

A. Title of Project:
B5 - Farmers' Markets as Social Economy Drivers of Local Food Systems

B. BALTA affiliation: SERC II

C. Co-Lead Researchers:
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BC: Hannah Wittman (SFU) & Herb Barbolet (Centre for Sustainable Communities, SFU)

D. Description of Project:

There is growing interest in the re-localization of food systems. Farmers' markets are important and increasingly prevalent sites of economic and social exchange in the evolution of local food systems. Little is understood, however, about the role of farmers' markets in fostering increased local production and consumption, or the broader impacts of these social economy enterprises on the communities (both urban and rural) and regions with which they are associated. What are the opportunities and obstacles facing farmers' markets? Could they play an expanded role in community and regional food security? The goal of this research is to examine and compare the current and potential role of farmers' markets in BC and AB as social economy drivers for local food systems. This research will build upon previous work completed for SERC II including the literature review, scoping project, and the recent case profiles on two farmers markets conducted in AB and BC.

Objectives:

The objectives of this project are as follows:

1. To examine the literature on FMs through a social economy lens:
 - a) To examine and compare the role of FMs in the development of local food systems in different global contexts - e.g. North America, Europe, Asia, Latin America;
 - b) To gather information on the history of FMs in Canada, particularly BC and AB contexts (ie. origins, locations, function, organizational structure) and what influences have shaped this. What is the distribution of public, social, and private investment in supporting the development of farmer's markets in BC/AB (land, buildings, infrastructure, administration). What actors within the social economy are taking the lead in this area, and what role do FMs play in their larger objectives/initiatives?
 - c) To identify themes emerging from the literature regarding the successes and challenges of FMs, and if possible to assess the extent to which FMs are (or could be) a driver of community food systems.

2. To develop individual case profiles (shortened version of a case study) of FMs clustered within a regional setting in BC and AB (no more than 10 FMs in each province) in order to evaluate and compare their current and potential role in advancing local food systems, individually and as part of an interacting regionally-based network. We are particularly interested in understanding if and how a regional cluster of FMs can stimulate short supply chain development. As part of a network analysis, we will investigate a number of relevant variables such as producer marketing mobility within a regional market cluster, competition for marketing space at different FMs, and FM relationships to other local businesses and community organizations. What purposes does the FM serve beyond sales – e.g., production and marketing knowledge exchange, political networking and advocacy, building awareness about local production and consumption? What is the potential for FMs to become focal points for warehousing, processing, and other forms of distribution of local food products, including public procurement?
3. To establish a Delphi method of inquiry in order to engage a group of experts (e.g., producers/vendors, FM managers, FM association representatives, academics, government representatives) in: 1) assessing the prospects for, and conditions affecting, FMs becoming a driver of the re-localization of food systems in BC and AB in the coming decade; and 2) proposing criteria for the success of FMs in this role in BC and AB. For further details on this method see attached appendix.

Outputs:

- 2 academic published papers: 1) Literature review 2) comparative study of regionally clustered FMs in AB, BC
- 1 summary report aimed at practitioners, policy makers
- 1 power point presentations on the summary of this research

Intended Outcomes:

- Examine and contribute to the development of FMs as social and economic drivers of community food systems.

E. Purpose and significance of the research:

This proposed research provides an opportunity to drill down into one of the key themes identified for SERC II – local and organic food systems. The goal of this research is to examine and compare the current and potential role of farmers' markets in BC and AB as social economy drivers for local food systems. This research will build upon previous work completed for SERC II including the literature review, scoping project, and the recent case profiles on two farmers markets conducted in AB and BC.

Farmer's markets are arguably one of the most successful examples of social enterprise activity in Canada. In part driven by increased public concern for the environment and demand for local food alternatives, individual farmers markets are expanding rapidly (e.g. the Vancouver and Rimbey markets have more than doubled their sales since 2006), and the number of farmers markets is also increasing in BC and AB.

Uniquely positioned for start-ups and micro-businesses, farmers markets offer an affordable venue to micro-businesses, ongoing direct customer feedback for product research and development, and the flexibility to scale production incrementally in a relatively low-risk environment. Given the close connections with small-scale producers and processors and a growing and very loyal customer base, the concept of FMs acting as a nexus for revitalizing our local food systems seems promising.

What are the opportunities and challenges Farmer's Markets face in fulfilling this role? As an example, the Farmers' Markets are ideally positioned to launch a range of expanded local food activity from cooperative warehousing to processing and distribution networks. However, the impermanent nature of their sales venues (most operate under special temporary permit from municipal authorities) lessens FM potential to establish such ventures. If they secured permanent locations, would farmers markets generate a cluster of local food enterprises? Further, policies held at many farmers markets such as barring resale of local product (farmers/producers can only sell their own product, not that of others) may inculcate a culture of "smallness" which both overtly and subtly reduces the potential for vendor growth. Other farmers markets have begun to experiment with resale, allowing cooperative marketing ventures whereby one farmer sells both their own produce and that of others, but have experienced significant resistance from many current vendors and the public. Are farmers markets now sufficiently established where alternative parallel structures need to be established, structures which build on the strength and networks of the existing vendors, without compromising the culture of vendor direct sales, these vital producer-to-customer relationships, which are a cornerstone of FMs success? As an example, the Farmers' Markets are ideally positioned to launch a range of expanded local food activity from permanent markets to cooperative warehousing, from processing and distribution networks to large scale Community Shared Agriculture, and Retail Supported Agricultures.

A model regaining popularity in economic analysis is that of market or sector clustering, which entails the virtual or physical connections between businesses in a specific economic sector. This can intentionally or unintentionally lead to the promotion of cross business innovations, collaborative marketing, market intelligence sharing and inter-business cooperation. Arguably, the FM structure already contains many of the components of a sector cluster e.g. physical proximity, vendor support, information sharing, coordination of production and participation in more than one market in a region. How can cluster theory be used to understand and improve current FM operations, both within markets and between markets? Larger scale local food infrastructure such as warehousing, processing and distribution systems could be facilitated by this type of cluster networking and collaboration.

These are some of the questions that will be explored through the proposed literature review, case profiles of regionally clustered FMs in AB and BC, and the Delphi inquiry. This research will explore and propose a range of changes in policy and practice that could potentially launch farmers markets into the next

phase of development and thereby become dynamic pillars of re-localized food systems.

F. Student researchers: Initially, 1 MA. student (affiliated with SFU and a graduate student of Hannah Wittman's) will be hired to assist in the literature review. This student will also be involved in the case profile work in BC. A PhD student, who has worked on a previous BALTA project, is being solicited to work on the case profiles in AB. One of these students will also assist in gathering and analyzing the data that emerges from the Delphi Inquiry. The students who have been identified have proven to be very capable researchers and are committed to contributing to the study of the social economy and/or agri-food systems. This research will complement the research they are involved with for their graduate degrees and will give them an opportunity to expand their research skills in qualitative research methods, as well as their knowledge concerning the social economy, local food systems, and market cluster theory. They will be under close supervision by the co-leads in BC and AB, particularly Drs. Wittman and Beckie.

G. Research Activities, plan of work and timetable:

Activity	Student Researchers Involved	Supervision	Timeline
Literature review and summary report; Assist in preparation for Delphi inquiry	1 SFU MA student	All co-leads	Sept – Dec., 2008
Delphi inquiry – 2 rounds of questions (collating, coding and analyzing data)	1 student	All co-leads	Jan – June, 2009
Case profiles (survey and interviews)	BC:1 SFU MA student ; AB:1 student	BC – Wittman and Barbolet; AB – Cabaj and Beckie	March – June 2009

H. Communication within the academic community:

Presentation at national (e.g., Canadian Association for Food Studies) and international (e.g., Agriculture and Human Values) conferences. Publication in peer reviewed journals (e.g., Agriculture and Human Values, Sociologia Ruralis)

I. Communication with practitioners and other stakeholders:

Report on findings made available to practitioners, provincial and other government departments and agencies. Results will be made more public through articles in the popular press and oral presentations.

J. Research Tools: Literature review, case study/profile protocol, qualitative interviews, Delphi inquiry. An ethics application will be prepared and submitted

for the case profiles and Delphi inquiry in advance of the start of these phases of the research.

K. Monitoring and Evaluation: To be determined following consultation with BALTA coordinator.

L. Budget and Contributions:

The budget will cover the costs associated with hiring graduate students (on term contracts) to assist with the literature review, case profiles and Delphi inquiry. Additional costs are associated with travel (case profiles, conference travel) and incidentals.

Category	Cost	BALTA	Other Funding	Students
<i>Budget – Sept. 2008 to March 31, 2009</i>				
Literature review/Delphi prep: 1 student 10 hrs/wk @ \$23/hr (plus 10.5% benefits) for 14 weeks	\$3,558	\$3,558	\$0 (**)	BC
Delphi inquiry: 1 student 10hrs/wk@ \$23/hr (plus 10.5% benefits) for 4 weeks	1,017	508	509	AB
Case Profiles: 2 students for 13 hrs/wk @ \$23/hr (plus 10.5% benefits) for 2 weeks	1,322	661	661	AB & BC
Total FY 2008-2009	\$5,897	\$4,727	\$1,170	
<i>Budget – April 1 to June 30, 2008</i>				
Delphi inquiry: 1 student 10hrs/wk@ \$23/hr (plus 10.5% benefits) for 4 weeks	\$1,017	\$508	\$509	AB
Case Profiles: 2 MA students for 10 hrs/wk @ \$23/hr (plus 10.5% benefits) for 12 weeks	6,100	3,050	3,050	AB & BC
Students travel to FMs	\$2000	\$1000	\$1000	AB & BC
Travel and accomod. for 2 students at a national conference	\$2000	\$1000	\$1000	AB & BC
Travel and accomod. for 2 BALTA members at an national conference	\$2000	\$2000		
Travel and accomod. For 2 BALTA members at an	\$4000		\$4000	

international conference				
Incidentals	\$ 600	\$300	\$300	
Total FY 2009-2010	\$17,717	\$7,858	\$9,859	
TOTAL for Project	\$23,614	\$12,585	\$11,029	

(**) We are requesting full BALTA funding for the first phase of the FM project, the literature review, so that we can get started as soon as possible.

Appendix – SERC II FM proposal

Delphi Inquiry – overview

Introduction

The Delphi method is explained in detail in Linstone and Turoff (1975).¹ In essence, it is a process allowing a group of experts to participate jointly in defining and analysing complex problems or issues where information is fragmentary or inaccessible, by contributing to successive rounds of information gathering, receiving feedback and, as a result, refining the information gathering process in the subsequent round. Early rounds of the inquiry often concentrate on opening up issues and allow participants a significant role in defining the framework of investigation itself. Later rounds narrow and refine the scope of questionnaires. Typically, such exercises involve three rounds, although there can be more, and in some instances a bare minimum of two rounds are employed. It is well suited to situations where perspectives might differ substantially according to background, and although it does not necessarily yield a unified consensus at the end of the process, it has the advantage that each participant can reflect on and take into account views based on the range of experience of the other panel members.

Why use the Delphi Method in this Project?

Within this project, the Delphi method will be used to achieve two things: 1) to assess the prospects for, and conditions affecting, FMs becoming a driver of the re-localization of food systems in BC and AB in the coming decade; and 2) to propose criteria for the success of FMs in this role in BC and AB.

Developing the approach

The first decision that needs to be reached concerns the nature and scope of the panel itself. In some studies the number of experts is strictly limited, whereas in others membership runs into several hundred. In this exercise, apart from the obvious consideration that the number should be as small as possible, to make analysis and feedback turnaround times as short as possible the panel should be kept to a minimum. The following probably need to be invited to participate in order to have representation of different stakeholder groups: provincial agriculture departments; managers of FM associations; managers of FMs; farmers/vendors, policymakers and regulators; academic researchers; local food activists.

Selecting members for the expert panel is, in reality, the easiest part of the process; gaining the interest and engagement of potential panellists throughout this process is much more demanding. For that reason, the contents of the first round questionnaire and its delivery are both of fundamental importance. One possible model would be to send an initial letter explaining the project as a whole (reference to the website); what commitment is required; and particularly how the exercise will benefit both individuals and the sectors in which they work. It could also provide the opportunity to nominate

¹ Recent relevant applications have been described in, for example, Chevron (1998), Griffith and Krampf (1997), Gupta and Clarke (1996), Kaynak et al. (1994), Lafourcade and Chapuy (2000), Mitchell and McGoldrick (1994), and Walter and Reisner (1994). See also Gupta and Clarke (1996).

other potential panellists, especially if the original panellist is unable to take part. Those agreeing to join in the Delphi inquiry would then receive the first round questionnaire, which would cover broad issues and contain only open questions to which participants would be encouraged to answer at length. After a reminder for non-respondents, closure of the first round would allow coding and thematic analysis of the responses. Project investigators would then discuss the summary report, together with a proposal for a more next structured questionnaire. The report and final version of the second questionnaire would then be sent to the panel members, in reply to which they would have a chance to modify their original response.

In summary, in establishing the Delphi inquiry for this research, the following will be addressed:

- Selection of an appropriate profile and number of members of the Delphi expert panel;
- Based upon the findings from the literature review (see proposal), first round questionnaire will be developed with a maximum of six, entirely open questions;
- The timeline for this process that fits with the two other components of this research – literature review and case profiles of regionally clustered FMs in AB and BC.

References

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