

Connect for Food Summary of Workshop Participant Discussion

November 17th, 2022 - Bruderheim Fire Hall, Bruderheim, Alberta

Thank you to all participants of this workshop and to everyone who helped make it a success! The following is a review of the event and a summary of the themes and highlights from our discussion around a more localized food system.

Connect for Food - 'Food Wheel'



Workshop Overview:

Ten individuals attended the workshop, including participants and facilitators, representing the categories of the Connect for Food - Food Wheel. Participants offered insights, learned from others' perspectives, and expressed their ideas about actions on developing a more localized food system that is also regenerative/sustainable.

Early in the workshop, participants were asked to complete the statement: *"My time here today will be well spent if ..."*. At the end of the workshop, participants were then asked to complete the sentence: *"The workshop today was a good use of my time because ..."*. These two exercises, at all of our workshops, are helpful for the CFF team to better understand the expectations of participants and what they found valuable and have been very useful in planning our events. Thank you to all for your open and honest responses!

The workshop facilitators guided the conversation, ensured timely input from all individuals, captured key points to support further discussion.



Discussion focused on two topics:

- Describing our current food system; and,
- What needs to change in our thinking and behaviours about food

Workshop Outcomes:

As anticipated, the workshop environment provided an excellent setting for both individual and collective discovery, critical thinking and, most importantly, a learning that can be applied to future events for Connect for Food. In general, the discussions affirmed and validated that there is indeed a need and purpose for the Connect for Food initiative, and the timing is right for engaging people (stakeholders).

Following, are key points captured from participant conversations around two *Topics for Discussion*.

Discussion Topic #1: Describe elements/characteristics of a more localized food system

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

1. Awareness and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders of the <i>Food Wheel</i> benefit from education and increased awareness. (Connect for Food is committed to <i>a learning culture</i>) • Globalization v. localization. Understand everything is connected and balance can be found between the two and be sustainable
2. Effective Policy and Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity, balance and optimization of policies and regulations is needed so <i>all</i> stakeholders are served and can succeed • Regulations are made available in plain language and are understandable to all stakeholders
3. Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a culture supportive of innovation and technology adoption, education and connection • Technology and innovation are critical for generating power for horticultural use
4. Accessible and Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility to food is inclusive and considers demographics, psychographics and socio-economic factors • Pick when in season and store/preserve to eat year round
5. Food Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From production to consumption, our food system ensures food safety for consumers • Optimize regulations and keep food safe at the same time
6. Ecologically Responsible and Environmentally Sustainable (Regenerative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All components of food system are ecologically responsible, environmentally sustainable and humane • A closed loop (permaculture) approach is needed for growing food sustainably
7. Connected and Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through a <i>systems thinking</i> approach, components of food system are integrated with all segments interconnected and collaborating • We understand and work together in communities
8. Food Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susceptibility and vulnerability to domestic and global factors to create a self-reliant, resilient, year-round food supply are reduced

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing equipment and processes such as flash freezing is encouraged
9. Contributes to Rural Economic Development and Beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals and communities realize benefits from economic development resulting from a more localized food system
10. Supported by All Levels of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments support a shift from a focus (primarily) on commodity production and export to local food production and consumption • Small food businesses will thrive

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

Five themes were identified for changing our thinking and behaviours about food:

1. Take pride in producing and consuming our own food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrating on the micro system / local may be the place to start. • Understand the importance of food in our lives and how cheap food may not be sustainable – it’s a matter of value, not just price • Good food is essential for our health
2. Expectations need to shift regarding reliance on imported food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sustainable, efficient, regenerative. Finding the balance is necessary. We must accept our limitations due to our location. • Balance between import and export is needed. • People need to <i>accept</i> a little bit more, rather than expecting more and more all the time. Critical thinking skills are needed. • Think longer term and have continuity, especially when growing food
3. Adopt a culture of learning, leadership and self-reliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain language around regulations is needed so the average person can figure it out • People are able to make informed decisions about food
4. We need to embrace complexity and accept that many solutions are not simple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solving the big picture is almost impossible, need to start at home to make a difference
5. Our current agricultural model is based primarily on high production and the export of commodities, often providing low net returns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture businesses and business owners need succession planning

<p>There may be more net return per acre in a local food model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventional agriculture operates on huge amounts of cash flow but leave small net margins for growers – input costs take all the profit
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Feedback from Participants:

The following shows how participant-respondents rated the workshop on a scale of 1 – 4 (4 being best) based upon relevancy and quality; this feedback is very helpful in planning for future CFF events

- I was able to provide input in a meaningful way and felt my contribution was valued:
 - 100% rated as a 4
- Participation was encouraged:
 - 100% rated as a 4
- Relevancy of topic:
 - 100% rated as a 4
- Important step in changing the way people think and behave about localized food:
 - 100% rated as 3 or 4
- Challenged their own thoughts and ideas about the food system:
 - 83% rated as 3 or 4
- Appreciated hearing new perspectives and ideas:
 - 100% rated as 3 or 4
- The workshop process worked well:
 - 100% rated as 4
- Wanting to continue being involved with CFF
 - 83% of rated as 3 or 4

Quotes from Participants of the Bruderheim Fire Hall Workshop:

“Was good to find there are like minded people sharing similar vision for the future.”

“I found that my thinking about food broadened just from the discussion – lots more to consider now.”

“Very good discussion and I learned some new things about food, food sources. A great approach to moving things forward.”

“Got me thinking (in general!) about strategies to address a system that seems to have a lot of cracks”

“The way the workshop was run it promoted a good exchange of ideas and prompted seeing the many connections in the food system (‘wheel’)”

“Renewed my hope for a more localized food system in the future (near!).”



Next Steps and Action Going Forward:

Input and feedback from CFF workshop and CFF coffee shop participants has 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.

Stay tuned for dates and locations for our upcoming Showcase and Exchange events in April, 2023.

CFF will continue to focus on the following to further develop the Initiative:

- Developing a (longer term) strategic plan including vision, mission, and goals as well as an action plan to serve shorter term objectives;
- Securing funding sources;
- Identifying potential supporters and partners; and
- Stakeholder Directory development

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 and Facebook group / page.

With kind regards,

Perry, Keleigh & Brooke

Your Connect for Food Team

