

Year in Review  
2007–2008

# Cultivating Change

## Community Food Action Initiative



The Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) is a health promotion initiative aimed at increasing food security for all British Columbians.

A community is “food secure” when everyone obtains a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice.<sup>1</sup> CFAI takes a systems approach to healthy eating, addressing the socio-economic, political and cultural as well as nutritional factors involved.



# A Collaborative Approach to Community Health

The Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) was the first provincial initiative in Canada to recognize and financially support community-led solutions to increase food security.

It is estimated that one in ten British Columbians do not currently have access to healthy food. People most at risk are those in low-income and single-parent households, Aboriginal people, seniors and people in rural and remote communities. People who are food insecure are also at greater risk of having multiple chronic conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

Since 2005, CFAI has promoted food security by taking action along a continuum that ranges from providing emergency food for those in need (for instance food banks), to building capacity and access within the community (community kitchens, gardens, farmers markets, etc.), to redesigning the local food system for sustainability (through for instance production cooperatives, food councils, and food policy).

At the local level, BC's regional health authorities provide funding, support and expert advice to communities to support their food actions. Provincially – guided by a

CFAI's efforts are focused on the availability, affordability and quality of the food supply for British Columbians. Our food supply is impacted by the food system – a set of inter-related systems and functions including food production, gathering, hunting, fishing, processing and distribution as well as food recycling, composting and disposal.

multi-sectoral advisory committee – CFAI develops tools and resources that enhance regional health authority efforts.

This report highlights some of the local and provincial projects undertaken last year, and celebrates the progress being made towards improving food security across BC.



## Community Food Action Initiative at a Glance

### Overview

The Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) is a health promotion initiative aimed at increasing food security for all British Columbians, particularly those living with limited incomes. Funded by the BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport and coordinated by the Provincial Health Services Authority, CFAI is a collaborative effort among the ministry, BC's six health authorities and the community. CFAI activities are overseen by a provincial multi-sectoral advisory committee and implemented by an operations committee with representation from all health authorities.

### Objectives

Towards enhancing food security across BC, CFAI works to increase:

- Awareness about food security
- Access to local healthy food
- Food knowledge and skills
- Community capacity to address local food security
- Development and use of policy to support community food security

### Key Strategies

- Facilitate networks and linkages among community groups, provincial organizations and government ministries
- Share knowledge gained from community food security interventions
- Share better practices in food security
- Support development of food security policy
- Evaluate CFAI-funded initiatives
- Work collaboratively across sectors to increase food security in BC



## Highlights of 2007/08

Over the past year CFAI has made significant progress toward its goal of increased food security for British Columbians. At a provincial level, activities completed during the year include:

### Strategic focus

- Developing a provincial strategic plan and a communications plan in support of CFAI's strategies, which include: engaging key community food security partners; promoting the use of evidence and research; influencing public policy; and supporting community action.



# CFAI Year-in-Review 2007–2008

### Measuring effectiveness

- Completing a province-wide process evaluation of the first two years of CFAI to understand program effectiveness. The 155 projects funded, with amounts ranging from \$500 to \$30,000, leveraged an additional \$1 million in funding and 3250 volunteer workdays. Evaluation results underscore the importance of community-led solutions to increasing food security and show a high level of satisfaction with CFAI and strong support for its continued activity.



### The year ahead...

For 2008/09, CFAI has plans to:

- Produce a set of evidence-based information sheets on important issues impacting food security, for instance climate change and poverty. The information sheets are intended to inform dialogue and action towards improving local food security.
- Explore new ways to communicate with and provide resources to a range of stakeholders, including an electronic newsletter and a website.
- Using *A Seat at the Table* (see left under providing resources), to engage local governments and community groups in collaborative efforts focused on food security and the development of food policy.
- Building on our CFAI evaluation (see left under measuring effectiveness), integrate evaluation into the funding of health authority food action initiatives.

### Providing resources

- Producing the *Community Food Assessment Guide*, a planning tool to undertake a community food assessment. Food assessments support improvements to food-related public policy, greater awareness of food security issues and increased sustainability of the community food system.
- Producing *A Seat at the Table*, a resource guide to help local governments take action to promote food secure communities, local economies and sustainable environments.



## Increasing Food Security Across BC: A Government Priority

In 2005, food security was adopted as one of the Ministry of Health's 21 core programs for public health, making it an integral function for regional health authorities. Community food security is also one of the strategies of ActNow BC in support of its healthy eating target for the province.

Within the context of this heightened focus on food security, BC's regional health authorities support collaborative, community-based solutions to food issues through CFAI. Here are just a few examples:

### Fraser Health

#### Tools for building a more food secure future

CFAI funding last year enabled the Surrey/White Rock Food Action Coalition in Fraser Health to pilot and evaluate *Developing Organizational Food Policy*, a toolkit the coalition produced in 2006 to help organizations implement food policy in the workplace.

Evaluation of the toolkit involved an online survey of employees from organizations within the coalition to assess their understanding and interest in food policy. A clear majority of employees said they understood what food policy is, and that they would like their organizations to support local farmers and be more active in food security. Most employees did not know whether their organizations had any food policies, but wanted to know how to help develop them.

Following the survey, the coalition invited organizations to trial some of the food policy tools from its toolkit. Four organizations volunteered – a food bank, a corporate office, a non-profit agency serving children and youth, and a commercial catering company.

The most common toolkit idea tested was providing healthy food at meetings. This generated interest in another idea, purchasing local food. The pilot revealed some of the challenges in implementing food policies, such as finding appropriate suppliers. It also showed that success in implementing food policy hinges on having an appropriate champion to support the new policies, explaining the rationale for the policies to both employees and customers, and having a commitment to improving the health of employees.

We were surprised and pleased by our CFAI-supported survey results – specifically by how much interest employees have in the food policies of their employers.

**Pamela Kheong**  
Fraser Health Coordinator  
Food Security Program



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### Interior Health

#### Careful funding fertilizes food security initiatives across BC's interior

A three-pronged approach was taken to CFAI funding in the Interior last year. Communities who had not yet held a food forum could apply for up to \$5,000 in funding to organize such forums. Last year this funding was provided to the communities of Golden and Revelstoke.

Interior communities who had already held forums and developed food security priorities were eligible for implementation, assessment or planning grants of \$5,000. These “seed grants” were provided last year to Cranbrook, Creston, Kaslo, Kelowna and Salmon Arm, and to the Kootenay Food Strategy Society and the North Okanagan Food Action Coalition.

The third prong of CFAI funding in the Interior was directed to support model programs in support of food security. In this area, last year CFAI supported the second BC Indigenous Food Sovereignty conference, along with follow-up outreach meetings at the Snixt Nation (Nelson), Qwemtsin Health Society (Kamloops), Ki-Low-Na Friendship Centre (Kelowna), Siska Traditions (Lytton), Kelmuc Sharing Place (North Thompson Valley) and the Soda Creek Indian Band (Williams Lake).

Funding was also provided to the Heartland Foods and Farm Tours Cooperative, an organization of Kamloops-area farmers and ranchers who produce a broad range of agricultural products to meet the growing demand for locally produced foods.

CFAI funding was also made available to help representatives of Interior food action coalitions to attend the eighth annual gathering of the BC Food Systems Network in Sorrento.

Getting people to look at the value of their own food – in a nutritional sense, in a cultural sense, in a spiritual sense – is very empowering.

**Dawn Morrison**  
Community developer  
Secwempc (Shuswap)  
Nation member

 **Interior Health**  
[www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)

### Northern Health

#### A healthier lunch – Bringing fresh produce to school kids

In Northern Health last year, CFAI funded a *Farm to School Salad Bar* pilot project in Quesnel, which provided fresh local food to children at their school. The success of the project has encouraged Northern Health to pursue funding to expand the initiative to schools across the health authority.

CFAI funding also supported production of a local food directory in Prince George, and the work of the city's food policy council, which produced a report with a series of recommendations concerning local food security.

With CFAI support, food security initiatives across the North were highlighted in an eight-page Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) newsletter distributed to over 200 individuals and programs in northern BC last summer. CFAI funding also helped the community of Hazelton to build a demonstration garden/greenhouse and to do outreach with two schools in the community.

A regional food security gathering supported by CFAI last year attracted 38 participants from a dozen northern communities, as well as regional and provincial representatives. One workshop, led by MLA John Rustad (Omenica), gathered information from participants that was later summarized in a CFAI-funded document, *Changing the Place of Food*, which was distributed to regional and provincial decision makers. One of the gathering's objectives was to hear from grassroots organizations and community food security champions about priorities for HEAL in the coming years. This information will be used to develop a strategic plan for the food security component of HEAL.

**Participating in the salad bar project was a treat – and a change from bagged lunches! Parents know their child is eating well, and my son even asked to buy different foods for home meals.**

**Since the beginning of the salad bar program, my child is now eating more fruits and vegetables and is open to trying new things.**

*Comments from parents on the CFAI-funded Farm to School Salad Bar project survey.*



**northern health**  
www.northernhealth.ca

## Vancouver Coastal Health

### More community gardens taking root

The past year has seen a continued expansion of food security initiatives and successful projects in communities throughout Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). For example, 19 food-producing community gardens have now been developed and ten more are in development. In Bella Coola, 745 kilograms of fruit was harvested and distributed. On the North Shore, the Edible Garden Project supplied 350 individuals with a total of 1,040 kilograms of produce, more than three times the expected harvest.

CFAI projects across VCH involve 147 intersectoral partnerships. These partnerships have resulted in land donations for community gardens (e.g. Translink's donation in Vancouver), the potential inclusion of urban agriculture and food security in official community plans (e.g. District of North Vancouver), community coalitions to address city policy about food security (Vancouver Urban Agricultural Network), and the establishment of gardens in low-income housing developments (District of North Vancouver).

Over the past year CFAI supported VCH staff presentations on food security to a variety of key stakeholders including municipal

representatives, MLAs, city councillors, and school trustees in communities throughout the health authority. Toward informing and engaging the public, CFAI estimates its food security messages reached more than 3,500 people in Bella Coola, 10,000 households in Richmond, 2,000 people in Powell River and 3,410 people in the Sea to Sky area.

**CFAI funding has allowed our region to accelerate the development of a network of people, projects, and organizations. We are seeing the tangible results of this network, in the form of increased interest in local eating, small-scale food production, food preservation, and other aspects of regional food security.**

**David Parkinson**

*Powell River Employment Program Society*



www.vch.ca

## Vancouver Island Health Authority

### CFAI helps prepare the ground for growth of action plans

Fifteen communities from Victoria to Port Hardy and on the surrounding islands received CFAI funding last year. Many well-established groups began implementing previously developed community food action plans, which in turn encouraged new communities to create their own plans. CFAI funding also fostered the emergence of "pocket markets," bringing local produce to areas within the Capital Region that would not normally have access to such food.

In the Cowichan Valley, Alderlea Farm welcomed participants from all over Vancouver Island for the 2008 Farm Café Symposium – a gathering of key stakeholders to share knowledge and increase skills in a venue perfectly suited to the germination of new ideas.

The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) has provided leadership for the communities of southern Vancouver Island for over a decade. The objectives of the roundtable are to increase the viability of farming, reduce hunger, increase the supply, consumption and diversity of locally produced and processed foods, and increase the community's knowledge of and involvement with food and agricultural issues. CFAI funds have enabled this broad partnership to promote further community collaboration. One of CR-FAIR's recent initiatives is working with the Capital Region District on the development of a food policy council.

**CFAI funding has allowed a diverse group of service providers to come together and provide many children with basic cooking skills that will give them the ability and confidence in the kitchen.**

**Cathy Cross,**

*Cool Cooks/Family Cooks Program, Port Alberni, BC*



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## CFAI Regional Leads

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(until August 2008)

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THESE COMMUNITIES:

ABBOTSFORD • AGASSIZ • ALDERGROVE

BEECHER BAY • BELLA BELLA • BELLA COOLA

BOSTON BAR • BURNABY • CHILLIWACK

COLWOOD • COMOX VALLEY • CORTES ISLAND

COWICHAN VALLEY • CRANBROOK • CRESTON

DELTA • ESQUIMALT • FORT ST. JOHN

GOLDEN • GREATER VICTORIA • GWA'YI

VILLAGE • HAZELTON • JAMES BAY

KAMLOOPS INDIAN RESERVE • KAMLOOPS • KASLO

KELOWNA • LANGLEY • LYTTON FIRST NATIONS

MAPLE RIDGE • MISSION • NANAIMO • NELSON

NEW WESTMINSTER • NORTH OKANAGAN

NORTH SHORE • NORTH THOMPSON VALLEY

PITT MEADOWS • PORT HARDY • PORT MOODY

POWELL RIVER • PRINCE GEORGE • QUESNEL

REVELSTOKE • RICHMOND • SALMON ARM • SEA TO SKY

(SQUAMISH, WHISTLER, PEMBERTON) • SNIXT NATION

SOOKE • SUNSHINE COAST • SURREY • TERRACE

VANCOUVER • WHITE ROCK • WILLIAMS LAKE

## CFAI Provincial Advisory Committee

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### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Hamm, M. and Bellows, A. (2003).  
*Journal of Nutrition Education Behaviour*. 35: 37-43.