



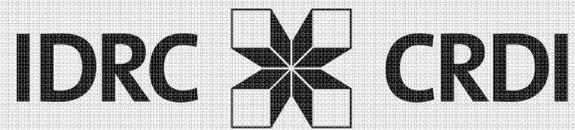
Working Paper

Food Security and Sovereignty

Prepared by:

C.H. Nelson and M.L. Stroink
Lakehead University

October 2011



Produced by the / Produit par le / Producido por el
Chantier de l'économie sociale
All rights reserved / Tous droits réservés / Todos los derechos reservados
© Chantier de l'économie sociale 2011



**CHANTIER
DE L'ÉCONOMIE SOCIALE**

ecosoci@chantier.qc.ca
www.chantier.qc.ca

This work was carried out with support from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IDRC.

Ces travaux ont été exécutés avec le soutien du Centre de recherche pour le développement international (CRDI), organisme canadien. Les points de vue exprimés dans le document n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne sauraient être attribués au CRDI.

Este trabajo se llevó a cabo con el apoyo del Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo Internacional (CRDI), Canadá. Las opiniones expuestas en dicho documento son de los autores y no reflejan necesariamente la visión del CRDI.

A Word from Margie Mendell

President, Research Committee FIESS

A Research Committee of the FIESS, made of academics and representatives from Canadian and international organizations, was convened to prepare five working papers on the Forum's themes, one synthesis paper on the broad theme of FIESS and six case studies. These background documents are available thanks to the generous support of three major partners of FIESS: the International Development Research Center (IDRC), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Center for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

The objective of the working papers, written by experts on each of the five FIESS themes, is to provide an overview of the challenges and issues raised by each of the Forum's themes (territory and local development; innovation and collective entrepreneurship; solidarity finance; work and employment and food security and sovereignty) and the relations between government and civil society in several countries that are useful illustrations of collaborative approaches to policy formation. These papers document experiences in many parts of the world that have significant heuristic value; they are not presented as best practices or as models to replicate. They situate the discussions in different national contexts and introduce pertinent theoretical debates on the role of the social and solidarity economy today. As the social and solidarity economy continues to evolve, these papers are offered as a "work in progress". Their purpose is to stimulate debate and discussion among FIESS participants.

The case studies are not limited to a single experience within each country. They include a variety of initiatives (national, regional or municipal) and provide an overview of the current and potential partnerships between government and civil society. The case studies document a broad array of experiences in six countries on four continents where the social and solidarity economy has made significant progress (Canada, Brazil, Mali, Bolivia, Spain and South Africa). More specifically, they describe the processes underlying the co-construction of public policy that address one or more of the forum's themes. Each case study was co-authored by practitioners and local researchers and coordinated by the Research Committee, reflecting the commitment of the Forum to develop and nurture an ongoing dialogue between the different actors engaged in the social and solidarity economy and to create opportunities for collaboration.

As President of the Research Committee, I would like to thank all its members for their hard work and dedication. Finally, as you will notice, these papers have been written in several languages. They are available in their original language except for the Brazilian case study which was translated into Spanish. I hope these documents will inspire a rich and constructive dialogue among FIESS participants and contribute to the growth of social and solidarity initiatives throughout the world.

Présentation des activités de recherche

Margie Mendell

Présidente du comité scientifique du FIESS

Un comité scientifique du FIESS, incluant des chercheurs du milieu universitaire et des représentants d'organisations canadiennes et internationales, a été formé pour préparer des documents de travail portant sur les cinq thématiques du forum, une recherche transversale et six études de cas. Ce projet a pu voir le jour grâce à la volonté et au soutien de trois partenaires majeurs de l'événement, soit le Centre de recherche pour le développement international (CRDI), l'Organisation internationale du travail (OIT), le Centre d'étude et de coopération internationale (CECI) et Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada (RHDC).

L'objectif de ces documents de travail est de dresser un état des lieux synthétique des enjeux et des défis entourant chacun des cinq sous-thèmes du forum, (territoire et développement local, innovation sociale et entrepreneuriat collectif, finance et commerce solidaires, emploi et travail, sécurité et souveraineté alimentaires) et de faire le point sur l'état de la recherche sur ces questions tout en faisant ressortir les enjeux liés aux relations entre les pouvoirs publics et la société civile. Ces textes abordent les différentes problématiques de manière générale en incluant des exemples pertinents mettant en évidence les enjeux et les défis liés aux questions soulevées. Ces exemples sont davantage des illustrations que des modèles à reproduire. Pour réaliser ces travaux, le comité scientifique a invité plusieurs experts reconnus sur chacun de ces cinq thèmes à se pencher sur la pertinence des initiatives d'économie sociale et solidaire comme réponse aux grands défis rencontrés dans ces différents domaines.

Par ailleurs, ces documents n'ont pas la prétention d'imposer une vérité ou d'orienter les échanges qui auront lieu durant le forum, mais bien d'offrir une mise à jour aux participants et de nourrir les discussions et les débats. Ces recherches peuvent être considérées comme des travaux en cours (*work in progress*) qui devront être poursuivis par les participants. Enfin, ces documents permettent également de situer dans un contexte plus large les études de cas nationaux.

Les études de cas ne se limitent pas à une expérience par pays mais couvrent un ensemble d'initiatives (nationales, régionales ou municipales) et donne un aperçu des relations et des éventuels partenariats entre les pouvoirs publics et la société civile dans un pays donné. Plus précisément, les chercheurs ont étudié, en partenariat avec des praticiens, les dynamiques de co-construction de politiques publiques en faveur de l'économie sociale et solidaire et en lien avec un ou plusieurs des cinq thèmes du forum. Les études de cas offrent un large éventail d'expériences à travers l'étude de 6 pays sur quatre continents où l'économie sociale et solidaire a connu des avancées significatives (Canada, Brésil, Mali, Bolivie, Espagne et Afrique du Sud).

Chaque étude est le fruit d'une collaboration entre praticiens et chercheurs locaux coordonnée par le comité scientifique. En ce sens, ces travaux s'inscrivent naturellement dans ce forum voué à la construction d'un dialogue pérenne entre les différents acteurs de l'économie sociale et solidaire.

En tant que présidente du comité scientifique, j'aimerais remercier tous ses membres pour leur travail assidu et leur dévouement. Enfin, comme vous pourrez le constater, ces travaux ont été réalisés en plusieurs langues. Ils sont disponibles dans leurs langues originales, sauf l'étude de cas sur le Brésil qui a été traduite en espagnol. J'espère que ces documents vont inspirer un dialogue riche et constructif entre les participants du FIESS et que, de ce dialogue, naîtront des initiatives concrètes en faveur de l'ESS.

Presentación de las actividades de investigación

Margie Mendell

Presidenta del comité científico del FIESS

Un comité científico del FIESS, compuesto por investigadores universitarios y representantes de organizaciones canadienses e internacionales, fue formado para preparar documentos de trabajo sobre los cinco temas del foro, un estudio transversal y seis estudios de caso. Este proyecto ha sido posible gracias a la voluntad y el apoyo de tres de los socios principales del evento, que son el Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo Internacional (IDRC), la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT), el Centro de Estudios y de Cooperación Internacional (CECI) y Recursos humanos y Desarrollo de capacidad Canadá (RHGCC).

El objetivo de estos documentos es proporcionar un resumen general de las cuestiones y desafíos de cada uno de los cinco sub-temas del foro (Territorio y desarrollo local, Innovación y emprendimiento colectivo, Finanza y comercio solidarios, Empleo y trabajo, Seguridad y soberanía alimentarias) y ofrecer un estado de la situación de la investigación sobre estos temas, destacando además las cuestiones vinculadas con las relaciones entre los poderes públicos y la sociedad civil. Los textos tratan los temas de una manera general, mediante la inclusión de ejemplos relevantes que destaquen los asuntos y desafíos relacionados con las cuestiones planteadas. Estos ejemplos son ante todo planteados a modo ilustrativo, más que modelos a replicar. Para realizar estos trabajos, el comité científico ha invitado a varios expertos reconocidos en cada uno de estos cinco temas para examinar la pertinencia de las iniciativas de economía social como respuesta a los grandes desafíos en estas áreas.

Además, estos documentos no pretenden imponer una verdad o dirigir los intercambios que tendrán lugar durante el Foro, sino que representa un intento de proporcionar a los participantes una actualización sobre los temas y alimentar las discusiones y debates. Estas investigaciones pueden considerarse como un trabajo en progreso (*work in progress*) a perseguir por los participantes. Por último, estos documentos permiten también insertar los estudios de casos nacionales en un contexto más amplio.

Los estudios de casos no se limitan a una experiencia por país, sino que abarcan una serie de iniciativas (nacionales, regionales o municipales) y describen las relaciones y las posibles colaboraciones entre los poderes públicos y la sociedad civil en un país dado. En concreto, los investigadores estudiaron, en colaboración con los profesionales, las dinámicas de co-construcción de políticas públicas para la economía social y en relación con uno o más de los cinco temas del foro. Los estudios de casos ofrecen una amplia gama de experiencias a través del estudio de seis países en cuatro continentes, donde la economía social ha experimentado avances significativos (Canadá, Brasil, Mali, Bolivia, España y Sudáfrica).

Cada estudio es el resultado de una colaboración entre profesionales e investigadores locales coordinados por el comité científico. En este sentido, estos trabajos encajan adecuadamente en un foro dedicado a la construcción de un diálogo permanente entre los diferentes actores de la economía social y solidaria.

Como Presidenta del Comité Científico, quisiera agradecer a todos los miembros por su duro trabajo y dedicación. Finalmente, como usted habrá podido notar, estos trabajos se han realizado en varios idiomas. Todos están disponibles en su idioma original, a excepción del estudio de Brasil, que ha sido traducido al español. Espero que estos trabajos inspiren un diálogo rico y constructivo entre los participantes del FIESS y que de este diálogo puedan surgir iniciativas concretas para la ESS.

Abstract

There has been an explosion of interest globally in food security and sovereignty with the increasing awareness of the limitations and negative consequences of the agri-industrial food system on human health, physical environment and social equity and in the escalation of anthropogenic climate change. Within this context, this paper focuses on how social and solidarity enterprises based on locally based food systems are addressing environmental, social and economic issues. These enterprises are meeting the need for food security and food sovereignty. This emergent social economy in the food sector is contextual and place-based and has the potential to be more resilient by building on long-established traditional practices and the protection of food crop seeds that carry the genetic diversity so critical to adaptation to unforeseen future global circumstances. These challenges to the dominant food system and its economic underpinnings present numerous opportunities to grow and expand the social and solidarity economy and enhance community food sovereignty and security throughout the world. The paper concludes by proposing a series of questions as a catalyst for state-civil society dialogue to develop public policies for the social and solidarity economy.

Résumé

Depuis quelque temps, on assiste à un regain d'intérêt pour la sécurité et la souveraineté alimentaires à travers le monde. Cet intérêt s'accompagne d'une prise de conscience grandissante des limitations de l'industrie agroalimentaire et de ses conséquences néfastes sur la santé, l'environnement, l'équité sociale et sur l'impact grandissant de l'homme sur les changements climatiques. Dans ce contexte, ce document explore en quoi les entreprises sociales et solidaires basées sur des systèmes alimentaires locaux contribuent à résoudre des problèmes environnementaux, sociaux et économiques. Ces entreprises répondent à des besoins de sécurité et souveraineté alimentaires. L'émergence de l'économie sociale dans le secteur agro-alimentaire est contextuelle et locale et offre un potentiel de pérennité en se basant sur des pratiques traditionnelles bien établies et sur la protection de semences dont la diversité génétique est cruciale à leur adaptation aux futures circonstances mondiales si imprévisibles. Ces défis aux systèmes agroalimentaires dominants et ses pendant économiques présentent de nombreuses opportunités pour un développement de l'économie sociale et solidaire et une amélioration de la sécurité et la souveraineté alimentaires des communautés du monde entier. Ce document conclut en posant une série de questions afin de stimuler le dialogue pouvoir publics-société civile pour la mise en place des politiques publiques en faveur de l'économie sociale et solidaire.

Resumen

La seguridad y la soberanía alimentarias han generado una explosión de interés a escala mundial debido a la conciencia cada vez mayor sobre las limitaciones y las consecuencias negativas del sistema alimentario agro-industrial para la salud humana, el medioambiente y la equidad social, así como para la intensificación del cambio climático antropogénico. En este contexto, este artículo se centra en mostrar cómo están abordando los problemas medioambientales, sociales y económicos las empresas de economía social y solidaria que se basan en los sistemas alimentarios locales. Dichas empresas están cumpliendo con la necesidad de seguridad y soberanía alimentarias. Esta economía social emergente en el sector alimentario es contextual y local y tiene potencial para ser más fuerte debido a que se desarrolla a través de prácticas tradicionales muy establecidas y de la protección de las semillas que contienen una diversidad genética fundamental para su adaptación a circunstancias globales futuras muy imprevisibles. Estos retos planteados al sistema alimentario dominante y sus bases económicas presentan numerosas oportunidades para expandir la economía social y solidaria y promover la seguridad y soberanía alimentarias en todo el mundo. El artículo finaliza con la propuesta de una serie de interrogantes que pretenden impulsar el diálogo entre estados y sociedad civil para desarrollar políticas públicas relacionadas con la economía social y solidaria.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....10

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK10

INVENTORY OF KNOWLEDGE12

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES20

INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW.....22

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS24

CONCLUSION25

REFERENCES27

Introduction

The social and solidarity economy (*économie sociale et solidaire*) emphasizes economic activity that is socially driven to support a resilient local food system. The focus is on innovative mechanisms to develop and consolidate a local food system that integrates health, sustainability and the economy to assure equity in food distribution, justice in access and availability of healthy nutritious foods and local food produced, harvested, distributed and processed through ecological practices that build resilience. In this transformation to a more local food system, we are recognizing that strong local food systems integrated globally will provide more opportunity for all to grow food that is more resilient to local conditions and can be more adaptive to the forces of climate change.

Conceptual Framework

Once again within the span of less than two years, the world has experienced international food prices soaring to record levels, triggering new global fears of insufficient food supply. The food security and food sovereignty movements appear well poised to work within a social and solidarity economic framework to address the current international food crisis. History informs us that social and solidarity economy approaches have often appeared most robust in responding to these socio-economic crises (Bacon, 2010; Schneider & Niederle, 2010). Currently, there are two competing global food systems, one based on industrialization and commodification of food for export and the other based on local production and consumption. Against the backdrop of small-scale, place-based, indigenous food systems that have positive impacts on health, availability of micro-nutrients, climate and social well-being (Blouin, Ashraf, Imai, & Konforti, 2009) governments and big business have been pursuing a contrasting agenda. This agenda imposes deeper commercialization of agriculture, food trade and further climate change interruptions that threaten the gains of food sovereignty movements worldwide. The current

industrial corporate agri-food system is increasingly demonstrating its inability to provide equitable access to food in just ways, or to provide nutritious, high quality food in sustainable ways that will meet increasing demands of the predicted 9 billion people by 2050 (Hannam, 2011). The focus on using technology to boost production to feed people has been achieved with the accompanying costs of depleted soils and water supplies, lost crop diversity, poisoned ecosystems, rising obesity and diet-related health problems, farmers who are facing debts incurred due to the high costs of inputs, increased inequity and accelerated rural-to-urban migration (Donald et al., 2010; Herren, 2010; Weis, 2010; Oliver, 2006; Green, 2005; Hassan, 2005). The international Green Revolution in the 1970's had an impact in both developed and developing countries. The Green Revolution's emphasis on hybridization to increase yields, petroleum based fertilizers and mechanization has accelerated environmental degradation and contributed to enhanced climate change. Agriculture is a major force of global environmental change, and currently accounts for more global greenhouse gas release than transportation. Moreover, even if accelerating demand for biofuel crops is ignored, demand for agricultural crops will likely double by 2050.

Food is essential for all people and yet it is denied to about one billion people daily. Economic access to food has become the critical issue (Quaye, 2007). As a planet, we are recognizing that the world food order is increasingly fragile and supplemented by ad hoc food assistance programs. Alternative agriculture that includes a movement toward community agriculture and fresh and organic food represents a counter-movement to meet the growing need for food worldwide. This regime shift is driven by social and solidarity economic initiatives that embrace this movement and transform what food is produced, the manner in which it is produced, and how it is distributed.

As discussed in the next section of the paper, the social and solidarity economy that emerges focuses on food security and food sovereignty. It is contextual and place-based and has the potential to

be more resilient by building on long-established traditional practices and the protection of food crop seeds that carry the genetic diversity so critical to adaptation to unforeseen future global circumstances.

Inventory of Knowledge

As the global industrial food system demonstrates its limitations and begins to crack in the face of internal and external pressures, people from communities throughout the world are beginning to organize alternative approaches to food production and distribution. These initiatives often share an organizing vision of food sovereignty and are driven from the bottom-up. *Food sovereignty* originates from the global peasant movement and has been defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and

Food Sovereignty is “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems“. It addresses people’s legal rights in an international context and shifts the focus from food as a commodity to food as a public good.

culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyéléni, 2007). The food sovereignty language emphasizes that people have a say in how their food is produced and where it comes from and it shifts the focus from food as a commodity in an industrial system to *food as a public*

good, essential to healthy communities (Monsalve, et al., 2006). Food security has been considered a more technical term describing people’s access to, and the availability of, sufficient, safe, nutritious food.

Although a similar term, the food security language does not directly address the issue of people’s legal rights in an international political

Food Security is considered a more technical term describing people’s access to, and the availability of, sufficient, safe, nutritious food. It does not generally have a strong political or legal nuance.

context (Quaye, 2007). Food sovereignty implies food security, but being food secure does not necessarily entail food sovereignty.

Given the role of food in both human health and economic activity, these emerging movements offer numerous points of reflection and overlap for those interested in the social and solidarity economy. In this section, we will provide a brief inventory of the many efforts underway to achieve food sovereignty. We attempt to demonstrate the diversity of the food sovereignty movement and its reach across national, urban-rural, and economic lines. The ways in which these movements have opened up alternative economies and have resulted in various degrees of policy action at the state level in both the North and South will also be highlighted.

La Via Campesina¹, an international movement with member organizations from Africa, Asia, South America, Europe and North America, brings together peasants, small-size farmers and agricultural workers to defend small-scale sustainable agriculture that promotes food sovereignty, social justice and dignity. It represents 150 organizations and is present and vocal at international forums where they challenge industrial forms of agriculture in a number of areas including biodiversity, trade, and agrarian reform. Member groups have lobbied for national agricultural policies and have worked locally to tighten relationships between producers and consumers. In one example, Wittman (2009) described the revival of local food trade in a region of Brazil where deforestation, unemployment, and the demand for land by workers led to the establishment of agrarian reform settlements. These settlements developed farmers' markets and local distribution networks to trade subsistence foods in local communities. Wittman pointed out that this direct form of trade enabled the establishment of authentic relationships and served as a foundation for food education. The farmers involved also came to see that through their relationships with consumers, they were able to "rework the form and process of trade" (Wittman, 2009, p815).

La Via Campesina, which first proposed the concept of food sovereignty at the World Food Summit in 1996, embraces actions that respect and reflect place-based knowledge in building local production and food trade systems.

¹ La Via Campesina: <http://www.viacampesina.org/en/>

In Canada, the People's Food Policy Project² is a national effort to build a set of food policy

As various Canadian initiatives gain momentum to establish a national food policy, the *People's Food Policy Project* is distinctive in its grassroots approach that embraces social and solidarity economy principles.

proposals based on the submissions of over 3500 citizens and organizations on the front lines of community food security. As the dominant food system fails, people across the country have self-organized innovative community-based solutions such as community supported agriculture, food policy councils, and collective kitchens. Collectively, these initiatives provide the key elements of a parallel healthy, just food

system. Housed within Food Secure Canada, an umbrella NGO, the PFPP has been unique in building policy proposals from the ground up, scaling up the impact of these community endeavours on the basis of the people's own insights into the policy barriers and opportunities they witness (People's Food Policy Project, 2011).

There have been several recent Canadian and international reports on the need to transform the food system. These reports provide insights into the key characteristics of the emerging alternative food systems. In particular, and consistent with research on resilience in socio-ecological systems, there is great diversity in and among these alternative food systems. They also tend to emphasize localization and recognize that more sustainable and ecologically-grounded approaches to food production are needed. For example, World Watch prepared their State of the World 2011 report on *Innovations that Nourish the Planet* (Nierenberg & Halweil, 2011). In it they

profile numerous efforts from around the world to move toward an agro-ecology approach to producing food, including rainwater harvesting in Rwanda, farmers

Agro-ecological approaches to producing food, such as rainwater harvesting, tree-planting, and fish or farm co-operatives featured in this State of the World 2011 report demonstrate the diversity and global reach of the social and solidarity economy.

conducting their own research in Kenya, planting nitrogen-fixing trees in Malawi, and forming various farming and fishing co-operatives and associations. Collectively, these approaches are more diversified,

² People's Food Policy Project: <http://www.peoplesfoodpolicy.ca/>

more resistant to climate change, and contribute to rural development in a way that strengthens the communities' resilience and well-being.

Pretty and colleagues (2010) conducted a horizon-scanning approach with leading experts and representatives of major agricultural organizations worldwide to derive the top 100 most important questions for global agriculture. The purpose of these questions was to influence policy priorities in ways that would have a significant impact on global agricultural practices worldwide. Given the challenges confronting the dominant food system, they pointed out that the agriculture sector can no longer focus simply on maximizing productivity; that it must now look at optimizing food production with an awareness of the broader complexity of production, environment, rural development, social justice, and consumption. The questions were organized into four sections: natural resource inputs, agronomic practice, agricultural development, and markets and consumption. Two of these questions were, "what is the impact of agricultural subsidies in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries on the welfare of farmers in developing countries?" and "what mechanisms can be devised to buffer against growing market volatility and subsequent risk for farmers and under which conditions do different mechanisms work best?" In the final section of this paper we will draw upon these questions to stimulate Forum discussion in a way that will encourage action to make civil society more food secure based on social and solidarity economy initiatives that value care and respect for humans and the natural world.

Blouin and colleagues (2009) of Équiterre and the Centre for Trade Policy and Law in Canada prepared a review of the literature on local food systems and public policy. They define local food systems as "an integrated food production, distribution, and consumption system operating within a designated geographical area for the purpose of achieving sustainable development goals" (p.11). As such, they explicitly recognize that local food systems attempt to provide economic, environmental, health and social benefits in addition to reducing distance travelled (food miles). Highlighting farmers'

markets, community supported agriculture, food box schemes, institutional local procurement initiatives and farm shops, they summarize evidence indicating that local food systems do indeed bring these diverse benefits. For example, farmers using local food systems report having greater control over prices and being less exposed to market fluctuations. Community supported agriculture and box schemes also protect the farmer from risk by distributing that risk among the community share holders. The authors also reviewed studies indicating that money spent in the local food system is more likely to stay within the locality, compared to the conventional food system (see also Quaye, 2007; Leite, Heredia, Medeiros, Palmeira, & Cintrão, 2004, cited in Quaye, 2007). In sum, because there are a variety of benefits associated with local food systems, it is important to identify which public policies best support the emergence, consolidation and development of these local food systems. These will be reviewed in the section that follows.

The above reports and initiatives on the emerging local food system reveal a diverse set of alternatives to the dominant food system. These include self-organized community efforts to identify ways of interacting and trading that act like shadow systems – alternatives emerging in the shadows of the dominant system – bringing critical diversity and resilience to the human-ecological-economic

Social and solidarity economies demonstrate self-organized community efforts to interact and trade food in ways that act like shadow systems – alternatives emerging in the shadows of the dominant food system – bringing critical diversity and resilience to the human-ecological-economic system.

system. Before reviewing the challenges and issues encountered by these efforts, we will provide an overview of some of the production and distribution models of social and solidarity enterprises that have emerged worldwide in place-based settings. These include co-operative movements, community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers' markets and collective kitchens, urban agriculture, and seed saving as specific examples of social solidarity food sovereignty activities.

In the shadow of the agri-industrial food system, small scale and family farms often lack the capital to access marketing and processing infrastructure, leaving them at a competitive disadvantage.

Co-operative movements have been generally quite successful in the food sector, offering food producers, including farmers and fishers, benefits such as shared access to seeds and other inputs, shared information and other resources, enhanced market power, and more effective lobbying (see also Nierenberg & Halweil, 2011). For example, Theron (2010) presented a case study of a Rooibos tea co-operative in South Africa. It began as a processing facility so that each member's tea could be processed and delivered to an agent at a marketing company. It was so successful in its first year that they were quickly able to bypass the marketing agent and deal directly with the buyers, even becoming certified through the Fair Trade Labelling Organization. By pooling equipment and sharing seasonal costs this group was able to significantly improve the income of the member farmers. The cooperative's surplus was invested in sponsoring various training and development programs. Demonstrating the intersection between human and ecological resilience, Di Falco, Smale, and Perrings (2007) also found evidence to suggest that durum wheat co-operatives in the southern regions of Italy, which processed, labelled, and sold the wheat locally as bread, had the effect of enhancing the genetic diversity of wheat varieties being grown in the region.

Community supported agriculture has a competitive advantage in linking the farmer to the consumer so that there is a direct connection with the source of food thus eliminating the physical and social distancing that is a core characteristic of the corporate agriculture system (McMichael, 2000). The consumer agrees to pay upfront the costs for fresh food that the farmer will produce, thus assuming some of the risks of production. Typically, the consumer communicates directly with the farmer throughout the growing season as to how well the vegetables are growing. Most CSA operations encourage the consumer to bring the family to visit the farm at least once per season with opportunities to participate in harvesting the vegetables.

Direct selling through local markets was used in preindustrial times as a primary way for farmers to gain income from excess produce. In recent decades, farmer's markets have mushroomed globally in

both rural and urban settings as a viable way to gain access to healthy food sources. Consumer education is reintroducing potential consumers to a traditional distribution model for food³.

Collective kitchens have emerged as a means to reduce food costs by buying in bulk and to re-learn cooking skills with local food that were lost when food became an input to industrial processing plants and removed from its direct link to local ecology and culture (McMichael, 2000). A collective kitchen consists of a group of people who meet regularly to plan, budget, shop, and cook nutritious meals for themselves and their families. Collective kitchens may be organized around a certain group of people like single mothers, seniors, students or around specific food interests. In Quebec, the movement is so strong that collective kitchens are seen as a path to social empowerment (Ebbels, 2007). Collective kitchens provide a place to develop and nourish friendships and have fun, learn new skills and prepare several healthy meals.⁴

Urban agriculture, the growing or raising of food within urban and peri-urban environments, is an important part of people's nutritional and economic well-being in developed and developing countries alike. Flynn (2001) explored urban agriculture in Tanzania. She found that nineteen out of seventy-one women in the city of Mwanza relied on growing their own food and that food could be found growing not only in private yards but also alongside public pathways and in low-lying drainage areas. Chickens could also be found roaming freely in open areas of the city. In developed countries urban agriculture is becoming increasingly popular as people seek safe and healthy alternatives to mainstream food sources (Feenstra, 2002; Newman, 2008; Pollan, 2006). Community gardens, roof-top gardens, vertical gardening, and guerrilla gardening have all received attention in the literature and are increasingly recognized as essential to sustainable urban design (Deelstra & Giradet, 1999). The bylaws that generally prevent the keeping of chickens and other small livestock in urban backyards are also being revisited by municipal officials in several developed countries (e.g., Gaynor, 1999; see also

³ <http://www.nourishlife.org/videos/farmers-markets/>

⁴ http://www.lcrc.on.ca/WhatisaCollective_Kitchen.html

People's Food Policy Project⁵). While this food is generally produced for subsistence, it forms an important component of the social and solidarity economy. Not only is this food often sold in market gardens or informally over the fence, it is also frequently traded in a barter-type economy among gardeners, between neighbours, and among family and friends (Chevrette, 2011).

Since the very beginning of human experimentation with agriculture, farmers have invested tremendous amounts of knowledge and labour in the process of harvesting and saving seeds. As such, the detailed knowledge and practices associated with seed saving are deeply engrained in the cultures and economies of agrarian peoples. The ability to save and trade seeds from plants that are successfully evolving in a particular ecological and climactic setting is essential to the resilience and adaptation of the people in that setting. Likewise, the resulting diversity in the overall seed-stock protects the resilience of the broader agri-ecological landscape (Shiva, 2000). This is why many people throughout the world are concerned about the commodification of seeds. With changes in the laws governing intellectual property and patents, and with technological advances in genetic engineering, corporations are now able to patent, own, and sell seeds, greatly impacting the dynamics that had previously ensured the diversity of plant species (Mascarenhas & Busch, 2006).

Interestingly, community-level efforts to keep and trade seeds have self-organized below this dominant corporate system. For example, Seeds of Diversity⁶ is a charitable organization helping gardeners and farmers to save and exchange open-pollinated heirloom vegetables, fruits, and grains in Canada. They offer a catalogue of heirloom seeds and preserve the knowledge of traditional seed saving and agricultural practices. Seedy Saturdays are events held in communities across Canada where people get together and swap seeds. In India, Navdanya⁷ is a network of seed keepers that has helped set up 54 seed banks across the country and has conserved more than 5000 crop varieties. In India and other

⁵ People's Food Policy Project on Urban Chickens: <http://peoplesfoodpolicy.ca/urban-chicken-report>

⁶ Seeds of Diversity: www.seeds.ca

⁷ Navdanya: www.navdanya.org

developing countries, the corporate control and sale of seeds puts small farmers in debt, and renders them unable to control or adapt their own plant species to changing local conditions. Organizations such as Navdanya and Seeds of Diversity demonstrate how the trade and exchange of seeds in local networks is developing underneath and alongside the dominant corporate system as a social and solidarity economy.

Challenges and Issues

The dominant food system is reaching the limits of its ability to feed a growing world population. The Green Revolution of the 1970s enabled farmers to increase crop yields through intensive fertilization, mechanization, crop specialization and irrigation. These techniques are now widely recognized to be undermining the health of the soil and to be contributing to climate change (Herren, 2010). They are also unsustainable in their dependence on fossil fuels and undermine the ability of rural communities to feed themselves. With challenges from climate change, water stresses, energy insecurity and dietary shifts, global agricultural and food systems will have to change substantially to meet the challenge of feeding the world. Moreover, the emerging bioscience century - where the world is increasingly turning to microbes, plants and animals to solve energy needs and using biomaterials from crops to manufacture car parts, foam, insulation, plastics, clothes, and building materials - will put more strain on an ever-decreasing land base and water resources to produce food. These challenges to the dominant food system and its economic underpinnings present numerous opportunities to grow and expand the social and solidarity economy and enhance community food sovereignty throughout the world (Wittman, 2009; Berkes et al., 2003). As these movements continue to scale up, they too encounter a number of challenges. These issues are primarily the result of an institutional framework that has grown

Challenges to the dominant food system and its economic underpinnings present numerous opportunities to grow and expand the social and solidarity economy and enhance community food sovereignty throughout the world.

up within and in support of the dominant agri-industrial food system. This institutional framework includes government policy at every level, international trade agreements, and even the human habits and socio-cultural structures that shape everyday behaviour. This is the same essential challenge faced by many social and solidarity economy initiatives (e.g., Teague, 2007). We turn now to a discussion of some of these challenges.

Blouin and colleagues (2009) summarized the findings of several studies on the barriers and challenges to a local food system and identified three broad types of barriers, which manifest themselves as specific issues at each step in the food chain. The first of the three broad types is a lack of financing. Local food projects such as community supported agriculture or local food distribution networks lack sufficient financial resources. Moreover, as they are designed to achieve social and environmental objectives as opposed to focusing only on profit, they are considered high risk and unable to access credit from commercial banks. The second is a relative lack of economic power. Large food retail chains and marketing channels do not have to pay for the environmental and social costs of their businesses and are able to impose minimum quantity and quality criteria that often exclude smaller food producers. The third is a lack of knowledge, especially at the consumer level, which leads to a lack of demand for local food products.

In the People's Food Policy Project (2011), Canada's lack of a coordinated and explicit food policy designed for the public good is discussed. In the absence of such a policy, a "patchwork of government policies and business-oriented decision making" determines our food system (p. 2). The project explored policy recommendations in areas ranging from health, agriculture, fisheries, urban, and rural communities. For example, the current bureaucratically intensive regulations pertaining to the inspection and processing of food favours the centralization of food processing, undermining the ability of small, rural, and remote communities to produce their own food. Likewise, natural resource policies and mechanisms are organized around industrial interests in forest lands and waterways, such as

timber, mining, and hydro-electric projects. These policies undermine remote communities' capacity to protect, harvest, and certainly trade forest or traditional food supplies. In agriculture and in fisheries, food has been viewed as an export commodity and the farmers and fishers are unable to make a living unless they operate on an industrial scale. Policies that favour community based ecological management of waterways and farm land and a living wage for food producers are recommended.

When considered on the international level, the policies and practices of nations and the trade agreements among them further constrain the dynamics of the food system toward an agri-industrial model. For example, small farms in the developing world struggle to compete with imports from North American and European countries in which certain forms of agriculture are subsidized (Wittman, 2009). For example, food grown in North America under subsidies is sometimes dumped in developing countries under the guise of "food aid" which results in the further impoverishment of farming communities in these countries (Oxfam, 2005). Furthermore, it has been argued that the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture denies states the right to "full self-sufficiency as a national strategy" (McMichael, 2003, p.175). Therefore, on an international scale, participating countries are unable to place the food sovereignty of their people at the centre of their food policies. These policies clearly contribute to the chronic hunger and food insecurity that continue to plague people throughout the world by encouraging the private and public sector to mutually reinforce the dominant agri-industrial food system (Teague, 2007). On an international scale, such policies and agreements will need to be revisited with a mindful awareness of the very tight interconnections between human and ecological well-being.

International Overview

The International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) raises awareness of the complexity of food issues and challenges us to rethink our global food system so

that it can feed people, ensure viable communities and economies and sustain our planet (Herren, 2010). A social and solidarity economy approach acknowledges the interrelatedness of food and economy. While the industrial food system may be strong and globally ubiquitous in its influence, it is demonstrating that it promotes food security through unsustainable methods that encourage further environmental degradation and inequities in control of the food system including recent acceleration in the area of gene privatization. Furthermore, the resources required to produce food for export are not available to most small scale farmers and trade liberalization escalates greater competition in local markets (Oliver, 2006). As such, the industrial food system undermines food sovereignty in communities in both the north and south.

With a food system based on locality where the nuances of climate change can be responsibly addressed and communities can be empowered to provide food security while building locally responsible community assets, communities could be empowered in just and fair ways at both the individual and collective levels. The social and solidarity economy can address the six pillars of food sovereignty (Nyeleni, 2007).

- Focuses on food for people
- Values food providers
- Localizes food systems
- Puts control locally
- Builds knowledge and skills
- Works with nature to improve resilience

Given the generational tenacity of traditional systems, it may be that industrial agriculture has been justified by a misrepresentation of the capacity of these localized agriculture systems. Studies are showing that production and productivity in a social and solidarity economy framework can be high (Nierenberg, & Halweil, 2011; Altieri & Nicholls, 2008; Rosset, 1999). Moreover, production for world trade is a different measure than production for not only the direct consumption of food, but for

renewal of the land, food crop refuse for food for livestock, and renewal of the soil. If a farming system is viewed as a whole, then production of food alone is an inadequate measure of productivity.

There is clear evidence globally that the social and solidarity economy has the potential to become a viable framework to address food security and food sovereignty issues. Yet, in spite of the documented successes as highlighted in this paper, it still appears vulnerable due to lack of enabling public policies. Policies are needed that can sustain the social and solidarity economy by recognizing its economic viability and thereby broadening the meaning of 'effectiveness' beyond viable incomes and profits to be inclusive of sustainable environmental stewardship and fair and equitable food systems. There is a growing global movement that suggests that public policy developed with an awareness of the dynamic and global interconnectedness of ecological, economic, and social systems (which can be understood through complexity theory) may provide an approach that nurtures the resiliency needed to address food sovereignty within a social and solidarity economy. There is compelling evidence that hunger and poverty are more the result of policy directives than actual food shortages (Allen & Wilson, 2008; Quaye, 2007). The questions suggested below can assist in exploring public policy alternatives as well as new approaches to partnerships between government and civil society. Through reflection and open, inclusive dialogue, these new ways of relating and of organizing our food systems in a social and solidarity economy can emerge and foster the resilience and well-being of communities throughout the world.

Potential Questions

- Can food security social and solidarity economy enterprises emerge as an effective tool for mitigating surging world food prices? What types of international supports are needed to nurture the social and solidarity economy's growth in order to address the high cost of food in a sustainable manner?
- How resilient can food security social and solidarity enterprises be in responding to such global issues as a structural shift in competing demands for land between bioenergy and bioproducts

and food needs, demand for simply more food as the global population reaches 9 billion, shifting changes in diets, and increased consumption of meats?

- What should be the appropriate balance between social and solidarity economy interventions at the local level, different forms of market exchanges, and state intervention?
- Is a social and solidarity economy sustainable and under what criteria?
- As social and solidarity economies emerge out of context, is there space for a normative approach that could assist the sustainability of these various initiatives?
- Are there new leadership and organizational principles arising out of complexity theory that would provide a resilient framework in which the social and solidarity economy addressing food security and food sovereignty can flourish?
- What is the impact of agricultural subsidies in countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on the welfare of farmers in developing countries?
- What mechanisms can be devised to buffer against growing market volatility and subsequent risk for farmers and under which conditions do different mechanisms work best?
- What policies at which levels of government are needed to support the emergence of social solidarity and food sovereignty activities around the world? What changes are needed in international trade agreements to facilitate this shift?

Conclusion

Food is a way of life. It has deep material and symbolic power. Food embodies the links between nature, human survival and health, culture and livelihood. Food is vital to healthy communities that nurture healthy people. The way we practice agriculture impacts on the coevolution between culture and environment (Gliessman, 1990). Strategically maximizing the amount of food that we can grow locally frees up productive land in all countries to grow food more adapted to specific local contexts in a way that strengthens the social, environmental, and economic vitality of each community.

There are some compelling features of a social and solidarity economy approach to food security and food sovereignty that have the potential to provide a fundamental regime shift in the food system. However, since the 1970's a neoliberal approach of export led and a free trade based industrial agriculture model has dominated the supply and consumption chain (Allen & Wilson, 2008). International policy has supported an approach that has encouraged developing countries to shift to crops that have high export value, eliminate local government supported agricultural subsidies and in exchange accept surplus crops from developed countries that undermine local production (Alteri & Nicholls, 2008; Bello, 2008). The impact has been devastating on many fronts, including the erosion of traditional practices, environmental degradation and accelerated indebtedness. Efforts at debt reduction have spiralled through promises of recovery through the development of new export markets that have resulted in the eradication of local subsidies on traditional local crops (Quaye, 2007). Thus, pivotal for a successful shift to a food sovereignty approach, is the emergence of policies that support local production using ecological sustainable management systems. These policies may include a blending of modern agricultural science and indigenous knowledge systems, technological sovereignty and farmer to farmer networks that support local production, distribution and food processing. This process of localizing requires a context of political engagement and action (Allen & Wilson, 2008).

References

- Allen, P. & Wilson, A.B. (2008). Agrifood inequities: Globalization and localization. *Development*, 51(4), 534-540.
- Altieri, M.A. & Nicholls, C.I. (2008). Scaling up agroecological approaches for food sovereignty in Latin America. *Development*, 51(4), 472-480.
- Bacon, C.M. (2010). A spot of coffee in crisis: Nicaraguan smallholder cooperatives, fair trade networks and gendered empowerment. *Latin American Perspectives*, 171, 37(2), 50-71.
- Bello, W. (2008). How to manufacture a global food crisis. *Development*, 51(4), 450-455.
- Berkes, F., et al. 2003. Navigating social-ecological systems: building resilience for complexity and change. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Blouin, C., et al. (2009, September). *Local Food systems and Public Policy: A review of the Literature*. Equiterre & The Centre for Trade Policy and Law, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON.
- Canada National Food Strategy, (2010). <http://www.nationalfoodstrategy.ca/>
- Chevrette, L. (2011). Community Gardening: Exploring Motivations and Gardener Experience. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Canada.
- Deelstra, T. & Girardet, H. (1999). Urban agriculture and sustainable cities. In N. Bakker, M. Dubbeling, S. Guendel, U. Sabel-Koschella, and H. de Zeeuw (Eds.). *Growing cities, growing food: urban agriculture on the policy agenda: a reader on urban agriculture* (pp. 43-66). Leusden (Netherlands): Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Forestry.
- Di Falco, S., Smale, M., & Perrings, C. (2007). The role of agricultural cooperatives in sustaining the wheat diversity and productivity: the case of southern Italy. *Environmental and Resource Economics*. DOI: 10.1007/s10640-007-9100-0
- Donald, B, Gertler, M., Gray, M. and Lobao, L. (2010). Re-regionalizing the food system? *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3, 171-175.
- Ebbels, K. (2007, Feb 16). Cooking up new collective kitchens: Tasty social change, one meal at a time. *The McGill Daily*. Retrieved April 22, 2011
<http://thetyee.ca/Life/2007/02/16/CollectiveKitchens/>
- Feenstra, G. (2002). Creating space for sustainable food systems: lessons from the field. *Agriculture and Human Values*. 19(2). P. 99-106.
- Flynn, K.C. (2001). Urban agriculture in Mwanza, Tanzania. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 71, 666-691.
- Gaynor, A. (1999). Regulation, resistance and the residential area: The keeping of productive animals in twentieth-century Perth, Western Australia. *Urban Policy and Research*, 17, 7-16.

- Gliessman, S.R. (1990). *Agroecology: Researching the ecological basis for sustainable agriculture*. New York: Springer-Verlag
- Green, R. E., Cornell, S. J., Scharlemann, J. P. W., Balmford, A., 2005, Farming and the fate of wild nature, *Science* 307, 550–555.
- Hannam, P. (2011). Future of Agriculture Southwest Agricultural Conference, Guelph, ON.
www.southwestagconference.ca
- Hassan, R. M., Scholes, R., Ash, N., & Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (Program). (2005). *Ecosystems and human well-being: Current state and trends : findings of the Condition and Trends Working Group*. The millennium ecosystem assessment series, v. 1. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Herren, H.R. (2010, May 12) *Supporting a True Agricultural Revolution* Embassy. Available:
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201005140832.html>
- Leite, Sérgio, Beatriz Heredia, Leonilde Medeiros, Moacir Palmeira, and Rosângela Cintrão. 2004. *Impactos dos Assentamentos: Um Estudo sobre o Meio Rural Brasileiro*. Brasília: Núcleo de Estudos Agrários e Desenvolvimento Rural (NEAD).
- Mascarenhas, M. & Busch, L. (2006). Seeds of change: Intellectual property rights, genetically modified soybeans and seed saving in the United States. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 46, 122-138.
- McMichael, P. (2003). Food security and social reproduction: issues and contradictions. In: I. Bakker and S. Gill, (eds). *Power, production, and social reproduction*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 169–89.
- McMichael, P. (2000). The power of food. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 17: 21-33.
- Monsalve, S., Rosset, P., Vazquez, S.V., & Carino, J.K. (2006). Agrarian reform in the context of food sovereignty, the right to food and cultural diversity: Land, territory and dignity. Civil Society Issue Paper presented at the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD). Available online:
www.nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/landandfoodsov_paper5.pdf
- Newman, L. (2008). Extreme Local Food: Two Case Studies in Assisted Urban Small Plot Intensive Agriculture. *Environments*, 36(1), p 33-43
- Nierenberg, D. & Halweil, B. (2011). *State of the World: Innovations that Nourish the Planet*. A Worldwatch Institute report on progress toward a sustainable society. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Nyéleni (2007). Forum for Food Sovereignty Synthesis Report. International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty. Available: www.foodsovereignty.org
- Oliver, B. (2006). *A place for family farming: Food sovereignty in Uruguay*. Thesis Montreal, Quebec: McGill University.
- Oxfam (2005). Food aid or hidden dumping? Separating wheat from chaff. Oxfam Briefing Paper #71. Oxfam International. Available: <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/food-aid-or-hidden-dumping>

- Peoples Food Policy Project (2011). Resetting the Table: The People's Food Policy. Available: <http://peoplesfoodpolicy.ca>
- Pollan, M. (2006). *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin
- Pretty, J. et al. (2010) The top 100 questions of importance to the future of global agriculture. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, 8 (4), 219. DOI: [10.3763/ijas.2010.0534](https://doi.org/10.3763/ijas.2010.0534)
- Quaye, W. (2007). Food sovereignty and combating poverty and hunger in Ghana. *Tailoring Biotechnologies*, 2, 69-78.
- Rossetk Peter M. (2006). *Food is Different: Why we must get the WTO out of agriculture*. (Global Issues), Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.
- Schneider, S. & Niederle, P.A. (2010). Resistance strategies and diversification of rural livelihoods: The construction of autonomy among Brazilian family farmers. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37, 379-405.
- Shiva, V. (2000) *Stolen Harvest, the hijacking of the global food supply* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press)
- Teague, P. (2007). Developing the social economy in Ireland? *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 31(1), 91-108.
- Theron, J. (2010). Informalization from above, informalization from below: The options for organization. *African Studies Quarterly*, 11, 87-105. Available: <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v11i2-3a6.pdf>
- Weis, T. (2010). The accelerating biophysical contradictions of industrial capitalist agriculture. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 10: 3, 315–341.
- Wittman, H. (2009). Reworking the metabolic rift: La Via Campesina, agrarian citizenship, and food sovereignty. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36, 805-826.