



The intersection between food safety and food security is an issue that keeps coming up, with respect to challenges faced by some community organizations in meeting food security regulations, and the challenges of PH to ensure that food security initiatives are foodsafe.

This talk builds on a workshop held last year at the CIPHI Ontario conference.

Objectives

- Examine intersections between food safety and food security
- How does food security relate to PHIs?
- Share experiences from different perspectives
- Identify best practices, needs and gaps

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Food security is not something that EH or health protection has been directly involved with, but has become relevant in recent years.

Want to help address challenges,
find ways to help inspectors minimize need to use enforcement techniques, and
support consistency of approach in different regions.



Food security can mean different things to different people.

This is my backyard garden – this represents food security to some (very local food, knowing where it comes from, sustainably produced, etc.).

To others, food security is simply having enough food to prevent their family from feeling hungry.



FS: Common WHO/FAO definition

CFS: Often used by public health or community groups (Hamm and Bellows)



Canada:

8.3% of households were moderately or severely food insecure in 2011-2012 (CCHS)
(5.8%/2.5%)

Newfoundland:

7.7% (lowest in country – historically not that way)



Very simplified schematic to illustrate different ways of conceptualizing food security and the multiple actors who are involved.

EHOs are most likely to engage at the community level.



Food security and food safety are both public health issues. Both aim to protect and promote health

Food security includes food safety

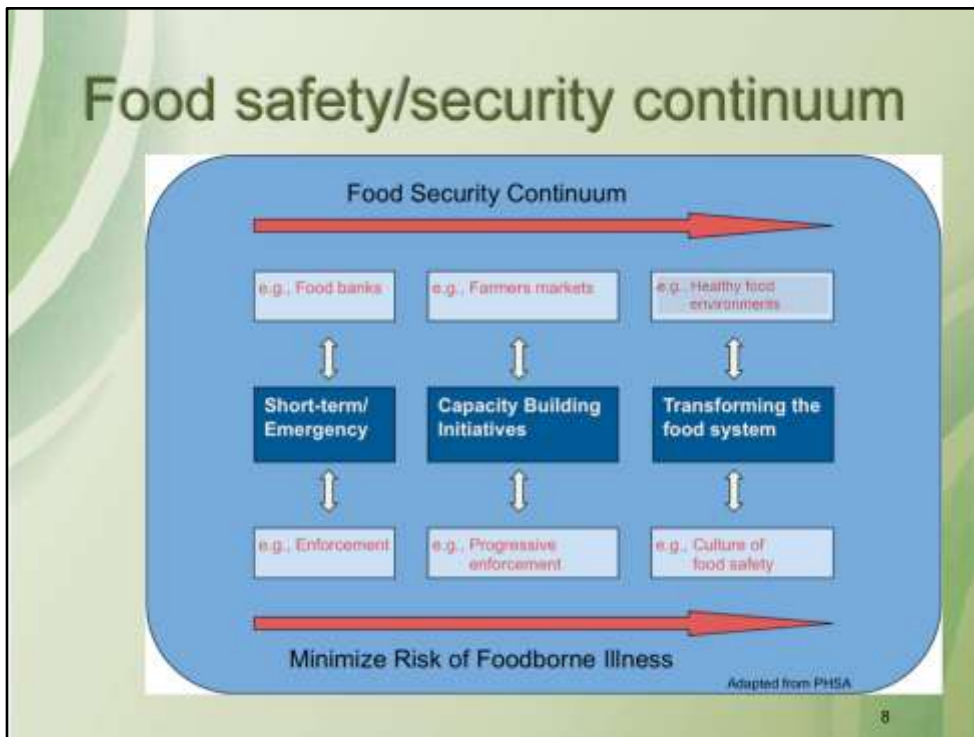
Food insecurity is a serious health issue:

CCHS: Moderate = quality and/or quantity compromised | Severe = reduced intake and disrupted eating patterns

-**Child** nutrition and health has impacts now on school performance and learning + social/health effects later in life

-Higher **prevalence** of diabetes, cardiovascular, dental, psychosocial outcomes, obesity
– may be related to food insecurity or to socioeconomic conditions

Affects **diverse range of people**: First Nations, immigrants, EI or social assistance recipients, working poor, single parent families, children.



The Food Security Continuum is often used to describe a range of actions intended to promote food security, moving from meeting immediate needs to changing the system to be more food secure for all people.

Food safety can be viewed in a similar way, moving from actions to remove immediate health hazards, to helping operators become more foodsafe, and ultimately creating safe food environments.



PH renewal in many provinces is resulting in **new kinds of events, interventions, etc. that fall under jurisdiction of PHIs.**

Ontario Public Health Goals, BC Public Health Act, NS Public Health Renewal all include such broad views on public health mandates. In BC, food security is a core program for public health in the province.

- Bed bugs, healthy built environment, **equity, determinants of health**, etc. are all being addressed by environmental public health.
- Food security now a PH issue



- Social conditions affect ability to **understand** and **follow** guidelines or comply with regulations
- Addressing SDH requires participation of policy makers, officials who carry out policy (e.g., PHIs), and communities **across jurisdictions**

EH is changing



- Discretionary use of enforcement
- Education and health promotion vs. enforcement tools

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- Keeping the stick but using it less
- More effective



- Wider mission of food security initiatives often includes issues outside health, or other aspects of health, or different ways of defining health
- Many PHIs or health regions have adopted responses for different kinds of situations, but varies from place to place
 - need to **scale up and share** these best practices

Food security events

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| • Farmers' markets | • Farm to table |
| • Soup kitchens | • Farm to school |
| • Food banks | • Community gardens |
| • Good food box | • School gardens |
| • Temporary markets | • Traditional food |
| | • Daycares |

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Examples of food security events that EHOs may encounter.

The first column are probably more familiar – the second column includes initiatives and events that are seen more frequently that can face food safety challenges.



- What kind of food security events have you encountered?
- What are the main food safety issues?
- How have you responded?



Communications Coordinator

FSN lead agency for Farmer's Markets Guidelines

KR's notes from Rick Kelly's talk

Farmers markets:

- Vendors face challenges accessing local slaughter facilities, especially in remote or rural communities.
- Timing of inspections is a challenge because some vendors rotate schedules and do not participate in every market – This is challenging when they want to start on a week when the inspector is not present.
- Farmers find some of the forms – which were originally designed for other purposes – difficult to fill out as some sections do not apply to their operations.
- Applications for sale of new products – inspector may not know how to proceed if there are no existing guidelines for such foods, e.g., a vendor wanted to make and sell sea salt, which is not a classified product so difficult to assess for safety.
- Hot food vendors have challenges keeping ready to eat foods hot because there are limited kitchen facilities on site.
- Pre-season meetings with farmers, vendors, market managers, and EHO have been very helpful to ensure everyone knows what is expected and to answer questions up front.

Community Kitchens:

- Challenge because of so many different people coming through facility.
- Difficult to ensure food safety when people take prepared foods home, as there is no knowledge or control over how they handle the foods they make and take home.
- When foods are made in community kitchens and given to people to take home through the CK program or pantry program, labelling is a challenge. The foods change depending on what ingredients are available, and financial costs can be high to create new labels all the time.




Food Safety & Food Security Initiatives



Food Security Network
of Newfoundland & Labrador
Healthy food for all!

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What is Food Security?



Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods.

Food Security means that the people that work in the food system are able to earn a living wage in safe conditions.

Food Security incorporates environmental stewardship and social justice.

- Food Security means that all people at all times have physical & economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods, which are produced in an environmentally sustainable and socially just manner, and that people are able to make informed decisions about their food choices.
- Food Security also means that the people who produce our food are able to earn a decent, living wage growing, catching, producing, processing, transporting, retailing, and serving food.
- Food Security, therefore, is a universal concern: it affects everyone and it touches many public policy areas.
- At the core of food security is access to healthy food and optimal nutrition for all. Food access is closely linked to food supply, so food security is dependent on a healthy and sustainable food system.
- The food system includes the production, processing, distribution, marketing, acquisition, and consumption of food.



The Food Security Network NL (FSN) is a provincial non-profit organization with the mission to actively promote comprehensive and community-based solutions to ensure physical and economic access to adequate and healthy food for all.

We have three core goals to achieve this mission:

1. To increase understanding and awareness of food security and its impacts to enhance efforts to improve food security across NL
2. To catalyze and support community action to improve food security across NL
3. To build diverse, strategic partnerships to enhance food security in NL

Farmers' Markets Food Safety



- 7+ markets in NL in 2014
- Two Handbooks developed in 2011 based on Provincial Public Market Guidelines
- Wide variety of foods. Raw veggies and meat to prepared hot foods
- Venues not purpose built for markets

Farmers' markets have grown from 1-2 markets operating each year in the early 2000s to 7 regular weekly or monthly markets in NL in 2014, plus some additional one-time markets.

In 2011, FSN received funding from the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program to develop two handbooks to act as guides for Vendors and Organizers of Farmers' Markets across Newfoundland and Labrador. The content in these handbooks is drawn primarily from information provided through a *Public Market Guidelines* document prepared by the Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2011.

The practices described in these handbooks are intended to reflect food safety within the context of regularly operating farmers' or public markets where a variety of food products are offered for sale regularly in a specific facility or location. This context is recognized as being distinct from other one or two day events that happen occasionally, such as organized by community groups.

These markets are characterized by the wide variety of foods available, including vegetables, fruit, meats, and prepared foods such as baked goods, preserves and, hot ready-to-eat foods. Food safety policies for farmers' markets need to address this wide

range of products.

The markets are also typically not in a venue designed to be a farmers' market. Some are in community centres and clubs, while others are outdoors, using tents.

Farmers' Markets Food Safety

- Licensed food premises and slaughter facilities lacking
- Forms not adapted to public markets.
- Unusual products
- Timing of inspections
- Biggest challenge: Hot foods at the Market
- Pre-season meetings between EHOs and Vendors helped



Challenges markets face in meeting all food safety regulations are:

Licensed Food Premises – Difficult for some vendors to access a licensed kitchen to prepare their food in. Slaughter facilities for farmers who want to sell meat also lacking in NL.

Forms not adapted to public markets – Some vendors were confused by forms made for "Food and/or Tobacco", which didn't seem to fit with the reality of farming, for example.

Unusual products – It took over a year for one vendor to become approved for selling sea salt because it was difficult to classify or understand the food safety risks.

Timing of inspections – At one busy market which has new/different vendors coming in each week, it was difficult to schedule inspections by EHOs (who had to inspect each vendor at the market) to coincide with new vendors, leading to a limitation on the number of vendors that could sell at the market.

Hot foods at the Market – Hot foods pose one of the biggest challenges for markets in meeting food safety regulations. Often using one Kitchen on site to heat food for multiple vendors.

Promising Practice: Several markets in NL reported that setting up meetings with the Environmental Health Officer and vendors up front was very helpful.

Community Kitchen / Pantry

- Pantry: Keeping sanitized
- Kitchen: teaching food safety in kitchen
- Client Education
- Once food leaves the kitchen with client...
- Labelling guidelines



Some common problems for food pantry's/food banks and community kitchens are:

Processes for keeping the food pantry sanitized with a large number of people coming through every day.

Though a community kitchen or food pantry can teach their clients basic skills, how to prepare and store food, one of the biggest issues is what the client does when they leave the kitchen or pantry. Some food pantry clients may not have the facilities to store food at the proper temperature.

Labelling guidelines: Food Banks which distribute prepared food need to individually label each distributed item with a full ingredient list. Large cost and time consideration if an organization changes what they prepare every week based on what's available as ingredients.



I will share some key points I have learned from conversations with people in the field.

Chris Nolan from the NL Department of Health and Community Services shared his experience with developing food safety guidance for farmers markets and Renee Blake, an EHO here in St. John's, share her experience inspecting the local farmers market.

**Farmers' Market Food Safety:
Market Organizer Handbook**
A Resource for Farmers' Market Organizers in
Newfoundland & Labrador

**Farmers' Market Food Safety:
Vendor Handbook**
A Resource for Food Vendors of Farmers' Markets in
Newfoundland & Labrador

- Initiated by NL Food Security Network
- Involvement of health, environment, natural resources, veterinary care
- Sector-specific guidance available (home kitchens, non-profits, food service, farm markets)
- It's getting easier ...

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Thanks to Chris Nolan for this information.

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- Access to licensed kitchens (rental)
- Guidance for home prep of low risk foods
- People know what to expect
- Relationship with market managers
 - Consistent messaging
 - Early consultation between vendor and manager → conditional approval
- Education re reasons behind requirements
- Clear responsibility of manager/vendor

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Thanks to Renee Blake for sharing her experience working with the markets to meet the guidance.

Challenges to food safety

- Access to licensed kitchen facilities
- Volunteer food handlers/
Food safety training
- Variety of food products, new processes
- Approved sources of food
- Finding out about new things happening
- Different priorities/mission

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Challenges are even greater in remote or rural areas that face additional food security challenges (e.g., access, high costs, desire for traditional foods). It is essential to find ways to balance these barriers with the need for safe food.

Best practices for food protection

- Good relationships
- Early involvement
- Consistent messages from all parties
- Collaboration
- Education and information
- Clear roles and responsibilities



Guidelines are:

- Great tool for education
- People know what to expect
- Permit application process = opportunity to work on potential hazards and engage in education
- Clarify roles and responsibilities



Guidelines are under development in BC to encourage more donation of perishable items by industry. BCCDC is working with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society, Metro Vancouver, PHSA, and the Ministry of Health to ensure that the guidelines not only promote donation of safe foods, but also divert quality food from the waste stream, support food security needs, and encourage donation of healthy and nutritious foods.

What NCCEH has learned

Best practices

- Collaboration
 - Within PH
 - Across sectors and jurisdictions
- Education
 - PHIs, PH professionals
 - Consumers, food handlers
- Early intervention
- Creativity and flexibility
- Focus on outcomes
- Curiosity

Needs and gaps

- How to identify new initiatives early on
- Public education
- Health promotion/education takes time
- Lack of evidence-based guidance
- Need networking opportunities



Please share your questions, ideas, and feedback with us.

Comments/Discussion with participants:

- Lead and other chemical contaminants in soil can be a concern (e.g. lead).
 - This has come up in several provinces.
 - There is a movement in St. John's to encourage soil testing (see Safer Soil St. John's: <http://safersoil.ning.com/>)
- At least one region has experienced pushback on specialized food safety requirements that were seen as unequal (e.g., different expectations for farmers markets vs industry), particularly when foodborne illness occurred.

Resources

National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health:
<http://www.ncceh.ca/environmental-health-in-canada/health-agency-projects/food>

Food Secure Canada: www.foodsecurecanada.org

www.ncceh.ca | www.ccnse.ca

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National Collaborating Centre
for Environmental Health
Centre de collaboration nationale
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CCME
Conseil canadien des ministres de l'environnement