

Food Insecurity & Local Food Systems

BRIEF SUMMARY

This research examines food insecurity as a social determinant of health, as well as a product of inequity in Ontario. Through the perspective of seeing food as a human right, case study research was utilized to illustrate the vitality of community-based initiatives that attempt to mitigate the implications of food insecurity. This research also highlights that the need for local food systems planning is vital to community sustainability and overall health and wellbeing.

KEY FINDINGS

- ❑ Food insecurity affects the health and wellbeing of communities and should be considered a social determinant of health that is interrelated with other factors like income and housing.
- ❑ Alternative food systems or local food systems are integrated at a community level to address food insecurity. The most accessible and popular form of charitable food assistance is food banks, but the usage of these services is not a great indicator of food insecurity.
- ❑ Food insecurity needs to be accurately measured to evaluate the prevalence and risk factors, as well as address possible interventions and policies that could be implemented to mitigate the issues.

- ❑ Local food systems and community-based institutions benefit the overall health and sustainability of a community. Local food systems minimize industrial production and distance from producer to consumer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research three key recommendations emerge:

- ❑ The benefits of community-based initiatives and local food systems need to be integrated into planning frameworks so that they can also influence provincial and national food policy.
- ❑ Measurement of food insecurity is needed to be collected at the municipal and provincial levels, not just at a national level.
- ❑ Food insecurity needs to be seen as a human right. Food insecurity is the result of inequity, not a failure in food systems.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The full major research paper can be accessed online at <https://ruraldev.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ShinMRP2022.pdf>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Evelyn Shin is a graduate of the Master of Science in Rural Planning and Development program at the University of Guelph. Evelyn can be contacted at eshin02@uoguelph.ca.