

**Connect for Food Workshop – April 13, 2022, Flat Lake, AB**

**- Summary Report**

To: Connect for Food Workshop Participants

From: Connect for Food Team

Date: May 18, 2022

The following is a summary of the workshop at Flat Lake Hall, April 13, 2022, including emerging themes relating to the food system and next steps.

**Connect for Food - 'Food Wheel'**



**Workshop Overview:**

Approximately 30 individuals attended the workshop, representing all categories of the Food Wheel. Participants provided ideas, learned from each other, and offered insights and identified actions on developing a more sustainable food system.

Initially, participants were asked to complete the sentence: "My time here today will be well spent if ..."; at the conclusion of the workshop participants were then asked to complete the sentence: "The workshop today was a

good use of my time because ...”. These individual exercises were helpful for the CFF team to gauge what was on the minds of participants and will prove valuable in planning and facilitating future events.

A guest presentation set the stage for group work in the afternoon. Eileen Kotowich, Farmers’ Market Specialist, Food Science & Development Section with Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development spoke to the topic of: “Possibilities for a (local) food system: the time is now!”.

The afternoon workshop discussion focused on two topic areas:

- What is a food system and / or food economy? and,
- What needs to change in our thinking and behaviours about food?

Each table/group had a facilitator to guide the conversation, ensure input from all individuals, capture ideas and report highlights to all participants to support further discussion.

### Workshop Outcomes:

As expected, the workshop would provide a collective and individual discovery and learning experience participants and would serve as a guide for future endeavours of Connect for Food. The discussions affirmed and validated there is indeed a need and purpose that can be the goals for Connect for Food, and the timing for this initiative is right.

Following, are the key points captured from participant conversations at the workshop:

#### **Topic #1 What is a food system and / or food economy? (What are the elements / characteristics of a sustainable food system?)**

Ten elements were identified as necessary for (developing) a sustainable food system.

Elements	Meaning
<b>1. Awareness and Education</b>	All stakeholders of the food wheel can benefit from education and increased awareness. (Connect for Food is committed to <i>a learning culture</i> ).
<b>2. Effective Policies and Regulations</b>	Clarity, balance and optimization of policies and regulations is needed so <i>all</i> stakeholders are served and be successful.
<b>3. Innovation</b>	Fostering a culture that supports the adoption of innovation and technology is necessary.
<b>4. Accessible and Inclusive</b>	Accessibility to food should be inclusive and consider demographics, psychographics and socio-economic factors.
<b>5. Food Safety</b>	From production to consumption, our food system needs to ensure safety for consumers.
<b>6. Ecologically Responsible and Environmentally Sustainable</b>	Starting with production through to consumption our food system must be ecologically responsible, environmentally sustainable and humane.

<b>7. Connected and Collaborative</b>	A successful food system is fully integrated with all segments interconnected and collaborate to be successful; A <i>systems thinking</i> approach will be necessary.
<b>8. Food Security</b>	Reduce susceptibility and vulnerability to domestic and global factors to create a self-reliant, resilient, year-round food supply.
<b>9. Contributes to Rural Economic Development and Beyond</b>	Individuals and communities will see benefits from economic development relating to a more localized food system.
<b>10. Supported by All Levels of Government</b>	Governments must support a shift from a focus primarily on commodity production and export to local food production and consumption is imperative. Both can co-exist and contribute to economic growth and sustainability.

**Topic #2      What needs to change in our thinking and behaviours about food?**

The second table discussion took a step further to examine what needs to change with our food system. **Five emerging themes** are presented below:

1. Take pride in producing and consuming our own food.
2. Our expectations need to change regarding the (year-round) availability and sources of food and our reliance on imported food.
3. Adopt a culture of learning, leadership and self-reliance; “Lead from where we stand and accept that solutions may not come from external sources”.
4. We need to embrace complexity and accept that solutions to complexity may not be simple.
5. Our current agricultural model is based primarily on high production and the export of commodities, often providing with low net returns. There may be more net return per acre in a local food model.

**Feedback from Participants:**

Feedback from participants is highlighted below and is very positive about this Initiative overall:

- 89% of respondents scored the event as a 4/4, to provide their input in a meaningful way and felt their contribution was valued.
- 89% of respondents scored the event as a 4/4, for encouraging participation.
- 95% of the respondents scored 4/4, as the topic being relevant.
- 75% of respondents scored a 3 or 4/4, as the event was an important step in changing the way people think about food behaviours.



- 95% of respondents scored a 3 or 4/4, as the event challenged their thoughts and ideas about the food economy.
- 88% of respondents scored 3.5 or 4/4 and appreciated hearing new perspectives and ideas.
- 91% of respondents scored the event a 4/4, that the process worked well.
- 94% of respondents scored 4/4 for wanting to continue being involved with CFF.

### Next Steps and Action Going Forward:

Input and feedback from workshop participants and coffee shop series participants have clearly indicated that Connect for Food is an initiative that can foster the development of a localized food system (in this region and beyond) and we are stronger through connecting, collaborating and the sharing of ideas and shared vision.

As momentum builds, CFF will be scheduling more virtual coffee shops to discuss these findings and planning for more in-person events in the future.

Meanwhile, CFF will focus on the following to further develop the Initiative:

- Developing a (longer term) strategic plan including vision, mission, and goals as well an action plan to serve shorter term objectives;
- researching funding sources; and
- identifying potential supporters and partners.

Thank you for supporting Connect for Food!

Please reach out to us with your questions and comments. We can be reached through our website, our email, Facebook group / page.

With kind regards,

*Perry, Keleigh & Brooke*

Your Connect for Food Team