



Good Food Gathering *Report*

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About



The Good Food Program is a project of the Squamish Food Policy Council (SFPC) and identified as a priority action item from our Squamish Valley Agricultural Plan which supports Action 2.4 - to support local procurement initiatives. The Good Food Program aims to shift the buying power in the Squamish to Lillooet Region towards procuring more locally grown food by implementing Good Food Values. The Good Food Values being advocated for are: 1) Local Economies & Communities; 2) Environmental Sustainability; 3) Nutrition; 4) Animal Welfare; and 5) Valued Workforce.

Institutions from school districts, local governments and health care, and businesses from restaurants, retail and offices make significant food purchases; they can strategically leverage their purchasing power to generate greater health and wealth in communities. How and where procurement dollars are spent can have important economic, employment, social, and environmental impacts. We are working to bring local food players to the table to take a coordinated approach in achieving Good Food Values across the region through the implementation of pertinent research, planning, policy, and programming.

In Phase 1 all five municipal and regional governments pledged to adopt Good Food Values into their purchasing decisions with the intent to develop policy. Phase 2 identified best practices and conducted interviews across the region to identify the key barriers to purchasing and selling locally grown food. In Phase 3 we hosted our first Good Food Gathering series as a means to network and further identify barriers to purchasing and selling locally grown food, and to conduct a SWOT analysis with diverse food players from across the region in order to identify the next steps. In Phase 4 the SFPC will conduct a Farm and Food Hub Feasibility Study for community needs in partnership with the District of Squamish. In Phase 5, the SFPC will be applying the learnings gleaned in these Gatherings and from the Study to offer more events, programs, and opportunities to purchase locally grown food across the region.

About

The Good Food Program is a multi-year, multi-phase project that takes both top-down (policy), and bottom-up (access, programs) approaches. The attendee contributions through the SWOT analysis will help to identify the next steps and inform policy recommendations.

Phase 1: All local and regional governments in the Squamish to Lillooet Region sign on with intent to develop policy

Phase 2: Research & Best Practices



Phase 3: Gatherings & Policy Recommendations

Phase 4: Feasibility study for Farm Hub

Phase 5: Next steps** (certification and branding, & infrastructure needs)

Goals



We have seen that the shape of a food system impacts a community's climate footprint as well as its overall health and wellbeing. Food self-reliance has been identified as a key climate change strategy in British Columbia. The Squamish to Lillooet Region (Furry Creek to Lillooet), is largely dependent on imported foods. The area is also facing population growth, development pressure on agricultural land, and increased risks of flooding, wildfire, and drought due to climate change. The region has a well established small and medium-scale agricultural community in Pemberton and Lillooet, a growing number of farms in Squamish, and great potential for more.

GOALS:

- Create a local, resilient, and accessible food economy in the Squamish to Lillooet region
- Increase our community's health and wellbeing
- Meet the challenges of climate change on a local scale
- Ensure that farmers and food producers earn a living wage
- Increase equitable community access to local food
- Work with community partners and diverse food players across the region

Why we gathered

The Squamish Food Policy Council convened the gathering of diverse food sector players from across the Squamish to Lillooet Region over the course of two events called the Good Food Gatherings. The inaugural event offered to Farms & Restaurants took place on November 8th, 2022 at the Raven Room in Whistler, and the second event for Institutions & Policy Makers took place on November 23rd, 2022 at the Squamish Public Library. The goal of the Good Food Gatherings were to bring together farmers, buyers, and policy makers from across the Squamish to Lillooet Region to forge new relationships, learn about our regional food system, and identify the pertinent gaps within it in order to begin to imagine a vision for the future of food and agriculture in our communities. The Good Food Gatherings are part of the Good Food Program, which aims to strengthen local food procurement policy and purchasing in the Squamish to Lillooet Region.

The Good Food Program aims to shift the buying power in the Squamish to Lillooet Region towards procuring more locally grown food by implementing **Good Food Values:**



LOCAL ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES



NUTRITION



VALUED WORKFORCE



ANIMAL WELFARE

Who was there?

A total of **95 attendees** were present, including representatives from:

27 Farms, 22 Restaurants, and 8 Food Processors, 9 Government staff and Elected Officials, 8 Non-profits & Food Banks, 3 Health Care, 6 Education, and 3 Industry



Relationships

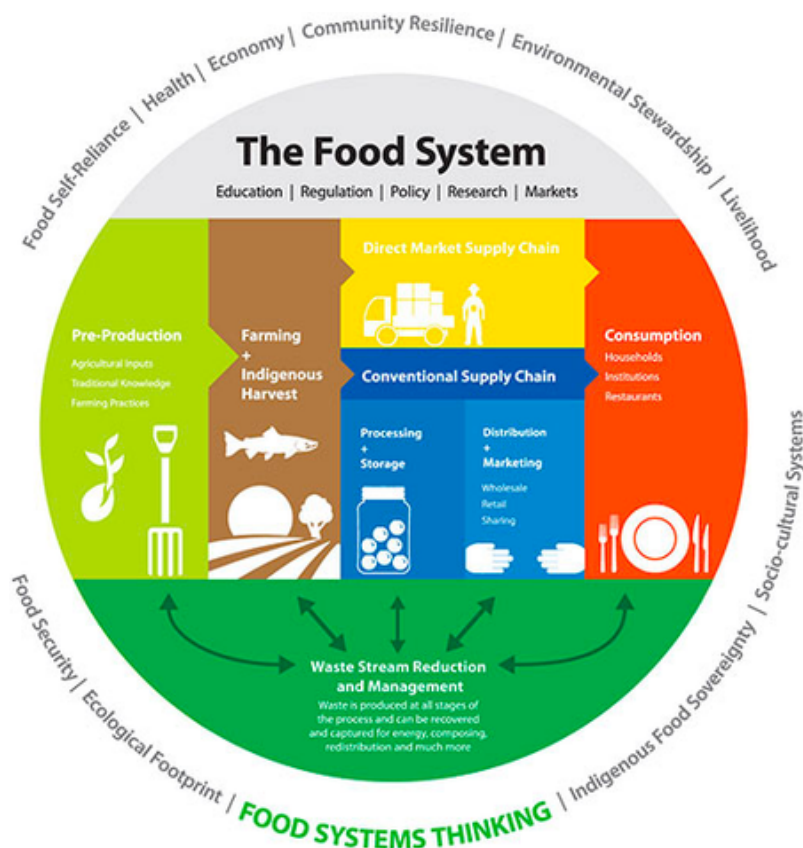
The momentum of this project and inspiration that drives this work forward are the partnerships that have been formed with various agencies involved in our local food system. For, a sustainable food system is made of up relationships between soil, plants, animals, and people. These partners represent key stakeholders in helping to identify and understand current purchasing practices in the Squamish Lillooet Region, lessons learned from other communities across the country and how food in the broader public and private sector can be increased. Forming and nurturing these relationships also assist to provide an understanding of the types of foods grown, limitations to production, barriers to accessing locally grown food, and a thriving and just food system for all.

What did we do?

By gathering at the same table, Farmers & Restaurants formed new relationships, learned about our regional food system, and identified gaps for improvement to ultimately begin to imagine a vision for the future of food and farms in our communities. Attendees left with new business contacts, knowing more about our local farms and restaurants, and a deeper understanding of our food economy.

Policy Makers & Institutions left armed with tools and resources to be local food champions, with a better understanding of the community impacts and benefits of supporting our local food economy, how to implement effective procurement policy, how to strengthen investment in local food, and where to begin addressing current gaps.

These events were a win-win for all involved in the agriculture, food processing, institutional and tourism sectors as we begin to understand our roles in shaping the future of our regional food system.



farmers & restaurants agenda

- **Community Snapshots:** Hear about the Good Food Program and from our local government about current community stats and projects
- **A Farmer-Restaurant Success Story** with Eric Griffith, co-owner of Alta Bistro and Chair of Restaurant Association of Whistler, and Simone McIsaac and Ariella Falkowski from Rootdown Farm
- **A vision for the future of food in our region:** Begin to solve the top barriers to buying local identified in our region, help us shape policy recommendations with a guided SWOT analysis, and imagine what is possible for our region!
- **Canapés and Connect:** Enjoy local fares prepared by the Raven Room highlighting seasonal and locally grown food while networking with other Farms and Foodie Folk from the region

institutions & policy-makers agenda

- **Good Food Program Presentation:** Who and what is on the table?
- **Local Food Landscape & Panel Discussion:** Hear about the Good Food Program and from regional experts
- **Local Procurement Success Story:** Thunder Bay Area Dan Munshaw and Karen Kerk
- **Buy with Impact:** Why social procurement matters and how to apply a food lens with Tori Williamson from Buy Social Canada
- **SWOT Analysis and Network** with Simon Fraser University Food Systems Lab

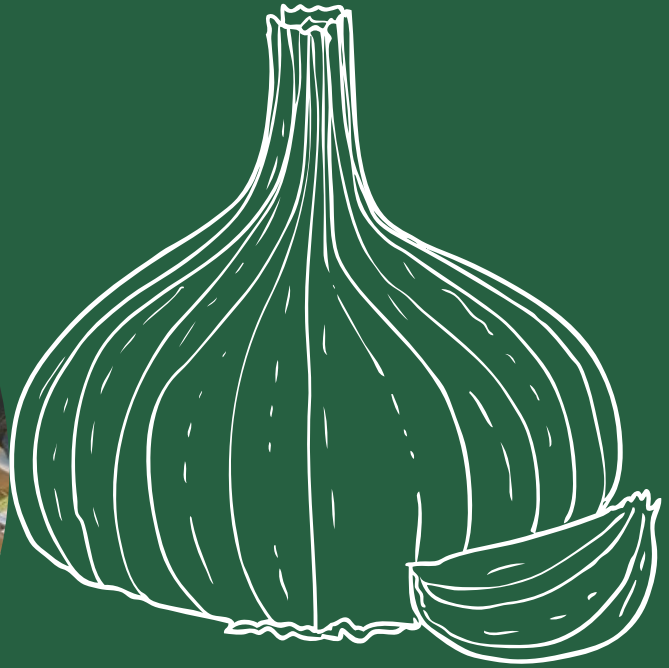


Who presented?

The Farmers & Restaurants Gathering Kicked off with an overview of the Good Food Program presented by Gaby Barnes from the SFPC, and community snapshots provided by Claire Dewar, a Senior Planner from the Squamish Lillooet Regional District, Gizem Kaya Program Manager from Whistler Community Services Society, and Kate Mulligan, an Economic Development Officer from the District of Squamish. The presenters gave an overview of current food and farm challenges and opportunities their community and the region are facing, and an update on what projects are underway to address this in their respective positions. Next, Ariella Falkowski and Simone McIsaac from Rootdown Farm and Eric Griffith, co-owner of Alta Bistro and Chair of Restaurant Association of Whistler (RAW), shared their story of their relationship as long-time suppliers/purchasing partners and key takeaways for farms and restaurants interested in establishing more local relationships.

The Policy Makers & Institutions Gathering began with a presentation by Gaby Barnes of the SFPC discussing the Good Food Program. Following this panelists Allison Westwood, Regional Dietician for Vancouver Coastal; Ione Smith Founder of Upland Consulting, Kate Mulligan, Economic Development Officer for the District of Squamish; and Krystle tenBrink, Executive Director of Squamish Food Policy Council answered questions diving into the social, health, environmental, economic, and future of food opportunities and challenges facing to the Squamish to Lillooet Region and beyond. Karen Kerk, Coordinator for Food Strategy Thunder Bay, and Dan Munshaw, Supply Management Manager for the City of Thunder Bay, presented (virtually) Thunder Bay's journey to increasing local food procurement in their city's long-term care facility. Lastly, Tori Williamson Director of Education and Consultation from Buy Social Canada presented "Why social procurement matters and how to apply a food lens".

What were the SWOT analysis findings?



Strengths

What Farm and Food assets does the Squamish to Lillooet Region have?

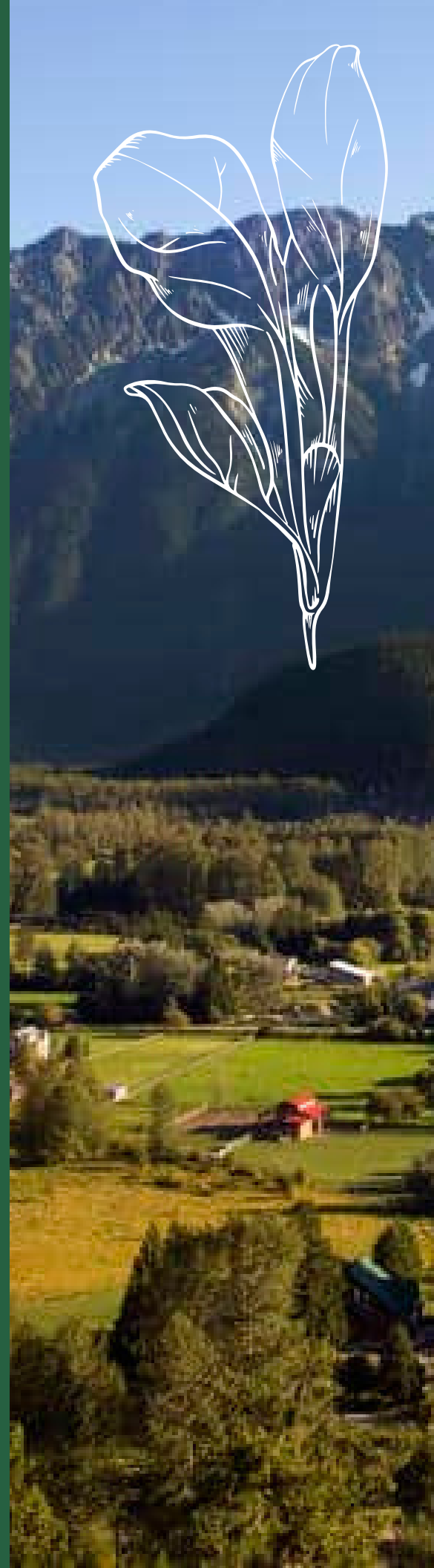
- Coordinated regional approach and existing relationships
- Pre-existing data and information about gaps and opportunities
- Farm and Land capacity
- Fertile land, good growing conditions, and protected ALR
- Diversity of Producers
- Hunting, Fishing, and Farming
- Economic Opportunities in tourism, innovation, and business
- A growing population
- A community that appreciates and values nature, health, and local food
- Existing community food and farm events: Slow Food Cycle. Farmers Markets
- Local Initiates (Good Food Program, Regional Dietician, Farm to School Program. Nourish, Under One Roof)
- SD48 gardens & farm, community gardens, food literacy education
- Reconciliation and Traditional Knowledge holders in Skwxwú7mesh, St'át'imc and Lil'wat nations and a commitment to building relationships
- We have groups (SFPC, etc) and government committing to driving this work forward with policy



Weaknesses

What resources in our community are lacking to create a thriving food system? What disadvantages do we have?

- Lacking supportive infrastructure (co-ops, abattoirs, storage, processing, transportation and delivery)
- High costs of land and lack of housing for workers
- Competition with big business
- Access to government grants and relief
- Education and expectations about seasonality, costs, climates
- Socio-economic insecurities
- Large geographic area with varying supply and demand
- Food in healthcare falls under operations and is not considered a form of medicine
- Land, Geography and Distribution (transportation, distance, weather impacts, single highway connectivity. supply chain complexities)
- ALR Land being used for other uses (golfing, development)
- Under-utilized ALR Land / not in production
- Vancouver-centric approach to healthcare (not localized)
- Loss of culinary programs at schools
- Lack of emergency preparedness for food supplies
- Food as a security issue / lack of sovereignty and reliance on imports



Opportunities

What changes in our communities and region can we tap into and how? What is missing that we need to be doing?

- Value-added partnerships, opportunities for collaboration, sharing assets
- Business opportunities to build infrastructure and create impact
- Public buy-in, education, programs, policy, events
- Creating a regional destination, brand, culture
- Asset-sharing and tool building
- Establishing regional procurement targets
- Champions and momentum to move action and implementation (Good Food Program, and institutional champions)
- Government and Institution Funding and Policy
- Repatriation of food services at VCH
- Widespread structured purchasing contracts to favour 'Good Food' values
- National School Food Program
- Redistribution of social responsibility for procurement from individual to collective
- Events and film opportunity for by-laws to procure locally
- Aligned province and federal priority with lots of investment dollars



Threats

What obstacles do you face to buying and selling locally?

What global and local changes are threatening your ability to operate successfully?

- Weather, extreme weather events, changing climate (fire, drought, highway closures)
- High costs of land
- Complicated red tape, policies, expenses, licensing processes
- Geographical logistics
- Provincial blanket regulations/policies gap (One size fits all governance)
- Monopolization of federal contracts by large businesses
- Certification to sell in grocery store (Canadian gap certification)
- Changes in growing seasons due to environmental disasters and extreme weather
- School programs are champions, not institutionalized
- Inflation and cost of living





Next steps

By gathering at the same table, and forming new relationships between farmers, buyers, and institutions we have taken the first step to establishing a resilient and thriving food system for the Squamish to Lillooet Region. A food system is made up of diverse players with different roles but a common ground: *food*. The collaboration of farmers, organizations, and consumers to aggregate and distribute resources to make food available in a given area is essential to a healthy local food economy. By building supply-chains that prioritize local, sustainable farmers and businesses, governments and institutions can harness their purchasing power to contribute to healthy communities and local food economies.

Through developing policy and implementing programming at a community level with diverse partnerships, the Good Food Program aims to establish the foundation for a resilient and thriving local food system. The information collected in the SWOT analysis at both events helps to determine the priority areas for the next steps of the Good Food Program.

Each food player has a role to play in their own networks and circles of influence to make *Good Food Choices*. **Email gaby@squamishcan.net to collaborate on your next steps, and stay tuned to learn about future Good Food Program offerings and actions.**

As stated in the Future of Food in order to achieve a sustainable food system we “require recognizing that food is not simply a commodity but a central aspect of our social, cultural, historical and environmental realities, with a tremendous impact on the quality of our lives as citizens and as communities.”