health Agency of Canada. At the provincial level, British Columbia Pregnancy Outreach Programs provides prenatal and early parenting support to women who experience health or lifestyle challenges during pregnancy, birth and the transition to parenting.

⁹ In 2006, the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS) was established by the BCFSN in order to ensure that Indigenous perspectives were part of provincial discussions. The leadership and administration of the WGIFS and the BCFSN supported the eventual establishment of the Indigenous Food Systems Network, an organization committed to facilitating a better understanding of the relationship between Indigenous land and food systems across Canada.

Recognizing the need for a multi-scale approach to impact the food system, the BCFSN has encouraged provincial organizations to organize locally, with the intention of establishing a coherent network structure to encourage the interactive flow of ideas and action between local, regional, provincial and national groups.

Food Matters Manitoba

Food Matters Manitoba (FMM) emerged from decades of work that have made connections between food, health, social justice and the environment. In 1974, Manitoba's Frontier School Division introduced a Health and Nutrition advisor program and produced one of the first recorded documents that focused on issues of provincial food security. This pioneering report laid some of the early groundwork for the community food security efforts that followed. In 1992 another broad attempt was made to communicate some of the combined factors that resulted in provincial food insecurity. Constituted by a number of health and anti-poverty organizations, the Nutrition and Food Security Network of Manitoba published a report on the contributing factors to the household food insecurity of low-income residents along with a framework for policy reform and future research. Building on these early efforts, in 2001 a collective of individuals and organizations came together under the name FoodSecure Manitoba representing diverse food system stakeholders. The gathering resulted in a set of concrete actions, which prioritized a larger food security conference as a first step. In 2003, FoodSecure Manitoba received provincial government funding and through a partnership with the Centre for Policy Alternatives organized its first provincial food gathering: Making Manitoba Food Secure. In recognition of these innovative efforts, Manitoba was identified to host the upcoming National Food Security Assembly.

In October 2004, representatives from across Canada gathered for a second National Assembly in Winnipeg. For Manitoba's emerging provincial food network, the most significant outcome of the period leading up to and including the Assembly was the initiative to develop a food charter similar to the one successfully developed in Toronto¹⁰. The idea of moving beyond the municipal-level in Manitoba was encouraged by participants from the North, who suggested the development of a provincial food charter that included farmers and Northerners. In 2005, the steering committee of The Food Charter Project began community consultations with over seventy groups involved in Manitoba's food system.

By May 2006, the provincial food charter was drafted and a second province-wide food gathering was held to solicit feedback and decide how to proceed. The final draft of the Charter provided a vision and principles intended to guide and inform all levels of government, businesses, non-profit organizations, and communities in a mutual effort toward food security and community development. The Charter's vision was to work towards a "just and sustainable food system in Manitoba . . . rooted in healthy communities, where no one is hungry and everyone has access to nutritious food." Individual and organizational signatories committed to work in partnerships towards this vision and described action steps they would take.

¹⁰ The Toronto Food Charter was established through broad citizen participation and adopted by City Council in March 2001. It presents a vision for a just and sustainable food system in Toronto.

In December of that year, the Manitoba Food Charter Inc. (MFC) legally incorporated as a non-profit organization. The organization was established to promote the charter and to engage a dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders. At a launch event, participants identified 170 action areas to guide the new organization. With funding from federal and provincial governments and private foundations, the MFC initiated an annual provincial Growing Local conference along with programming aimed at cultivating community food skills, providing public education, and building partnerships and networks. In 2009, with over 125 active partners, the MFC changed its name to Food Matters Manitoba (FMM), to better reflect the breadth and scope of its work. Today, FMM acts as a convener and participant with a number of food-related networks bringing stakeholders together to support each other, share ideas and develop strategies for future work. FMM has supported and coordinated over forty community food projects, participates in a number of regional networks, and convenes the Manitoba Food Security Network, which meets twice annually and serves as a forum for people from across the province to connect, communicate, showcase their projects, and share resources.

Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming

Formally established in 2008, Sustain Ontario: the Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming (Sustain Ontario) is the newest of the four provincial network organizations. Despite Ontario's long and rich history of engagement in food and agriculture initiatives, there had been little broad based collective effort to transform food and agriculture at a systems-wide level. Beginning May 2007, the George Cedric Metcalf Foundation¹¹ held a series of working meetings that brought together affiliated grantees and advisors to identify key food system priorities and to solicit feedback on ways Metcalf could support future collaborations. The broad array of actors invited to participate represented the breadth and diversity of the initiatives in Southern Ontario from urban food security and food policy organizations to peri-urban and rural groups involved in farm viability and agricultural land preservation.

As a first step, the group decided to draft a position paper that would provide an analysis and broadly frame ways to work towards a local, sustainable and accessible food system in Ontario. The final publication was entitled *Food Connects Us All*, and garnered positive response from policymakers and contributors. The paper also laid the foundation for the establishment of a provincial network organization. In February 2008, Jeanette Longfield, coordinator of Sustain: the Alliance for Better Food and Farming in the United Kingdom (Sustain UK) was invited to Toronto by the nascent food network to share her organization's experiences. Inspired by Sustain UK's organizational model and with the success of a funding application to the Metcalf Foundation, the network moved to establish a more formalized organizational structure¹². In 2008, Sustain

¹¹ A Toronto-based charitable organization, the Metcalf Foundation had been actively supporting food-related social justice, health and farming initiatives across Southern Ontario. Metcalf's mission is to enhance the effectiveness of people and organizations working together to help Canadians imagine and build a just, healthy, and creative society (www.metcalffoundation.org).

¹² Sustain Ontario is structured as non-profit charitable organization under the auspices of Tides Canada, a federally registered charity who's mission focuses on environmental and social sustainability (www.tidescanada.org). Sustain Ontario furthers the mission of Tides Canada and adheres to its policies as well as the requirements of the Charities Directorate of the Canadian Revenue Agency. The Tides Canada Board has full governing, legal and fiduciary responsibility for Sustain Ontario.

Ontario was established with its own staff, co-chairs, an advisory committee and a steering committee representing the diversity of the food and farming sector in the province. When Sustain Ontario's steering committee first convened, it became clear that working collaboratively as a network provided the opportunity to reach out to a broader range of organizations and groups across the province that had important experience to share but limited access to resources. A decision was made to expand the mandate of Sustain Ontario to include the entire province rather than only focus on its Southern Ontario roots. Sustain Ontario currently serves as a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance for food and farming in the province of Ontario. It works to strengthen existing networks within the province by linking diverse communities.

The establishment of Sustain Ontario was the product of a particular historical moment that included the efforts of the Metcalf Foundation, along with numerous organizations and individuals around the province. While Sustain Ontario did not formally incorporate until 2008, previous efforts established the foundations and created the conditions for a provincial food network to evolve. Some of this earlier work included broad-based network building, however, the capacity of those networks were limited since most organizations were narrowly focused and had limited ability to address the structural problems of the food system. It is important to note that there have been other attempts to establish provincial collaborations that pre-date Sustain Ontario. For example, the Ontario Public Health Association's (OPHA) Food Security Working Group was established in 1993 to advocate for the adoption of a provincial food and nutrition strategy but over time became involved in broader food policy work and supporting other provincial and national groups. Through the expansion of its a partnership with members of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (OHCC) a need was identified to increase the capacity of local and regional community food security initiatives. A steering committee was established and in 2007 the group received a three-year grant to establish FoodNet Ontario (FoodNet) as a provincial network to provide better access to information, tools, and resources to support local and regional community food security initiatives and sustainable food production. FoodNet primarily acts as a resource and information hub to support frontline food security initiatives. In both 2010 and 2011, FoodNet and Sustain Ontario worked together on the planning and program development for the provincial Bring Food Home Conference. In addition, Sustain's Director sits on the Coordinating Committee of FoodNet and there is a FoodNet representative on Sustain Ontario's Advisory Council.

Nova Scotia Food Security Network

The birth story of the Nova Scotia Food Security Network (NSFSN) begins with the collaborative relationship between academic, public health and community groups concerned with food insecurity in the province. In 1989, the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council (NSNC) conducted a food costing survey in the province and published a report, which showed that people on income assistance could not afford to eat a nutritious diet¹³.

¹³ The food costing project is part of Health Canada's National Nutritious Food Basket, which attempts to monitor the cost and affordability of eating a healthy diet. The results are used to promote and support the development of policies to increase access to nutritious food. Provincial, territorial and regional governments develop their own protocols to guide data collection in their jurisdiction.

That finding encouraged a small group of dietitians and nutritionists to get involved in advocacy work focusing on income assistance rates. Despite some successes, the project was short-lived due to funding constraints and lack of capacity in the NSNC to support the group.

By 2000, food insecurity had worsened in Nova Scotia and the NSNC decided to revisit the idea of food costing as a way to address issues of poverty in the province. A group of public health professionals and academics came together to form the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council Research Working Group to continue the food costing work along with developing a number of other innovative food security projects. When the group's funding eventually ran out, the projects became hosted through Mt. Saint Vincent University in Halifax as the Nova Scotia Participatory Food Security Projects (NSPFSP). At this time, a small amount of funding was received from the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection (NSHPP)¹⁴ to explore the options to continue the food-costing project¹⁵. As opposed to working strictly with professional researchers, participatory food costing involved people experiencing food insecurity, decision makers, and community workers in the process of data collection, analysis, communications and dissemination¹⁶. To complement the food costing, the Steering Committee of the NSPFSP began a series of community dialogues around food security and used participatory techniques to increase awareness of food security issues.

In 2005, there was a turning point for the evolving network when the NSHPP named food security as one of four health priority areas for the province¹⁷. The NSPFSP received a grant from the NSHPP to develop an action plan to continue their work building food security. In June 2006, the Steering Committee of the NSPFSP recommended the establishment of a Nova Scotia Food Security Network (NSFSN) that would include even broader representation from organizations in multiple sectors and a Coordinating Committee to guide all existing and future work. The NSFSN Coordinating Committee was established to reflect the geographic, cultural and sectoral diversity of the network with a mandate to become a hub that makes connections across the province, to create space for conversation, and to identify opportunities for moving food security work forward.

The NSFSN still oversees the participatory food costing through a working group that operates within the network. The NSFSN is currently a core partner on the Activating Change Together for Community Food Security (ACT for CFS), a five-year Community University Research Alliance grant sponsored by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. ACT for CFS aims to build on the participatory

¹⁴ In 2011, the provincial Department of Health Promotion and Protection and the Department of Health merged to create the Department of Health and Wellness.

¹⁵ The Department of Health Promotion and Protection, now the Department of Health and Wellness, has provided ongoing funding since this point.

¹⁶ Results of the Participatory Food Costing Project are available at <http://www.foodsecurityresearchcentre.ca/nova-scotia-participatory-food>.

¹⁷ The Department of Health Promotion and Protection released *Healthy Eating Nova Scotia* in March 2005 as a strategic plan to address nutrition-related health issues. The report was produced in partnership with the Healthy Eating Action Group of the Nova Scotia Alliance for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. The report is available at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/ohp/healthyEating.html>.

work of the NSFSN by assessing food systems and their impact on food access in Nova Scotia and beyond as well as developing strategies for policy change.

Mobilization Beyond the Provincial Scale

The historical developments of the four provincial network organizations highlight the way that local level organizing has been an integral part of mobilization on the provincial scale. Likewise, local and provincial efforts have been interconnected to mobilization that has occurred on a national (and global) scale. Thus, the story of the four provincial network organizations would be incomplete without a brief recounting of the key moments that have brought together actors at these broader scales. These national efforts have been shaped by, and contribute to the shaping of the provincial networks.

With the inauguration of the first World Food Summit in Rome in 1996, the community food security movement in the United States, and the food sovereignty movement in the Global South, Canadian activists and academics recognized a need for a public forum to discuss food system issues and a space for collaboration and strategic action. In 1999, a group of academics and practitioners gathered in Toronto to discuss the possibility of forming a national food network that would consist of representatives from academia, community organizations, practitioners, and policy makers. Their efforts were expedited by an invitation to prepare collective input for the Canadian Government during the preparation of the official submission to the World Food Summit – Five Years Later to be held in 2001 in Rome. In 2001, representatives from the public and private sectors were invited to attend a conference at Ryerson University in Toronto; the main outcome of which was a resolution from participants that stated the need for a Canadian food security network¹⁸. These events became the seeds for the development of a pan-Canadian food movement.

Following the Ryerson meeting, a National Assembly was held in 2004 in Manitoba with the goal of bringing together the broad array of food movement actors. At a second National Assembly in Waterloo, participants agreed to three interlocking commitments that formed the vision for Food Secure Canada-Sécurité Alimentaire Canada (FSC/SAC). These commitments were: 1) Zero Hunger; 2) A Sustainable Food System; and, 3) Healthy and Safe Food. FSC/SAC was ratified by its membership in 2005 at a third National Assembly in Vancouver.

At the same time, another organization was emerging with an interest in building partnerships among community and university food researchers. In April of 2005 a meeting was held at Ryerson University that resulted in the decision to form an association that would bring together academics, community and public sector researchers committed to generating new food-related knowledge in response to societal needs. Members emphasized policy-relevant scholarship that could be used to build arguments aimed at decision makers and support existing initiatives towards food system transformation. Taking the name the Canadian Association for Food Studies- l'Association canadienne des études sur

¹⁸ Koc, M., and MacRae, R. (eds.). 2001. *Working Together: Civil Society Working for Food Security in Canada*. Toronto: Media Studies Working Group. p. 49.

l'alimentation (CAFS/ACEA), the intention was to “promote critical, interdisciplinary scholarship in the broad area of food policy, production, distribution and consumption . . . [and to address] the complex relationships between food-related issues¹⁹.” CAFS/ACEA was born as a sister-organization to FSC/SAC, to allow university and community-based researchers from diverse disciplines to meet regularly and share their work with each other and the broader public. The two organizations did however agree to keep an arms-length relationship to allow for independent development. Recently, there has been a renewed interest and momentum to discuss collaborative efforts.

FSC/SAC formally incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2006 and adopted a collaborative approach and an inclusive politics. Its mission stated that FSC/SAC was to be a “Canada-wide alliance of civil society organizations and individuals collaborating to advance dialogue and cooperation for policies and programs that improve food security in Canada and globally.” FSC/SAC’s initial vision, according to Cathleen Kneen, the organizations volunteer chair from 2008-2012, was to:

create a coherent food movement in Canada that could strengthen local projects and support a national food policy for a just and sustainable food system. The idea was to bring together all the very different perspectives working on food issues, insisting that ending hunger, supporting population health through healthy and safe food and ensuring the environmental (and economic) sustainability of the food system are necessarily interlinked²⁰.

The development of FSC/SAC and CAFS/ACEA as national organizations was the result of more than two decades of mobilization around food issues. Many of the founding leaders of the organizations were involved in the PFC and were directly connected to existing local, provincial and global food networks. Both FSC/SAC and CAFS/ACEA have become a platform for the provincial networks to connect with each other, share strategies and collaborate. In 2010, FSC/SAC passed a formal resolution put forth collaboratively by the provincial networks to establish an official provincial network-working group. Through this resolution, FSC/SAC committed to delineating time and space for the provincial networks to meet during future National Assemblies. Further, FSC/SAC established bi-monthly provincial network teleconferences as a space for the provincial networking organizations and anyone else interested continue these discussions. Facilitated by the networks, there have been a number of project- and research based collaborations between the provincial network organizations and sharing of recourses and strategies (e.g. the People’s Food Policy Project, collaboration around the 2012 visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement – Community Food Security Hub).

¹⁹ Power, E., and Koc, M. 2008. A double-double and a maple-glazed doughnut: special issue on Canadian food studies. *Food Culture and Society* 11 (3): 263–267. p. 264.

²⁰ Kneen, C. 2011. Food Secure Canada, where agriculture, environment, health, food justice intersect. In Hannah Wittman, Annette Aurelie Desmarais, and Nettie Wiebe (eds.). *Food Sovereignty in Canada, Creating Just and Sustainable Food Systems*, p. 80-96. Halifax: Fernwood. p. 80.

In this section, we have provided an overview of the development of the provincial network organizations in the four case study provinces and their interconnection with broader networks in Canada. However, the moments described here are only a part of a much more intricate and detailed story of food networks in Canada that is beyond the scope of this report. Far from being a new or temporary trend, food networks are part of a long process of mobilization around food issues. While there is only enough space here to discuss the case studies, provincial food network organizations have been established in other provinces including Alberta (Growing Food Security in Alberta est. 2003), Saskatchewan (Food Secure Saskatchewan est. 2006), New Brunswick (The New Brunswick food Security Action Network est. 2010), Prince Edward Island (The Prince Edward Island Food Security Network est. 2008), and the Newfoundland and Labrador (The Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador est. 1998). There is also a regional network that has been established in Canada's North, hosted by FSC/SAC (The Northern Food Network est. 2010). The next section of this report will describe the research findings that look specifically at the relationships and structures of the provincial food networks that were part of the case study.

V. Results from the Provincial Network Research

This section presents the preliminary research findings. The results have been divided into seven sub-sections that represent different aspects of the relationships and activities taking place within the provincial networks.

Issues and Values of Organizations Participating in the Networks

Survey respondents were asked about the kinds of work their organization is most frequently involved with, by ranking a list of 19 issue-areas (including spaces to list others not part of the original list). The findings revealed a great deal of diversity in the issues identified (see *Table 2*). The most highly ranked issues included community development, community health, farming/agricultural, food literacy/education, food security and food sovereignty work. While not as highly ranked overall, a number of respondents also identified issues such as anti-poverty, consumer choice, and labeling/certification. A smaller number of respondents identified issues such as farm workers rights and global trade. There were

Table 2: Ranking of Issues that most Organizations Identified with Across the Four Networks

Highest Ranked	Middle Ranked	Lowest Ranked	Additional Work*
community development, community health, environment, farming/agricultural, food literacy/education, food security, food sovereignty	academic/research, anti-hunger, anti-poverty, consumer choice, distribution and marketing, food safety, labelling and certification	agritourism, fishing, farm workers rights, global trade, chairity	civic engagement, policy, sustainable infrastructure, traditional/wild foods and indigenous rights, climate change, preserving heritage/culture, hunting/game meat, school food

*Mentioned more than once

also other more general areas that were highly ranked by multiple respondents including civic engagement and policy. While the responses across provinces were fairly similar, there were also a few notable differences between the provinces. In British Columbia, respondents ranked labeling and certification slightly below the overall average and rated the environment well above average. In Manitoba, respondents ranked farming/agriculture and academic/research well above the overall average. In Nova Scotia, respondents ranked labeling and certification slightly above the overall average. The extensive list of issues identified within the regional networks makes it difficult to conclude that there is any one central issue or approach favoured within the networks. These results reveal that network organizations are collectively addressing a wide variety of issues as opposed to focusing on a particular issue area.

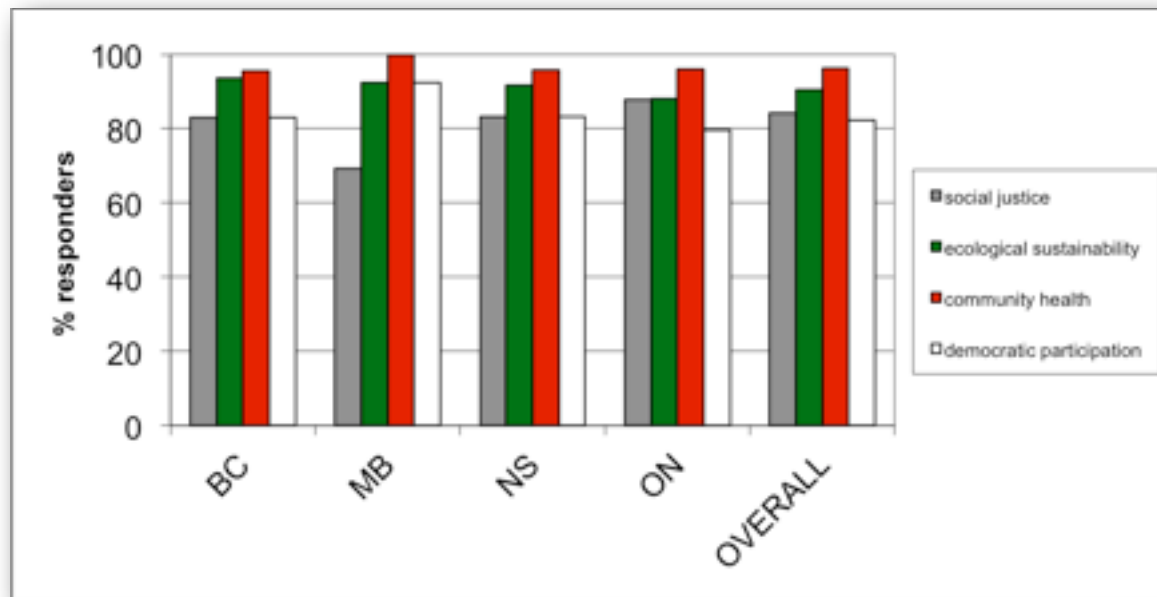
In each province, organizations were also asked to rank the extent to which they identified with a list of core values: social justice, ecological sustainability, community health and democratic participation. The survey provided a five-point ranking scale for each core value: very strong, strong, weak, very weak and not at all. In all provinces, the majority of organizations ranked all four values as strong/very strong (see *Figure 2*), with ecological sustainability and community health among the highest. Respondents in Manitoba ranked social justice slightly lower than the other provinces and community health and democratic participation slightly higher. Respondents in Ontario ranked social justice slightly higher than the overall average.

According to the network survey, an overwhelming majority (97%) of respondents identified as part of a collective and evolving food movement (see *Figure 3*). This suggests that, even though they are interested in different issues, the respondents felt like they had a shared collective identity as part of a broader “movement”.

Relationships Among Organizations in the Networks, and with other Institutions

In the survey, respondents were asked to describe the nature of their relations with other organizations in the province. The responses were summarized into six emergent categories

Figure 2: Organizational Identification as Strong/Very Strong with Core Values



and are described in *Table 3*, which represents the percentage of responses in each category. The most identified type of relationship was in the category of structural/organizational support (31% of total respondents). Primary responses in this category included the overlap of individuals through joint membership in each other's organizations, individuals sitting on the executive boards and steering committees of multiple organizations, organizations providing guidance and support in the establishment of other organizations. The second type of relationship most identified by respondents was in the category of information exchange (29% of total respondents), which included regular verbal/face-to-face contact, providing education and training, attending conferences or events, subscribing to listserves, and using an organization's web site on a regular basis. Relationships that were identified less frequently by respondents included: funding (14% of total responses), which involved both monetary and in-kind contributions (e.g. sponsorship, use of space, incubating an organization); joint events (10% of total respondents) including projects, programs or campaigns; and, shared resources (10% of total respondents) including sharing volunteers, material goods (e.g. food) and specific services or programs. The types relationships least identified were in the category of joint promotions (6% of total respondents), which included collectively promoting awareness of a particular issue or product and joint advocacy.

Survey respondents were also asked which institutional sector they had been in contact with

Figure 3: Organizational Identification as part of a Food Movement

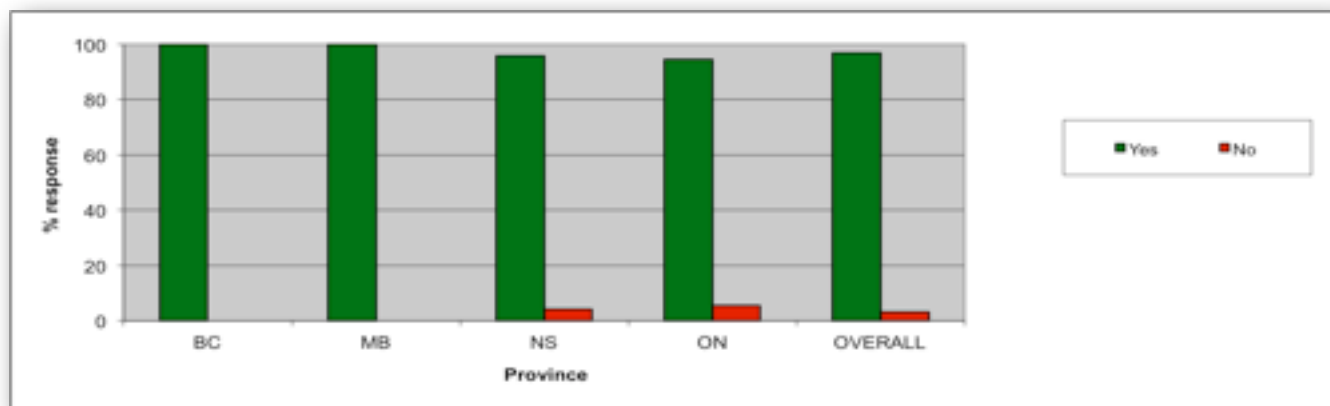
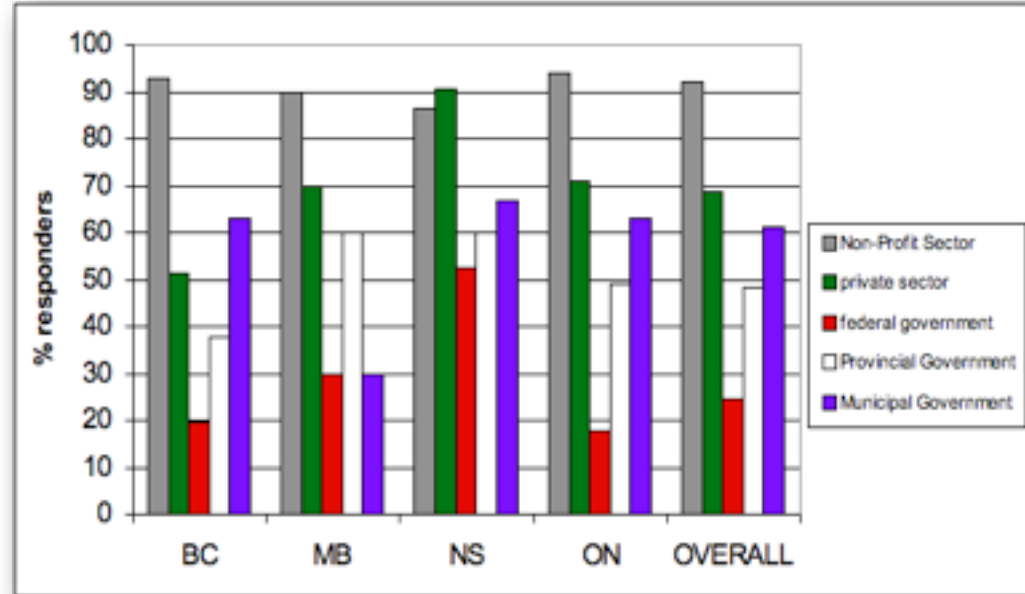


Table 3: Percentage of Responses to the Types of Relationships with other Organizations

	Structural/ Organizational Support	Information Exchange	Funding	Joint Events	Shared Resources	Joint Promotions
BC	20%	37%	20%	7%	12%	4%
MB	19%	32%	14%	16%	14%	5%
ON	31%	30%	12%	11%	9%	7%
NS	54%	12%	11%	11%	5%	7%
Total	31%	29%	14%	10%	10%	6%

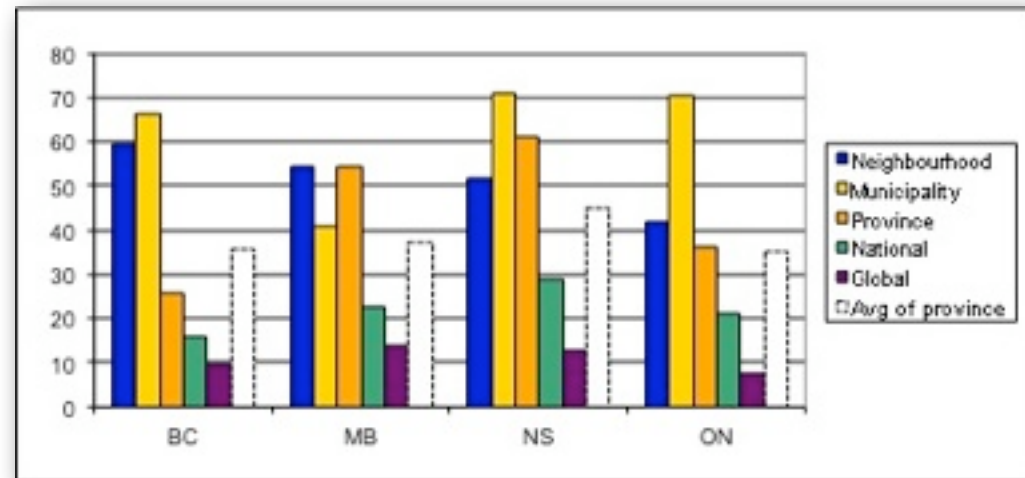
most regularly in the past year. The options provided were non-profit (e.g. other organizations), private (e.g. business or media), as well as the federal, provincial and municipal government. The responses revealed that organizations were most regularly in contact with the non-profit and private sectors. Contact with government varied depending on the level. Contact was weakest with the federal government and stronger with provincial and municipal governments. However, within the provincial networks, there is sustained contact with all three institutional sectors (see *Figure 4*). Contact with the private sector was much weaker among respondents in British Columbia than in all other provinces. In Nova Scotia, responses showed that participating organizations had much stronger contact with all levels of government and with the private sector than all other provinces.

Figure 4: Organizations Had Regular Contact with these Sectors in the Past Year



The survey also asked at what scale the work of each organization was focused. Respondents were given five options and invited to choose all that apply. While there were some scales that had higher response rates it was clear that within each network there was work occurring at multiple levels (see *Figure 5*). Averaging all of the responses between the provinces, network focus was highest at the municipal (62.1%), neighbourhood (51.9%), and provincial (44.5%) levels with decreasing focus at the national (22.2%) and global (11.0%) levels.

Figure 5: Scale of Organizational Work



The Benefits and Drawbacks of Collaboration

The survey asked respondents to rank some of the benefits of collaborating with other organizations within the provincial networks (including non-profit, the government or private sectors). Respondents were asked to rank each predetermined category on a three-point scale that included: able to serve our mission or members better, acquisition of additional funding or other resources, acquisition of new knowledge or skills, built new relationships that are helpful to our organization, heightened public awareness or profile of our organization and enhanced influence in the community. Most agreed that their organization received benefits in all six of the categories provided represented in *Figure 6*, which highlights those ranked highest. Of the responses, the category of additional funding/resources was the lowest reported benefit across all provinces. Manitoba reports the lowest of all (60%), followed by Nova Scotia (70%).

The survey also asked respondents to rank some of the drawbacks of collaborating with other organizations within the provincial networks. Respondents were asked to rank each predetermined category on a three-point scale that included: takes too much time and resources, loss of control/autonomy over decisions, strained relations with partners, strained relations within my organization and not enough credit given to my organization (see *figure 7*). Examining the highest ranked responses, in every province, the most frequently reported

Figure 6: The Highest Ranked Benefits of Collaborating with other Organizations

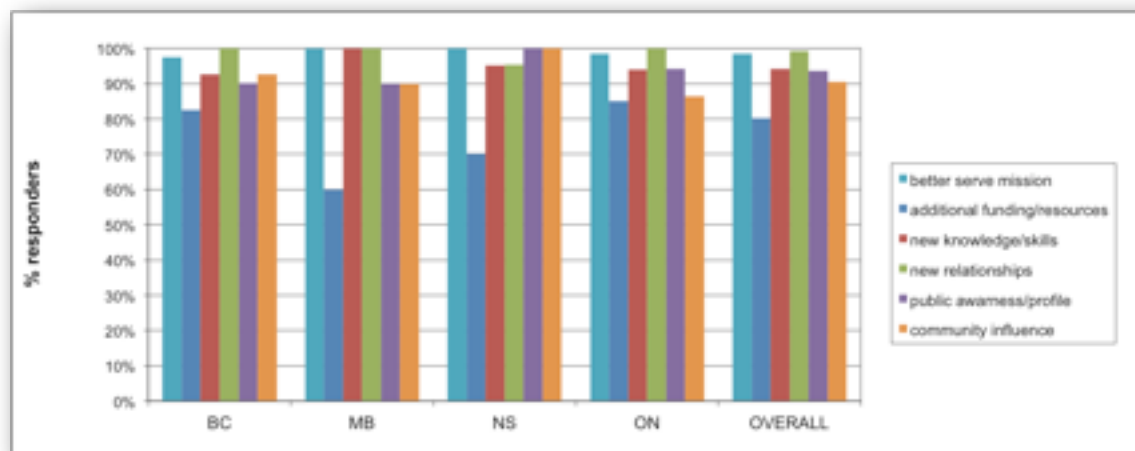
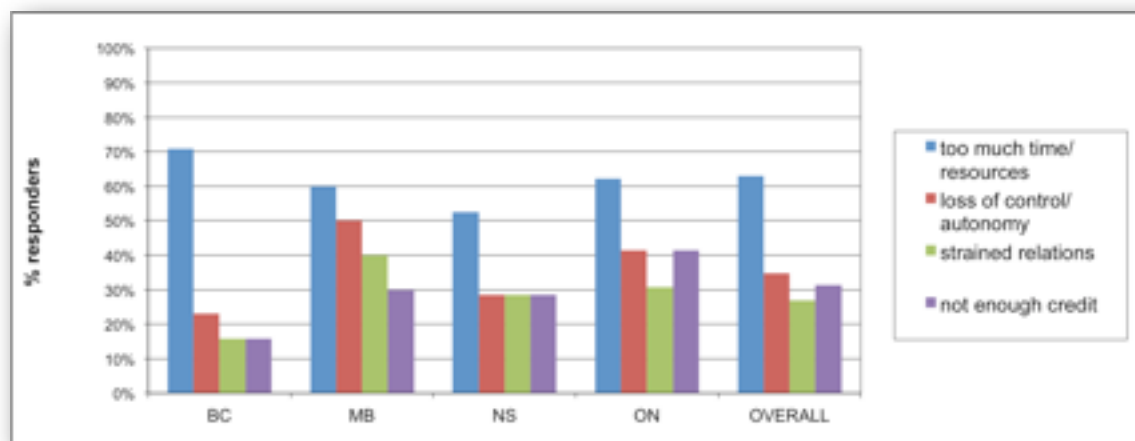


Figure 7: Drawbacks of collaboration with other organizations in the network



drawback was “taking up too much time and resources,” and the second most reported was “loss of control/autonomy”. In British Columbia, most of the drawbacks listed were reported less than in all other provinces. In each of the provinces at least one respondent mentioned “territorial issues/perceived overlap of work” as an additional drawback of collaboration.

Provincial Network Centralization

Network centralization reflects the number of direct links connecting an actor to others in the network and indicates the extent to which that actor is central to that network. The higher the centrality value, the more connected an actor is assumed to be. The star graph in *Figure 8a* illustrates a network with the highest centralization level possible where the centre node has ties to all other actors in the network, but they do not have ties to each other. This actor is considered to be the most active, thus possessing the highest level of centrality. The circle graph in *Figure 8b* illustrates a network with low centrality where no actor is more central than any other actor.

Figure 8a: Star Graph

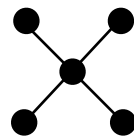
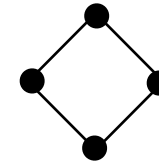


Figure 8b: Circle Graph



Network centrality was calculated from survey responses that identified other groups that each respondent was involved with most frequently and that they believed were most valuable to their organization for addressing food issues. Using UCINET, a network centrality index was generated for each network as an indicator of the network centrality for the group of organizations. *Table 4* shows the network centralization index, a descriptive statistic expressed as a percentage. The percentage is lower when all actors have similar levels of centrality. The percentage is higher when one actor dominates or overshadows the network. In *Figure 8a* for example, the star graph would have a centrality index of 100% where as the circle graph in *Figure 8b* would have a centrality index of 0%. The values in the network centrality index for each of the provincial food networks are extremely low in comparison to centralization scores in other studies. This means that within all four provincial food networks there is very low centrality with no actors who completely dominate the network.

Table 4: Network Centralization Index

	Network Centralization Index
BC	0.53%
MB	3.16%
ON	0.92%
NS	1.90%

The data was also used to create sociograms that illustrate the in-degree relations within each provincial network (see *Figures 9 - 12*, next page), and to identify which organizations were most central in each network. These sociograms illustrate the low centrality and high level of interconnectivity of the provincial networks. Despite the overall decentralized network structure, a small number of organizations do hold higher in-degree scores (determined by the value that represents the number of times they were named by other organizations). This suggests that these organizations hold somewhat more central positions in each of the provincial networks. According to the data, the top in-degree scores in each province are held by the provincial network organizations, with the exception of Nova Scotia where the NSFSN is still among the top in-degree scores (see *Table 5*). *Figures 9 - 12* illustrate this visually with most arrows pointing to the provincial network organizations. Other organizations with top in-degree scores come from various sectors. In British Columbia, top in-degree organizations are from the non-profit sector and the municipal government. In Manitoba and Ontario, top organizations are from the non-profit sector and the provincial government. In Nova Scotia, top in-degree organizations are from the provincial government, the non-profit sector and academic institutions. But, relative to the number of organizations in the network, no one organization emerged as being clearly central in the networks.

Table 5: Top In-Degree Organizations in Each Province

	Top indegree organizations (in order of rank)
BC	BC Food Systems Network; Vancouver Coastal Health; Farm Folk City Folk; City of Vancouver
MB	Food Matters Manitoba; Province of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives
ON	Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming; FoodShare; FoodNet Ontario; The Stop Community Food Centre; Ontario Public Health
NS	Province of Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture; Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture; Ecology Action Centre; Nova Scotia Food Security Network; Province of Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection; Community University Research Alliance: Activating Policy Change for Community Food Security

Figure 9: British Columbia Food Network Sociogram



Figure 10: Manitoba Food Network Sociogram

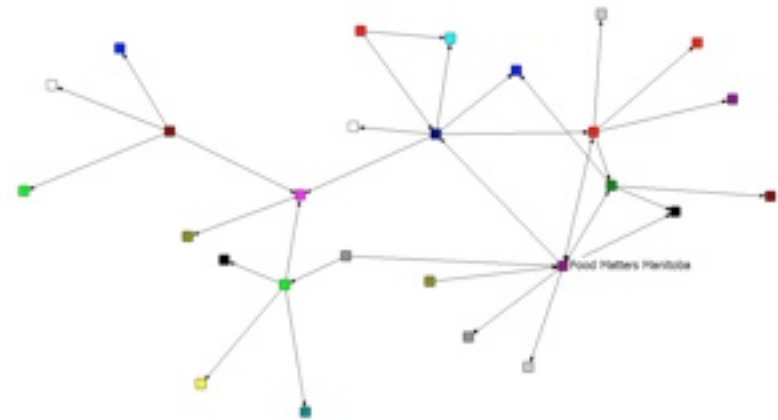


Figure 11: Ontario Food Network Sociogram

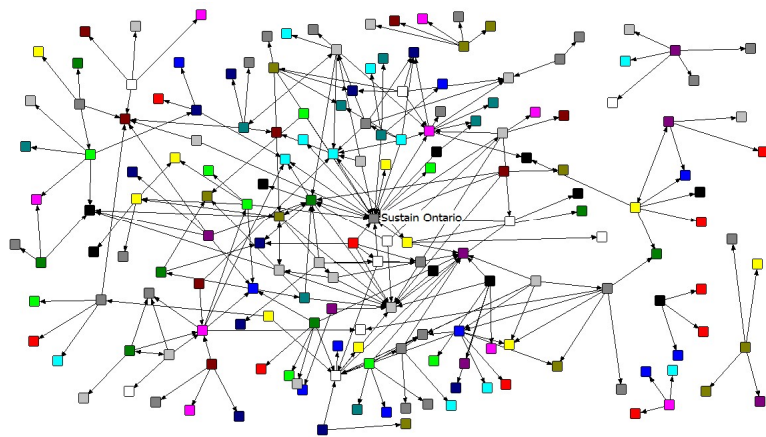
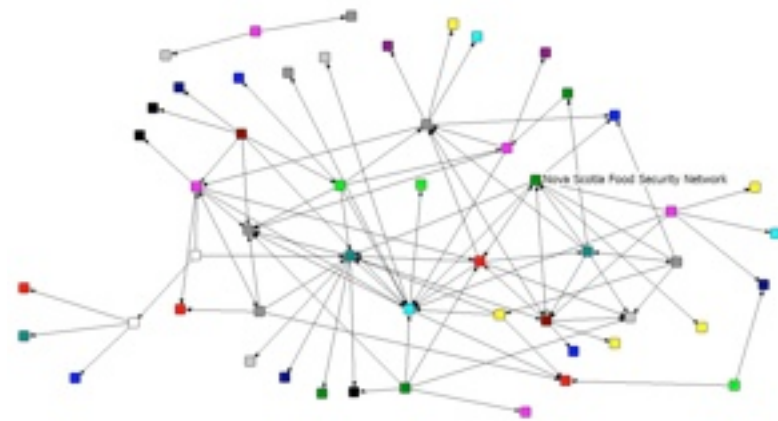


Figure 12: Nova Scotia Food Network Sociogram



Relationships with Provincial Network Organizations

Responding organizations were asked to describe their relationship with their respective provincial network organization on a five-point scale ranging from very strong to very weak. In all provinces, the predominant type of relationship was moderate to strong (see Figure 13). In Ontario, more weak and very weak relationships with Sustain Ontario were reported. In Nova Scotia, about half of all respondents declared a strong or very strong relationship with the NSFSN, the highest of all provinces, and almost double that of Ontario.

In each province, organizations were also asked to evaluate the types of relationships they have developed with the provincial network organizations. The responses were ranked on a five-point scale and included: shared info or advice (e.g. regular calls, working groups, meetings or emails, formally shared resources/projects (e.g. joint funding or applications, joint projects, shared equipment or personnel, shared facilities, etc.), joint action or support (e.g. providing letters of support, cross promotion of resources or campaigns, acting together informally), referrals received or given (e.g. suggestions that members, clients or the public contact or work with the other organization). The graph represents responses from organizations that rated the issues as often/regularly (see Figure 14). Overall, Ontario and British Columbia ratings were below average on all four types of linkage, Manitoba was about average and Nova Scotia rated the

Figure 13: Organizational Relationships with the Respective Provincial Network Organization

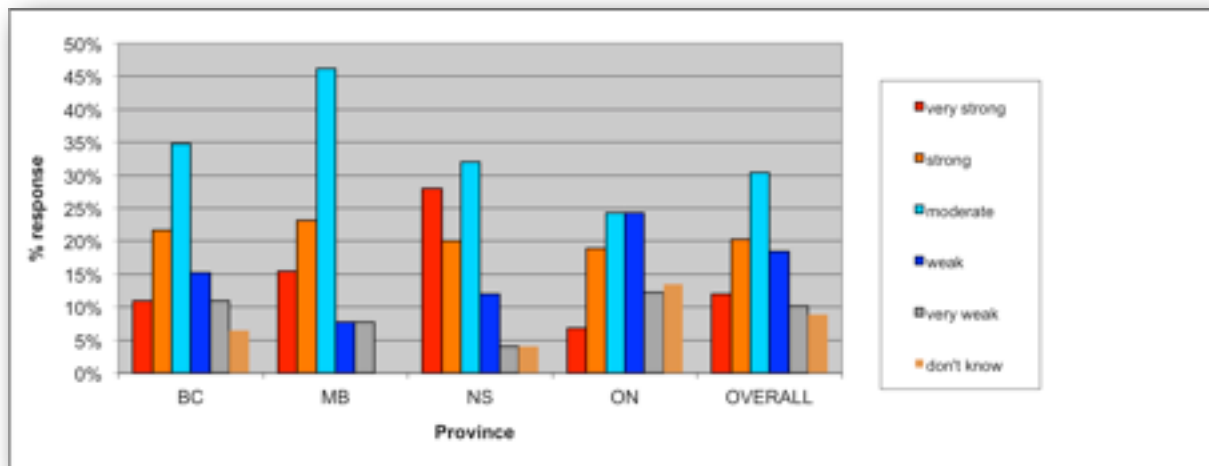
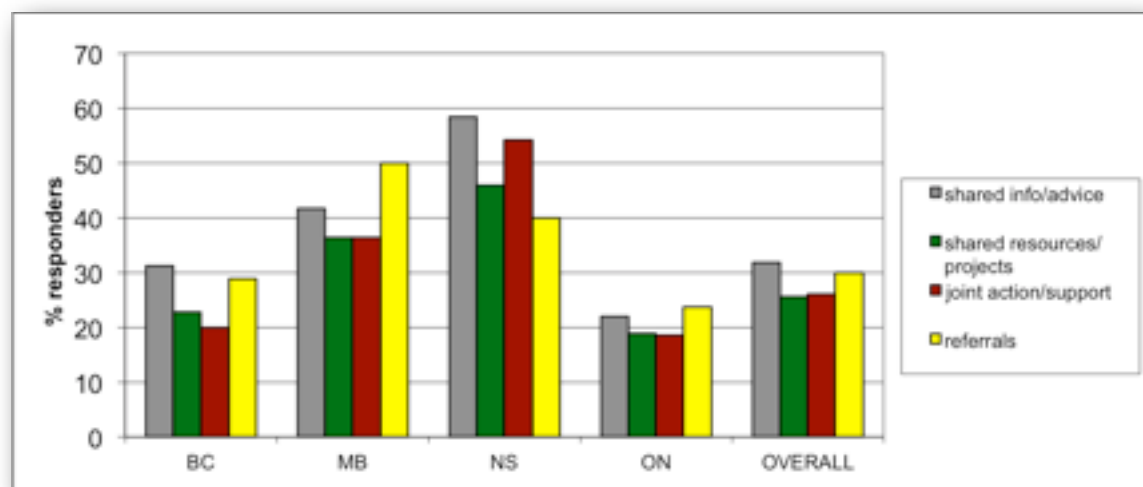


Figure 14: Type of Organizational Relationships with the Provincial Network Organization Ranked Often/Regularly



highest. Beyond the list provided in the survey, the most common “other” responses were participation in the provincial gathering, board/steering committee representation, and receiving/contributing to email listserves.

Comments about the Provincial Network Organizations

In both the network survey and interviews with organizational leaders, representatives were asked an open-ended question about the ways that the respective provincial network organization could better support organizations and future collaborations. These summaries represent the most common responses within each of the networks; comments that were similar between provinces are presented first, followed by comments specific to each province.

Of all the comments from the participating organizations, the majority focused on the need for support acquiring financial and other material resources. These comments ranged from support in identifying grants to advocating at all levels of government for permanent funding streams for food-related work. One suggestion from Manitoba was that FMM take responsibility for linking groups in the province to jointly apply for grants in specific areas.

Another set of comments voiced consistently across the four provincial networks focused on the need for the provincial network organizations to broaden the network’s reach. Suggestions for how this could happen centred on three general areas. First, in Manitoba and Ontario, respondents commented that they would like to see more of the provincial network organization’s efforts focused outside of urban areas, primarily in the rural communities and in the North. Second, comments from all the provincial networks suggested supporting and/or hosting more meetings to bring organizations together. Some comments suggested holding more regional meetings as opposed to or including the provincial-wide conference to encourage collaboration between the provincial network organization and local networks. Third, suggestions were made in all provinces to increase the scope of the network by encouraging a broader representation of actors from across the food system. Specifically, a number of responses mentioned that more producers needed to be included in the network and some suggested more inclusion of provincial and federal government bodies.

Respondents in all provinces also commented on a role for the provincial network organizations to facilitate strategic collaboration among participants in the network. While many respondents appreciated sharing and learning from the efforts of other organizations, many suggestions pointed to the unique position of the provincial network organization to facilitate collective action and the need to coordinate moving forward together. Some suggestions to the provincial network organizations included specific ideas about the kinds of projects required in the province. Some mentioned the desire to be connected to other organizations with similar goals. And some pointed to a more active role, suggesting that the provincial network organization speak with a single voice and actually take on work no one else is doing. A number of comments across the four provincial networks suggested that the provincial network organization engage more around policy.

There were also a number of responses that were unique to each of the provinces. In British Columbia, a number of comments focused on the grassroots nature of the BCFSN. While many respondents appreciated this approach, some suggested that there is a need to look at ways more external expertise could benefit the members. Another group of comments recognized and supported the ability of the BCFSN to take on a political position and be more activist-oriented than other organizations in the network. In Manitoba, many comments centred on the need to include more rural communities and producers in the network. Also, many responses mentioned the desire to meet more often to discuss the strategic directions of the network. In Ontario, many of the comments focus on the fact that Sustain Ontario is a very young organization and the desire to support its growth as a network organization. A number of responses mentioned that they did not understand Sustain Ontario's mandate, its relation to different organizations in the province or how best to get involved. In Nova Scotia, many comments suggested the NSFSN should be engaging in more action-oriented projects that use the extensive research that has been completed over the past decade.

Perspectives within the Networks on What Increases and Decreases Community Food Security

The popular education workshop goals were two-fold: first, to reflect on the current work and strategies of organizations within the province; and, second to build energy within the provincial food networks. Working in small groups, participants created a picture of how community food security (CFS)²¹ was affecting their communities using a What's Happening Chart. First, participants discussed things that made it more difficult to establish CFS in their communities, and second, participants discussed ways they were working to increase CFS. Ideas were posted on the chart in five areas: social justice (those addressing power and material equity through physical and economic accessibility to sufficient amounts of food along with the circumstances and conditions of those who produce food), ecological sustainability (those addressing the connection between human and ecological systems along with the enduring biodiversity of those systems), community health (those addressing regional capacity to produce and distribute adequate nutritious, safe and culturally acceptable foods), democracy (those addressing process equity through increasing opportunities for public participation in decision-making and system-wide control), and "other"; as well as looking at three different levels where people are affected: local/ provincial, national, and global. The following information has been synthesized from the workshops in the three case study provinces.

Table 6a and *6b* represent the some of the main commonalities between the provinces as well as some of the key differences.

²¹ During the workshop, the concept of CFS was described as a theoretical and practical approach that attempted to create broad-based and systemic approaches to reconnect food production and consumption and ensure an adequate and accessible food supply. The concept of CFS has evolved over time, but is now generally defined as "a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice (Hamm and Bellows 2003: 37)." The focus of CFS advocates is on community self-reliance, and the goal is to develop a community-based food system grounded in regional ecological production and local decision-making. [Hamm, M. W., and Bellows, A. C. 2003. Community Food Security and Nutrition Educators. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 35 (1): 37-43.]

Table 6a: What Decreases Community Food Security?

	Social Justice	Ecological Sustainability	Community Health	Democracy	Other
Globally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ income disparity ▶ speculation (land, food) ▶ export oriented food production ▶ free trade ▶ lack of food related knowledge and skills ▶ commodification BC ▶ colonialism MB ▶ lack of culturally appropriate and local diet for northern peoples ▶ cost of food in rural grocers ON ▶ access to land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ contamination of natural resources ▶ climate change ▶ corporate agribusiness agenda ▶ export oriented food production ▶ food as commodity BC ▶ biofuel MB ▶ loss of food skills ON ▶ government subsidies to industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ lack of food literacy (i.e. how to shop, cook, grow) BC ▶ subsidizing cheap food ▶ medical system ▶ poverty MB ▶ loss of small producers ON ▶ separation between food and health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ trade agreements ▶ lack of investment in “real” food ▶ corporate concentration (i.e. land aggregation, oligopolies, market power) BC ▶ land privatization MB ▶ genetically modified food ▶ loss of traditional knowledge ▶ over-regulation ON ▶ broken supply management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ expectation that food should be cheap ▶ loss of traditional knowledge and skills BC ▶ advertising MB ▶ lack of innovation ON ▶ commodification
Nationally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ income disparities ▶ lack of food knowledge and skills ▶ no food policy ▶ corporate agribusiness agenda BC ▶ access to land MB ▶ racism (i.e. residential schools) ON ▶ inadequate labour laws ▶ lack of supportive housing policy ▶ inadequate social assistance rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ inadequate policy and regulations ▶ loss of food knowledge and skills ▶ hidden cost of food production MB ▶ centralization of processing ON ▶ inadequate labour laws ▶ lack of access to farmland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ lack of access to food ▶ lack of information ▶ lack of food policy ▶ loss of food knowledge and skills BC ▶ socio-cultural structures (i.e. time) MB ▶ advertising to kids ▶ focus on individual vs. determinants of health ON ▶ inequality ▶ public transit (rural) ▶ food deserts ▶ remote communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ lack of access to people in power ▶ lack of unified action of the food movement ▶ corporate oligopoly ▶ problems with regulatory systems BC ▶ subsidies for industrial crops MB ▶ “intellectual property” of seeds ▶ the Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (Canada-European Union) ON ▶ limited food policy work ▶ broken supply management ▶ “vote with your fork” reproduces inequality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ public acceptance of a broken food system BC ▶ civil society’s lack of experience doing policy work MB ▶ cost of living ▶ loss of wages ▶ little financing for small scale farming ON ▶ unclear who is responsible to target
Locally/ Provincially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ lack of comprehensive food policy ▶ poverty (access to affordable food) ▶ inadequate social assistance and income security ▶ lack of knowledge and skills ▶ no ongoing funding for CFS programs BC ▶ culture of individuality MB ▶ social supports engender dependency ▶ high cost alternatives vs. affordability of food for all ON ▶ food deserts ▶ lack of affordable housing ▶ lack of affordable childcare ▶ few good jobs ▶ lack of transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ limited local infrastructure (i.e. cold storage, value added, processing, abattoirs) ▶ limited connection to food producers ▶ pesticides and pollution ▶ lack of food knowledge and skills BC ▶ decrease in fish stocks MB ▶ land use and food integrity (i.e. moose, goose, fish, water) ON ▶ lack of farmland protection ▶ reliance on interns for labour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ loss of food knowledge and skills ▶ inequitable and inadequate food access and distribution ▶ over abundance of pre-processed food ▶ cultural norms ▶ lack of infrastructure ▶ disconnection between people BC ▶ climate change ▶ advertising MB ▶ groups working in isolation ▶ disparity in food costs in Northern communities ▶ food safety regulations limit use of wild meat ON ▶ flawed education system ▶ lack of support for CFS programs ▶ lack of student nutrition policy ▶ availability of culturally appropriate foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ no inter-ministerial collaboration (lack of political will) BC ▶ over-regulation MB ▶ local food production bogged down in policy/law ON ▶ access to land ▶ limited food policy work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ BC ▶ access to transportation (road systems) MB ▶ individualism ▶ corporate control of public consciousness ▶ lack of affordable housing ON ▶ lack of local food distribution

Table 6b: What Increases Community Food Security?

	Social Justice	Ecological Sustainability	Community Health	Democracy	Other
Globally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ fair trade BC ▶ food justice ON ▶ learning from social movements in the Global South 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ seed saving projects BC ▶ micro-lending MB ▶ revitalizing animal species and seed varieties ON ▶ linking small-scale farmers ▶ International agreements (i.e. organic standards) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ urban agriculture ▶ food boxes BC ▶ dissemination of information through the internet ON ▶ intersections of food, health and environment ▶ cooperatives (food and others) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ fair trade ▶ resistance against free trade ▶ multi-stakeholder coops ▶ global campaigns (i.e. water as human right, alternative distribution, anti-GMOs, boycotts) ▶ new media and communication technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC ▶ consumers willing to pay the real price for food ON ▶ values (cooperation, honesty, integrity, inclusiveness) ▶ policy push-back on agribusiness ▶ media attention ▶ food as a unifying theme
Nationally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ fair trade ▶ subsidized food programs BC ▶ eco-certifications ▶ bridging the gap between generations and cultures ▶ food central to spiritual and cultural relations MB ▶ job opportunities in agriculture (urban/rural) ▶ food cooperatives ▶ moving towards self-sufficiency ON ▶ housing policy work ▶ food policy work ▶ pay farmers for ecological goods and services ▶ work with migrant farm workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ fair wages and work conditions for farmers BC ▶ restorative agriculture ▶ food recovery MB ▶ 100 mile diet ▶ urban agriculture and gorilla gardening ON ▶ foundations support for food alternatives ▶ multifunctionality ▶ policy work ▶ climate change realities ▶ farm organizations raising voice at the political level ▶ cooperatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ food policy (charters, People's Food Policy) ▶ food-focused initiatives impacting people and systems ▶ public demand for organic/local food BC ▶ more focus on community vs individual ▶ increased rural/remote self-reliance ▶ cross-sector partnerships MB ▶ interest in lost culinary arts (i.e. canning, fermenting) ON ▶ student nutrition program work ▶ procurement policies ▶ education and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ People's Food Policy BC ▶ increased food-education ▶ health equity lense on policy and programs MB ▶ job creation in local food ON ▶ government-level support ▶ collaborative movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ increased media attention BC ▶ increasing food knowledge and skills MB ▶ social media used to connect with others and share experience ON ▶ academic-community collaborations ▶ investment in infrastructure (i.e. mobile abattoirs) ▶ creative land access (i.e. rent/lease, borrow, land trusts)
Locally/ Provincially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ food policy councils, charters, municipal strategies ▶ market vouchers ▶ supports for new farmers MB ▶ community kitchens and gardens ▶ mentoring projects ▶ lifestyle activism ▶ public health authorities working with community groups ▶ institutional purchasing ON ▶ increased cooperation and collaboration ▶ re-inventing food banks ▶ fair trade ▶ social enterprise ▶ Good Food Box ▶ community-based research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ new markets for distribution and processing (CSAs, farmers' markets, food boxes, cooperatives, buying clubs) ▶ urban agriculture ▶ seed saving ▶ programs supporting new farmers ▶ protection of agricultural land BC ▶ pesticide bans ▶ bee keeping ▶ farmer cooperatives MB ▶ school food policies ON ▶ local food hubs ▶ pay farmers for ecological goods and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ new markets for distribution and processing (CSAs, farmers' markets, food boxes, cooperatives, buying clubs) ▶ urban agriculture ▶ community kitchens ▶ education (including food skills and literacy) ▶ community compost ▶ gleaning ▶ healthy baby groups ▶ procurement policies ▶ collective celebration and enjoyment ▶ developing local infrastructure ▶ local food production bylaws ON ▶ food hubs ▶ network building and promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ food policy councils and food charters ▶ cooperatives ▶ collaborative networks MB ▶ community gardening ▶ increased knowledge of food issues in school system ON ▶ engaged politicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ community education programs ▶ increased capacity of networks BC ▶ Indigenous groups subsidize community food ▶ engaging community members as experts ON ▶ strong, diverse partnerships across sectors ▶ overcoming inertia – get out and just do it ▶ developing local infrastructure

Looking to the charts as a whole, there tend to be more cross-provincial similarities in the “decreasing CFS” chart than the “increasing CFS” chart. This suggests that there may be more consensus around the challenges than the solutions. Further, some areas (e.g. local health) were much more populated than others (e.g. national/global democracy). The value of the visual chart format was that it enabled participants in the workshop to identify where the largest numbers of perceived challenges lie and where energy might be most needed. While there are many commonalities among the provinces, there are some specific differences. In British Columbia, there is more focus on issues concerning Indigenous populations and fisheries. In Manitoba, many of the concerns and solutions focus on the relationship between Indigenous, Northern and Southern populations. In Ontario, there was a significant amount of discussion focusing on urban-rural relations, access to land, and diversity issues.

These charts highlight the depth of understanding and critical analysis of the problems within the food system among network members. They also clearly demonstrate the immense amount of work being done to develop a food system that is more socially just, ecologically sustainable, healthy and democratic. Despite the value of these charts, their content does not represent the full richness of the conversations that took place in the workshops. Multiple workshop participants commented that the discussions and the chart were a valuable way to collectively reflect and begin to strategize on the current challenges and successes at different scales. Numerous participants also commented to the limitations of the chart’s structure and categories that did not enable points to be listed that crossed issues and scales. As a result, many of the points listed overlap in different categories.

VI. Discussion of Research Results: Insights from the Roundtable

The dual purpose of this research is been to better understand social mobilization around food related issues in Canada and to support and strengthen the activities of the provincial networks. As part of the research process, attempts have been made to move beyond a one-way relationship that only provides results from the study. Instead, this project involves ongoing dialogue between the researchers and actors within the provincial networks. As part of this process, opportunities have been created for the researchers and network actors to collectively reflect on the data with the intention of improving “food movement” theory and practice.

This section presents highlights from the roundtable discussion that reflected on the research results presented in this report. The participants included Dayna Chapman, Chair of the BCFSN, Stefan Epp-Koop, the Community Food Assessment and Evaluation Coordinator with FMM, Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, Director of Sustain Ontario, Lauren Baker, the founding Director of Sustain Ontario, and Patty Williams, a past Coordinating Committee member of the NSFSN. The section concludes with some of the questions raised by session attendees.

Research Results and Experiences Within the Networks

In general, the participants agreed that the research results reflected their experiences within the networks. Each explained that there had been a proliferation of food initiatives in their province and that the value of this research was the description of the kinds of relationships and interconnections among those initiatives. Lauren Baker reflected on the way that the networks have provided the infrastructure to move beyond a specific place and problem to “work on cross-jurisdictional, multi-dimensional issues at different levels since they all impact the work on the ground.”

Dayna Chapman pointed out that the BCFSN is a networking organization that does not coordinate programming. For this reason she, in particular “identified with the high degree of connectivity and the low degree of centralization in our network.” She explained that the BCFSN lacked the capacity to support the hundreds of small projects around the province and decided to put energy and resources into the development of bioregional networks. These efforts have contributed to the rapid expansion of new and existing initiatives, with the networks taking on a life of their own.

Stefan Epp-Koop spoke to the high level of activity identified at the neighbourhood and provincial levels in Manitoba and of the recent growth in regional and municipal networking. He explained that many neighborhood renewal corporations in lower-income communities in Winnipeg have integrated positions to develop food related projects such as community gardening. Beyond the individual projects, these groups are beginning to come together to share ideas and resources and to lobby for policy change. While these activities have developed primarily outside of the provincial networks, Stefan explained that they contribute to and support the work of the broader network.

Patty Williams spoke to the high degree of connection identified between the government, academic and non-profit sectors in Nova Scotia. She explained that these connections were central to the development of the NSFSN and that maintaining strong inter-sectoral partnerships has been integral to the current work. Patty also noted that while there may be some connections with the private sector, no businesses were currently connected to the NSFSN. However, this was identified as an area the NSFSN would be interested in exploring further.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Diverse and Decentralized Food Networks

Lauren Baker described the implications of the diverse and decentralized structure of the provincial food networks using the analogy of scaffolding. She explained,

We are constructing a new food system with new enterprise models, new forms of agriculture, and new ways of thinking about health and community engagement. Unlike a hub and spoke image, our networks are decentralized. Like scaffolding, there are nodes of connectivity and the power is decentralized vertically and horizontally. Running along those lines of scaffolding are the relationships. But it is difficult to

build that scaffolding in an equitable way across the province and it's even more difficult to do it across the country. But, as activity proliferates on the ground we need it to find ways to make good use of resources across the decentralized networks.

Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker also reflected on the advantages of a diverse and decentralized network structure that she feels, enables the provincial networks to better address the whole food system. She suggested that centralized network structures are more conducive to groups that focus on one particular issue (e.g. the national and provincial Federations of Agriculture). Ravenna then explained the way that a decentralized structure presents distinct advantages and challenges for organizing:

A huge advantage is that we are required to be in constant dialogue about the whole food system and each of the players begins to change through that dialogue. We are progressively understanding more about how the food system works and developing more holistic approaches to change it . . . The network is also very dispersed with many hubs of activity. For Sustain Ontario to remain relevant there is a requirement for constant dialogue, engagement, renewal, and reflection. But this is also a weakness. It takes a lot of time to have these conversations and it requires patience with process. But I think the advantages far outweigh the challenges. In my experience, the players see that and find value in understanding a system rather than just bringing their piece to the table.

While agreeing with these sentiments, Stafan Epp-Koop elaborated on the weaknesses of a decentralized network structure from his perspective within FMM. He spoke specifically to the stark differences among networks in Manitoba. For example, he suggested that networks in urban Manitoba (i.e. Winnipeg) look much different than rural Manitoba where there are relatively low levels of connectedness. He explained, "In rural areas, people often feel more isolated and do not have points to plug into. The geography of the province is a distinct challenge we face with the diversity and the disparateness of our network. It costs more to fly to some of the communities that we work with than it does to fly to Europe." These challenges are multiplied by the limited funding available for expanding network activities, especially outside of Winnipeg. Thus, because the network is so diverse and decentralized it requires significant energy and resources to bring people together.

Patty Williams concurred with the challenges related to supporting a diverse and decentralized network with limited resources. Specifically, the NSFNSN has operated without a paid staff position, which has made communication a challenge. Patty explained, "Nova Scotia is quite small and there are strong relationships in the province. The network is loose and organic, but it is hard to get the diverse actors to the table, partly because of this communication issue."

Connecting Organizations Across Geographies, Sectors and Scales

All of the participants spoke directly about efforts to make connections between the diverse and often disparate actors within the provincial network. In general, the discussion focused on the importance and challenges of including groups that may not initially identify themselves as part of the networks (e.g. farmers, Indigenous communities).

Sustain Ontario is “not a consensus-based network,” explained Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker. This has been a deliberate governance decision to create spaces where groups can come together around particular issues and take action. Ravenna explained that this is “quite a difficult space to hold, particularly if there are polar opposite opinions.” She gave the example of issues surrounding raw milk where Sustain Ontario staff has organized information resources and a public debate. Instead of coordinating a campaign or forcing a particular decision, Sustain Ontario has created a space for groups to come together to collaborate, to disagree and to work through difficult questions over time.

Stefan Epp-Koop described the diverse members that collaborate through network events like the annual Growing Local conference. He explained that the conference “is one place that we have put a lot of our energy and attention to bring people together. It only happens once a year but it is an important opportunity to share and learn from each other.” Stefan also explained that FMM is part of hosting a separate conference in Northern Manitoba to provide a space to bring Northerners together from across different communities. This has been a key strategy in building a network of Northern communities across thousands of kilometers. In another example, Stefan pointed out that during the establishment of the Manitoba Food Charter, the decision was made that the charter should be provincial as opposed to municipal. This was a direct reflection of the realities of the food system and a strategic choice. It also necessitated the inclusion of a broad spectrum of food system actors from producers and processors to retailers and consumers and to bring those diverse voices to the table in a concerted way.

Patty Williams also discussed the value of provincial gatherings and “bringing the diversity of people across the province together.” She explained the benefits of a bursary system to support people to participate that might not be supported through their organization or people living in poverty (e.g. childcare support, honoraria and travel subsidies). Patty notes, “Whatever the situation may be, we have made it a priority to provide honoraria as well to recognize the time people are providing to contribute to the network.”

Dayna Chapman discussed one of the strategies that the BCFSN has used to support collaboration among organizations. Recognizing the growing number of food initiatives and the ways that the regional networks in British Columbia were evolving, the BCFSN’s membership agreed to “put energy and resources, money and time into developing and supporting bioregional networks.” This was part of a recognition that “as a provincial network we didn’t have the capacity to support every little project in every little community but that they could easily support each other. After we decided to create those internal networks, they have since mushroomed and have taken on a life of their own.”

Lauren Baker pointed to the opportunities to engage people across geographies, scales and sectors outside of the provincial food networks. She gave the example of Foodstock, an event held in October 2011 in Southern Ontario where well over 2,500 people participated in a demonstration against the proposed Melancthon Quarry and a celebration of the farmland, the natural environment and the livelihoods under threat. Sustain Ontario and other food initiatives played a central role in Foodstock and as a result, engaged with a new sector of chefs and food entrepreneurs who had not been previously part of the provincial network. Sustain Ontario’s involvement in the event helped to make the connections between the threatened farmland and the broader food system.

Responding to the Realities of the Provincial Food Networks

Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker identified an important issue, asking: “As the networks work to connect different organizations across geographies, sectors, and scales, who is included and, more importantly, who is not at the table?” From the research findings, she pointed to some key actors that were not captured by the survey. For example, while the conventional agriculture sector is a foundational part of the food system, they may not consider themselves part of a “food movement.” Taking this further, Ravenna suggested, “One of the largest challenges we face is conceptually figuring out, is there a ‘we’? And if so, who is the ‘we’ and how does that ‘we’ relate? The answer is a constant shifting and negotiation.”

Responding to this query, Lauren Baker proposed that a challenge for the food networks is to find ways to work with groups that may not see themselves as part of a movement but are integral to developing cross-sectoral solutions. She suggested that there have been some successes though collaborating on specific issues (e.g. the work of the BCFSN around the Meat Inspection Regulation of BC’s Food Safety Act). Thus, at times, different groups come together to focus on a particular issue and at other times the network comes together as part of a provincial effort. Lauren expressed, “I don’t think there is one model, but it is a way to begin to address the complexity that we struggle with.”

Stefan Epp-Koop showed how FMM has attempted to find key entry points to engage people in the broader movement by providing more issue-specific working groups and networks for people who are interested in a particular issue or particular area. He explained,

Participating in food networks or the food movement can be kind of vague and people are not quite sure what they are getting into. For those with limited resources who are not sure how to participate, FMM can provide some specific things. For example, we recently had a meeting on composting and brought a range of groups to share ideas and challenges . . . It was a good chance to bring people together around a specific issue as an entry point and to get them involved in the broader movement.

The Strategic Purpose of a Provincial Level Network

Roundtable participants reflected on the flows that bring food to our tables across many different paces. The problems within the food system were not caused solely on a local level and the solutions will not be developed solely locally. This reality encouraged participants to think through the purpose of a provincial network and the ways that these collaborations are making connections beyond the provincial level.

Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker articulates this reflection well when she explained that Sustain Ontario’s “ultimate goal is policy change, but there is a lot that needs to happen before policy change is possible - all of the understanding, the bringing together, and the creating of alliances.” In this sense, the network attempts to establish a provincial voice to address the jurisdictional level where many decisions around food are made.

Further, Ravenna expressed that the role of the provincial network is to take what's being understood at the neighborhood and the municipal level and to translate it into policy pieces and move them forward. She explained, "Sustain Ontario is part of a constant interplay with the federal level and with the municipal and neighbourhood level. Through the national network [i.e. FSC/SAC] we need to be connecting to global movements as well."

Patty Williams also explained that the NSFSN has tried to focus on multiple levels by connecting to national networks. A provincial network has the ability to address specific issues that are unique to Nova Scotia and can take leadership to connect people within the province.

Questions Raised by Attendees

Following the roundtable discussion there were a number of questions raised by session attendees. While addressing these questions is well beyond the scope of this research, we include them here as ideas that could be followed up for future research.

- ▶ You each work with movements that have a very integrated sense of where you are going in terms of environmental sustainability, food access, and farm liability, but you are also working with other stakeholders who have much narrower agendas and are working down their own paths. If you are trying to build an alliance to create policy change what are the strategic opportunities? What areas do you see strategic potential for building a bigger tent around the network's vision?
- ▶ When we are talking about networks we typically talk about cooperation, but there is also adversity and competition, and sometimes for good reasons, like ideological or political competition. How do you cope with adversity and competition in your own network?
- ▶ There are other alternative networks beyond food, like in health, employment, and housing. How do you relate, or cross-fertilize ideas with other networks? What are some approaches for linking these food networks to other networks?
- ▶ When you talk about diversity, you have identified different sectors but what about social or ethnic diversity? I don't see very many newcomers here for example, so what do we need to do to bring them into our networks? How do we build a social movement that's inclusive of everybody affected by the food system?
- ▶ How do the networks find time for advocacy and what possibilities or obstacles are there?
- ▶ How do we build the power of our movement and at the same time maintain a degree of flexibility and openness that is not tending us towards a professional organization-based network?
- ▶ What is your perception of the stakeholders that hold greater financial capital or financial power (e.g. private or government sectors)? What is their perception of the work you are doing and the networks you have been part of building? What does that interaction and dynamic look like with those kinds of stakeholders that are further removed and might not be as interested in movement building? How do you stay relevant with those organizations and those points of view, and how does that impact the way you sustain the network?

VII. Conclusion

In this report we have presented the preliminary research results from a study of four provincial food networks with a focus on the provincial network organizations: the British Columbia Food Systems Network, Food Matters Manitoba, Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming, and the Nova Scotia Food Security Network. The report summarizes the findings from a network survey, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, popular education workshops, and highlights from a roundtable discussion with provincial representatives reflecting on the research findings.

The initial findings from the research reveal that the participating organizations hold a diversity of core values and are collectively addressing a wide variety of issues as opposed to focusing on a particular issue area. Of these, the most common issues being addressed included community development, community health, farming/agricultural, food literacy/education, food security and food sovereignty. Despite the wide range of issues and core values, the majority of respondents felt like they had a shared collective identity as part of a broader “food movement.”

Participating organizations also indicated a wide-range in the kinds of relationships within the networks with structural/organizational support and information exchange being the most common. Survey respondents also indicated that organizations were most regularly in contact with the non-profit and private sectors while contact with government varied depending on the level.

Calculating the different connections within each provincial food network, the findings revealed that all four networks are extremely decentralized with no actors who completely dominate the network. However, the provincial network organizations do hold a more central position (indicated by higher in-degree scores) than all other organizations in each provincial network. Focusing more directly on the relationships between organizations and their provincial network organization, the findings in all provinces revealed that the majority of respondents described the connection as moderate to strong. Suggestions directed to the provincial network organizations focused primarily on the need for support acquiring financial and other material resources, interest in broadening the network’s reach, and an increased role in facilitating strategic collaboration among the network.

The charts from the popular education workshops focused on participant’s perspectives of the factors that increase and decrease community food security. Presenting discussions in a chart format enabled participants in the workshop to identify where the largest numbers of perceived challenges lie and where energy might be most needed. Overall, there were many cross-provincial similarities as well as areas of the chart that were more populated than others.

From the roundtable session at the Canadian Association for Food Studies assembly, the four provincial network representatives each confirmed that the research results resonate with their experiences on the ground. The discussion indicated the way provincial network organizations have

created spaces for collaboration across multiple sectors and scales along with some of the benefits and challenges being addressed. Likewise, the diverse and decentralized structure of the networks presented actors with new opportunities for relationship building and engagement in food system change as well as difficulties around ensuring inclusivity and developing equitable governance structures and strategies.

The findings and the ensuing discussion represent part of a larger study that explores the role that provincial food networks play in mobilizing organizations around food-related issues and developing alternatives to the corporate, industrial food system. In an effort to support and strengthen the work of each provincial network, we hope that the information presented here will become a part of an ongoing dialogue about the current and future work within each provincial network.