Food Security 101:
What is food security and what does it have to do with food protection?

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BC Food Protection Association Conference
October 22, 2009 | Richmond, BC
Outline

• Basics of food security
• Food insecurity in BC
• Trends in food security
• Food safety ↔ food security
• What can you do?
What is food security?

- *Security* refers to individual, household, community, national, or international food supply
- Quantity, Quality, Distribution
- Includes social, cultural, health, and technical aspects of food
- Sometimes refers to protection from bioterrorism, trade disruption, disasters, etc.
Food security includes **safety**

**FAO/WHO (World Food Summit 1996)**
- “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, **safe**, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”
- Availability, access, utilization, stability

**Community Food Security/BC Public Health Core Programs**
- “situation in which all community residents obtain a **safe**, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice” (Hamm & Bellows 2003)

**AAAAASS**
- Accessible, adequate, appropriate, affordable, available, **safe**, sustainable
Food Safety
+ Accessibility
+ Affordability
+ Access
+ Acceptability
+ Adequacy
+ Sustainability
= Food Security
Food security continuum

Short-term/Relief
- Focus on individuals
- Emergency food aid
- e.g. food banks, soup kitchens

Transitional
- Community development & capacity building
- e.g. farmers markets, community gardens

System Redesign
- Policy change
- Local & sustainable food distribution systems
- e.g. coordinated food policies
Food insecurity in Canada

- 704,414 individuals assisted by food bank in March 2008 = 2.1% of national population
- 2004 CCHS data:
  - 9.2% of households are food insecure
    (2.7 million people; almost ¾ million children)
  - 33.3% of Aboriginal households are food insecure
  - Food insecurity is associated with income
Food insecurity in Canada

Figure 3.1 Income-related household food security status in Canada, 2004

- Food secure: 90.8%
- Moderately food insecure: 6.3%
- Severely food insecure: 2.9%
- Food insecure, All: 9.2%

Data source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, Cycle 2.2, 2004 – Share File, Household Weights
Food insecurity in BC

• 78,101 British Columbians use food banks at least once a month in 2008
  – Up 2.1% over 2007 stats
  – 31.2% are children (78,101)
  – Many are employed (14.4%), on disability (22.5%), or social assistance (42.7%)

• 2004 CCHS data:
  – 10.4% of households are food insecure
Food insecurity in BC

Figure 3.2 Income-related household food insecurity by province, 2004

Data source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, Cycle 2.2, 2004 – Share File, Household Weights

E Data with a coefficient of variation (CV) from 16.6% to 33.3%; interpret with caution
Food security issues in BC

• Dependence on imports
• Declining agricultural land base & fish stocks
• Lack of efficient local distribution
• Food safety outbreaks: e. coli, avian influenza, BSE, salmonella
• Isolated communities
• Poverty
• Farmer attrition & lack of farm labour
Future food security challenges

- Climate change
- Increasing population
- Increasing demand/need for local food – need to minimize food miles
- BC geography and land base
Trends in food security

Vancouver Farmers Markets
You Are What You Eat. Prepare to Meet Your Maker.
Food security policy & programs

• Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI)
• Canada’s Action Plan for Food Security
• BC Core Programs in Public Health
  – Food safety
  – Food security
• Food policy councils
• 2005 PHO Report
Food Safety ↔ Food Security

• Earlier perspectives on food security focused on quantity, and later on quality (nutrition & safety).

• More recently, food security advocates take a community & social justice perspective, with added focus on local economic development, choice, relationships, ecology, sustainable farming, local sourcing, food miles, carbon footprint....
What does this mean for the food industry?

- Focus on small producers
- Relationship-based markets (vs brand-based)
- Processors may not have resources of large food companies, but small size offers opportunities to promote change and educate re food safety
Food security initiatives can be good for food safety

• Increased awareness of food – opportunity to increase awareness of food safety
• Growth in local food production and processing
• Focus on fresh and value-added foods
Food Security Continuum

- Short-term/Emergency (e.g. Food banks)
- Capacity Building Initiatives (e.g. farmers markets)
- Transforming the food system (e.g. local food distribution)

Minimize Risk of Foodborne Illness

Adapted from PHSA
Possible tensions

- Small scale food processing
- Farmers markets – new safety guidelines
- BC Meat Inspection Regulations
- Urban agriculture
- Backyard chickens
What can food protection do to support food security?

• Common goals
• Awareness
• Communication
• Education
• Risk vs regulation
• More secure = safer

Food safety:
Protect health by preventing foodborne illness

Food security:
Protect health by preventing hunger and malnutrition

Help food providers understand where/how food safety risks occur. Work with food providers to understand their constraints and find ways to help them prevent foodborne illness in the context of their work.

Understand how a healthy, secure food environment can improve quality and safety.
Thank you!

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Resources

- Agricultural Land Commission
  http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/index.htm
- 2005 PHO Report
- Food Secure Canada
  http://foodsecurecanada.org/
- Core Programs in Public Health
  http://www.phabc.org/modules.php?name=Contentcore&pa=showpage&pid=150
- Vancouver Food Policy Council
  http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/foodpolicy/
- BC Food Systems Network
  http://www.fooddemocracy.org/