

# Farmer's Markets as Social and Economic Drivers of Local Food Systems

BALTA SERC II: B5 and B7

Mary Beckie, University of Alberta

Paul Cabaj, Canadian Centre for Community Renewal

Hannah Wittman, Simon Fraser University

Chris Hergesheimer, Simon Fraser University

Emily Huddart Kennedy, University of Alberta

Melisa Zapisocky, University of Montana

BALTA 2009 Symposium



# FM in Canada: \$3.09 Billion



BALTA 2009 Symposium

## The Context

- FMs visible face of local food systems in communities
- Intertwined social and economic benefits
- Number and size of markets growing steadily in BC and AB
- Regional clustering of FMs apparent in both provinces
- Successful examples of social economy enterprises

# Research Questions

- What is the current and potential role of farmers' markets in BC and AB as social and economic drivers of local food systems?
- What is the nature, extent and significance of horizontal and vertical linkages amongst geographically clustered markets and other aspects of the short supply chain?
- As social economy enterprises, what impacts do FMs have on the communities and regions they are situated in?

# Research Methods and Workplan

- Literature Review on FMs using a social economy lens – nationally and internationally – best practices, successes and challenges (Oct – Dec 2008)
- Delphi Inquiry with experts to explore current and future role, challenges and needs (Nov 2008 - Jan 2010)
- Documentary and narrative research of regionally clustered FMs in two locations in both BC and AB (June 2009 – Feb 2010)

# Theoretical Framework

Exploratory but informed by:

- Cluster theory
  - geographically proximate groups linked through competition and collaboration (Porter 1998; Davies and Larkin 2001)
  
- Embeddedness
  - social ties, relations of regard/trust (Sage 2003)
  - spatial context, short food supply chains and locality (Penker 2006)
  
- Actor Network Theory (Latour, 1991; Jaroz, 2005)
  - Mapping the connections and relations within networks of actors

# Literature Review Summary

- FMs as actors within the phenomena of local food system clustering over time and space (Marsden, Banks and Bristow, 2000)
- FMs role in assisting the protection of farmland and the promotion of local economies (Brown and Miller, 2007)
- Inter-related challenges facing FM include tenure (Connell, 2006), governance and regulation (Black, 2005)

# Delphi Participants

Category	MNGR	VEND	GOV or DIR	Total
BC	4	6	5	15
ALB	5	7	3	15
R.R.	73%	68%	83%	74.5%



# Delphi Results

Diverse opinions on shape/contour of LFS

- Geographic boundaries
- Components of a given local food system
- Marketing channels (what is local?)
- The nature & role of geographic clustering

# Preliminary Delphi Findings

- Constraints on Increased Demand for Local Food
  - limited availability (1-2% of local food passes through FMs in AB and BC, but in some cases much higher)
  - limited access (certain marketing channels under-utilized)
  - lack of consumer information and awareness

# Preliminary Delphi Findings cont...

## ➤ Constraints on Increased Supply of Local Food

- low prices relative to the cost of production
- underdeveloped marketing options
- lack of government support

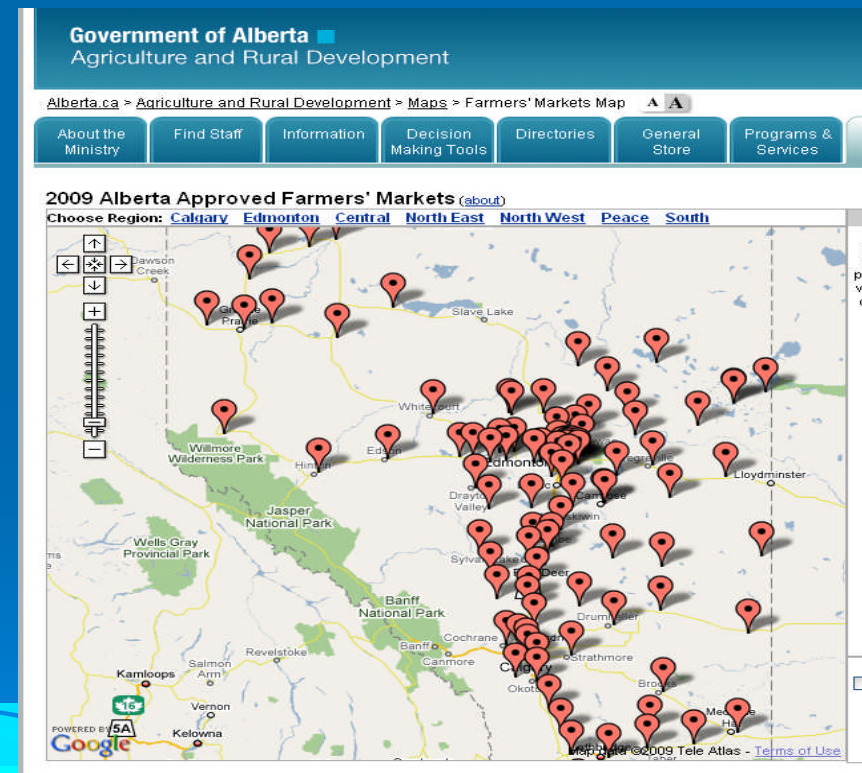
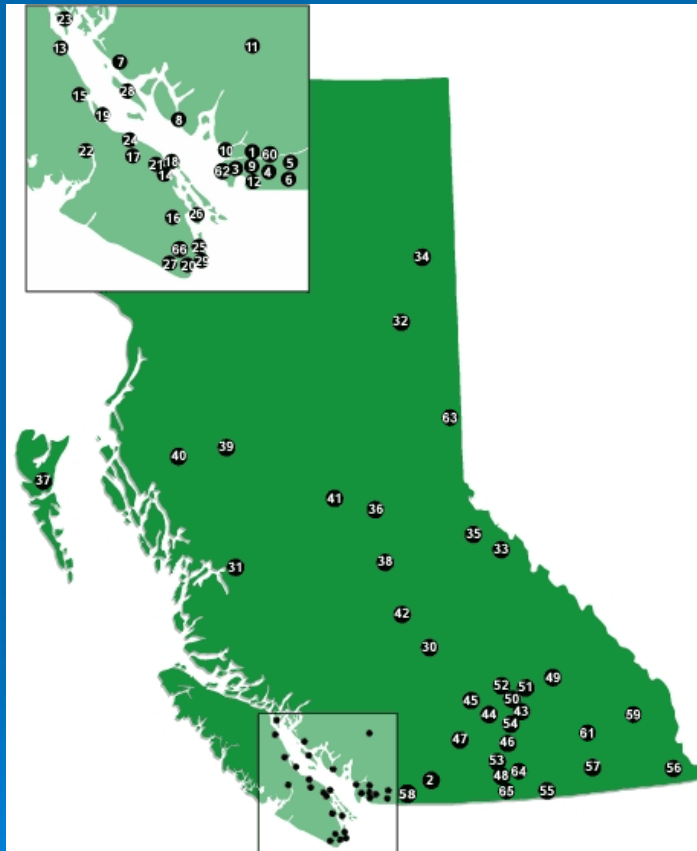
## ➤ What's needed to enhance Local Food systems?

- Local and regional branding
- initiatives to stimulate consumer demand
- improved coordination

# Contradictions/Challenges

- The no. 1 and 2 answers for Constraints on demand are limited availability and access, both supply side issues.
- Why is the response for enhancing local food systems (both for our participants and for Canadian policy) focused on the demand side?
- Lack of awareness of the potential benefits of clustering and fear of unhealthy competition

# FMs in BC and AB



# Conventional Clusters versus FM as clusters

- Geographically bounded
  - Local focus versus global/export
- Self organizing
  - Historical path with key actors and events
- Focus on similar products and/or services
  - FM focus on a diversified product range
- Dependant on production
  - Production and customer/demand base
- Benefits of knowledge flows
  - Technology versus production/marketing systems

# FM cluster relationships

- Vendor to vendor
- Vendor to market
- Market to market within a cluster
- FM and external relations
  - Customers, community organizations, FM associations, government
- FM markets and vertical linkages in the supply chain

# Shaping the success of clusters

- Leadership
- Location- supply and demand
  - Diversified product profile, consistency of product supply, urban versus rural
- Infrastructure and security of tenure
- Social and civic support
- Organization and regulations
- Strengthening both horizontal and vertical linkages



# Drivers of local food systems?

- FMs prime venue for creating social/economic links amongst farmers and consumers, educating about LFS, building community
- Clustering holds potential for enhancing FMs as 'drivers of LFS' need for strategic policy, planning and action:
  - Collaboration across sectors, strengthening links in short supply chain, cross marketing options, leadership, infrastructure development