

Community Food Security Submitted by Monty Crisp

Community food security (CFS) is a condition 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. There are six basic principles which community food security should address:

1) Low Income Food Needs: Low income is the single greatest contributing factor to household food insecurity. Approximately 50,000 people live below the poverty line within the CRD, and 1 out of 6 are children. CFS, first and foremost, must meet the food needs of low income families and individuals to reduce hunger and improve health.

2) Broad Social Objectives: CFS must address a broad range of issues affecting the food system, community development, and the environment. Some examples that we find within the CRD include disappearing farmland and family farms, loss of ALR to development, urban sprawl, reliance on imported food, and air and water pollution from food production and distribution channels.

3) Self-reliance/empowerment: Community food security must emphasize the need to empower individuals and their abilities to provide for their food needs. This is especially important within the CRD, with a large disadvantaged and marginalized population. Community food security seeks to build upon community and individual assets, rather than focus on their deficiencies. CFS projects must seek to engage the wide range of community residents.

4) Local agriculture: A stable local agricultural base is key to a community responsive food system. Farmers need increased access to markets, and consumers need greater access to local food. By building stronger ties between farmers and consumers, consumers gain a greater knowledge and appreciation for their food source. Almost everyone realizes the superior quality of food produced locally, but consumers cannot vote with their dollars unless they have access to local food.

5) Community focus: CFS seeks to build up a community's food resources to meet its own needs. Some resources that are growing in popularity within the CRD include farmers' markets, pocket markets, household and community gardens, box programs, roof gardens, an increase in community-based food processing, and local purchase by restaurants and supermarkets.

6) Inter-disciplinary: CFS projects typically incorporates collaboration with multiple agencies, institutions, and government officials. Decision-makers need a collaborative, creative, and consistent policy approach with partners from various ministries and services, NGOs, community groups, and the private sector, through policies which promote local production, protect valuable farmland, and allow local food access. This includes government officials who must embrace a far-sighted vision to see CFS as part of the solution to making CRD municipalities and our environment more liveable. Strong advocacy for community food security will result in nutritious, safe, culturally-acceptable, and healthy food in a socially-just and environmentally-sustainable community for all who live within the Capital Region District.

Click below to return to the Making Food Matter newsletter:

http://www.communitycouncil.ca/crfair_nl/crfair_nl_issue3_index.html

