



THE GROWING UP ORGANIC PROJECT

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FOREWARD:

The following report was done by Canadian Organic Growers (COG) to explore ways to increase the amount of locally grown organic food served in Canada's institutions. Our initial results indicate that there is an interest in and support for the development of such a project. However, there is a lack of coordination among interested groups. COG has decided to take on this coordination role and to develop the tools necessary to help interested groups initiate organic farm-to-institution programs in their communities.

Organic farm-to-institution food programs promote alternatives to traditional methods of agricultural production and distribution and thereby enhance regional and local food security. This report will explore what COG and its Chapter and/or Partners can do to develop institutions procurement programs for local organic food. In the first part of the report, we outline some of the policy barriers to implementing farm-to-institution programs. The rest of the report explores some of the models that can be used to facilitate farm-to-institution purchases. Many of the methods we examined exist only at a small scale and in isolation (one area of the country). However, we believe that some of these models could be scaled up for institutional procurement purposes in many communities across the country.

We anticipate that this report will be used as a starting point by our Chapters and/or Partners to begin the dialogue on how to start implementing organic farm-to-institution programs in their area. We recognize that every part of the country is different with different opportunities and challenges. For example, in some regions, the largest issues may be on the supply side, while other areas may have enough organic producers, but distribution or access to institutions is difficult. As more pilot-projects are developed, we will be able to assess whether the tools we have developed are effective or whether they need to be modified to deal with unforeseen challenges. At the end of this three year trial period, we will compile and analyze the results of the regional pilot-projects and publish our recommendations about how organic farm-to-institution programs can be developed across the country.

PART 1: MOTIVATION FOR THIS PROJECT:

Our current food system is unsustainable. This is due in large part to the fact that is based upon an industrial agricultural production model that seeks only to produce abundant and inexpensive food with little regard for the social and environmental consequences. In fact, in Canada, 98.5% of all farms are using industrial agricultural practices. Less than 1.5% of all farms are using alternative farming methods, representing under 1% of agricultural land. To make our food system sustainable, we have to stop trying to mitigate the impacts of the industrial food model and simply adopt a more sustainable production and distribution system. This idea is not new¹ and in some jurisdictions, efforts are being made to implement new models².

COG is interested shifting Canada towards increased organic production. There are numerous benefits to such a shift including: improved ecosystem services related to soil and water quality and quantity, energy utilization, wildlife habitat, climate change mitigation, and rural economic revitalization and the development of sustainable food systems that ensure the food security of all Canadians.

1 Hill, Stuart B. and MacRae, Rod J., 199x. Organic farming in Canada. Agr. Ecosys. Env., 39; pp.71-84.

Also NFU policy on sustainable agriculture, available: <http://www.nfu.ca/>

2 MacRae, Rod J et. al.. Policies, programs and regulations to support the transition to sustainable agriculture in Canada, available: <http://eap.mcgill.ca/publications/eap109.htm>

Also MacRae, Rod et.al., 2002. A National Strategic Plan for the Canadian Organic Food and Farming Sector, available: <http://www.organiccentre.ca/reportfinal.pdf>

To bring about this shift, COG has decided to focus on developing farm-to-institution programs based on local organic food systems. There are three main reasons why we have decided to focus on this. First, farm-to-institution programs help build relationships between farmers and institutions making them active participants in the local food system and direct contributors to local food security. Secondly, since there are no middle-men in this type of program, farmers are more likely to receive a greater portion of the institution's food dollar thereby increasing their annual farm income and securing their livelihood. Finally, institutions, as opposed to individual consumers, have enormous purchasing power and the potential to bring about large scale positive change in production and consumption patterns in a relatively short time frame. In addition, organic farm-to-institution programs provide an opportunity to address some of the broader social health issues related to poor nutrition and exposure to agricultural chemicals.

In a letter addressed to the Canadian Medical Association³, Auer et al. stated that 'beginning in childhood, we eat more frequently, we eat to the point of saturation and we eat more calorie-dense foods'. According to the authors, this is the major contributing factor to the increase in the number of cases of childhood obesity and may underlie our society's epidemic of cancer. In addition, children are at particular risk to chemicals through their diets because they consume more food per kilogram of body mass than adults and because their diets are rich in foods with higher levels of pesticide residues such as juices, fruits and vegetables. Children are more vulnerable to the effects of these chemicals because of their developing nervous systems and because they have a longer lifespan over which to accumulate toxins. A study by the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences in the US in 2005⁴ examined the role of dietary exposure to agricultural chemicals on the health of children. The urinary metabolites of malathion and chlopyrifos were examined in 23 children between the ages of 3 and 11. The analysis was done with children on a conventional diet and after their diet was switched to 100% organic for five days. Immediately after the switch, concentrations of the metabolites decreased to non-detectable levels. The authors concluded that the chemical exposure likely came from the conventional diet and that this could be reversed by an organic diet. Farm-to-institution programs, by providing access to fresh, organic and local produce, create an opportunity for children to learn about healthy foods and healthy eating behaviors.

In summary, COG is interested in exploring ways to develop and implement organic farm-to-institution programs as a way to achieve sustainable, bioregionally-based, organic food systems which protect and enhance the environment and rural communities while offering consumers, particularly children and opportunity to eat healthier, less toxic food.

PART 2: RECRUITING FARMERS FOR TRANSITION:

While developing relationships with the few farmers who are already certified organic, not certified but using organic practices or who have already initiated the transition process will be critical for the short term viability of this project, long term viability will depend on our ability to identify and recruit a new group of farmers. There are two potential pools of farmers that we can target to help us deal with the organic production shortfall. These include the conventional farmers who are already farming using industrial methods and the new farmer who is either a young person starting a career in agriculture or a

3 Auer, R. et al, 2001. Obesity in Canadian children, CMAL; 164 (11)

4 Lu, C., Toepel, K., Irish, R., Fenske, R.A., Barr, D.B. and Bravo, R., 2005. Organic diets significantly lower children's dietary exposure to organophosphorus pesticides, Environmental Health Perspectives.

career changer who is moving into agriculture.

For the organic farm-to-institution programs to be successful, we are going to require an assortment of fresh food, including fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy. We are also going to need processed foods based on grains and dairy. To meet these requirements, we are going to need both conventional and new farmers. Conventional farmers in the transition process can supply us with some of these products (e.g. meat, processed grain), but for other products, especially vegetables, we suspect that we are not going to have much success convincing conventional market gardeners to transition to organic production methods. The reasons for this are complex and relate to the very different management practices required in organic market gardens, the higher labour requirements on organic farmers and the relatively low organic premium for vegetables. Therefore, for commodities such as vegetables, we believe that it would be more strategic to focus our efforts on the new farmer who is better able to adapt to these conditions.

Recruitment and training programs for these two types of farmer must reflect the needs of these two very different groups. Offering farmers access to new markets is not enough to convince them to transition. When writing our book on the transition process (*Gaining Ground: Making a Successful Transition to Organic Farming*), COG undertook some research to uncover the factors that motivate farmers to transition from industrial to organic methods as well as the factors that would prevent them from transitioning. Our research suggested that with a key challenge for conventional farmers is shifting their brain to a new way of thinking and imparting new technical skills not used in conventional farming. New farmers, on the other hand, do not need to unlearn old habits, but they do need to acquire farming skills. Another significant issue for the new farmer is access to land. Recruitment and training programs for these two types of farmer will be described in more detail in a later section. However, before getting there, we would like to look at ways governments could support the transition process.

PART 3: GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR TRANSITION:

Rod McRae recently analyzed what other countries were doing to support transition to organic agriculture⁵. He found that countries with governments that intervened in the organic sector through policy and program development have significantly more organic farmers and more acres under transition.

The European Union (EU), for example is one of the few jurisdictions with a detailed action plan for the promotion of organic farming. The plan integrates both supply (push) and demand (pull) measures. Many EU member states have developed their own national action plans. The goal of the EU action plan, as well as that of its member states, is to increase the size of the organic sector because of the public benefits that result. The action plans generally commit millions of dollars in public funds to implementation and normally include targets for adoption (typically 5-10% by 2000/2005 or 10-20% by 2010), direct financial support through the agri-environment / rural development programs; marketing and processing support; research and extension service support; consumer education and infrastructure support. A typical mix is 50% of expenditures for direct payments and 50% for a host of other training and infrastructure related supports. Some action plans focus more on demand-side interventions (e.g. the Netherlands), others on building information support systems for all players in

5 MacRae, R, 2003. How Governments Successfully Support the Development of Organic Agriculture in Other Jurisdictions, 45 p.

the organic food chain (e.g. Germany), and others on increasing supply (e.g. England and Wales).

Outside of the EU, no other countries have undertaken such an integrated approach to policy and program development. While some countries like the United States (US) have regulated organic production standards and have provided some funding for marketing support as well as research and extension service support, they have not developed a formal action plan.

Many countries, both in the EU and outside of the EU, have also enacted or reformed regulations outside of their agricultural and rural development policies to facilitate the large scale transition of farmers to organic agriculture. Many of these countries have enacted or reformed public procurement policies that encourage institutions to develop and implement sustainable food procurement. A sustainable food procurement policy requires institutions to commit to buy, when available, food items that were produced in a socially just and environmentally sustainable manner. For many of the common purchases institutions make, alternatives now exist that are less resource-intensive and less harmful to human and environmental health than their conventional counterparts. By choosing to practice sustainable procurement, institutions can mitigate the impacts of their consumerism and contribute to greater food system sustainability⁶.

In the following section, we examine how European countries like Denmark, Italy and Austria as well as North American countries like the US have promoted the transition to organic agriculture through agricultural and public procurement policies. In the case of the US, it also looks at how other policies, namely community development and health and nutrition policies, have contributed to a greater awareness of and support for small-scale farming and organic agriculture. We then take a look at the situation in Canada in order to identify what still needs to be done in terms of policy development to implement successful national policies and programs to support widespread adoption of organic agriculture.

3.2.1 Denmark

In the early 1990's, most of the EU's agricultural policies were governed by free trade principles. By the late 1990's however, the EU was on the precipice of massive policy reform as many member states were openly questioning such policies and began to push for a greater integrating of environmental and sustainable development objectives into EU policies. In 1997, at the Amsterdam Summit⁷, the EU member states made an official commitment to integrate social, economic and environmental objectives into all EU policies to promote sustainable development.

Changes to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) created a new environment that no longer favored intensive agriculture and an increasing use of fertilizers and pesticides, but rather agricultural practices that would provide environmental services to protect the countryside. This shift in the EU's CAP along with the introduction of other regulations promoting greater integration of environmental considerations into day-to-day operations opened the door for the promotion and financial support of organic agriculture. Policy makers began to see organic agriculture production, when coupled with a local distribution and consumption model, as a strategic tool not only for attaining agricultural policy goals, but also for attaining wider socio-economic and environmental policy goals.

6 Mastny, L., 2003. Worldwatch Institute Paper #166: Purchasing Power: harnessing institutional procurement for people and the planet. Worldwatch Institute, 72 p.

7 (see Treaty of the European Union, article 6 for more detail)

Denmark was one of the first EU countries to realize this and it developed a national support program for the transition to organic agriculture even before the EU had officially developed any common framework or regulatory base for such a program. According to Denmark's government, the best way to get farmers to adopt organic farming practices was not through a regulatory approach, but rather through market demand. To this end, Denmark funded national marketing campaigns to increase consumer awareness of the benefits of organic products and to increase consumer confidence in the organic label. As demand rose, farmers began to see that by transitioning to organic agriculture, they could tap into this new and growing market and increase their profits. Denmark supported these farmers through the transition process by providing them with a public subsidy as well as by increasing funding for organic research and advisory services. The public subsidy was often used by farmers to cover the costs of training and transitioning their land, but was meant to compensate them for the social and environmental services they would be providing to society by adopting organic farming practices.

The next major development in Denmark's national support program came after the EU reformed its public procurement policy. The original policy was based on two key principles: transparency and non-discrimination. Transparency relates to how a public contract is publicized and how tenders are assessed. Non-discrimination relates to the idea that the public authority awarding the contract must not be biased towards domestic businesses. To safeguard against this, the original policy did not allow public authorities to request specific production methods in the contract. After reform, the policy allowed public authorities to assess bidders on the basis of the production methods they use. This gave them the opportunity to choose bidders whose goods and/or services were 'environmentally-friendly' and not just 'cheap'. Denmark took advantage of these policy reforms to expand its national marketing campaign from individual consumers to public and private institutions. It provided funding, through the national support program, for the campaign as well as directly to some of the institutions to allow them to purchase organic food.

From Denmark's experience, it is possible to see that market development measures can have significant positive impacts when market conditions are not optimal. For example even though Denmark's consumers are not as health conscious as Germany's, organic products have a larger market share, likely as a result of government intervention and retailer supports. Where consumption of organic food is extremely price sensitive, as it is in institutions, policy measures affecting price premiums - such as subsidies to organic products or production - will be highly effective at increasing consumption of organic foods⁸.

3.2.2 Italy

Once the EU passed legislation that promoted and supported the transition to organic agriculture, other EU countries quickly began to follow in Denmark's footsteps. Unfortunately, not all of them enjoyed the same degree of success as Denmark. The main reason was that many of them did not take or were not yet able to take an integrated policy approach to organic agriculture. They dealt with organic agriculture solely within the confines of agricultural policy and not within the greater socio-economic and environmental context. As a result, their transition rates were lower and many are not yet in a position to move into public procurement. The one exception is Italy.

Italy's approach to supporting the transition to organic agriculture was initially not as integrated and structured as Denmark's, but is now becoming increasingly so. Despite this, Italy was able to enjoy a

8 MacRae, R, 2003. How Governments Successfully Support the Development of Organic Agriculture in Other Jurisdictions, 45 p.

high transition rate to organic agriculture. This was mainly because it began tapping into the public procurement sector early on. In fact, before the EU had even reformed its public procurement policy, Italy had been lawfully circumventing it in a number of ways. To understand how it did this, consider the case of academic institutions. Italy, like France, has a strong local food culture and in its policies it assigned meals the function of conserving local food traditions. This allowed Italy to overcome the principle of non-discrimination by saying that it was necessary to incorporate 'typical and traditional' foods in the menus and that only local operators could know what the local consumers' tastes were in the various parts of the country. Also, it claimed that local operators were best able to adapt to changes in consumer tastes and have this reflected in institutional menus in a timely manner. Secondly, it incorporated broader educational programs into the meal services. This allowed Italy to retain complete control over the food service provider and modify the terms of service in the contract in order to have them comply with the wider educational programs. Finally, Italy made it clear that when it came to food, 'best value' was not the same as 'lowest cost'. This allowed Italy to assess bidders on criteria other than price.

Today, Italy is the EU country with the most organic acres in terms of total land area⁹. Also, many of its kindergartens and schools now serve organic foods. Much of the impetus for the transition to organic agriculture came from the municipal level. Local authorities, in the late 1980s, were concerned with health and nutritional issues related to diet and began to experiment with the introduction of organic and traditional menus in school food services. They could either convert the entire food service system or adapt just some of the school menus (some in a short time-frame, others in a more gradual approach). For example, the Cesena city council in the Emilia Romagna region started a project named "Pappamondo" in 1986. The purpose of the project was to introduce an organic Mediterranean diet in school cafeterias. As the project gained in popularity over the years it led to the adoption of a national law in 2000 that required the use of organic ingredients in the cafeterias of public schools and hospitals. Public funding then became available to qualifying institutions for the purchase of organic foods as well as for education and training of cafeteria staff. The funding helped facilitate and accelerate the widespread adoption of the organic Mediterranean diet in the cafeterias of public schools and hospitals around the country. Some regional governments provided additional funding for the transition. For example, in 2002, the Tuscan regional government introduced legislation to promote the consumption of local organic products and provided nearly 3 million Euros over 3 years for procurement of this nature. Individual institutions could qualify for up to 70% of costs if they converted at least 50% of their menus¹⁰.

From Italy's experience, it is possible to see that in some cases institutions can change their purchasing practices towards more organic items without financial support from the state. However, the widespread adoption of organic consumption practices is undoubtedly facilitated and accelerated by national policy and funding.

3.2.3 Austria

An Austrian case study provides some evidence that institutions can convert some of their purchases to organic without any substantial increases in cost¹¹. Austria found that organic foods, in most product categories except out of season vegetables and fruits and some processed foods, could be sold in

9 Rohner-Thielen, E., 2005. Organic Farming in Europe, 7 p.

10 Morgan, K. and Morley, A., 2002. Relocalising The Food Chain: The Role of Creative Public Procurement, 89p.

11 MacRae, R., 2003. How Governments Successfully Support the Development of Organic Agriculture in Other Jurisdictions, 45 p.

Vienna hospitals and that with skillful purchasing and accounting for seasonal and regional variability, cost increases were far lower than anticipated. By implementing measures aimed at reducing material losses and slightly reducing portion sizes of things like meat, they were able to reduce the cost differential between organic and conventional. The study also found that the labour costs associated with increasing the use of raw unprocessed food were lower than those associated with convenience items. They found that it was possible to increase the share of organic products to 30% for industrial kitchens without any substantial increases in costs if:

- meat cooking was closely matched to the quality of the cuts;
- meat portions were reduced by 20 to 30 grams;
- servings of vegetables and fruit were based on seasonal availability.

Similar results were found for some senior's homes and for a small purchasing group supplying a few senior's homes, hospitals, a fire brigade and a vocation school.

The case study also provided the following lessons for increasing the organic share of institutional menus:

- (a) Planning must be done jointly with kitchen staff, administration, labour, dietary services, and teaching staff.
- (b) Start gradually by using uncomplicated organic products, which will build trust in the quality of organic products and to allow for consistency in supply.
- (c) Give preference to regional food that can be easily supplied.
- (d) It is all about seasons, for vegetables, some fruits and even meat.
- (e) Introduce organic components step by step - it's more practical to introduce organic components in all the dishes on the menu, rather than create entire "organic menus".
- (f) Measures to reduce costs when putting organic products on the menu:
 - buy seasonally;
 - replace individual menu components;
 - offer inexpensive meat stews and vegetarian dishes;
 - reduce the size of meat portions in favour of vegetables and side-dishes;
 - substitute meat cuts based on what is most available organically;
 - do not only use the expensive cuts;
 - use expensive convenience products very selectively.

3.2.4 United States (US)

Outside of the EU, similar trends towards the transition to organic agriculture can be observed. In the US for example, organic agriculture was one of the fastest growing segments of US agriculture in the 1990s¹². This was in large part facilitated by the Organic Food Production Act of 1990 which established organic production standards as well as certification programs, but also by a number of initiatives happening outside of the department of agriculture. These initiatives were essentially coming from groups who had been approaching food system sustainability from the perspective of distribution as well as from groups who were worried about children's health and nutrition. To illustrate how the different groups were converging to affect policies, consider what was going on in the City of San Francisco, California at that time:

In 1997, a local team of 22 key stakeholders drafted a Sustainability Plan for the City and County of San Francisco that included a chapter on food and agriculture. As part of its plan, one objective

12 NASDA Policy Statement on Organic Agriculture, 2003.

stipulated that by the year 2002, 25% of all produce purchased by government institutions, schools, restaurants, and other food-related establishments would come from sustainable Bay Area sources, while at least 70% of the rest would be acquired from other California sources. On a state level, Governor Gray Davis launched a new “Buy California” campaign to support California agriculture. Federally, the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Services Division initiated a “Small Farms/School Meals Initiative” in 1997 to encourage small farmers to sell fresh fruits and vegetables to school and schools to buy wholesome produce from small farmers. Most recently, Section 4303 of the 2002 Farm Bill encourages institutions participating in the school lunch and breakfast programs to purchase locally produced foods, to the maximum extent practicable¹³.

As was the case in Italy, much of the impetus for the transition to organic agriculture came from the local level, but this was supported by policy and funding from higher levels of government. For example, consider the US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) *Small Farms/School Meals Initiative*. In the US, 94% of all farms are small or limited-resource farms. They provide, on average, a net income of only \$23,159 per year. Their potential to generate income has been restricted in part by depressed farm-gate prices for many bulk agricultural commodities and recent reductions in traditional crop subsidies¹⁴. Therefore, the direct sale of fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, and other high-value agricultural products to local school districts is being promoted by the USDA as an opportunity to provide an important source of income generation for such small farm operations, sometimes without substantial additional investment in infrastructure and equipment.

To facilitate the implementation of the program at the farm level, the federal and state governments designed a number of financial and logistical support programs to help small farmers and food processors gain access to the local school food service market. In terms of financial support, the governments typically provide funding to form and develop farmer-owned marketing co-operatives as well as to conduct market research. According to their experience, co-operatives can offer small farmers significant advantages when they attempt to market their farm products to local school food service and other institutional clients. Co-operatives can enable small farm operators to better leverage their limited financial resources as well relieve them of some of the burdens associated with taking care of all aspects of production, contracting and marketing. Moreover, institutional buyers prefer to work with one local business entity, as opposed to several independent firms and feel as though a group of small farmers is more likely to deliver the desired volume, quality, and consistency of merchandise than an individual small farm. In terms of logistical support, the governments have allowed farmers participating in the farm-to-school program to tap into existing meal programs, like the national school lunch program and the school breakfast program. The USDA purchases roughly 20 percent of the food items used in the national school lunch program, while school districts themselves are responsible for purchasing the remaining 80 percent. While many of the USDA’s purchases are conducted using strict competitive bidding processes, some are explicitly designed to increase the participation of small, minority-owned, or economically disadvantaged businesses as suppliers to the programs.

To facilitate the implementation of the program at the institutional level, federal and state governments modified some of their regulations to facilitate institutional procurement of local food items. The federal government also provided some financial support to organizations such as the Center for Food & Justice (CFJ), a division of the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College in

13 San Francisco Food System Council, 2002. Background on farm-to-school program, 4 p, available: http://www.farmtoschool.org/ca/sf_f2sbackground.pdf

14 USDA, 2000. How local Farmers and school food service providers are building alliances, 40 p, available: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/MSB/PDFpubList/localfarmsandschool.pdf>

Los Angeles, California, and the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) in Santa Fe, New Mexico so that they could develop tools to help school districts from across the country set up farm-to-school programs.

According to a review of existing farm-to-school programs published by the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service (ATTRA), the initial phase of program implementation is typically the most time consuming¹⁵. It involves education and outreach work, several face-to-face meetings and may even require the purchase of processing, storage, or distribution equipment. Food advisory committee or program coordinator can facilitate this initial phase. A food advisory committee usually includes farmers, food purchasers for the school, kitchen personnel, school board members as well as representatives from any coordinating organization. The food advisory committee's main role is to guide program development which could include examining logistical and management concerns, identifying potential sources of funding and hiring a program coordinator. Specific steps used to implement a farm-to-school program will differ from one state to the next and from one situation to another.

From the US experience, it is important to note that the farmers participating in the farm-to-school program are not necessarily organic farmers, nor is there necessarily any pressure put on them to adopt organic farming practices. The US model builds upon existing programs and resources to increase opportunities for all small-scale farmers.

3.2.5 Canada

3.2.5.1 Federal government

Unlike the EU and the US, Canada only recently passed an organic regulation to enforce organic production standards and it does not have programs to support the transition to organic agriculture. In recent years however, it has provided some funding for strategic planning and for organic agriculture research.

In terms of public procurement, the Federal Government has a commitment to sustainable development and thus, to buying 'environmentally-friendly' products. However, the 'green'¹⁶ procurement policy, enacted in April 2006, does not appear to extend to food items.

3.2.5.2 Provincial and territorial governments

Agriculture is largely a provincial jurisdiction under the constitutional framework and several provinces have made considerable progress in supporting organic agriculture. Both British Columbia and Quebec have established provincial organic regulations and both provinces have developed strategic plans to increase acreage under organic management. Recent production statistics indicate that these programs are beginning to show results and these provinces have the most vibrant organic sectors in the country. Saskatchewan has the most organic farmers, but the production focus is export-based and little progress has been made to develop local consumption and distribution systems.

15 ATTRA, 2003. Brining local food to local institutions- a resource guide to farm-to-school and farm-to-institutions programs, 28 p. available: <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/farmtoschool.pdf>

16 Sustainable Development in Government Operations Initiative, available: <http://www.greeninggovernment.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=256986C5-1>

3.2.5.3 Municipal governments

Many urban municipalities have a strong interest in food system sustainability. However, they tend to place less emphasis on the production component than on the distribution component of the system. As such, they may not distinguish between agricultural practices that mitigate the impacts of the industrial agricultural production model, like integrated pest management (IPM), from agricultural practices that maintain ecosystem stability, like organic farming. For them, the priority is that the product is ‘local’ and it is of secondary concern whether the product comes from an IPM farmer or from an organic farmer. Many urban municipalities have provided funding to develop Food Security Councils and ‘Buy Local’ food guides.

In terms of public procurement, some urban municipalities like the City of Vancouver and the City of Toronto are showing leadership by integrating social justice and environmental considerations into their purchasing policies¹⁷. While these considerations apply mostly to apparel and general office supplies, there are signs that they are also being extended to food items. More specifically, the City of Vancouver is in the process of developing an institutional food procurement policy¹⁸ that promotes food system sustainability and builds upon the existing ethical purchasing policy. According to the City’s preliminary research, the major policy barrier to the implementation of an institutional food procurement policy relates to contract assessment criteria. A public authority must be able to issue and award contracts based on criteria other than ‘lowest cost’. In its draft report, the City also outlined some of the elements required in the implementation plan.

In short, the efforts at the municipal level to develop sustainable food systems are generally fragmented. However, an exception to this rule can be seen within the Municipalité Régionale de Comté (MRC) des Collines-de-l’Outaouais. The MRC is a grouping of six municipalities in the Outaouais administrative region of Quebec. In September 2005, the MRC published a feasibility study it had undertaken to investigate the possibility of establishing an ecological agriculture and forestry zone throughout the entire MRC¹⁹. The study concluded that although such a project would encounter some limiting conditions, it would have enormous benefits to the region and should therefore be implemented. One of the limiting conditions the study outlined was the lack of financing to help with the transition process and the development of regional processing facilities. The study published by the MRC is an example of an integrated approach to sustainable development and regional food security. Recently, the MRC received some money to begin implementing the plan which includes developing markets for locally grown products, getting organic food into institutions and creating a heritage seed bank among other environmentally sustainable objectives.

3.2.5.4 Other policies

In addition to public procurement policy, there are also a number of other regulations and policies that can directly impact institutions and their ability to purchase food directly from farmers. Consider for example, regulations and policies regarding food safety and nutrition: food safety is about minimizing the risk of outbreaks of food-borne illnesses among consumers. Often, food safety begins on the farm by ensuring that plants and animals are healthy and disease-free. To this end, farmers and the

17 City of Vancouver Ethical Purchasing Policy, City of Toronto Responsible Garment Manufacturers (No Sweatshops) Policy

18 De La Salle, J, 2005. Working Background Document, 15 p.

19 MRC Des Collines-de-l’Outaouais, 2005. MRC Bio: Ecological Development for Agricultural and Forest Land, 178 p, available: <http://www.mrcdescollines.com/MRC-Bio.htm>

agricultural industry have come together to develop an On-Farm Food Safety Recognition (OFFSR) program that is based on the internationally accepted food safety control system called Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP). The HACCP system focuses on anticipating and preventing problems in the production of food products, rather than only inspecting the final product. Hence, by adopting and implementing the OFFSR program, farmers can ensure that the food passing their farm gate is safe to eat. However, since there are many opportunities for food to become unsafe along the distribution chain from farm to fork, food safety cannot be the sole responsibility of the farmer- food safety is a shared responsibility among farmers, processors, handlers, governments, and consumers.

At the federal level, Health Canada (HC) is responsible for establishing standards for the safety and nutritional quality of foods sold in Canada. A separate department, namely the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), is responsible for ensuring that those standards are enforced. It accomplishes this by encouraging and supporting the development, implementation and maintenance of the HACCP system in all federally registered food processing establishments. It also provides information and education materials to food service professionals and consumers regarding the safe handling, preparation and storage of food in the kitchen. A similar approach has been adapted at the provincial level.

Since certain people, such as young children, hospitalized people and seniors are particularly susceptible to the risks of unsafe food, some institutions like childcare centers, hospitals and nursing homes often have strict food safety requirements. They may require that the food be in a certain form (eg.: washed, pre-packaged) and/or that their supplier has HACCP certification if they are unable to process food items according to safety standards themselves. In addition, they may ban certain foods as they could cause allergic reactions (eg.: peanut butter, wheat) or choking (eg.: grapes or crunchy foods like carrots). They must also ensure that the foods they serve meet the nutritional requirements of those groups of people. To do this, they often plan menus several weeks or months in advance and have them approved by a dietician or nutritionist. If their menus do not take into consideration the seasonal availability of food, they will not be buying what farmers are offering at specific times during the normal growing season. Consider for example, the case of young children. Provincial governments do not have any specific acts or regulations directly related to childhood diet and/or nutrition. They do however, have acts and regulations relating to the design and operation of childcare facilities which will often include sections on food services. In general, the sections on food services stipulate that menus should be planned in advance and that meals and snacks should be prepared in accordance with Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Increasingly, provincial governments are recognizing the lack of guidance on children's nutrition issues and are trying to rectify this situation by developing nutrition policies for institutions²⁰.

The rationale behind menu planning is that it allows for parents to complement their child's dietary and nutritional needs at home. Some acts and regulations require that menus be posted a month in advance while others require only a one week notification period. Some acts and regulations also require that menus be prepared or verified by a professional nutritionist while others only require that menus be prepared by a person with knowledge of the nutritional needs and eating habits of young children like the childcare facility's executive director or chef for example. In either case, the menu planner uses Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating as a tool to help him/her determine serving size and the overall

20 Manitoba: Government of Manitoba, 2005. Manitoba School Nutrition Handbook, 66 p, available:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyschools/msnh.html> . Ontario: Ontario Society of Nutrition Professional in Public Health, 2004. Call to Action: Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment, 60 p, available: <http://www.osnpnh.on.ca/position.html>

number of servings a child should receive from a particular food group in order to meet their daily nutritional requirements. It is important to note that while the childcare facility or menu planner may promote one type of diet over another, vegan or vegetarian for example, Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating does not promote or endorse any particular type of diet.

Institutions that do not deal specifically with these groups of people may be in a better position to accept food directly from farmers.

PART 4: PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION MODELS:

A food system is the deliberate organization of the production, processing, distribution, selection and consumption of food²¹. In order to be sustainable, a food system must demonstrate that it is beneficial to society and environmentally benign.

Our current food system is unsustainable. This is in part due to the fact that production is based on an industrial agriculture model that is driven by efficiency and encourages, among other things, a progression towards large scale production; high-yielding hybrid and genetically modified crops; monocultures, the extensive use of pesticides, fertilizers and external energy inputs as well as a cheap food mentality. This model has resulted not only in an impoverished and declining farm community, but also in severe environmental degradation which has manifested itself through increased fossil fuel consumption, increased soil and biodiversity loss as well as increased water pollution. In addition, the transportation of food from one region of the world to another has led to yet more fossil fuel consumption as well as to the depletion of other natural resources. When food items are exported from an area, the water and nutrients that are in that food item are also exported. This mass distribution model also facilitates the global spread of diseases and food-borne illnesses.

Although we recognize that other components of the food system model will also have to be addressed if the overall system is to achieve sustainability, the focus of this report is to identify alternatives to the unsustainable production and distribution methods of the dominant agricultural model and to determine how large scale change can be brought about by working with institutions to change their models of food procurement.

Below are examples of organizations that are trying to contribute to food system sustainability by promoting organic agriculture and local distribution networks to individual consumers. The purpose of examining these examples is to identify the useful components of these models which could be adapted for use at a larger scale that is appropriate for the needs of institutions and not individual consumers.

4.1 Distribution models for food

4.1.1 Direct farmer to consumer models

The simplest food distribution model is a 'direct farmer to consumer' model. Some examples of the application of this model include farm gate sales, farmers' markets and community supported agriculture (CSA). This model has the advantage of building a relationship between the farmer and the consumer thereby making them active participants in the food system. The farmer has an opportunity to educate the consumer, to build a more engaged and loyal consumer base, and because there are no

21 BC Food Systems Network available: <http://www.fooddemocracy.org/>

middle-men in this model, to receive a greater portion of the food dollar. This model, however, can significantly increase food miles. Since most farms are located outside of densely populated urban areas where the majority of consumers live; travel to and from farms or farmers' markets by so many farmers and consumers may not be feasible or desirable. Another disadvantage is that not every farmer is willing or able to meet the diversity of the consumer's food needs nor can they ensure year-round availability of certain food items. As a consequence, the consumer is forced to seek out several different farmers in order to meet his/her food needs during the normal growing season and to seek out an alternative food supply and distribution system outside of this time frame.

Equiterre, a non-governmental organization based in Montreal, Quebec has played a significant role in establishing a network of CSA farms in Quebec. It started out with about seven farms in 1995 and now helps to pair approximately 100 farms with nearly 24,000 members every year. In 2002, it tried pairing farmers from its CSA network directly with institutions. It began by working with childcare centres within the Montreal area and is now examining the possibility of working with schools. A large component of Equiterre's CSA network development and institutional procurement programs involves education and marketing. There is also logistical work involved in pairing farmers with individuals and institutions.

When pairing farmers with institutions, the challenge is to find farmers who are willing to meet the special requirements of the institution, in this case, childcare centres. Once it has identified appropriate farmers, Equiterre leaves the details to the farmers and the childcare centres to work out. For the most part, these farmers advise participating childcare centres, on a weekly basis, of the fresh produce that is available and then, the childcare centres place an order. Once the order was placed, the farmers assemble the food items and deliver them to the childcare centre(s).

The project was successful in soliciting the support and participation of organic farmers, parents and childcare centres, however it was not without its problems. On the production side, taking orders and dealing with transportation logistics was difficult for some small scale producers. The farmers didn't find it convenient to make and send produce lists to childcare centres each week. Farmers who were already going to markets each week and therefore already had price lists readily available found this chore to be easier than farmers who did not sell at markets. Assembling and delivering such small quantities of food was also problematic. Farmers who had an existing drop-off point near the childcare centre or had made an agreement with the childcare centre that it would act as a drop-off point (this sometimes involved the childcare centre recruiting parents to become members of the farmer's CSA) were more likely to take this on. There were also farmers who, despite these inconveniences, went out of their way to cater to the childcare centre's needs because they believed in the project and wanted to support it.

On the consumer side, initially childcare centres expected to be able to get all of the food items they needed from their respective farmer. They soon realized that this was not always possible. In addition, since childcare centres were not actually members of the CSA (they could not pay up-front nor could many of them deal with a 'surprise' food box since their menus had to be set in advance), they were often only offered surplus food items. If there are not many surplus items, as is the case in years when yields are particularly low, the childcare centre's access to organic and local food items can become severely compromised. Finally, many farmers in the CSA network were unable to provide fresh produce to the childcare centres outside of the normal growing season.

In summary, most direct farmer to consumer models offer limited selection (usually restricted to fresh food), are only available for part of the year in Canada, and for the most part, have not optimized

ordering and transportation logistics. Some of these problems could be addressed by integrating other distribution models into the institutional procurement program in order to deal with some of the shortcomings of the direct farmer to consumer model.

4.1.2 'Home delivery' model

More and more companies are getting into the business of home delivery of organic products. These companies vary in size and efficiency with many of the larger home delivery services developing sophisticated modern energy-efficient transportation and distribution networks. Some of these companies are also identifying their niche as 'local organic'. Home distribution models tend to be based around sophisticated on-line ordering systems such as that developed by SPUD in Vancouver, BC. These companies provide up to date lists of available products and prices to their clients. Home delivery services tend to have a wider variety of products than direct farmer to consumer models, including both packaged and fresh products. Once the client places his/her order, the items are packed and assembled from a large warehouse and are delivered to the client's home according to a pre-determined, weekly or monthly, schedule. A service like this would most appeal to small institutions such as childcare centres and it is possible to envision that it could even be scaled up to cater to some schools as well.

Although the home delivery model excels at creating an efficient distribution network, most have not addressed production issues and rely largely on the existing production infrastructure to supply them with product. It is very difficult for them to deal one-on-one with numerous individual farmers. The delivery services we have spoken with all indicate that securing high quality locally produced organic product is their largest challenge and they would prefer to deal with farmers or farmer co-operatives with larger production capacity.

4.1.3 'Buying coop' model

The Cooperative d'Alentours, based in Sherbrooke, Quebec and the Ontario Natural Food Coop (ONFC), based in Etobicoke, Ontario, are two examples of buying co-operatives that offer some fresh, but mostly dried and processed foods to their members. These co-operatives tend to buy food items in bulk from various suppliers, both organic and non-organic, as well as both local and non-local, and resell them to members at discounted prices. This type of model can allow an individual co-operative member to complement the fresh produce obtained from a farmer during the normal growing season as well as outside of this time frame. Like the home delivery model, this model can be highly efficient in terms of warehousing, ordering and transportation logistics and the larger co-operatives such as ONFC use transportation software to build in transportation efficiencies such as shortest possible route planning and returning the trucks full to the warehouse. This model also lends itself to 'scaling-up'. With very little investment, buying co-operatives like ONFC could easily provide the volumes required by large institutional purchasers. In fact, ONFC is already providing food to about 10 childcare centres in metropolitan Toronto in addition to large buyers such as Whole Foods.

One problem with this model however, is that the consumer can no longer be sure that the farmer will receive an adequate portion of the food dollar. Moreover, as the distance between the consumer and the producer increases, trust in the food diminishes. Buying co-operatives also often have minimum order requirements which may represent a substantial amount of food. Unless, the consumer has adequate food storage facilities, this may prove to be somewhat inconvenient. One way around this is for individual consumers to come together to form a 'buying club' and then order collectively from the buying co-operative. Like the home delivery service, this type of service would also appeal to

individual childcare centres or a childcare centre buying club. It could also be used to meet the needs of some schools. In the short term, it would make sense to partner with such organizations if they exist in the region, while promoting the development of local organic processing facilities might be a more viable longer term solution.

To summarize, home delivery and buying coop models have optimized the warehousing, ordering and transportation components of the food system to achieve the most efficient use of resources. They also provide a wide diversity of products all year round. However, these models are not optimized to meet the needs of the primary producer and they may or may not be able to provide local, fresh, in season produce. Although the home delivery and buying coop models in Canada all value the development of local food systems, in practice they are unable to attain this ideal because of the lack of local organic farmers and the need to optimize transportation over a larger geographical area- often at the provincial rather than city scale.

4.1.4 Food service or catering model

The above examples assume that the institution's food service operations are self-managed (direct purchasing) and not contract-managed (indirect purchasing through a caterer or food service provider). Many large institutions however, are not self-managed. They have opted to contract out their food needs to large scale food service providers. Our initial investigation suggests that this situation does not easily lend itself to the development of a sustainable local food system. Many food service providers are not inclined to buy organic and/or local food due to the impracticalities of sourcing and dealing with organic and local suppliers. In such cases, a gradual and long term approach to changing purchasing practices may be required. For example, this could begin with having them agree to start with organic and local fruits and vegetables or milk and dairy products.

Some smaller institutions are also not self-managed. They have opted to contract out their food needs to caterers. In some cases, this has proven to be quite beneficial, especially if the caterer is committed to providing organic and local products. For example, many of the YMCA childcare centres in Toronto do business with Real Food for Real Kids (RFRK). RFRK is a for-profit business that prepares and delivers organic food to childcare centres in the Toronto area. By contracting out their food needs, these institutions have cut costs by having someone else do their menu planning, food purchasing and preparation. These institutions have also avoided the fixed costs associated with rental or purchase of kitchen space and appliances. Since institutions often operate on tight budgets, developing and integrating a catering service into the institutional procurement program might provide viable solutions for some smaller institutions.

When deciding what model or combination of models to use to get organic food items into local institutions, it is important to consider whether or not it will promote a secure livelihood for farmers. If farmers cannot earn a living producing food under the conditions set up by the model, then they are not likely to remain in business and the program will eventually collapse. This would be the death knell to a local food system. To help ensure a secure livelihood for farmers, it is advisable to not only advocate for fairer food prices, but also to facilitate farmer participation in other parts of the food system to gain a larger share of the food dollar.

4.2 Production models for food

Industrial agricultural has caused farmers to lose control of production and management decisions²². In an effort to regain and maintain some power and control in this agribusiness-driven food system, many farmers are finding it necessary to join together to seek out markets collectively and/or to integrate their farm operations with processing or 'value-added' activities. The specific type of organizational structure or business model they choose is dependent upon many variables, among which are shared values and goals.

Co-operatives are a popular choice of business model among small farmers because they are value driven and tend to promote social cohesion. In the past decade however, the traditional farmer co-operative business model has had to undergo some significant changes. This has in large part been due to the fact that farmers needed to adapt and respond to the socio-economic consequences brought about by the Green Revolution in the agricultural sector. The result of those changes has been what is now coming to be known as the 'New Generation Co-operative' (NGC) model. NGCs combine the benefits of traditional co-operatives with that of investor-owned corporations. NGCs are increasing in popularity, especially in the US and on the Canadian Prairies²³, as their potential for use as a strategic tool to stimulate value-added activity and rural development grows.

NGCs have built upon the traditional co-operative model by introducing four key concepts: closed membership; higher level of initial equity investment; delivery shares that are not tied to the level of initial equity invested; and the transferability of delivery shares as well as the opportunity for appreciation or depreciation of the value of delivery shares²⁴. Each producer member can have only one membership share, but can have many delivery shares. Basically, delivery shares obligate the producer member to deliver to the co-operative a specified amount of product. If the producer member cannot fulfill his/her commitment, then he/she must purchase the product elsewhere in order to meet his/her delivery requirements. Voting rights are attached to membership shares (one membership share, one vote) whereas patronage refunds are attached to delivery shares (more delivery shares, more profit). Producer members can transfer their delivery shares to other producer members and they may also sell their delivery shares to other members or to new members. The price of the delivery shares is negotiated between the seller and the buyer. Another type of share that can be made available through NGCs are preferred shares. Preferred shares are similar to investment shares. They are sold to non-members as a means of raising additional equity. Preferred shares are non-voting and usually offer a limited, fixed rate of return. Only a handful of NGCs exist in Canada largely because there is limited awareness of the NGC model and secondly, because there is limited start-up support.

In Canada, there are about 280 agricultural marketing co-operatives²⁵. Most of them are based upon the traditional co-operative model since the NGC model, as mentioned above, is not yet well-known. Although co-operative formation and development is financially supported at both federal and provincial levels²⁶, limited financing seems to be available to farmers to cover start-up costs. For some farmers, this is not a problem as they are able to raise funds to cover these costs. However for most

22 Fulton, M., 2001. NGC development in Canada, 31 p, available: <http://www.usaskstudies.coop/pdf-files/NGC%20Dev%20in%20Cda.pdf>

23 Alberta: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bmi6646](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/bmi6646); Saskatchewan: <http://www.usaskstudies.coop/>; Manitoba: http://www.umanitoba.ca/afs/agric_economics/MRAC/

24 See NGC their relevance for Manitoba, available: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/research/ardi/projects/98-093.html>

25 Gurung, R and MaCagg, L, 2005. Profile of Canadian Agricultural Co-operatives (1998-2002), Co-operatives Secretariat, Government of Canada, 44 p.

26 See <http://www.coopscanada.coop/>

farmers, lack of start up funds prevents them from forming a marketing co-operative despite the awareness of the benefits of doing so²⁷. It can also keep them from expanding the co-operative should they succeed in establishing it. Some individuals and non-governmental organizations interested in social justice and environmental issues have been helping farmers organize themselves and start co-operatives. This is a common trend in the Canadian FairTrade²⁸ movement, but seems to be occurring in the organic movement as well.

4.2.1 Traditional marketing co-operatives

Farmer Direct is an example of a traditional marketing co-operative that was started not by farmers, but by non-farmers. It was formally established in 2002 and is based in Regina, Saskatchewan. The original founders are now currently employed by the co-operative to market grains, oilseeds and pulses on behalf of its 60 organic producer members. At the moment, the co-operative does not do any processing or value-added activities. This marketing co-operative is of particular interest not only because it was started by non-farmers, but also because it has developed what it calls the 'FairDeal'. Basically, the FairDeal is a contractual commitment from buyers to pay farmers a fair or just price for their products. This price includes the costs of production and labour as well as a modest profit margin. In addition, the co-operative offers 'insurance' to its producers members to recover their losses in the event that a buyer does not pay. There is significant potential to develop marketing co-operatives and FairDeal programs in other regions of the country and for other commodities, such as fruits and vegetables. This would also have the benefit of consolidating farm products to ensure a diversity of products as well as sufficient quantities for institutional procurement programs.

4.2.2 'New Generation' marketing co-operatives

LeRoy Agra-Pork Co-operative Ltd is an example of a NCG. It is based in LeRoy, Saskatchewan. It was created after Stomp Pork Farm Ltd, the area's major hog producer and employer, lost most of its breeding stock in a barn fire and the local grain elevator was shut down. The first thing the co-operative did was to construct four hog finishing barns at Stomp Pork Farm. This provided the farm with new facilities without responsibility for the capital costs of these buildings. It also provided the farm with a partner with whom to share risk and access to a secure, local and cheaper supply of feed grain from area farmers. For the grain farmers, the co-operative provided a market for their barley as well as access to manure which reduced their farm input costs and their dependence on commercial fertilizers. The creation of the co-operative also returned economic stability to the community as Stomp Pork Farm employs over 100 people and has an annual payroll of over \$3 million. Each of the co-operative's 100 members provided an immediate \$20,000 payment for their delivery right share. Each member is also committed to supply 8,000 bushels of feed grain annually to the co-op. If the member is not a grain farmer, he/she can make an arrangement with local farmers to supply their commitment or have the co-operative source grain on the local market.

PART 5: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION:

In the first part of this report, we examined what other countries are doing in order to promote sustainable food systems and noted that many are adopting policies and programs that support the development of organic agriculture and local food distribution networks. Institutional procurement

27 Based on conversations with co-operative developers

28 See La Siembra Co-operative (Coco Camino brand products): <http://www.lasiembra.com/>

policies appeared to play a key role in bringing about food system change.

Since our system shares many similarities to these food systems, it makes sense to assume that we could achieve a greater level of food security and environmental sustainability by following their example. For this reason, we looked at potential policy and program barriers here in Canada and examined ways in which organic food items could be sourced and distributed to local institutions in communities across our country.

We recognize that in some Canadian communities, the resources and services described in the previous section (e.g. CSA networks, home delivery services, etc.) already exist and can easily be tapped into and/or built upon, but that most communities lack such resources and services. Given the large disparity between communities, it is difficult to prescribe a single plan for an organic farm-to-institution program that can be successfully used anywhere in the country. Therefore, we have opted to provide an outline of the key issues that need to be considered when determining where to start and how to scale up this type of program, followed by some examples of how this type of system could work in practice. This, we hope, will allow communities to customize programs to fit their current and future needs. It is anticipated that COG National, COG Chapters and COG partners will be the primary users of this information.

5.1 Conducting preliminary research

Before beginning an organic farm-to-institution program, it makes sense to undertake some preliminary research. The research phase should start by defining the 'local' area in which the program will be implemented and get an idea of the current and potential food supply as well as the current and potential food demand. This will give program designers a better idea what resources and services they have available to them and which ones they need to develop. It will also give them an idea of the scale of the required program. For example, a local area that only has a few institutions interested in organic and local food will require a much smaller scale project that involves fewer primary producers and a less complex distribution system than one in which there is potentially large-scale institutional interest.

5.1.1 Defining 'local'

In order to develop a local institutional food procurement program, the boundaries of the 'local' community must first be identified. According to CFIA, the Federal agency responsible for enforcing the Organic Products Regulation and the Food and Drugs Act along and the associated labeling requirements, 'local' is defined as follows:

"Local", "Locally Grown", and any substantially similar term shall mean that the domestic goods being advertised originated within 50 km of the place where they are sold, measured directly, point to point, or meets the requirements of section B.01.012 Food and Drug Regulations, whichever condition is least restrictive.

...section B.01.012... "local food" means a food that is manufactured, processed, produced or packaged in a local government unit and sold only in

- (a) the local government unit in which it is manufactured, processed or packaged,
- (b) one or more local government units that are immediately adjacent to the one in which it is manufactured, processed, produced or packaged, or

(c) the local government unit in which it is manufactured, processed, produced or packaged and in one or more local government units that are immediately adjacent to the one in which it is manufactured, processed, produced or packaged.

It should be noted in this regard that other terms such as "Product of Nova Scotia", "Foodland Ontario", "Buy BC", or "Quebec Vrai," etc. may be used to describe fresh produce which is produced and grown within a province but which does not meet the criteria for "local".

COG National is considering adopting CFIA's definition of local. The definition will be discussed at the Partnership Day in Toronto.

Once the local area has been defined, then begins the process of determining and developing 'supply' and 'demand' within that area.

5.1.2 Assessing local supply

By necessity, this project is targeted to all farmers and all commodities. Because we have made the decision to work with institutions which require a broad variety of fresh and packaged foods, it will be necessary to help them to access all of their food requirements. Individual COG Chapters may decide that they want to focus on the procurement and distribution of fresh food, and this is completely reasonable given that COG is a farmer-focused organization. However, we cannot ignore the fact that fresh food makes up only a small percentage of the food that institutions use. We need to think through how we are going to help them move their entire menus towards local and organic procurement. This may involve identifying other partners or businesses that can help us provide the entire range of food products required.

Another key component to consider when determining and developing local supply is seasonal availability. While supply may be sufficient during the normal growing season, this may not necessarily be true outside of this time frame. Therefore, it is important to think about what food items will be made available during the year. This may require the development of on-farm season extension technology and/or processing and storage facilities.

5.1.3 Assessing local demand

This project is targeted at the institutional sector, both public and private. The food requirements within this sector vary considerably from one institution to another. Not all institutions manage their own food service operations nor do they all require large volumes of food. Therefore, it is important to develop a clear understanding of what types of institutional markets exist within the local community, what their specific needs are in terms of food supply and what, if anything, will need to change in the production and distribution chain in order to meet those specific needs. For example, childcare centres tend to be small purchasers while hospitals tend to be big purchasers. In the first case, it is foreseeable to quickly match an individual farmer with one or even a few childcare centres- little would have to change in the current production and distribution chain. In the second case however, it is unlikely that an individual farmer would be able to meet the needs of the hospital. Much work would have to be done to reorganize the production and distribution chain in order to accommodate the larger institution. It is up to COG Chapters and Partners to decide what type of institution to start with. We have suggested that childcare centres could be a good starting point because they require very little food (and there may be very little local organic food available to start with depending where you are). However,

we recognize that the project should be flexible and adaptable to local conditions. If you are located in an area where there are few children, such as Salt Spring Island, you may want to shift the focus to other types of institutions.

5.2 Developing an implementation plan

Once the preliminary research is complete, an implementation plan should be developed. The plan should consider how supply issues will be addressed and the distribution models that will be developed and/or used to get organic foods into institutions in both the short and the long term

COG National will be providing its Chapters and Partners with a number of tools that will facilitate the development of implementation plans. These tools will include things like formulae for calculating required total food volumes and the corresponding crop acreage; for determining design parameters for central storage, processing and distribution systems; and for cost analyses of organic vs. conventional menus, among others. We have provided a complete list of these tools near the end of this report.

The plan should also consider markets development. Based on our review of experiences from other countries, it can take some time to build relationships with institutional buyers. Many institutions are unaware of the benefits of buying organic and local food and believe that such a change in purchasing practices is not financially feasible. One-on-one and group meetings may be needed to educate institutional buyers and to dispel myths about organic and local food.

COG will also be providing its Chapters and Partners with support documents outlining the benefits of organic foods along with cost comparisons of conventional vs. organic and local menus. Our preliminary assessment is that if we take an existing menu and substitute in organic items, the budget would increase by approximately 25%. However, we believe that by purchasing direct from farmers, by adjusting menus to include more fresh seasonally appropriate foods and by moving away from processed foods that we can achieve our objectives within the current budgets. As part of this project, we will be developing menus that institutions can adopt that allow them to meet the goals of this project while staying within their current budgets.

Finally, the plan should include ideas about how to fund the coordination of regional pilot-projects. We hope that an important outcome of our Partnership Day in Toronto will be for COG National and its Chapters and Partners to agree to work together to raise the required funds to support regional coordinators for pilot-projects across the country. By developing common messaging, a wide network of supporters, by agreeing to work together to approach regional funders, by sharing existing proposals and by making supporting documents such as national financial reports easily accessible, we believe that we can take away some of the pain associated with fundraising. COG National is in the process of identifying potential project sponsors and this money will be used to support regional coordination. Another source of funding that could be explored is 'fee per service'. Chapters and Partners could decide to charge participation fees for program services. This possibility will be discussed at the Partnership Day in Toronto.

5.3 Beginning a pilot-project

The purpose of a pilot-project is to begin program implementation at a small scale in order to identify unforeseen barriers or limitations. However, make sure that you take the time to match your demand to your supply. If you decide to start with just a few childcare centres, don't make the mistake of recruiting too many farmers as they will be underwhelmed by the demand. It may make sense to start

with a few farmers and childcare centres who are supportive of the project and who are interested in participating. These people can then act as ambassadors to help move the project to the next level. Childcare centres require small volumes of food and are capable of implementing changes in a shorter time frame than larger institutions.

To formalize participation in the program and ensure that participants embrace the vision of the project, we will ask farmers and childcare centres to sign the 'Organic Pledge'.

The Organic Pledge

Institutions

We agree to play an active role in facilitating the development of a sustainable local food system. We will do this by gradually revising our menus and ingredients to include locally and organically grown food wherever possible within the constraints of our budgets and food availability. We agree to preferentially support local farmers and businesses who commit to the principals of organic production and to work with them to ensure that farmers receive a Fair Deal for their products.

Signature
(Institution)

Producers

We agree to play an active role in facilitating the development a sustainable local food system. We will do this by committing to adopt the philosophy and methods of organic production and agree to transition to organic certification.

Signature
(Producer)

Definitions:

a) Local food: We adopt the definition of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in Section B.01.012 of the Food and Drugs Regulation Act:

"local food" means a food that is manufactured, processed, produced or packaged in a local government unit and sold only in

(a) the local government unit in which it is manufactured, processed or packaged,

(b) one or more local government units that are immediately adjacent to the one in which it is manufactured, processed, produced or packaged, or

(c) the local government unit in which it is manufactured, processed, produced or packaged and in one or more local government units that are immediately adjacent to the one in which it is manufactured, processed, produced or packaged;

b) *Organic food*: We adopt the definition of organic used in the Canadian Organic Standard (*Organic Production Systems General Principles and Management Standards, CAN/CGSB-32.310-2006*):

Organic production is a holistic system designed to optimize the productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the agroecosystems, including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people. The principal of organic production is to develop enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment. Under this pledge, two types of organic producers are recognized: producers who are certified according to the Organic Products Regulation and those who are registered with a certification body and are recognized as being in transition to organic certification.

This pledge is a draft that will be discussed and finalized at the Partnership Day in Toronto.

COG National is developing a number of tools (see section on Next steps) which can be used by COG Chapters and Partners to begin a pilot project. COG National is also developing educational curricula - 'toolkits' that can be used in childcare centres and/or schools to engage childcare workers, teachers, children and their families in the development of sustainable food systems. The toolkits will consist of age-specific activities for children to promote awareness about where food comes from and what impact it has on us and the environment. Proposed activities include farm tours, farmer market visits, vermicomposting, sprouting, cooking classes, gardening, etc. The adult-oriented curricula will include workshops on shopping for organic food, making organic baby food, etc. We will have brainstorm ideas on topics for curriculum development at the Partnership Day in Toronto.

As previously mentioned, the specifics of program implementation will vary from one community to another. Nonetheless, COG Chapters should keep in mind that their role is to stimulate interest in the program at the local level and to coordinate people and resources such that the program can expand to ultimately meet the needs of all institutions in the local area. The lessons learned from the pilot-project should enable COG Chapters to re-evaluate their implementation plan and determine whether their milestones and timelines are realistic. At the end of the pilot phase in 2009, COG National will compile the lessons learned from the pilot-projects in the regions and use these lessons to develop a broader strategy for getting organic and local food into all institutions in Canada. This may form the basis of a broader advocacy strategy.

PART 6: NEXT STEPS:

The Growing Up Organic project will be officially launched in February in Toronto at the Growing Up Organic conference. The Growing Up Organic conference is a one-day public conference that will explore some of the environmental health issues associated with agriculture that impact children. Following the public conference, COG National, COG Chapters and COG Partners will have the opportunity to spend a full day discussing the Growing Up Organic project and how it can work in the regions.

COG National has developed a flow chart (see Appendix 1) that outlines the roles of COG National (national office) and COG Chapters/Partners (regional chapters or partners in regions where COG does not have a chapter). In a nutshell, COG National will undertake overall project coordination and

fundraising activities at a national level. COG National will also provide feasibility grants to a few COG Chapters each year so that they may undertake the preliminary research (see section on Program implementation) required to develop an implementation plan for a pilot-project in their communities. Finally, COG National will also develop the tools to help COG Chapters implement farm-to-institution programs at the local level. These tools will include:

Outreach and marketing materials

- COG National plans to upgrade the COG website to host a specific project section.. This section will provide information on the project, a list of existing pilot-projects with contact information, as well as access to the other outreach and marketing materials tools we develop. The latter will include a promotional brochure which can be used to target prospective institutional clients, promotional ads for the project and its workshops (to appear in newspapers, magazines, etc) and group presentation materials on the benefits of organics and an analysis of the costs associated with transitioning menus to organic and local food..

Strategic planning and program evaluation guide

- COG National will develop a strategic planning and program evaluation guide. The purpose of this is to help COG Chapters set short-, medium- and long-term program goals to develop and build upon local resources and services. It will also enable COG National to monitor the impact of the Growing Up Organic project.

Transition workshop materials

COG National has developed a general workshop for transitioning farmers. It is also developing a number of other items, such as transition software and a farmers guide to the standards and regulation which could be useful to persuade farmers to transition. COG National will be modifying the general workshop material to focus on market gardening and will be developing similar workshops for the new farmer.

Co-operative workshop materials

- Starting a co-operative requires a lot of time and energy. Many farmers will not be able to do this on their own. Our role will be to make it as easy as possible for farmers to start a co-operative. COG National will do this by developing a toolkit which includes information on co-operatives and how to start one, funding sources and sample business plans. COG Chapters could play a role in co-operative start-up by identifying regional co-operative developers and familiarizing them with the Growing Up Organic project and the purpose of the co-operatives.

Sample organic menus and cost analysis

- COG National will develop sample organic menus and cost estimates associated with the adoption of each sample menu. The purpose is to give institutions an idea of what an organic menu that has also incorporated seasonal and local factors looks like. Institutions will also get a better idea of the costs of going local and organic. We will also be developing recommendations about how to save money in designing these menus. For example, it is easier to adopt an organic menu and then source organic ingredients than it is to convert an existing menu to organic equivalents. Another example, it is often cheaper to shop for organic ingredients at local farmers' markets than it is to shop at local supermarkets. Institutions can also save money by decreasing the portion sizes for meat or substituting

other less expensive sources of protein. The sample menus and tips will allow COG Chapters to help childcare centres switch over to an organic and local menu and still remain within budget.

Educational curricula

- COG National will develop workshops for parents and families and educators, as well as age-specific activities related to farming and food systems for children. The workshops and activities will be delivered by a facilitator. The educational toolkit is a way to increase awareness of the benefits of organic products and of stimulating demand for such products in all other institutions to which parents are directly or indirectly attached. COG National will provide COG Chapters with educational toolkits and a facilitator's manual.

Program implementation guide for farmers

- COG National will develop a guide and tools for farmers to help them access institutional markets in their area. The main purpose of this is to provide some support to farmers interested in the program, but unable to participate because a pilot-project is not underway in their area. We could decide to develop a guide and tools aimed at parents similar to that produced by Equiterre, or partner with Equiterre to translate their guide into English.

Fundraising materials

- COG National will develop background materials such as organizational and project descriptions, sample budgets and sample funding proposals to help Chapters write their own proposals.

Some of the costs associated with the development of these tools can be recovered. For example, part of the workshop registration fees could include development and printing fees. Moreover, workshops and activities in the educational toolkit could be provided on a fee per service basis which again could include development and printing fees. Likewise, the program implementation guide could be marketed as a COG publication and sold at a small price. In addition to tool development costs, there are also costs associated with program coordination at the local level. A portion of these costs could potentially be recovered through participation or program registration fees. COG National will engage COG Chapters in a discussion on tool development and program coordination costs and how they can be recovered at the Partnership Day in Toronto.

In addition to developing tools for program implementation, COG National will develop a project evaluation framework. The project evaluation framework will be presented to COG Chapters for comment and feedback at the Partnership Day in Toronto and will ultimately be incorporated in the strategic planning and program evaluation guide.

PART 7: STRATEGY AND TIMELINES:

Based on the findings of our six-month study, COG has developed the following strategy and timeline to facilitate the development and implementation of organic farm-to-institution programs over the next three years:

Year 1

- In the first year, COG National will focus on developing the tools COG Chapter will need to implement organic farm-to-institution programs. We recognize that some COG Chapters

will have already begun implementing programs without many tools to facilitate their work. Despite the difficulties these COG Chapters may encounter, we believe it is best to start implementing farm-to-school programs as soon as possible. If possible, we would like to start getting some locally grown organic food into institutions this summer. This will enable us to get a better feel for the challenges we are likely to face, as well as to generate some immediate on the ground results that we can build on. We will be asking our Chapters and Partners to collect as much data as possible throughout the project so that we can measure success and adapt the project as we learn.

- During the first year, COG Chapters will focus on preliminary research, developing a strategic plan and program evaluation framework as well as getting some food into some institutions.

Year 2

- In the second year, COG National will focus on acquiring more information on larger institutions such as schools and hospitals. We will do a detailed policy analysis to identify potential barriers to implementing organic farm-to-institution programs.
- During the second year, COG Chapters will identify elements from their strategic plan which they wish to work on and begin getting the necessary resources together to have them implemented. These elements could include setting up farmer training programs, helping farmers to organize co-operatives to help scale up and diversify production, developing plans for a more centralized distribution system. This could include elements such as warehousing and transportation systems, etc.

Year 3

- In the third year, COG National will focus on results compilation and analysis. At the end of the third year, COG National will publish a report outlining our recommendations on how organic farm-to-institution programs could be promoted and implemented on a national level. The report will include policy recommendations.
- During this time, COG Chapters will continue working on implementing their strategic plan.

This information has been summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Strategy and implementation timeline for Growing Up Organic Project:

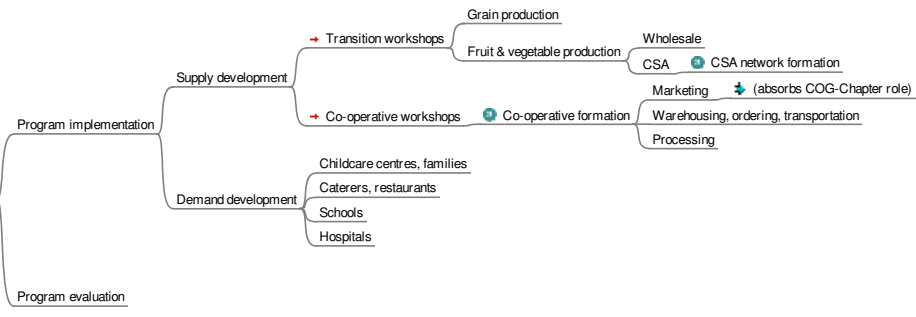
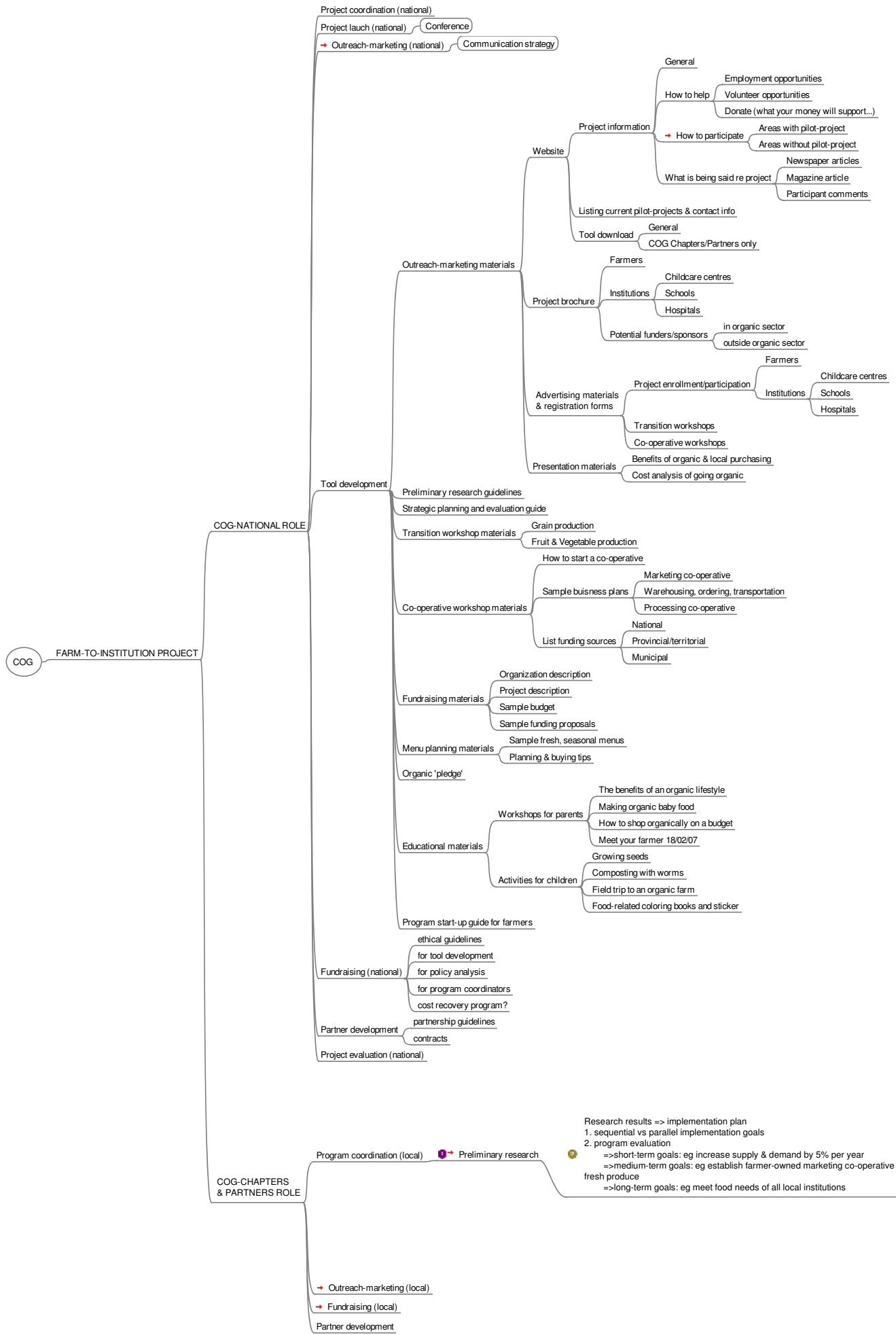
TIME	COG NATIONAL	COG CHAPTER
Year 1: 2007		
(January)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on study findings • Evaluation framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary research • Strategic plan and evaluation framework
(February)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch project 	
(March)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising & partner development (March-): • Tool development (March-October): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - outreach materials - strategic planning and evaluation guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program implementation (begin-) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - get some food into institutions - collect data throughout process

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transition workshop - co-operative workshop - educational toolkit 	
(August)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary research guide (update) 	
(September)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation to apply for grants for preliminary research (update) 	
(October)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award grants for preliminary research • (anticipated delivery date for tools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (second set of COG Chapters begin: Preliminary research)
(December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report: compilation & analysis of results from COG Chapters- re-evaluation of strategic plan for 2008 	
Year 2: 2008		
(January)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool development (January-May): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - program start-up guide for farmers • Research needs of schools and hospitals (January-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic plan coordination (eg. develop supply, develop demand, form co-operative, apply for funding, meetings, etc) • (second set of COG Chapters deliver: Preliminary research Strategic plan and evaluation framework)
(May)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (anticipated delivery date for tools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
(March)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy analysis (March-October) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (second set of COG Chapters begin: Program implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -get some food into institutions -collect data throughout process)
(September)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation to apply for grants for preliminary research (update) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (third set of COG Chapters begin: Preliminary research)
(October)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award grants for preliminary research 	
(December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report: compilation & analysis of results from COG Chapters- re-evaluation of strategic plan for 2009 	
Year 3: 2009		
(January)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final report compilation & analysis of results from COG Chapters, lessons learned, policy recommendations (January-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic plan implementation (begin-) • (second set of COG Chapters begin: Strategic plan coordination (eg. develop supply, develop demand, form co-operative, apply for funding, meetings, etc)).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (third set of COG Chapters deliver: Preliminary research Strategic plan and evaluation framework)
(March)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (second set of COG Chapters begin: Program implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -get some food into institutions -collect data throughout process)
(December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final report 	

APPENDIX 1:

OVERVIEW OF COG NATIONAL AND COG CHAPTERS/PARTNERS ROLES



Program evaluation

APPENDIX 2:

ORGANIC FOOD PROCUREMENT & DISTRIBUTION MODELS

Implementing Organic Food Procurement & Distribution Models

