

Farm 2 Fork

This annual newsletter has been created as an update for individuals who have interacted with this suite of research projects as an interviewee, advisor or interested citizen. I welcome your feedback or questions. If you received this indirectly and would like to be added to the "subscription" list, please email c_anderson@umanitoba.ca

University of Manitoba - Environmental Conservation Lab - September 1, 2008

Video: Food For Thought, Food For Change

Learn about the process of this participatory video.



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The Local Food Movement Moves!

Read about the launch of the Harvest Moon Society Local Food Initiative



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Heartland Quality Foods

A profile of a burgeoning cooperative food marketing group based out of Kamloops, B.C.



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Road Tripping... Western Canada

3 Travel Companions, over 5000 Kilometers, 18 interviews and 3 Provinces all in 12 days in a Hyundai Accent loaded to the gills.

On June 21st, we embarked on a voyage across a sea of prairies through to the beautiful Kootenays and back again. The commitment required by such a journey is by no means a small one and I was lucky enough to have the company of 2 colleagues and friends along the way.

The purpose of this project is to explore alternative food networks through the eyes of those on the front lines. With a particular focus on direct marketing and collective farmer marketing efforts, we "snowball" sampled 18 farmers and community organizers involved in a diversity of farm operations and collective action. We visited each individual or family along the way and by luck or, more accurately, because of the hospitality and flexibility of all 18 research participants, we strung together

a tight twelve days of interviews with little distance wasted in-between. Further interviews have been conducted in and around Vancouver, Victoria and Kamloops.

I plan to follow up with research participants over the next two years to gain a longitudinal (study over time) perspective on each initiative. The interviews this summer were filled with rich stories and important insights however represent only a snapshot in time. While interesting and extremely useful in-of-themselves, followup interviews will help understand the effects of changing market and regulatory conditions, what barriers initiatives come across and how these organizations and/or enterprises evolve over time. Further participation will, of course, be optional and will likely be conducted over the phone in the winter time.



Dave Vasey, Colin Anderson, Keith Huscroft and Chris Barkman near Creston, British Columbia

Thank You

I am grateful to all of the participants in this research project for your generosity and hospitality along the way. Check out www.farmtoforkresearch.com for pictures and more details about this journey.

Participatory Documentary Video

“With over 6000 minutes captured, we will begin sorting through video starting in September. Ultimately we plan on (painstakingly) slimming the video to a 45 minute documentary video.”

— Colin



Our aim is to simultaneously conduct research and affect positive change in the community through the creation of a video that is widely accessible and disseminated broadly in Canada and beyond. Unlike a conventional documentary, this video will be directed by a Participatory Video Committee (PVC) comprised of both farmers and urban citizens. The PVC will collectively craft the video.

Ultimately, the video will be distributed to farmers, farm organizations, eaters, politicians, other Local Food Initiatives and be available for download from the web.

The PVC is made up of individuals who are, in their day-to-day lives, immersed in the subject material of the video. The participation of the PVC in the video development process will facilitate a more accurate and authentic portrayal of the subject material. In this research-based video, questions and methods will be developed in collaboration with the PVC in an iterative fashion (i.e. they will evolve as new information comes to light) and provide the basis for the documentary video. This collaborative and participatory approach helps ensure that the results will be of most benefit to the community. Indeed, the

main intended beneficiaries of this research are communities and individuals working to build strong local food economies that support rural renewal, increase food sovereignty and build community.

Ultimately, the message and content of the video will emerge from the voices of the interview participants and be constructed by consensus between PVC members. This will occur through successive cycles of planning, collecting video and reflecting on the captured video. A near-final draft of the video will be presented to the research participants featured in the video to gain feedback and make adjustments - another participatory element of the video. Final outcomes will include one 45 documentary videos and a number of short videos.

PVC Members
Clint Cavers Farmer
Pam Cavers Farmer
Colin Anderson Ex-rural citizen, researcher
Stephane McLachlan Urban citizen, researcher
Ian Mauro Urban citizen, film maker
Jay Permanand + Randy Frykas Video Editors



Top: Mark Lane and Colin near Regina, SK. **Middle:** Colin and Dave Vasey in Pincher Creek, AB. **Bottom:** Colin and Jon Steinman in Nelson, BC.

Farm Level Adaptation to Mad Cow Disease



This study involved a large-scale prairie wide mail-out survey, individual interviews and focus groups. One of the key findings in this study was the discovery a new set of categories of farm household adaptation to change. Most of the current adaptation research focuses on climate change and tends to be theoretical by nature. By using BSE as a case study, we were able to explore farm-level adaptation to market related crisis. We found that farm-level responses to the BSE crisis can be separated into one of three categories: Innovating, Enduring or Exiting. Off-farm income was also an important response to BSE. Direct-marketing was one innovative response to BSE that will be explored throughout the remainder of this research. By reducing the number of steps between the farmer and consumer, many farmers hope to realize a greater profit. The proportion of animals marketed directly to consumers at retail or near-retail prices are less vulnerable to market failures such as those experienced as a result of BSE (retail prices were relatively unaffected by BSE).

The Launch of A Food Group Who's Your Farmer?



On September 13, 2008 the Harvest Moon Local Food Initiative (HMSLFI) will introduce Manitoba to a line of local, natural products - good food grown by good people. My action research project with the HMSLFI will make up the second empirical chapter of my PhD thesis. We, as a group, have been gearing up towards this "launch" which is the culmination of 2 years worth of monthly meetings, committee meetings and the countless hours of "sweat equity" invested by farmers and urban citizens alike.

This September marks an important moment in this action research project. I intend to thoroughly document the events surrounding the launch both visually and through interview methods. In all of my travels this summer, I did not encounter any initiatives that have been so successful in bringing together farmers from the diverse range of production practices as those existing within the HMSLFI. I believe this is an important model for a farm population that is often divided amongst themselves by commodity group, farm size or quality distinctions such as organic/non-organic or natural/not natural.

This will also be the moment when theory is tested in practice. How will the urban/rural or farm/fork interactions play out in real life? Can we all get along? Are we all on the same page? Read chapter 2 in Colin's thesis to find out!

Eater and Farmer Perceptions of Local Food in Manitoba



This spring and summer, we have collected over 500 surveys at retail stores, farmers markets and the Growing Local, Getting Vocal conference in Winnipeg.

These "consumer" survey results will be combined with over thirty interviews and a focus group with retailers, farmers and eaters to compare perceptions and motivations of multiple stakeholders in Manitoba's local food system.

Thank you to all survey participants and expect to see results posted on www.farmtoforkresearch.com in 2009.



Colin Anderson (left) is the graduate student coordinating these research efforts as a part of his doctoral research. Stephane McLachlan (right) is Colin's advisor and the coordinator of the Environmental Conservation Laboratory at the University of Manitoba.



Profile: Heartland Quality Foods

Heartland Quality Foods (HQF), based out of Kamloops B.C., is the product of over two years of hard work by a dedicated group of farmers community activists. This summer, I was met with 3 of the farm families who sell product through HQF as well as Marla and Andrea who have played a key role in the day-to-day affairs, promotion and organization for the group.

The issues faced by this nascent cooperative are striking similar to those faced by the Harvest Moon Society Local Food Initiative (HMSLFI) in Manitoba and others across the country. HQF, in one regard, is a step ahead of Harvest Moon in that they have retail and cold storage space in Kamloops. Where HMSLFI have been developing ideas and working on a business plan for almost two years, HQF took a different approach by starting to sell products much earlier in the life of their cooperative and adjusting to challenges along the way. It

will be interesting to watch these two initiatives grow and compare the two approaches over time.

Despite having thriving direct marketing businesses, the members of HQF are committed to the success of the collective effort. They are driven by a desire to create sustainable agro-food systems with a commitment to developing a healthy local food system for this and the next generation of eaters and farmers. The similarities in motivations and experiences between HQF and the other collective marketing organizations was astonishing. There is certainly much learning and collaboration that could take place between these groups and individuals. I hope to facilitate this through my research.

One of the greatest challenges faced by both individual and collective direct marketers is to make their foodstuffs accessible and convenient to customers. HQF has experimented with a boxed food program, deliveries to restaurants and has opened a small retail outlet in a building that also houses a cold storage business. Despite being affordable and being located next to a cold storage business (essential to a perishable food distribution company), the location is somewhat “off the beaten path” and it is difficult to draw consumers in. Yet, two or three customers dropped in to the store when I was visiting with Andrea Gunner.

Owning retail space rather than selling wholesale allows collective marketing groups to capture more of the value out of the food chain and delivers food to consumers in a convenient and familiar way. However, managing a retail store is expensive and requires a diverse set of skills.

The momentum and early success of HQF left me hopeful and excited. The parallel emergence of similar alternative food networks across the country is indicative of a growing discontent with the status quo and a sign that we are on the right track.



Tristan Cavers - Corn Grower Extraordinaire



Top: Ian and Anya Mitchell. **Bottom:** Allison Linklater.