



SDG 2 recognizes the importance of our food systems and focuses attention on food security, healthy diets and promotion of sustainable agriculture.



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA

**The Learning
Institute**

Many community foundations are exploring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their planning, granting, convening, Vital Signs and more. This Fact Sheet is part of a series that focuses on specific SDGs to engage and inspire community foundations of all sizes to deepen their work around these goals.

What is this approach?

The [targets of SDG 2](#) direct global effort toward ending hunger and malnutrition, maintaining the diversity of food plants and seeds, and ensuring sustainable and productive food systems that improve the livelihoods of small-scale farmers. Globally, 3 million children still die from hunger and malnutrition every year, and the situation is worsening due to the effects of climate change, conflict and population growth ([source](#)). In Canada, food insecurity is experienced by 4.4 million people ([source](#)), and a recent report by UNICEF ranked Canada 37 out of 41 wealthy countries for child food security ([source](#)). Canadian farmers and rural communities are also struggling with the effects of climate change, the challenges of COVID-19, and difficulties making ends meet as farming costs increase. These will all have knock-on effects for the sustainability of Canada's food systems.

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Food Security

Food security is when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.

— [ROME DECLARATION ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY](#)

Sustainable Food Systems

A food system includes all people, activities and resources needed to feed the people in a given area. A sustainable food system is one that provides healthy food to meet current needs, while at the same time keeping the local ecosystem and environment healthy so that food can be provided to future generations.

— [MIDDLESEX-LONDON COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT](#)

Canada's approach to SDG 2 recognizes that children, racialized communities and Indigenous peoples all experience higher levels of food insecurity on average than the rest of the Canadian population ([source](#)). The national approach to SDG 2 is spelled out in the government's [Food Policy for Canada](#).

The policy takes a systems approach to SDG 2 that recognizes the “interdependence of social, health, environmental and economic components of the food system” ([source](#)) and focuses on six priority outcomes:

- Vibrant communities: Improved community capacity and resilience to food-related challenges.
- Increased connections within food systems: Increased governance spaces and partnerships that connect multiple sectors and actors across the food system.
- Improved food-related health outcomes: Improved health status of Canadians related to food consumption and reduced burden of diet-related disease.
- Strong Indigenous food systems: To be co-developed in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations.
- Sustainable food practices: Improvements in the state of the Canadian environment through the use of practices along the food value chain that reduce environmental impact and that improve the climate resilience of the Canadian food system.
- Inclusive economic growth: Improved access to opportunities in the agriculture and food sector for all Canadians within a diversified, economically viable and sustainable food system.

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW **Food Sovereignty**

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.

— [WORLD FORUM FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY](#)

Indigenous Food Sovereignty

While food was often used as a tool of colonization, it has the potential to be a tool for healing and asserting Indigenous food sovereignty.

As we work towards the SDGs, we must aim for not only food security, but food sovereignty of Indigenous communities, which is inseparable from access to land and water.

— [FOOD SECURE CANADA](#)

At the local scale, communities see the interconnection between hunger, health, poverty, inequality and access to local food systems and are pursuing integrated solutions. Community approaches to SDG 2 involve understanding the local food system including the healthiness and quantity of food available, who is producing and providing food, who is able and unable to access the food, what kinds of food people have access to, the connections between producers and consumers, and where food is being wasted or lost.

At the community scale, action on SDG 2 looks like:

- Supporting local farmers and reconnecting farmers and communities through activities like farmers markets.
- Promoting urban agriculture, including small-scale production for local consumption.
- Supporting community gardens and encouraging household food production.
- Reducing food waste and making sure food gets to where it is needed most.
- Providing food banks to meet immediate needs in a way that respects the autonomy and dignity of those who use them.
- Addressing urban planning and development to ensure communities have access to affordable and healthy food providers.
- Providing food literacy programs that help people understand the impact of their food choices on their health, the environment and the economy.
- Holding community cooking classes that focus on diverse and nutritious meals.
- Supporting a local living wage that allows people to afford healthy meals and support local producers.
- Providing child nutrition programs such as free breakfasts and school lunches.
- Supporting sustainable agricultural practices and environmentally friendly food production.
- Developing and promoting sustainable local food policies.

Why is it important for grantmakers?

Action on SDG 2 is a priority for grantmakers across Canada, and in 2016/2017 foundations provided \$131 million for initiatives that addressed hunger, malnutrition and sustainable food systems ([source](#)). The grantmaking of community foundations has often addressed hunger and food issues, and experience has revealed the complexity of food insecurity and led to more strategic granting. A survey of community foundations in 2014 revealed that 91% had supported food-related work and that many community foundations go beyond charitable granting to systemic approaches that support local food policy, food systems mapping, and sustainable food initiatives for a local and just food economy ([source](#)). The report also revealed that:

- **36%** of respondents provided leadership support, such as engaging partners and donors, and convening or participating in collaborative groups.
- **42%** of respondents had engaged in mobilizing community knowledge through programs such as Vital Signs or other forms of community knowledge and awareness.
- **18%** of larger community foundations provided investments, such as microfinance and seed capital, that support local food organizations and economies.

Food is the place where some of our most pressing issues converge — poverty, health and well-being, our environment and economy — they all hit home at our kitchen tables.

— [TAKING THE PULSE OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOOD ACTIVITY ACROSS CANADA](#)



While progress has been made, 1 in 7 households in Canada is still food-insecure, and even before the pandemic food insecurity was the highest it had been since 2007 ([source](#)). An intersectional lens reveals that food insecurity is not experienced equally, with 11% of white Canadians experiencing food insecurity compared to 28.9% for those who are Black, 28.2% for Indigenous peoples, and 20.4% for Arab and West Asian Canadians. Geography also plays a large role, with 57% of households experiencing food insecurity in Nunavut ([source](#)). With COVID-19, national food insecurity has risen by 39% ([source](#)), and Toronto has seen a 200% increase in the use of food banks, while a recent national survey indicates that 55% of respondents are concerned about food security ([source](#)). Community foundations have played a key role in responding to this challenge through the [Emergency Community Support Fund](#), which has funded more than 1,800 food security projects.

Meanwhile the importance of long-term and systemic approaches to SDG 2 can be seen in the initiatives of community foundations across Canada including:

- The integrated approach of Toronto Foundation, which supported [Food Animators](#) who work with communities to build community food security, reduce isolation and create public space, supported by grants for community gardens, good food markets and community kitchens.
- Vancouver Foundation's [East Van Green](#) program, which addresses the interrelated challenges of food security and climate change by working with small-scale urban farmers to ensure [zero waste food systems while helping them adapt to climate change](#).
- The [Victoria Foundation's support for the regional Food Share Network](#). As part of this network, the Victoria Foundation is helping feed 35,000 people while contributing to a regional food hub that will support food literacy, job training and local food producers.
- The Ottawa Community Foundation's [New Leaf Community Challenge](#), which has provided a [\\$125,000 grant to systematically address local food security issues](#).

- The support of community foundations in the creation of [local food policy councils including in Saskatoon and London](#). Food policy councils take a systemic approach to food security by studying the local food system and identifying actions and policies that could improve it ([source](#)).
- The [Clayoquot Biosphere Trust partnered in the creation of a regional Food Action Plan](#), which identified food security challenges across the region as well as networking and partnership opportunities.

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Food Policy Council

Food Policy Councils are made up of members representing various sectors of the food system. They identify emerging food issues that will impact their municipality or region and work to influence them through policy and programs.

— [BC FOOD SECURITY GATEWAY](#)

Common principles to get started

There are many ways that grantmaking can support SDG 2, but there is a common recognition of the need for systemic solutions to food insecurity ([source](#)). In a recent review of Canadian food security funders, interviewees recommended rethinking project timelines and encouraged more long-term investment due to the systemic nature of food issues. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of “developing collective action and enhancing capacity building efforts vital to the future success of a cohesive food movement” ([source](#)).

01 Identify food security issues and approaches

- Learn more about food security issues and leading approaches in Canada. A good place to start is the [Beyond Hunger](#) report and the website of [Food Secure Canada](#).
- See how other community foundations are already working toward SDG 2 by reviewing CFC’s report [Taking the Pulse of Community Foundation Food Activity Across Canada](#).
- Use Vital Signs to identify and track food security issues in your community. Data from Vital Signs has played a key role in the food security work of the [Victoria Foundation and the Clayoquot Biosphere Reserve](#).

02 Understand your local food system

- Carry out ecosystem mapping of community food security issues and actors, and plan systemic interventions. See the work of the [Foundation of Greater Montréal](#) and the [Community Foundation of Southeastern Alberta](#).
- See if your community has a local food policy or a food action plan and explore how your work can align with or support its progress. Contact your municipality or search this [online directory](#).
- Consider conducting or supporting a more in depth [community food assessment](#) to better understand the state of the local food system and actions to improve it. A great example is the [Middlesex-London Community Food Assessment](#), and more examples can be found at [Food Secure Canada](#).

03 Strategic grantmaking

- Support the creation of sustainable food centres that address multiple interconnected food and poverty issues. See the [Community Food Centres Canada website](#) for more information as well as the work of the [Victoria Foundation](#) and [Community Foundation Grey Bruce](#) in creating food centres.
- Support the creation and/or operation of a local food policy council. View this [report by Food First](#) for more information on how to get started with a policy food council and review the work of the [London Community Foundation](#).
- CFC's [national survey](#) identifies the important role of impact investing for supporting food security through investments in local food economies. An example is the Edmonton Community Foundation's [Social Enterprise Fund](#), which invested in [The Organic Box](#), a locally owned home delivery service focused on organic and sustainably produced food. For more tools and examples, check out the [Food, Farms, Fish and Finance](#) report by the McConnell Foundation.

04 Lead and collaborate

- Lead by example through your foundation's procurement policies, and use your purchasing power to support the local food economy and sustainable food businesses. Consider encouraging your partners and supporting grantees to adopt sustainable procurement policies as well. See the work of the McConnell Foundation and its [institutional food program](#).
- Consider partnering with Indigenous organizations to support [Indigenous food sovereignty](#) projects that reclaim traditional food production, distribution and consumption practices. See examples of these kinds of projects on the website of [Investing in Native Communities](#).
- Join or create networks to address the complex nature of food systems. The Victoria Foundation participates in and supports a regional [Food Share Network](#), and the Foundation of Greater Montréal has brought a focus on food security to a city-wide [Collective Impact project](#).

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Food Security Networks

Food Security Networks are coalitions of community members, organizations, agencies and businesses who work collaboratively to address food security.

— [BC FOOD SECURITY GATEWAY](#)

Resource list

Taking the Pulse of Community Foundation Food Activity Across Canada

- A national survey on the involvement of community foundations in food issues.
- Pages 4–6 present case studies of grantmaking on food issues.
- Pages 10–12 look at common approaches for working on food issues.

Beyond Hunger

- Pages 10–15 present data on the state of food security in Canada.
- Pages 32–42 look at the causes of food insecurity in Canada.
- Pages 43–53 provide policy recommendations for addressing food insecurity.

Food Secure Canada

- A website that brings together key information, networks and resources dedicated to achieving food security in Canada.
- Contains a section on food policy approaches and systemic action.
- A searchable resource portal with up-to-date food security research.

Sustainable Food Systems: A Landscape Assessment for Canadian Philanthropy

- A national survey of philanthropic organizations working toward food security.
- Pages 6–16 provide a synthesis of key issues that organizations are working on and the opportunities they see for philanthropy.

Food, Farms, Fish and Finance

- Pages 10–36 cover impact investing strategies for supporting local food systems.
- Pages 37–55 identify opportunities for impact investing.

Make Food Matter Toolkit

- A detailed online toolkit developed by FoodARC and focused on Nova Scotia but applicable to other regions.
- Provides tools and resources for community dialogue, policy engagement, social innovation, advocacy work and communication.

Planning for Food Security: A Toolkit for the COVID-19 Pandemic

- An Indigenous approach to food security actions and strategies.
- Pages 5–7 provide examples of food security approaches.
- Pages 8–12 include planning tools and worksheets.

Groundswell: A Guide to Building Food Security in Rural Communities

- Pages 21–43 provide tools for supporting the key dimensions of food security.
- Pages 45–67 provide examples of different rural food security initiatives.
- Pages 66–75 explore the role of food policy and local food policy initiatives.

Working with Local Government on Food Policy: A Toolkit for Civil Society

- A toolkit developed for British Columbia but applicable to other provinces.
- Pages 25–34 provide guidance on collaborating with local government and roles for civil society.

Community Food Assessment Guide

- Pages 8–12 focus on how to get started with a community food assessment.
- Pages 13–24 cover key processes and sample methodologies.

Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned

- A US report that covers different benefits and approaches to food policy councils.
- Pages 19–31 cover common structures and functions of food policy councils.
- Pages 32–44 document starting points, success stories and challenges.