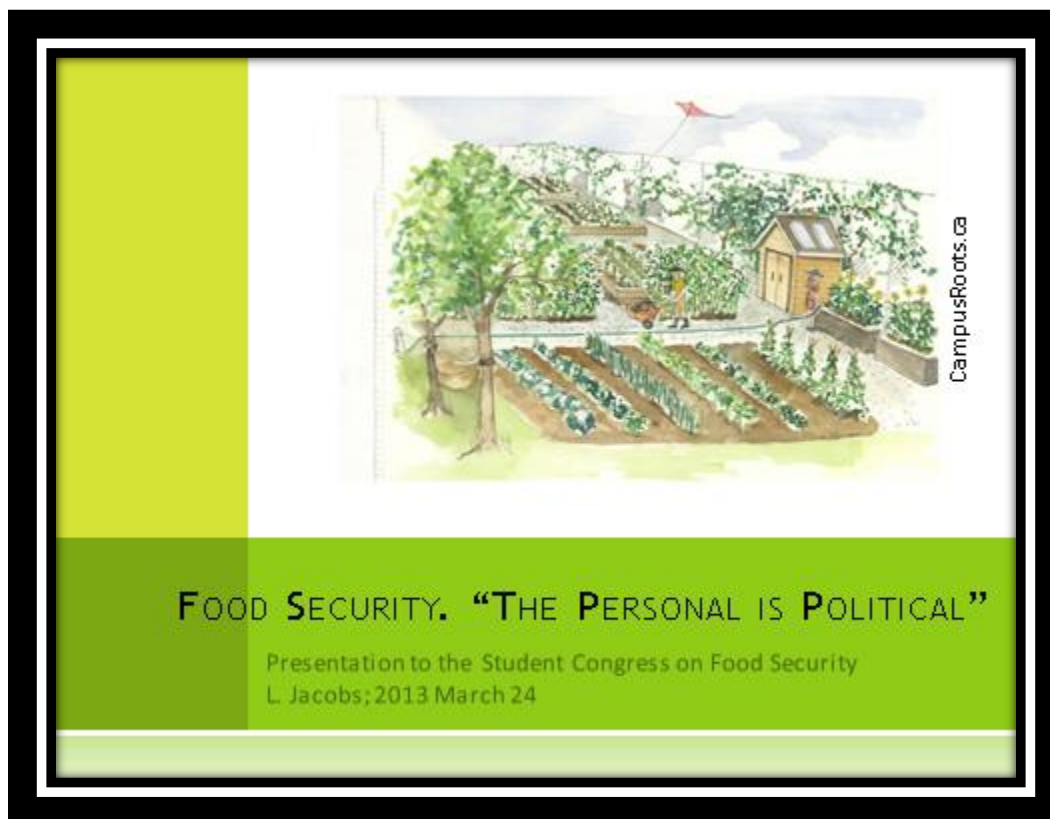


## ***Food Security. “The Personal is Political.”***

Keynote Address to the Student Congress on Food Security, University of Lethbridge, 2013 March 24

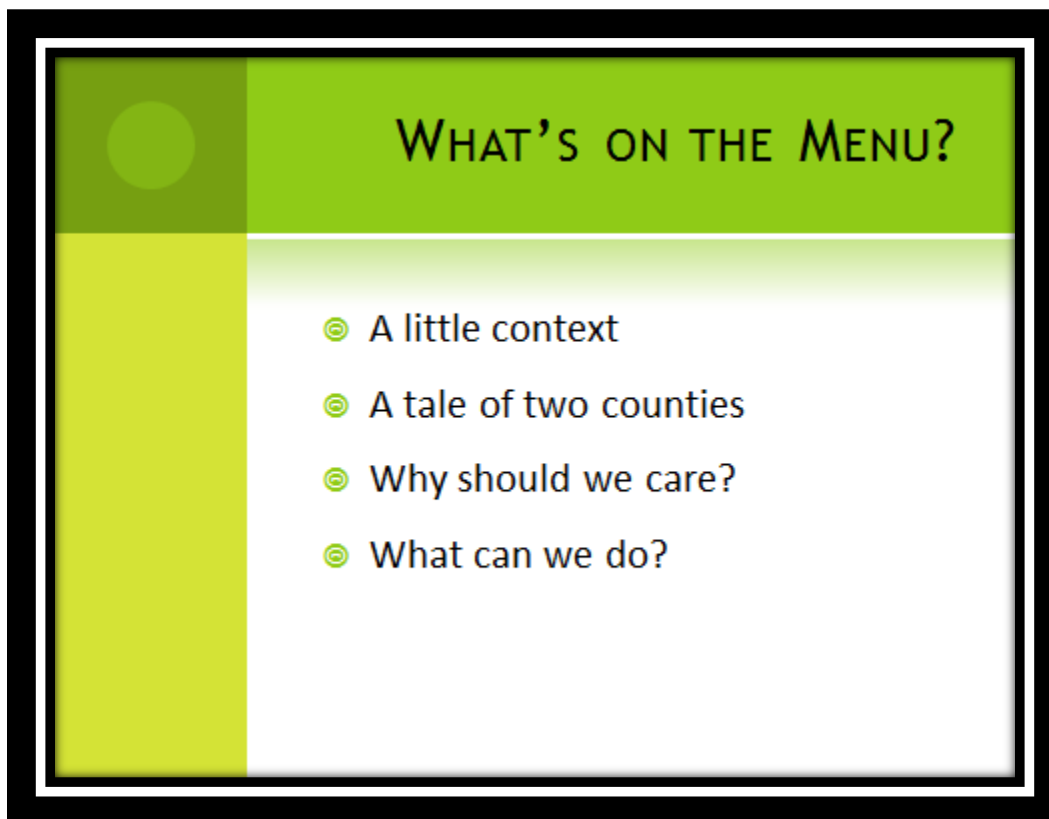
Abstract: Everyone agrees that food security is a necessary goal and that Canada should have a national food strategy. Where there is disagreement is in how food security is best achieved and at the root of THAT disagreement are differences about what “food” is and what is meant by “security.” By telling the tale of two countries, Cuba and Canada, I will reference the challenges to food security inherent in our global food system, touch on some efforts to address these challenges at the national level, and then speak to my experience and actions taking care of my personal food security.



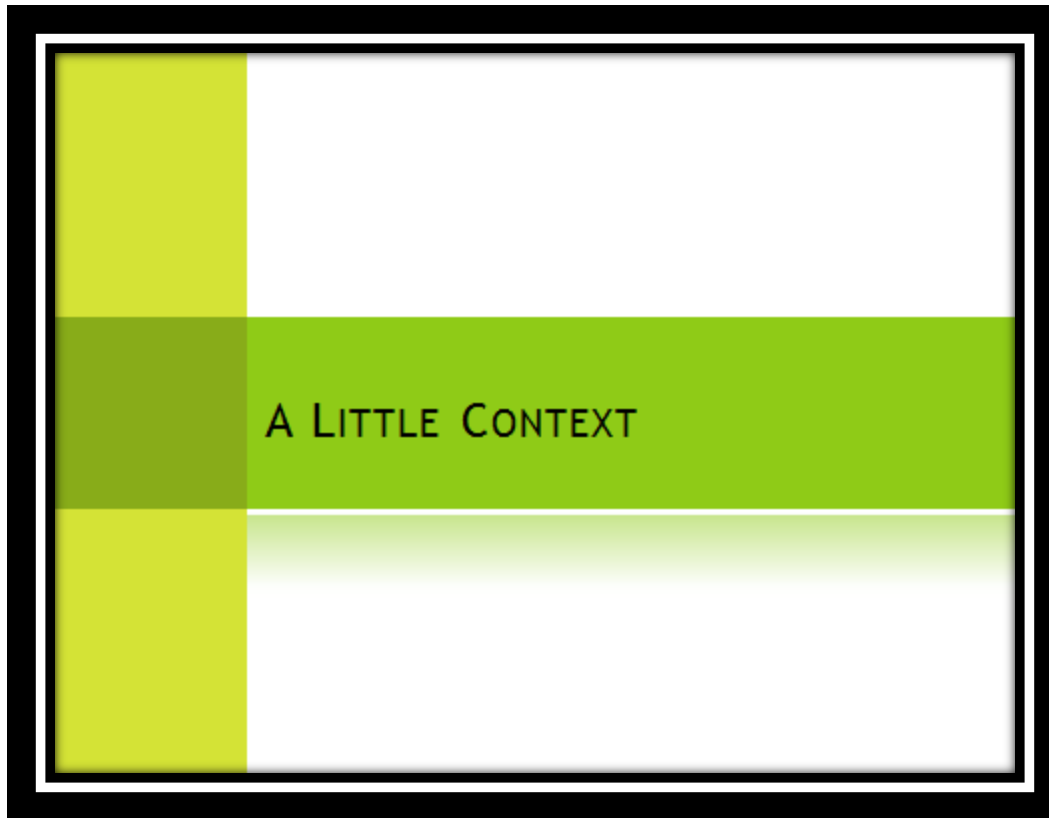
Thank you. I have to confess that I was and am feeling a bit nervous about this gig and a couple of weeks ago, I had a panic attack and told Trina, I couldn't do this to which she replied quite calmly, “yes you can” and reminded me that I can talk and talk about this stuff. And I can and perhaps that is the problem. I only have 20 minutes and Trina knows I can go for hours.

As well, this is not a topic of research for me in the same way that academic librarianship is my research interest but it is a topic of personal and profound interest given that I see food as a basic need to sustain myself. And, as I learn more about the global food system as it is, I am more moved than ever and to the extent possible, to take control of my own food security while at the same time, working with others to shape our food system into one that does not see food as a commodity and does not de-personalize the people involved both in production and in consumption.

My title, “the personal is political,” actually has its roots in feminism and refers to the observation that awareness of an issue as a consequence of oppression is as important as action against such oppression. So while the phrase from the 1960s referred to the conditions of women in the context of power relationships, for my purposes, I am saying that understanding the global food system is the first step to reconciling your own stand within it and any actions you take as a result.

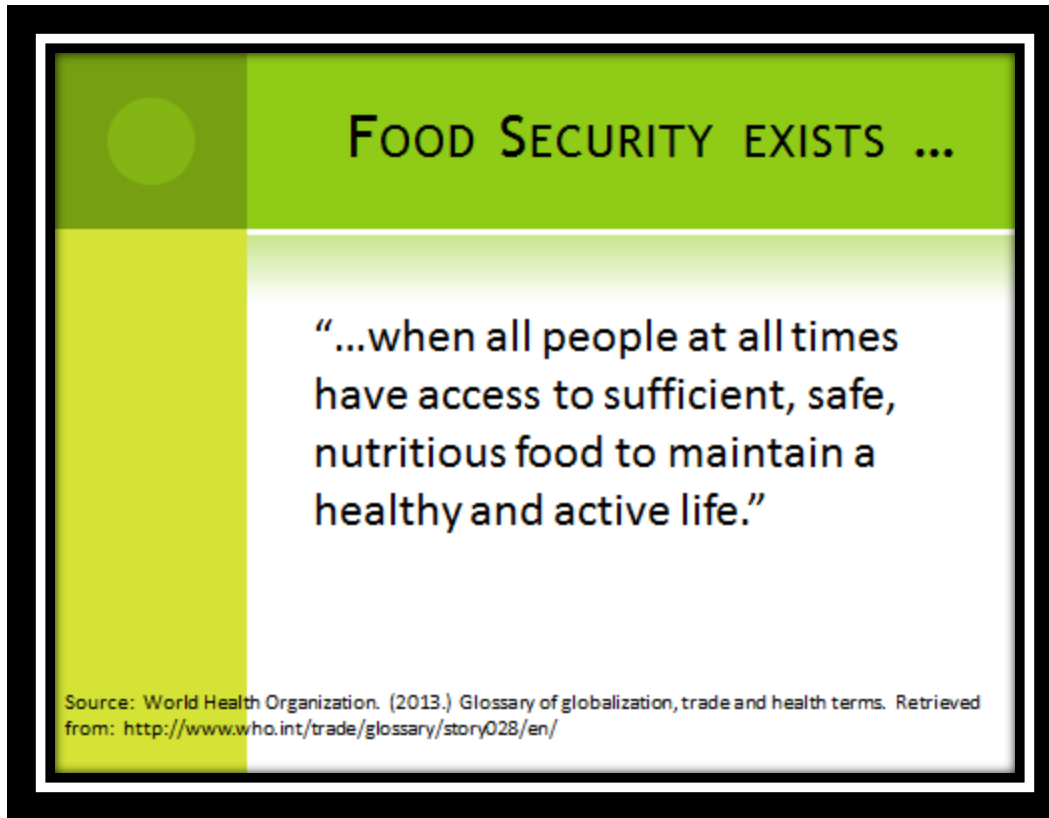


My goal for this talk is to lead us into the presentations of our students so what I am going to do first is make sure we are all on the same page with respect to context. Then I want to tell you the tale of two countries and in the context of discussing food security, point out some issues of concern with our present food system. And, finally, I will let the students take over and tell us what THEY have learned.



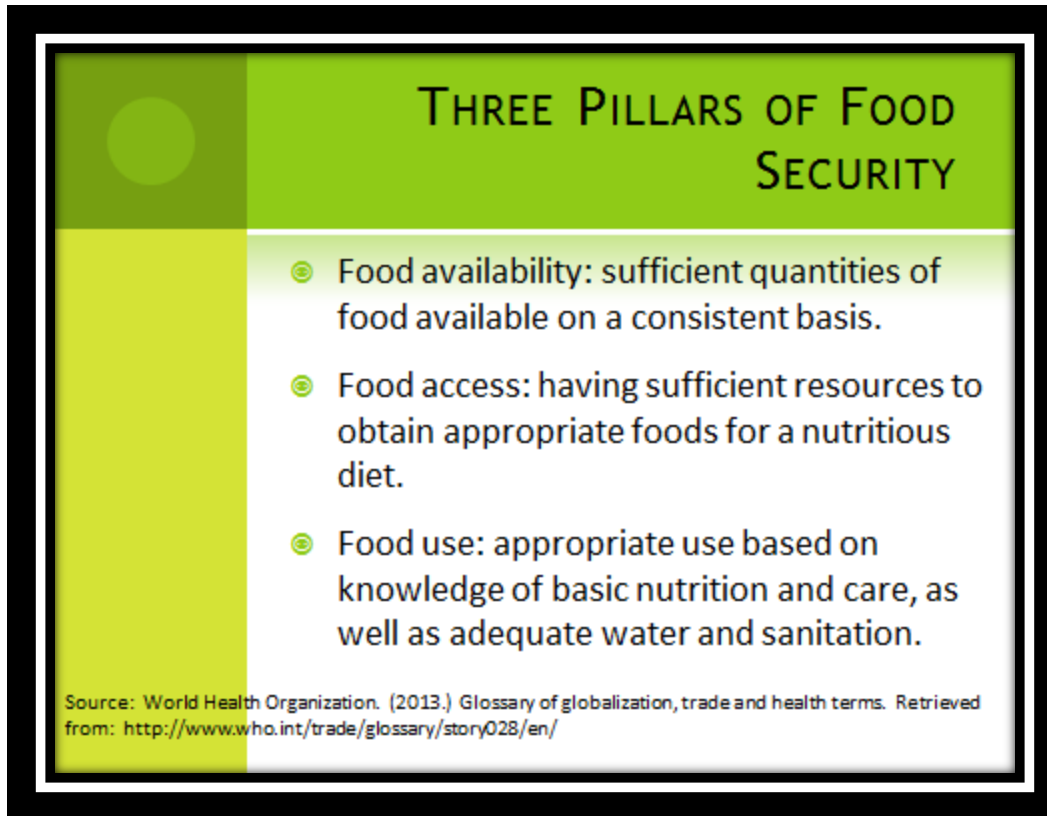
Now for me, the first step on my quest for understanding was becoming food aware and, as always, there are events that happen that serve as wake-up calls. In the case of food, the wake-up calls usually are health related and the response is to start noticing what you are eating. I call this food awareness and it is about reading labels and noting salt, sugar and fat contents as well as the food additives.

Then you start to pay attention food safety. How is my food handled? Is it free from bacterial contamination? And if you are paying attention to food safety issues, such as the recent prolonged closure of XL Foods in Brooks with their E.coli contamination, you might begin to wonder why on earth the closure of one meat-packing plant is so disruptive to the flow of beef into the food system and the flow of meat products out of the system. And that should logically, lead you to start to wondering about the security in the supply of your food.



This is the definition of Food Security as published by the World Health Organization: "Food security exists when ALL people at ALL times have sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life."

For most of the individuals in this room, food security may not be the most pressing issue in your INDIVIDUAL life BUT as citizens in the collectivist society, it should be THE most pressing issue in OUR lives. Food is required by all of us. If we don't have it, we do anything to get it. Poverty leads to hunger leads to violence. Food security matters.



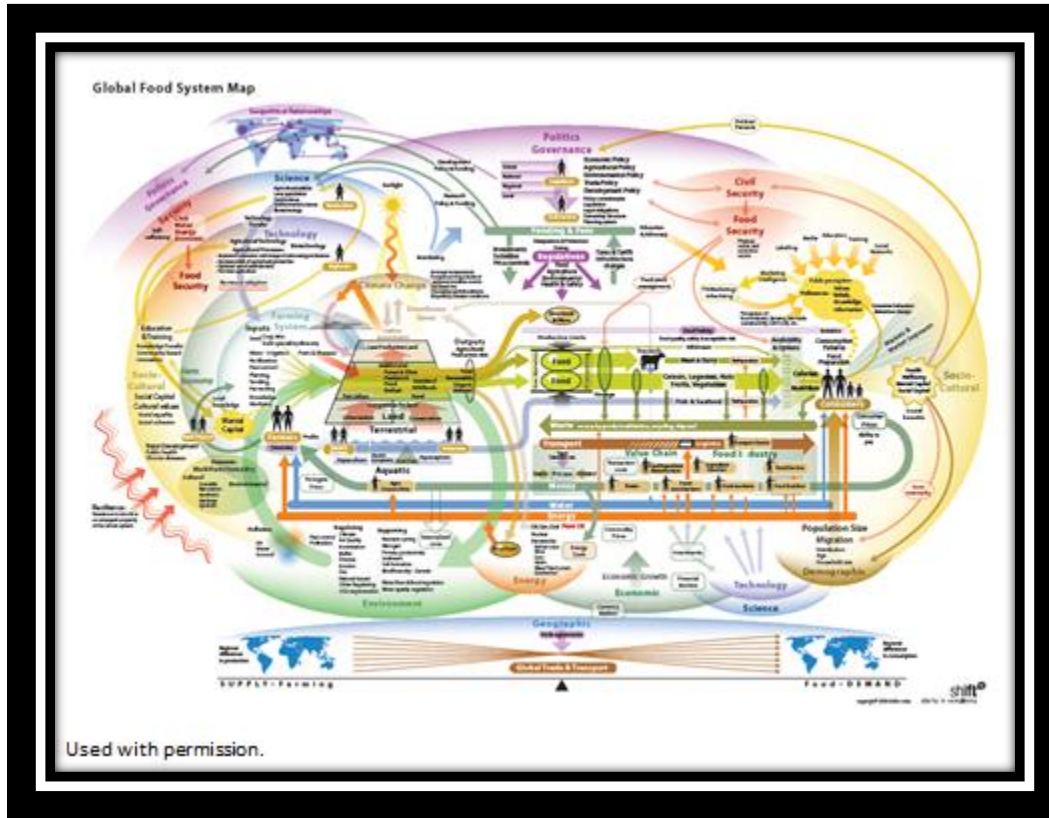
The World Health Organization goes on to describe food security as:

- 1) Availability to sufficient (underscore “sufficient”) food on a consistent basis – our body needs to be consistently fuelled.
- 2) Resources to obtain nutritious food – and this relates not only money to buy food but also access to the outlets for food.
- 3) Knowledge to safely prepare the food – and in my lifetime, I contend that this has been delegated to the food processing industry as we have come to increasingly rely on prepared foods and fast foods.

Now, in 2011-2012, a few of my colleagues across campus decided to collaborate in their teaching and research and lecture series, on the topic of food. And I had the good fortune to be able to sit in on a Liberal Education class that looked at food from a variety of perspectives. As a warm-up, however, the students were asked to study a book written by Marion Nestle, a professor in nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University, called “What to eat.”

Nestle took us on a tour of the supermarket and discussed the food we find on our supermarket shelves from the perspective of nutrition, pros and cons of organically grown food, and most importantly, the politics in food industry. I had just experienced a “dot” in my understanding of the global food system. I

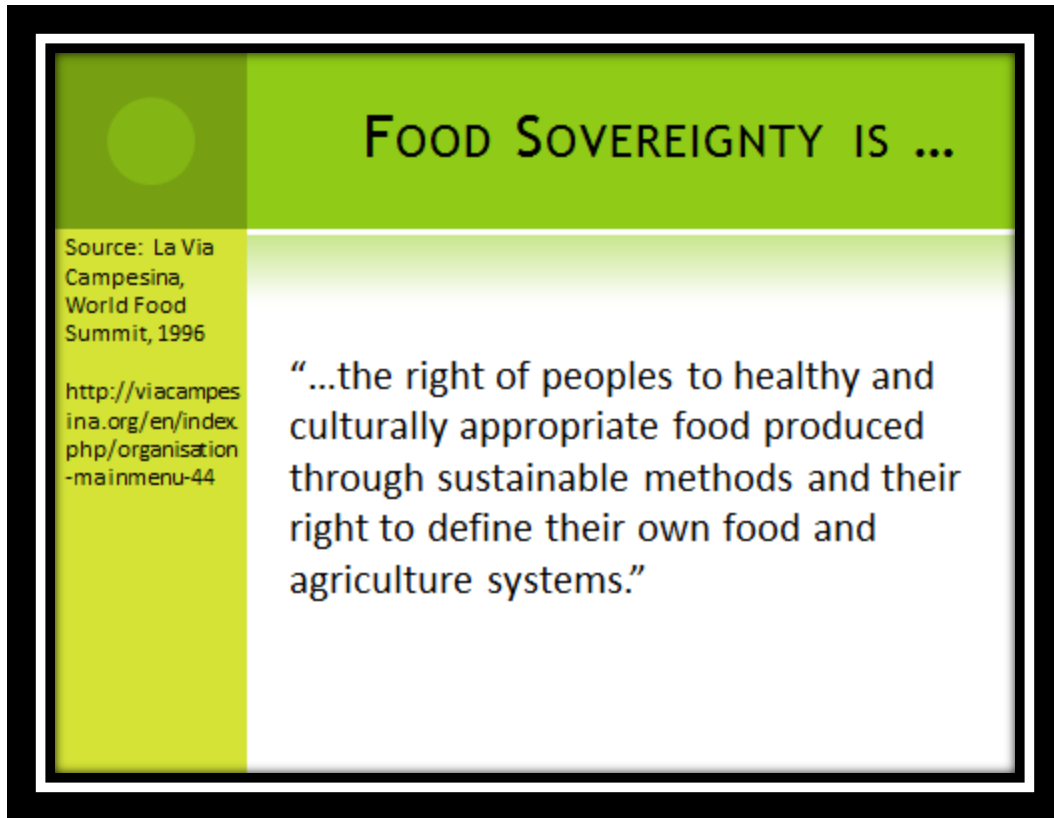
recommend reading some of her work; you will never approach your grocery shopping in the same way again.



This graphic from ShiftN in Belgium is a very nice visual of our current global food system, not only the system but the issues around it such as environment, geo-political, etc.

Now prior to my current assignment in the Library, I worked for approximately 30 years in technology and anyone who works in technology will be the first to say that the more you put between you and your goal, the less control you have over the outcome. Technology is great when it works; when it doesn't, such as, for example, when our access to the Internet goes down, it throws everything off-course.

My observation of this graphic is that there are many points of potential failure in our global food system and those points of potential failure sometimes actually fail and when they fail, it is our food security that is most at risk. That is why I have moved on in my understanding to the concept of food sovereignty.



La Via Campesina is a movement of about 150 local and international organizations from across 70 countries representing approximately 2 million peasant farmers (including some of our own “peasant farmers” in Canada). It was “born” in 1993 in Mons, Belgium.

It is an autonomous, pluralist, and multicultural organization that defends small-scale agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. It opposes corporate driven agriculture and transnational companies.

In 1996, at the World Food Summit, they coined the concept of “food sovereignty” as the “right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate foods produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”



These are the seven pillars of food sovereignty as defined by Food Secure Canada. As you can see, the pillars (or values) align with my passions regarding the environment and social justice.

The concept of food sovereignty as characterized by these seven pillars is the philosophical basis of Food Secure Canada, a grassroots national organization, one of three to four organizations debating the concept of food security in Canada. It is aligned with La Via Campesina.





Now I want to tell you the tale of two countries in the context of an evaluation of each of their respective successes to ensure food security for their citizens.



Let me introduce Ron Berezan. I met Ron through my association with the CampusRoots community garden here on campus. Ron bills himself as the Urban Farmer and is an educator in the concept of permaculture. Permaculture is a concept originated by David Holmgren and Bill Mollison in 1978, its essence being: “Permaculture is a design system based on [ethics](#) and [design principles](#) that can be used to guide efforts made by individuals, households and communities towards a sustainable future.”<sup>1</sup>

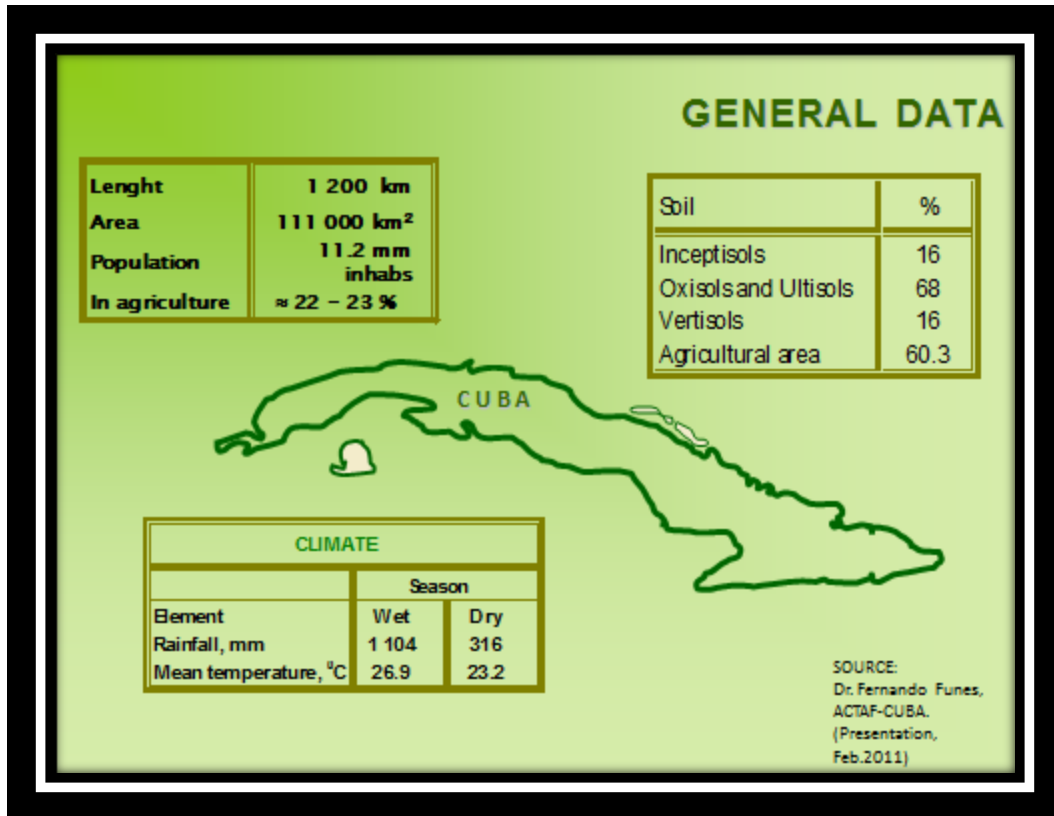
The takeaway: If you work with nature, your decision will take less work and give you less grief than if you work against nature; again, a philosophical position that I have arrived at myself over time.

There are multiple principles to the permaculture approach to living. It is not just about gardening but also about living in a sustainable way.

Well, Ron is connected into Cuba and ran agro-ecological tours to Cuba. In February 2011, Mark (my partner and I) joined Ron in Cuba.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://permacultureprinciples.com/contact.php>



Cuba is a small, tropical, island country with a large (relatively speaking) population.

The land now known as Cuba was colonized by the Spanish in 1492 and, as in most cases, mined for its resources through the use of slaves. The indigenous people, the Tainos, are more or less, wiped out within the first 100 years of occupation. The primary products traded were tobacco and sugar.

Over the history of Cuba, there were many attempts through rebellion to gain independence from Spain. Along the way, the United States also tried to purchase Cuba a couple of times but without success so around nearing the end of the 1800s and the beginning of 1900s, the US and Spain fight a war, the spoils being control over Cuba. Enter the United States into the life of Cubans through the establishment of provisional government. The Cubans make many attempts to gain independence from the United States. Finally, in 1957, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Raul Castro band together to successfully take control of Havana and of Cuba in January of 1959. In short order, Castro aligns with the Soviet Union, signs the Agrarian Reform Act which forbids foreign ownership of land and nationalizes oil refineries and all of that really makes the United States unhappy. The United States imposes a partial economic embargo on Cuba, breaks off diplomatic relations and gets them suspended

from the Organization of the American States, attempts invasion, and finally, expands the embargo, in 1962, to include all trade with Cuba save for non-subsidized food and medicine.<sup>2</sup>

I could go on but I have reached the important point: the US embargo on trade with Cuba and the increased and perhaps sole reliance by Cuba on Russia for agricultural inputs in the form of petroleum and petroleum products so they could participate in the Green Revolution.


The Green Revolution was the introduction agricultural technology and innovation (high-yield grains, pesticides, and fertilizers) to increase yields. Quoting from a document produced by the International Food Policy Research Network based in Washington, “In the 20th century, massive public investments in modern scientific research for agriculture led to dramatic yield breakthroughs in the industrial countries. The story of English wheat is typical. It took nearly 1,000 years for wheat yields to increase from 0.5 to 2 metric tons per hectare, but only 40 years to climb from 2 to 6 metric tons per hectare. Modern plant breeding, improved agronomy, and the development of inorganic fertilizers and modern pesticides fueled these advances. Most industrial countries achieved sustained food surpluses by the second half of the 20th century, and eliminated the threat of starvation.”<sup>3</sup>

Of course, in 1989 the Berlin Wall fell and in 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved, trade relationships between Cuba and Russia collapsed as Russia withdrew, and Cuba went into a “special period.”

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/time/timetbl4.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pubs/ib/ib11.pdf> access 2013-03-22.



SOURCE:  
Dr. Fernando Funes,  
ACTAF-CUBA,  
(Presentation,  
Feb.2011)

Source: Koont, S.  
(2008). "A Cuban  
success story: urban  
agriculture." *Review  
of Radical Political  
Economies*, Summer  
2008; vol. 40, 3: pp.  
285-291. DOI:  
10.1177/0486613408  
320016

## CUBA

# “THE SPECIAL PERIOD”

- ⊙ Three period, approximately 1990-1993 – most acute shortages
- ⊙ Resulted from the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of favourable trade with the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON)
  - ⊙ Loss of >80% of the trade IN ADDITION TO the USA Blockade.
- ⊙ Literal loss of body mass due to hunger

The most acute shortages of food occurred between 1990-1993 and resulted from the collapse of trade with the Soviet Union, primarily Russia. In his 2007 report on his mission to Cuba, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, summarized the challenges faced by Cuba as follows.:

Through COMECON, Cuba exported sugar and nickel in exchange for petroleum products from Russia. In 1989, Cuba imported about 50% of the calorie intake and about 59% of the protein consumed. With the collapse of COMECON in 1991, imports decreased by 75% which had a severe impact on food availability. GDP fell by 33% which also undermined food availability.

The agricultural sector was undermined by the loss of petroleum products from the USSR/Russia.

The US embargo on trade with Cuba (which is seen as a violation of International Law) was, as mentioned, introduced in 1962 and remains in place today.

[NOTE: The USA is approximately 90 miles away (Cuba to Florida).]

Some examples of the impact of the US Embargo mentioned by the UN Special Rapporteur:

- 1) Importation of rice from China and Viet Nam taking 45 days to reach Cuba when it would cost one third of the price and only two days to ship from the USA.
  - As well, the long period of importation affects the quality of the food.
- 2) Any importation of food from the USA requires payment in advance or through credit drawn a third country bank.
- 3) Foreign ships delivering food to Cuba are forbidden to enter US ports for 6 months.
- 4) Affects cost and availability of inputs needed for agricultural production.

**CUBA**  
THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE "GREEN REVOLUTION"

**SOURCE:**  
Dr. Fernando Funes,  
ACTAF-CUBA,  
(Presentation,  
Feb.2011)

- ⊙ Low biological diversity
- ⊙ High potential breeds and but poorly adapted to local conditions
- ⊙ Reliant on fertilizers, machinery, chemicals, irrigation
- ⊙ High productivity BUT very high energy costs
- ⊙ Reliant on imports of foods and agricultural inputs
- ⊙ Vulnerability – low resiliency
- ⊙ Productive and environmental problems
- ⊙ De-valuing of agricultural work

The principles of the green revolution, specifically the application of technology to agriculture is a key aspect of our current global food system AND a key contributor to food insecurity. It led to monocultures of these high-yield varieties of grains leading to the use of pesticides (since biodiversity is nature's way of dealing with pests and disease) and continuous cropping which led to the requirement of fertilizers (since the soil cannot be allowed to rest and regenerate its own nutrients). There was increased mechanization which displaced people from the land and into urban centres to seek waged

work (at least until technology displaced them from that work and into poverty). And Cuba has experienced all of these consequences acutely when they could no longer participate in the Green Revolution.

Now while they readily admit that they are not recovered from the set back from the 1990s, Cuba did take action to feed her people.

**CUBA**  
**HOW THEY DID IT**

- ⊙ Extensive research in agro-ecology done since 1970s by the Ministry of Defense.
  - ⊙ What if scenario re: cut off of petro-chemical imports
  - ⊙ Development of *organoponicos* – 30m X 1m *canteros* (raised beds) with mixture of soil and organic material.
- ⊙ Implementation:
  - ⊙ Introduction of *organoponicos* to urban agriculture
  - ⊙ State owned land was distributed to individuals and cooperatives in parcels of 0.5 to several hectares
  - ⊙ “strong, disciplined, coherent central direction and guidance combined with decentralized action in input provision, marketing and production.”

Source: Koont, S. (2008). “A Cuban success story: urban agriculture.” *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Summer 2008; vol. 40, 3: pp. 285-291. DOI: 10.1177/0486613408320016

Interestingly, they had already been doing research into the “what if” scenario of “What if they were cut off from petro-chemical imports?” The answer, subsequently implemented, was organic permaculture farming.

In addition, there were other policy changes implemented:

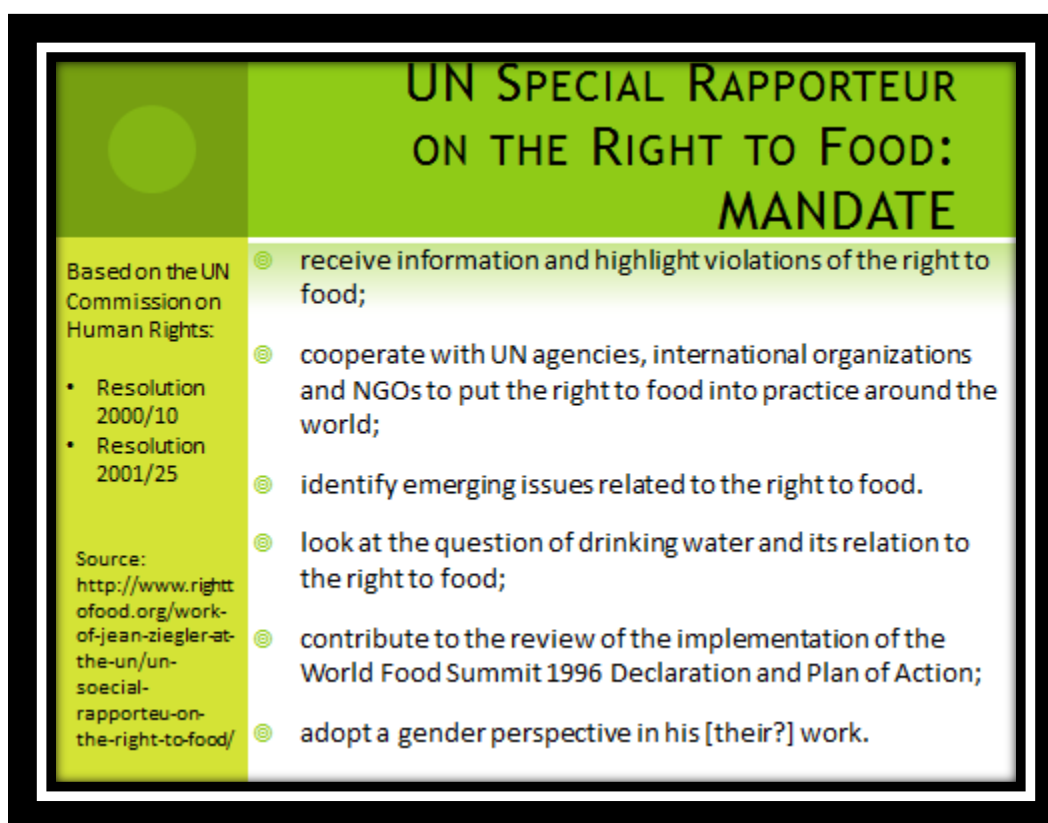
- Organoponicos were introduced into urban areas,
- State-owned land was distributed to individuals and cooperatives of 0.5 hectare to several hectares.

Finally as Koont describes it, there was a “strong, disciplined, coherent central direction and guidance combined with decentralized action in input provisions, marketing, and production” meaning that the producers could sell their produce privately although as we learned on our own tour, a percentage of their harvest was donated to feed children and seniors.





Now I always like to include one picture of me in Cuba just to prove that I really was on the job learning about agro-ecological practices. 😊



I have made reference to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food so I want to set Cuba aside for a minute to put some context around this position. The Mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food is derived from two resolutions of the UN Commission on Human Rights, 2000-10 and 2001-25 and is to:

- Receive information and highlight violations of the right to food
- Cooperate with other international bodies to implement the right to food
- Identify emerging issues around the right to food
- Include reference to access to drinking water
- Monitor the implementation of the World Food Summit (1996) [remember La Via Campesina conceived the concept of food sovereignty at the World Food Summit in 1996.]
- Adopt a gender perspective in their work.

It is important to note the connection: the right to food is a human right.

**UN SPECIAL RAPPOREUR ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD: INTERPRETATION OF MANDATE**

Source:  
<http://www.righttofood.org/work-of-jean-ziegler-at-the-un/un-social-rapporteur-on-the-right-to-food/>

- ③ define the normative content of the right to food and clarify the obligations of states through annual reports.
- ③ promote the right to food to different audiences including states, UN agencies, and civil society organizations by advocating for a human rights-based approach to development, trade and in various contexts such as armed conflict and climate change.
- ③ protect the right to food through communication and country missions, thereby giving a voice to victims of human rights and finding remedies for their suffering.

So how is this mandate interpreted?

The office sets the standards for the right to food and clarifies the obligations of countries.

It promotes the right to food through a human-rights based approach to development and trade and in the context of such things as war and climate change.

It protects the right to food through communication and through country missions to hear from the people directly about the status of their food security.

**UN SPECIAL RAPPOREUR  
ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD:  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?**

Source:  
<http://www.righttofood.org/work-of-jean-ziegler-at-the-un/un-soecial-rapporteur-on-the-right-to-food/>

- ⊙ Independent experts.
- ⊙ Non-remunerated.
- ⊙ Appointed by UN Commission on Human Rights (pre-2006) AND UN Human Rights Council (post-2006)
- ⊙ Jean Ziegler, 2000-2008
- ⊙ Olivier De Schutter, 2008 – present

The actual people filling the positions are independent experts in the field who are not paid for their work. So far there have been two such people filling the post:

- Jean Ziegler, 2000-2008, who is (or was) a professor of law and sociology before his appointment.
- Olivier De Schutter, appointed in 2008, who is a professor of economics and social rights in Belgium.



So in 2007, Cuba invited Jean Ziegler to visit and evaluate their food security.

In the kudos category, he noted:

- Right to food is one of the highest priorities of the Cuban Government
- National food programme aims to provide at least 50% of the population's basic food requirements
- Malnutrition is not a significant problem
- Achieved Target 2 of MDG 1: to reduced by half, the proportion of people suffering from hunger by 2015.

However, he cautioned:

- Anemia an issue for children and pregnant women
- Obesity is a concern

That said, he noted the challenges facing Cuba:

- External influences such as dissolution of COMECON, US Trade embargo, increasing food prices

- Internal challenges: inefficiencies in production, lack of agricultural inputs, problems in transportation, tropical climate.
- Market restrictions and low prices for agricultural producers
- Lack of income and high-cost of non-subsidized food, delays in deliveries and limited range of food products

Not a glowing report but not a bad report. Specifically, because the Cuban government was trying to do something about the food situation, they were acknowledged as contributing to the human rights of their people.

So, of course, the report made headlines in Cuba.

I searched but could not find any reference to the report making headlines outside of Cuba. I did pick up that there is an organization called UN Watch (out of the US) that condemned the UN for suggesting that Cuba was concerned about human rights and that got air-play within North America but nothing else that I could find.

So as I was putting this together along comes this ...



I am sure you are all aware of the headlines that Canada is not taking care of its people's right to food as reported in the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur's mission to Canada. So what Olivier De Schutter have to say about Canada?



He didn't have a lot of kudos for Canada although he did acknowledge the contribution of Canada to global food security. [Of course, that may change given the 2013 Federal Budget regarding rumour of leveraging of the Canadian International Development Agency for domestic economic opportunity through its merger with the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.<sup>4</sup>]

He is very concerned with:

- The widening gap between the rich and the poor with the result that a growing number of Canadians are unable to meet basic food needs.
- He is concerned with the rise in food banks (as am I) and reliance on charity.
- Vulnerable populations include those living on social assistance, women headed households, Aboriginal populations living off-reserve, new immigrant households

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[http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/federalbudget/2013/03/21/federal\\_budget\\_2013\\_tories\\_fold\\_cida\\_into\\_foreign\\_affairs\\_department.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/federalbudget/2013/03/21/federal_budget_2013_tories_fold_cida_into_foreign_affairs_department.html)

- De Schutter was “disconcerted by the deep and severe food insecurity faced by Aboriginal peoples living both on- and off- reserve in remote and urban areas”
- He did praise Canada’s record (and I would add past record) on civil and political rights but noted “protection of economic and social rights, including the right to food, has been less than exemplary.”
- He noted, there is currently,
  - No constitutional right to food explicitly stated in Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
  - No federal protection against discrimination based on poverty and socio-economic status – both issues in the right to food –and that he is concerned with the growing gap between Canada’s international human rights commitments and implementation domestically.
  - No coherent national right to food strategy that clearly articulates responsibility across levels of government noting
    - Isolated and uncoordinated efforts at the provincial and municipal levels although he did note with favour that all federal political parties referenced a national food security strategy as part of their political platforms and that some independent agencies (including Food Secure Canada among others) were trying to develop a national food strategy.
    - Reference to *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security* (adopted by the Council of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) including Canada (in 2004)
    - The need to know who is hungry, food insecure, and malnourished , hence condemning the cancellation of the mandatory long-form census in 2011 and condemning the dismantling of the National Council of Welfare

He noted Canada’s move to large-scale, input intensive modes of agricultural production leading to unsustainable farming practices which in turn lead to higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions, the loss of biodiversity, and increased soil contamination.

He noted that trade liberalization [and this is exemplified by the US-Canada Free Trade Agreement (1989), NAFTA (1994) and as is currently being negotiated, CETA (Canada-European Union Trade Agreement) (which, I might add, is described as prohibiting municipal governments from buying local) and TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership)] – that trade liberalization is leading to:

- Increased concentration, vertical integration, buyer consolidation in the AgriFood Sector
- Decrease in the number of farms (he noted that between 1988-2007 there has been a 25% reduction in the number of farms).



- A declining number of and an aging population of farmers, given the costs of inputs and land relative to the returns of farming.
- Reliance on (and treatment of) temporary foreign workers in the agricultural sector (and, I might add, in other resource sectors such as the oil and gas industry)
- The dismantling of orderly Canadian marketing systems such as the Canadian Wheat Board which have helped keep marketing power in the hands of farmers.
- A focus on an export food system that creates barriers to building a healthy domestic food system including local food systems.

He advocates for social protection in terms of social transfer, minimum wage legislation, housing, etc. and worries about the reduction in public spending as laid out in the 2012 Federal Budget noting that Canada has the lowest deficit-to-GDP and debt-to-GDP ratios and that the tax-to-GDP ratio has fallen 31% to place Canada in the lowest third of OECD countries for taxes, all of which translates into “Canada having the fiscal capacity to address the basic human need of its most marginalized and disempowered.”

Health wise, he noted that approximately 60% of the Canadian population is either overweight or obese and that on-reserve First Nations have particularly high obesity rates leading to such complications as diabetes. He encourages a look at:

- Food labeling,
- Action on trans-fats (There was a bill brought forward on this issue by Pat Martin, NDP a few years ago and I think it passed but that corporations are only subject to voluntary guidelines. There is also a bill on the salt content of food (Libby Davies, NDP) coming forward this sitting of Parliament – which I wrote my (Conservative) MP admonishing him to support. I am not holding my breath!)
- Layout of cities to eliminate food deserts (where the only food stores are convenience stores where good food, if it exists, is expensive and junk food (salty, sugary, fatty) food is cheap)
- AND then there are the third-world conditions that many of our First Nations people live in in addition to the cost of food in the Northern regions and territories.

Finally, De Schutter expressed concerns about cuts to CIDA’s funding given their involvement in food security abroad, and domestically, the living conditions of our First Nations and Northern peoples and their access to traditional foods.

So he recommends,

- Development of a comprehensive, rights-based national food strategy,
- Revision to social assistance to correspond to the basic necessities
- Setting minimum wage to a living wage
- Allow First Nations people access to their full rights under the Indian Act

- Realign the supply management for agricultural products to strengthen its advantages yet reform it for greater equity and to facilitate the entry of new farmers.
- Ensure Canada’s international policies do not have a negative impact on the realization of the right to food.

Well, as we know, the report was not received well.

Well, does De Schutter have a point?



Well let’s just step back from this and look at food prices over time. This chart is fed by data from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

In 2008 food prices took a big jump. Now likely we didn’t really feel the impact but others did.

In 2008, the stocks of rice were depleted and this, in turn, prompted increased prices for other grains such as wheat. No one really knows what exactly set things off. There was some blame for the increased prices on the rising costs of fuel and fertilizer as well as climate change (i.e. drought). One report I read, suggested the price increase was because of increased demand for rice (versus wheat) as the standard of living rises in China. On this last point, it was further reported that approximately half

the world's population (3 billion at the time) rely on rice as their basic grain.<sup>5</sup> Of course, the other thing taking place but not discussed (that I could find) was the whole financial mess because of the sub-prime mortgage thing going on in the United States and the chain reaction that set off across the globe.

Now back to the graph. While the price of food did come down, they did not return to the pre-2008 prices and then they took off again in 2011. What happened in 2011?

Drought on one hand and fuel prices translating into increased transportation costs on the other according to one report I looked at.<sup>6</sup>

Another report noted floods in Canada during planting season and in Australia which destroyed crops of sugar and wheat combined with drought and fire in Russia which prompted them ban exports with matters made worse (although not caused by) food speculation, that is food as commodity.<sup>7</sup>



Do we in Canada need a national food strategy that helps our citizens weather such shocks?

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<sup>5</sup> The Guardian (London); <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/apr/06/food.foodanddrink>

<sup>6</sup> CBS News; [http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-500395\\_162-20043737.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-500395_162-20043737.html) retrieved 2013-03-20.

<sup>7</sup> BBC; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11177214>) retrieved 2013-03-20



In his report, De Schutter expresses some hope that The Government would consider what happened and is happening to our domestic agriculture.

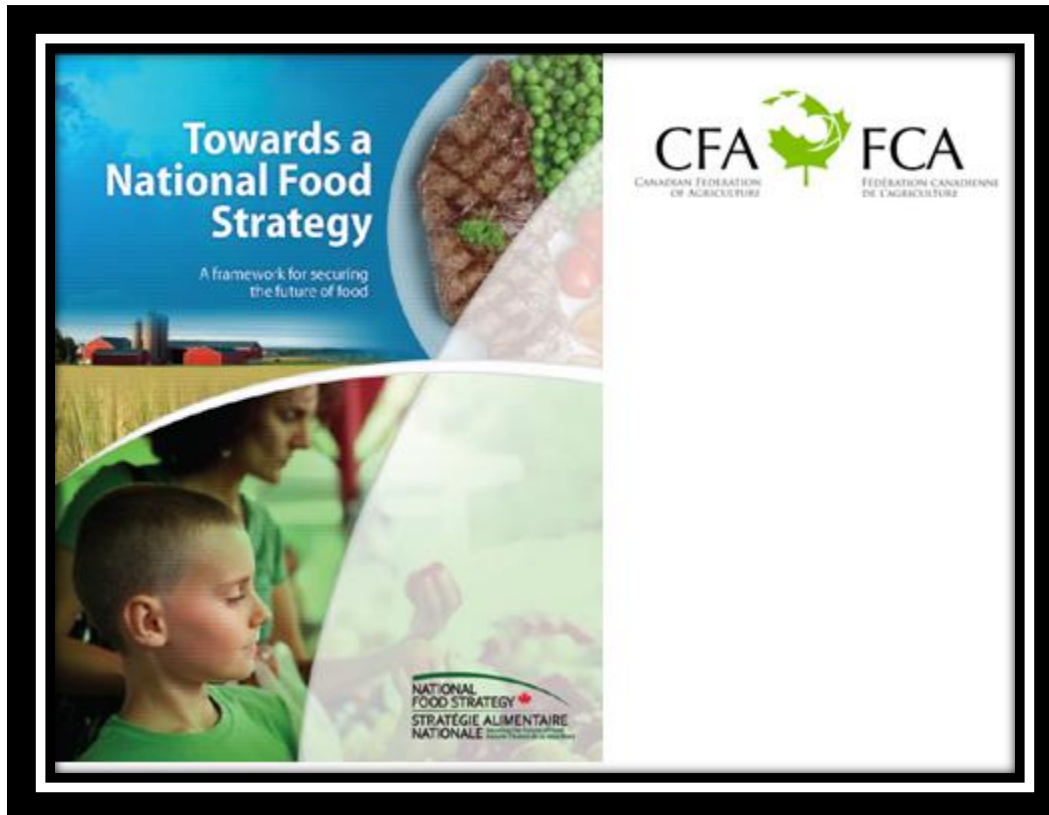
The Government thinks terms of 5 year plans. The first plan, called Growing Forward, was focused on the agri-food industry as is illustrated by the language used.

The second plan, Growing Forward 2, referred to by De Schutter, goes into effect in April 2013 and a quick scan indicates that the sequel continues Growing Forward and adds three new programs.

This is not a food strategy.

There was another organization mentioned in De Schutter's report which I had not found so I looked it up. The organization was the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute which described itself as a not-for-profit agency established in 2004 by The Government to deal with the mid-to-long term agricultural policy. I did find one discussion document prepared to "stimulate a dialogue among scientists, policy makers, professionals and managers from the health , agriculture, and agri-food systems" with the idea that these groups would develop an "integrated strategy" although not necessarily about food but

which “places the consumer at the center [sic], and must consider the conditions and dynamics of local and global markets from a systems perspective.” I did not find anything that looked like a strategy so I am not sure where this organization is at in its deliberations. <sup>8</sup>



The Canadian Federation of Agriculture made an attempt at a national food strategy and while I have not read it, I have scanned it and am left with the impression that it is trying hard to bridge between what is (i.e., the corporate model of agriculture) and what, perhaps, should be.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.capi-icpa.ca/pdfs/BuildingConvergence\\_Aug2009.pdf](http://www.capi-icpa.ca/pdfs/BuildingConvergence_Aug2009.pdf)



The Conference Board of Canada has been very busy. At first blush, you might think this is The Government (I did initially!) but the Conference Board of Canada is a “not-for-profit, applied research organization” who is “objective and non-partisan”<sup>9</sup> It describes itself as “specialists in economic trends as well as organizational performance and policy issues.”

The Board of Directors (ca.2012) include presidents of banks, corporations and businesses as well as presidents of universities (for example, Lloyd Axworthy from University of Winnipeg is included on the Board). In the case of food, the CBoC has created a subset called the Centre for Food in Canada (CFIC) the “investors” of which include among others: Loblaws, Maple Leaf Foods, Heinz Canada, Nestle Canada Inc, McCain Food, Saputo Inc., Weston Foods, Cargill, and, finally, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

There are two participants: the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (so perhaps this is where their discussion paper ended up) and the University of Guelph (they have a large agricultural school being in the heart of food production in Ontario).

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.conferenceboard.ca/Libraries/PUBLIC\\_PDFS/who\\_we\\_are\\_brochure.sflb](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/Libraries/PUBLIC_PDFS/who_we_are_brochure.sflb)

I have not read all these reports. I did look at one, “Valuing Food” (it was an early one in the series) and it was very focused on the economics of food as an industry.



## FOOD SECURE CANADA

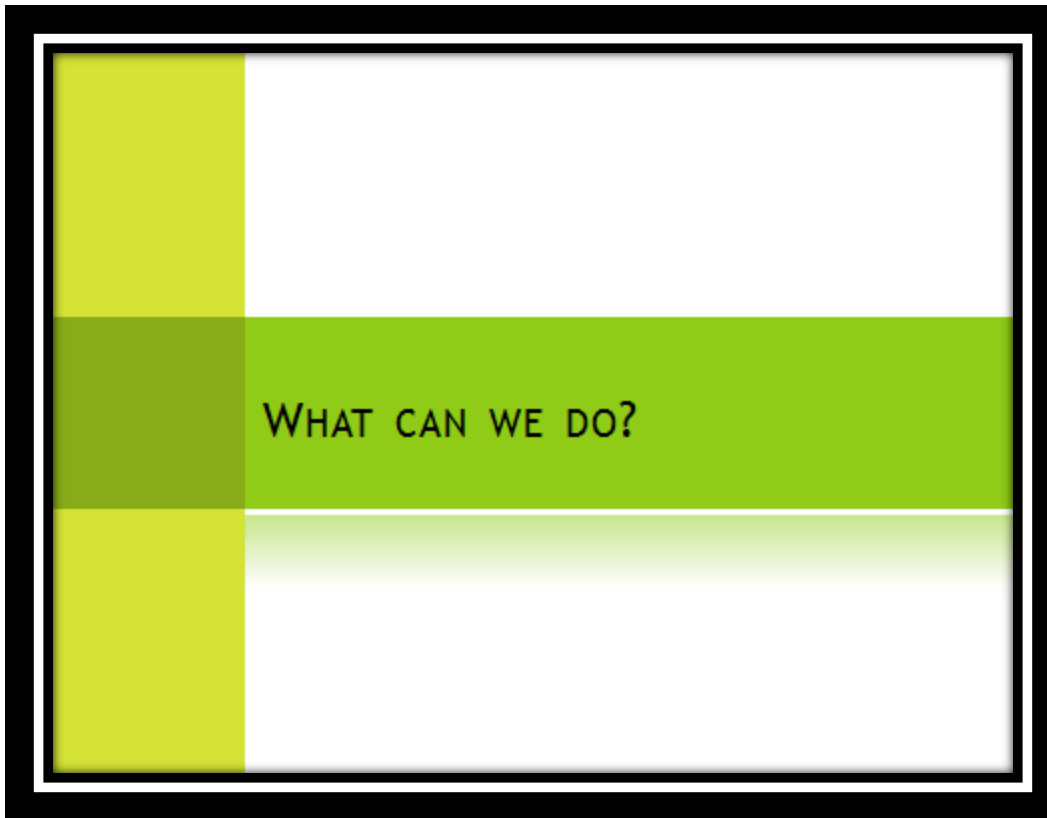
- ⊙ Minimize food miles – consumption close to production.
- ⊙ Supporting food providers in ecological production
- ⊙ Supporting policies for the entry of new farmers into agriculture.
- ⊙ Poverty elimination and prevention program.
- ⊙ Creating a nationally-funded Children and Food strategy.
- ⊙ Ensuring that the public are actively involved in decisions that affect the food system.

Finally there is Food Secure Canada, with its provincial affiliates, Growing Food Security Alberta being one of them.

Their report, *Resetting the Table: A people's food policy for Canada*, is the product of 3500 participants led by a team of 100 working “on the front lines of the most successful and innovative food-related community work in our country” (p.8) It took two years, hundreds of individual policy submissions, 350 Kitchen Table Talk gatherings and three pan-national meetings. There is a fourth national meeting scheduled for April 8 in Toronto and there was some kind of gathering in Edmonton in, I think February.

[I should mention that the Conference Board of Canada is having their Second Food Summit in April as well.]

So the proposal of Food Secure Canada is up there. They align pretty tightly with De Schutter's recommendations but perhaps not so much with The Government's economic agenda so while we add our voice and vote on the political front, we have to ask ... **ANIMATE**



... what can we do? ... locally and on a personal level.

As De Schutter referred to in his reports, there is lots of activity taking place by communities of various sizes to take control over their own food security. Here is what I am doing.





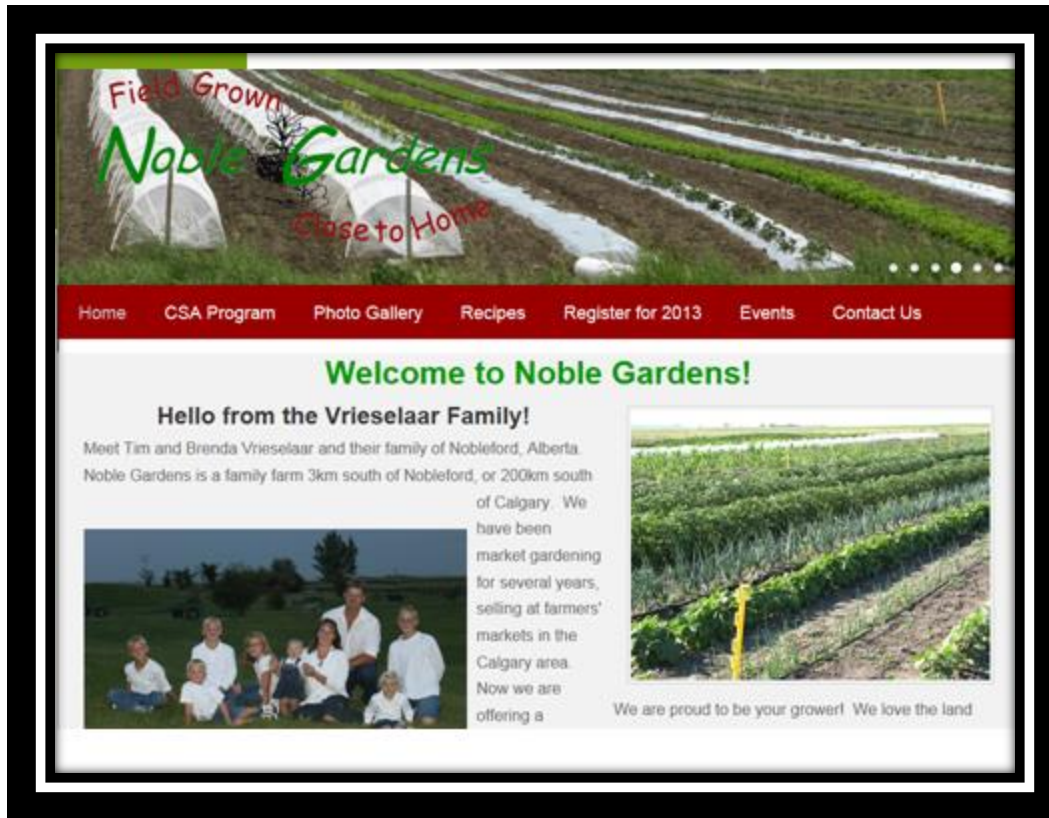
I have gardened in my own backyard for 20+ years although not always from the perspective of pushing back against the global food system.



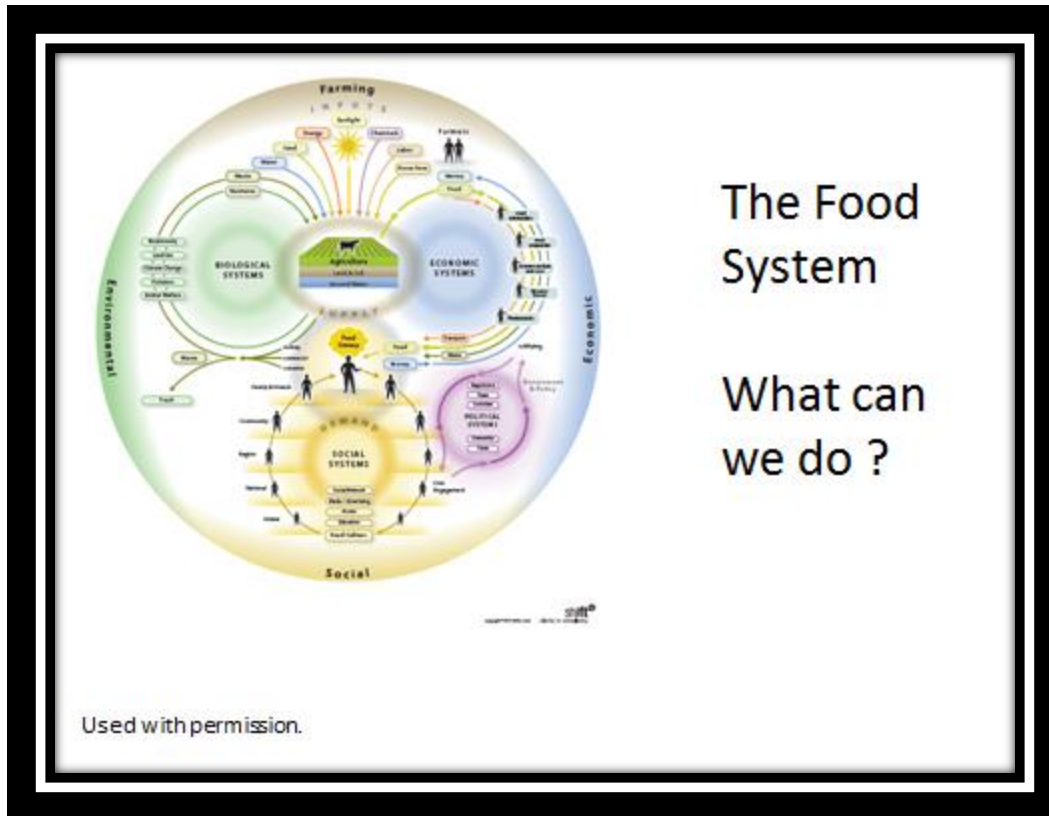
I am engaged with the CampusRoots Community Garden on campus, both as a gardener (we started gardening there last year by growing root crops) and as in an educational capacity through the winter workshops on producing your own food.



I buy local when I can and in the last two years, we have linked in with local producers throughout the winter months. We also watch what we buy and vote with our food dollars by purchasing local food options in the grocery store.



I am seriously thinking about buying into a system of community supported agriculture but I haven't sorted through that yet. I do have friends who do this.

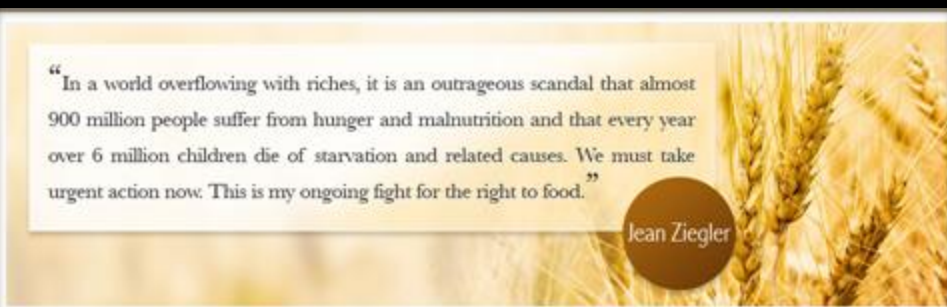


## The Food System

What can we do ?

Courtesy of ShiftN, here is what I aspire to for our country: a greatly simplified food system. And now I am anxious to hear from the students but before I relinquish the podium and the computer, just one more slide ...





“ In a world overflowing with riches, it is an outrageous scandal that almost 900 million people suffer from hunger and malnutrition and that every year over 6 million children die of starvation and related causes. We must take urgent action now. This is my ongoing fight for the right to food.”

Jan Ziegler

Thank you.