Introduction to sustainable food systems

Part 1 in the Sustainable Food Systems series

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RECORDING NOTICE: This webinar is recorded and will be made available to the general public on the HC Link website.
Introduction to Sustainable Food Systems

Healthy Food For All: Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems in Ontario
About the Sustainable Food Systems Webinar Series

- Part of a larger project – “Healthy Food for All: Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems for Ontario

- Webinar Series
  - Introduction to Sustainable Food Systems
  - Sustainable Food Systems in a Healthy Communities Framework
  - Organizing to Affect your Food System – Food Action and Policy Groups

- Developing and Sharing Resources and showcasing the expertise and experiences of communities currently building their local sustainable food systems

Healthy Food For All: Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems in Ontario
Webinar 1: Introduction to Sustainable Food Systems

- Definitions
- Food System
- Considerations and Measurement
- Resources

Our community presenter: Waterloo Region Food Systems Round Table.

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Sustainability – Various definitions but generally include the following ideas:

- Living within the limits
- Understanding the interconnections among economy, society, and environment
- Equitable distribution of resources and opportunities
- Element of Resilience
Sustainability Definitions

- “Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children.”
- origin unknown – often attributed to Indigenous lore
What does Unsustainability look like?

Environment:
- Pollution: soil, land, water degradation
- Lack of biodiversity

Social
- Health issues
- Community Collapse

Economic
- Lack of control of resources
- Poverty and food insecurity

Systemic Problem: embedded in social, economic, political system

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A Food System approach is about recognizing the connections:

- Holistic Approach
- Close the Loop for Sustainability
- Each aspect relates to the others
- Understanding how sustainability, equity, health and social expectations are managed in every stage
- Consideration of all stakeholders
- Highly collaborative supply chains
- Government/civic leadership results in policy development

http://www.fooddowntheroad.ca/

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Sustainable Food Systems

Production
- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Hunters/gatherers
- Community Gardens
- Backyard Gardens

Sustainability Issues
- Land use and access
- Transfer of skills – succession
- Cost of production
- Environmental practices
- Resource protection

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Sustainable Food System

### Processing
- Meat
- Dairy
- Fresh market
- Canning and Preserving
- Milling
- Secondary products:
  - Leather/Wool
  - Bone meal
  - Etc.

### Sustainability Issues
- Regulatory regime
- Food safety
- Economies of scale
- Distance to processing
- Global and redundant trade
- Transparency re: ingredients/production
- Skills and training

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Distribution
- Transportation is part of each food system aspect
- Food is transported globally
- Food Miles

Sustainability Issues
- Energy
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Transport infrastructure
- Access to markets
# Sustainable Food Systems

## Access
- Large supermarkets
- Neighbourhood food shops
- Farmers’ markets
- Farm gate
- Restaurants
- Food banks
- Backyard or Community Gardens

## Sustainability Issues
- Food desserts
- Healthy food
- Affordability of food/means to afford
- Food Insecurity

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Sustainable Food Systems

Consumption
- Nutrition
- Tradition/culture
- Seasonality
- Preparation
- Allergens

Sustainability Issues
- Health affects of poor nutrition
- Balanced diets
- Food quality
- Food skills
- Hunger

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Sustainable Food System

Waste

- 15-35% in the field
- Up to 15% in processing
- On average families throw out 15% of the food they buy.

Sustainability Issue

- Nutrient cycle
- Meeting increased demand
- Disposal risks
- High cost of disposal
- Environmental affects

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Sustainable Food Systems

“Sustainable food systems arise when agricultural producers and value chain partners thrive economically and employ environmentally sound practices, consumers of all socioeconomic levels have affordable access to healthy local and regional food and practitioners, policymakers and funders support enterprise-based food access solutions”

http://www.wallacecenter.org/

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Considerations on Increased Sustainability

- Change is required
- Continuum
  - Various stages
  - New idea, lack of data
- Measurable
  - Create a base line
  - Indicators
- Absolute
  - We are sustainable or not.
Consider:

- Food Systems Thinking
- Change by education and awareness
- Short-term cost vs. long-term benefits
- Critical points of leverage: air, water, land, health
- Government leadership – food policy development and economic models of growth
- New alliances and actions
- Fairness and equity

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Measure

- Farmland remains in production
- Minimize environmental affects – decreased air and water pollution – increase in forested areas
- Balanced energy production – energy in = energy out
- Health of individuals
- Size and diversity of farms and food businesses - succession
- Strength of regional economies
- Food democracy and choice – right to food
- Policy change and implementation
Sustainable Food Systems

- Vibrant, resilient communities
- Better health
- Improved Environment
- Equitable and sustained economic activity
- Increased Food Access

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Resources

- Sustain Ontario - http://sustainontario.com/
- Food Secure Canada – Sustainable Food Systems Network - http://foodsecurecanada.org/resources-news/events-calendar/local-sustainable-food-systems-network
THANK YOU

NEXT WEBINAR: FEBRUARY 27, 2014
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS IN A HEALTHY COMMUNITIES LENS