



## 1. Participants

Approximately 30 people joined in this teleconference presentation and discussion session. Participants called in from around the province, including St. John's, Marystown, Corner Brook, St. Anthony, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

## 2. Introduction

Kristie Jameson of the Food Security Network provided some introductory comments and information about the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador. Key points included:

- **A summary of the Food Security Network NL (FSN)** as a membership based not-for-profit organization with the mission to actively promote comprehensive, community based solutions to ensure physical and economic access to adequate and healthy food for all.
- **Food Security** exists when all people, at all times, have access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. Food Security means that the people who produce foods are able to earn a living wage.
- Food Security depends on a **healthy and sustainable food system**. The food system includes production, processing, distribution, marketing, acquisition and consumption of food. A healthy and sustainable food system is one that is focused around the health of the people, but also one that does not compromise the land, air, or water for future generations.

## 3. Panel Presentations

**Eugene Legge**, President of the [Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Agriculture](#) (NLFA), spoke about **Food Availability**. Some key points were:

- **About agriculture in NL:** Sales at the farm and processing levels are \$600 million per year, with 6200 people employed in the province with 600 farms and over 100 food manufacturers.
- **About the NLFA:** The NLFA represents farmers and farmers' groups in the province. Their motto is "farmers helping farmers". The NLFA's goal is the creation of a stronger, more vibrant agriculture industry in the province. The NLFA incorporates supply managed chicken, egg, and dairy producers. Benefits to NLFA members includes advocacy, networking opportunities, and discounting. The NLFA educates consumers and the public with the Jacob book series, it's website ([www.nlfa.ca](http://www.nlfa.ca)), newsletters, and tradeshow.
- **Dairy:** There are currently 33 registered dairy farms ranging from 25 to 1100 cows (average 144). NL farmers produce over 50 million litres of milk per year. The province is self sufficient in fluid milk, and exports milk to be processed into dairy products. One local processor has just started a cheese plant.
- The **egg industry** in NL has six registered producers ranging from 6,000 to 75,000 chickens.
- NL has the largest **chicken** farm in Canada, and 75% of the fresh market in the province is supplied by NL chicken farmers. The province produces 9 million chickens per year.

- **Horticultural:** in 2006 NL farmers grew vegetables valued at \$6 million, including 180,000 quarts of Strawberries, 270,000 pounds of blueberries, and 8 million pounds of cabbage, turnip, and potatoes.
- The Provincial Government has stepped in and is trying to start a **branding** so that people will identify NL products. It's called the "Best Kind" brand.
- There are 2,500 **cattle** slaughtered in the province every year, mostly in western Newfoundland. This only provides 5% of the beef consumed locally.
- The **pork** industry consists of only two local farmers. Pork production in the province has gone down drastically since the mid 1970's when there was a processing plant in St. John's.
- **Sheep** production was valued at \$542,000 last year. Sheep have decreased from over 100,000 animals before confederation to a low of around 4,000 now. The decline is due to roaming dogs, changes in the livestock act and reduced consumption. Spin off industries are wool and hide. This is a great province for growing sheep on marginal land - we have a lot of marginal land.
- There is **opportunity for growth** in many areas. NL only produced 2.2% of its Broccoli consumption a few years back, but is now up to 8.5 %. Carrots have moved from 4.1% to 14.4%. In 1987 we grew 4.6% of the potatoes we consume and now we grow to 5.5%. An average size potato farm in PEI grows more potatoes than all of NL, so we have nowhere to go but up.
- The province is also increasing its production of **value added** things such as jam and wine.
- The average age of **farmers** is high, with few new entrants getting into the industry. Farmers only get 27% of what you pay in the store, on average. Farming today requires a substantial upfront investment (\$800,000 for land clearing, equipment, barns, etc. to farm at any commercial size). Feed costs are high, and most implements are brought into the province. Getting access to land is difficult for new farmers.

**Annette Stapenhorst** spoke about **Food Access and Peoples' Right to Food**. Some key points were:

- **Economics:** Poverty - a lack of money to buy healthy food - is the biggest access issue. Food bank visitations have not decreased since 1997. The collapse in the fishery, as well as the recent global economic crisis, has destroyed livelihoods which has hurt peoples' economic access to food. **Healthy foods have a high cost** in remote regions.
- **Geographic:** The population density here is such that we need to look at community based solutions. We need a lot more innovation experimentation and diversity. Rural NL is drowning in junk food, which has a long shelf life, but with major health problems. There are transportation issues to getting healthy food to rural NL. The food fishery is very limited, and hunting and wild cropping is becoming more limited.
- **Climactic:** Climate change is having an impact on our food production. The fragility of monoculture and industrial production is something that we have to be cognizant of in terms of ensuring long term sustainability and food security. **The loss of water** is prohibiting production in more and more areas of the world and is a problem as well.
- **Physical:** Privatization of the commons is an issue. Our First Nations are trying to reclaim some communal approach to food production in some areas. We need a balance between industrial production and a community approach.
- **The loss of productive land:** Small farmers are disappearing. Those that are successful are much larger. This change is being driven by provincial, federal and international policy. There is very little arable land in urban areas. Just 2 generations ago every household had a kitchen garden which contributed to some level of self sufficiency. Some developments at the community garden level aim to address that and increase food production in urban areas.

- **Knowledge and Skills:** The market focuses on consumption and provides convenience to the consumer but there are fewer opportunities to learn about food and food production. There are such rapid changes in the food system that people don't even recognize some foods in the store anymore. There has been a **loss of skills** as well as personal empowerment. The market does not push healthy food, but is only concerned with profit.
- **Cultural:** There is recognition in international law of the rights of indigenous people to determine their own food producing recourses and processes in their community, but our government has not signed on to this declaration. Some of our first nations are trying to reclaim some of the ancestral resource bases. People have to reconnect to food at every level. There is currently a national process to develop a [People's Food Policy](#).

**Stephanie Buckle**, Regional Nutritionist with Western Health, spoke about **Food Use** and Community Kitchens:

- **Community kitchens** have been around for many years, in all regions of the province. They are an important tool for nutrition education.
- Nutritionists are concerned about Food Security because access to **healthy food is essential** for good nutrition. 10 % of people in NL experience **food insecurity** and we have the highest provincial per capita rate of food bank use.
- Canadians who are food insecure are more likely to have multiple **chronic conditions** such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.
- Consumers today are less skilled in various aspects of food and nutrition such as food selection when shopping, getting the most value for food dollar, cooking, and food storage & preservation. The **deskilling of food** has an impact on the cost of eating, nutrition, health, environment, and the cultural enjoyment of food.
- There is a shift away from **family meals** which is significant because there is a strong association between the frequency of family meals and the quality of dietary intake among children and adolescents. There is also a deskilling in the area of breast feeding.
- **Community Kitchens** consist of a group of people who get together to cook healthy low cost nutritious meals. Community Kitchens feed the stomach and nourish the soul. Members can take home the food, or they can share it together. Participants learn about shopping for food (budgeting), cooking, get to try new foods.
- Over the last two years **Western Health** has provided financial support for people to start up community kitchens. They provide money for food supplies as well as some start up costs (equipment), and in-servicing to the facilitators. Western Health provides the handbook, "healthy recipes" which focuses on healthy eating with Canada's food guide.
- Western Health supports the community kitchens by helping them with finding members, finding a location, and with how to run the first group meeting. The Community Kitchens are evaluated to determine if the funding has met their needs, if the kitchens are sustainable, and if there is any change in the participants' knowledge and skills around healthy eating.