



Organic Day Care: Eating and Growing Up

Promoting
responsible eating
within institutions





Equiterre's Mission: Promote environmentally and socially responsible choices through 4 areas:

- Sustainable transportation
- Energy efficiency/climate change
- Fair trade and responsible consumption
- Ecological agriculture
 - Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) (1995)
 - Campaign *Moi, je mange bio!* (2001-03)
 - Linking farms with institutions and other organizations
 - *Garderie Bio* (Organic Day Care) (2002)
 - Collective kitchens (2005-07)
 - *Alimentation institutionnelle responsable* (AIR) (responsible food in institutions) (2006-09)

Photo: Vincenzo D'Alto





Overview of Organic Day Care project

Goal: To improve the relationship between children, parents and caregivers of daycares and their food

Objectives:

- Facilitate the daycare's ability to supply itself with organic food by directly linking it with local, organic farms
- Increase awareness of the children, parents and caregivers of daycares about existing links between food, agriculture, health of children and the protection of the environment





Organic Day Care pilot project (2002-04)

Food:

- Five daycares were linked with four farms from the CSA network (2003)
- Two of the five daycares were in low-income areas

Education:

- Children/caregivers (some parents) went for farm visits
- Education kit prepared for use in daycares
- Awareness built through workshops, information kiosks, articles, information posters and pamphlets

Research:

- Literature review





Accomplishments of the pilot project: 2003

Food:

- 0% and 4% increase in costs
- Large demand for the project at daycares
- One of the five daycares became a CSA delivery point for families and caregivers
- Diversification of food supply at one daycare (dry, bulk foods)

Education:

- ↑ adult awareness of organic food/agriculture
- ↑ consumption of organic food at home





Diseminating the Organic Day Care model: 2004

- Created a guide to explain why and how to become an organic daycare
 - Distributed to 900 daycares in Quebec, organic farms and others involved in organic agriculture
- Toured five daycare associations in 5 regions
 - Presented the project
 - Distributed the educational kit to each region
 - Distributed the guide
- Press relations





Results 2004 to 2006

- 2004: 19 daycares in 9 regions in Quebec are eating organic
- 2005: 35 daycares and 2 family-setting daycares
- 2006: 44 daycares and family-setting spanning 9 regions in Quebec, over 3,000 children
- Several daycares function as delivery points for summer or winter CSA baskets
- Several daycares are supplied with:
 - Local, organic meats
 - Winter vegetables
 - Other organic foods such as cereals, etc.





Current challenges and opportunities

Challenges:

- Adaptation and flexibility of farms and of daycares
- Connecting with parents
- Sustain the project in the long term (promotion, building awareness and fostering support)
- Tendency to cut funding to daycares
- Coordinate what the farm produces with what the daycares need

Opportunities:

- Good reception to children health issue
- Food affordability because of the direct link with the farm





Research opportunities

- Impact of organics on social, cultural and health issues:
 - Document the impact of the **relationship between food and children**, including their habits and attitudes toward food
 - Document and compare the levels of contaminants in children who eat organics and those who don't
 - Follow these children after they start school
- Impact of organics on the financial side:
 - Pursue an analysis of the costs involved in integrating local, organic foods
 - Document participating daycares budgetary choices and solutions
 - Conduct a study of the revenues and expenses of participating farms





Research opportunities

- Organizational:
 - Coordinate what farms have to offer
 - Estimate more precisely what Quebec institutions need
 - Match supply with demand for a given territory
 - Study and diffuse similar programs elsewhere in the world
 - Explore models of collaboration between several ministries to implement state programs to facilitate projects

