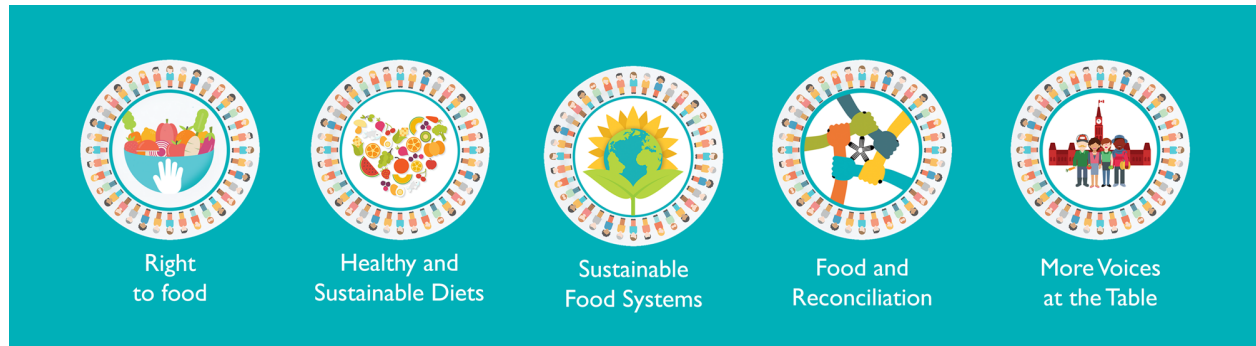


FIVE BIG IDEAS FOR A BETTER FOOD SYSTEM

A PROPOSAL FROM FOOD SECURE CANADA FOR A *FOOD POLICY FOR CANADA*



Unhealthy diets claim more lives than any other cause of death; our food system employs more Canadians than any other sector, yet too many are not paid a livable wage, and the food system is responsible for up to 50 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. Fixing our food system is therefore critical to addressing our most urgent health, economic, and environmental problems.

Despite this, Canada currently does not have a national food policy that we need to govern the many aspects of food and how it makes its way to our plates (or is wasted along the way). Instead, we have a patchwork of agricultural policy, health policy, trade policy, environmental policy, social policy, and so on. In order to create a better food system, we need to start thinking more comprehensively about how we govern our food, from farm to fork.

It seems the federal government is finally listening. Prime Minister Trudeau has tasked Minister of Agriculture Lawrence MacAulay with developing a national food policy to put more healthy Canadian food on the tables of families across the country and, we hope, to ensure access to good, healthy food for all.

Food Secure Canada, an alliance of organizations and individuals working toward a healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food system, is campaigning to bring citizens' voices to federal policy makers to ensure this policy helps all Canadians eat better.

OUR FIVE BIG IDEAS

Realize the human right to food



Canada has ratified the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which gives our government the legal duty to guarantee its citizens the right to adequate food. Yet four million Canadians, among them 1.15 million children, have trouble putting food on the table. This problem is far worse in northern and remote communities, where, in Nunavut, for example, two-thirds of children are food insecure.

What government can do:

- Through Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy, improve social programs and work to ensure there is an income floor below which no one can fall so that all Canadians can afford adequate, nutritious food.
- Overhaul Nutrition North to improve access and affordability of food while strengthening northern regional food systems, including public support for programs enhancing access to traditional foods.
- Ensure that international trade and investment agreements do not undermine public programs that enhance respect for human rights, sustainable livelihoods and/or food sovereignty.

Champion healthy and sustainable diets

The government has announced a Healthy Eating Strategy, which is a great first step, but more is needed to help Canadians make healthy food choices. The way Canadians eat affects not only their health but also impacts climate change and the environment. We need to address unhealthy diets to reduce the rapidly growing rates of diet-related disease that threaten to overwhelm our health care system, and we need to shift to diets that are good for our health and our planet.



What government can do:

- Integrate sustainability into Canada's Food Guide, creating a strong policy link between healthy eating and sustainable food production.
- Create a national healthy school food program to ensure that all school children learn basic food skills and have access to healthy, nutritious meals every day.
- Set targets for local, sustainable food procurement by public institutions to ensure public spaces are healthy spaces.

Support sustainable food systems



Unsustainable farming and fishing practices put a huge strain on our land, waterways, and oceans, threatening the viability of our food-production systems. What's more, Canadians waste forty per cent of the food we produce, costing us \$31 billion yearly. And almost 50 per cent of Canadian farmers are 55 years or older, with only one in 12 having someone to replace them when they retire, which has led to a decline in the number of farms.

What government can do:

- Through the next Agricultural Policy Framework, incentivize and reward best practices in environmental sustainability and climate resiliency and provide significant support for new farmers and organic transition.
- Take leadership and work with provincial, territorial and municipal governments to ensure less food is wasted at every stage from farm to fork.
- Revise Canada's Fisheries Act to better protect fish habitats and support sustainable fisheries in coastal communities.

Make food a part of reconciliation

Food was often used as a tool of colonization, but it can also be used as a tool for healing and reconciliation. Indigenous food systems are deeply connected to Indigenous economies, cultures, health, and well-being. Fundamental values of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and redistribution once guided relations in the diverse network of Indigenous food systems across Canada.



What government can do:

- Work with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to ensure they have more sovereignty over the foods they eat and are guaranteed access to traditional land-based foods and fishing and hunting rights.
- Support Indigenous leadership that is tackling the epidemic of diet-related disease and food insecurity among Indigenous populations.

Invite more voices to the table



Canadians - whether eaters, cooks, community groups, producers, workers, or food entrepreneurs - want a say in how their food is produced and in bringing about the necessary changes to our food system. We need to take the discussion out from behind closed doors where industry and government decide what is best for the rest of us and join the conversation.

What government can do:

- Ensure the consultations on national food policy are accessible and comprehensive and that special steps are taken to hear the voices of people living in food insecurity, youth, and civil society organizations, and not only industry.
- Create a National Food Policy Council that would bring stakeholders from across the food system to help the government make smart, common-sense decisions about the food we eat.

The launch of national food policy consultations is welcome and exciting. Canada has everything we need to be a world food-policy leader - natural abundance, universal health care, culinary diversity, dynamic businesses, a vibrant and engaged civil society, and a citizenry that loves talking about and eating good food. Let's tell the government it is time to eliminate hunger and elevate food as a critical element in our plans for a more sustainable and healthy country.