

World Food Day

Today is **World Food Day**. Since 1981, October 16th has been dedicated to raising public awareness about global and local food issues. World Food day is currently commemorated in 150 countries – this year the theme is "*Achieving food security in times of crisis.*"

On this important day, we are proud to be launching the [Food Security Gateway](#). A collaboration of the **Provincial Health Services Authority** and the **Public Health Association of BC**, the Food Security Gateway is a web portal that will connect you to BC initiatives and important resources that can help to create **healthy eating environments** and **food secure communities** in BC. It is meant to be a resource for public policy makers, food industry leaders, civil society organizations and interested citizens in BC.

Like air and water, safe and sufficient food is a critical requirement for life and an essential ingredient for good health. World wide, diet related chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some types of cancer have become leading causes of death and disability. In North America, chronic diseases contribute to 80% of the disease burden. Once considered diseases of affluence, these diseases are now affecting lower income groups in greater numbers. Globally, 80% of deaths related to chronic diseases occur in middle and low income countries. Chronic diseases are largely preventable – healthier eating can help.

Eating healthy is not just a matter of individuals making better decisions. It is true – individuals need knowledge, skills and time to choose and consume more nutritious foods. But there are societal factors that shape our eating practices. Our incomes, the price of food, availability of nutritious food in the communities we live in or the organizations we spend time in, the ingredients in prepared foods, advertising, cultural influences, the safety of our food supply and many other factors affect our food choices and in return, our health. We now live in societies where the unhealthy options have become the easy options, while we spend millions of dollars treating preventable diseases. For example, it is estimated that about 30% of cancers in Western countries can be attributed to dietary factors.

While encouraging individuals to make healthier choices, we need to work to create environments that make the healthy option the easy option. The Population and Public Health program at the Provincial Health Services Authority, through its role in the Food Security Public Health Core Program, is working with the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, the five Regional Health Authorities and other key partners to address systemic issues that can make healthy food the easy option. The PHABC website is a consolidated network tool for Public Health partners, practitioners, and interested citizens. The food security gateway represents the expansion of this vision and strengthens the association's commitment and activities aimed at food security and reducing health inequities.

Achieving safe, nutritious food for all at all times requires supportive policies, programs and systems. It takes all of us – communities, businesses, community organizations and governments – working together, to achieve this.