

# We Are What We Eat

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ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS & FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

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# Discussion Topic

What is an alternative food system?

- Why is it considered alternative?
- What are examples of alternative food systems?

What is food sovereignty?

- Why is it important to be food sovereign?
- Who is part of the food sovereignty movement?
- What is a food sovereignty framework?

# What is Food Sovereignty?

**Food sovereignty is difficult to define because it has come to mean many different overlapping ideas.**

Patel (2009)

- Food sovereignty is, if anything, over defined. There are so many versions of the concept, it is hard to know exactly what it means. The proliferation of overlapping definitions is, however, a symptom of food sovereignty itself, woven into the fabric of food sovereignty by necessity. (p. 664).

Alonso-Fradejas, Borras Jr, Holmes, Holt-Gimanez, and Robbins (2015)

- The term has become a challenging subject for social science research, and has been interpreted and reinterpreted in various ways by different groups and individuals. Indeed, as it is a concept that is so broadly defined, it spans issues such as ***food politics, agroecology, land reform, pastoralism, fisheries, biofuels, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), urban gardening, the patenting of life forms, labour migration, the feeding of volatile cities, community initiatives and state policies, public health, climate change, ecological sustainability, and subsistence rights.*** (p. 443)

Qualman (2011)

- Food sovereignty...is many things depending on place, time, culture, needs and so on. As with many forward-looking ideas, it is difficult to predict exactly what food sovereignty will look like in practice – to provide an exact blueprint of food sovereignty is not only difficult but also counter-productive. So it might be easier to define what it isn't. (p.20)

# Introduction to Food Sovereignty

## ***Darrin Qualman Advancing Agriculture by Destroying Farms? The State of Agriculture in Canada***

### **Food Sovereignty is NOT:**

- A set of policies simplistically aimed at maximizing production and exports
- A disregard for the destruction of family farms and rural communities
- A push towards high-input, high-cost, high-energy-use model for food production that generates chronic negative returns for the farm families who work the soil
- A concentration of land ownership into the hands of fewer and fewer owners, many of them non-farmers
- A corporate takeover of a growing number of agricultural sectors (e.g. hog production and cattle finishing)
- A push towards massive production units that concentrate potential pollutants
- A transfer of key food processing facilities to foreign companies, even to foreign lands
- Economic policies that make foreign-based transnationals the primary beneficiaries of the wealth created by farm families working our land
- A system that makes citizens ever more dependent on food supplied further and further from their homes



# What is Food Sovereignty?

Food sovereignty is a multidimensional concept that refers to a process and an outcome.

- **Process** – it describes a movement, a struggle, a democratic process perpetually in negotiation and always in motion.
- **Framework** – to compare food regimes.
- **Outcomes** – agreed upon declarations of rights, codes of ethics and guiding principles. These declarations are debated at conferences, meetings, and public forums and carried out by the parties (who agree with the declarations) in local communities.
- [Nyéléni](#) Declaration 2007

Food sovereignty refers to:

- the rights of nations and people to control their own food economy – to decide how food is produced, consumed, processed, and distributed.
- a paradigm, trend, framework, discourse, regime and model. It is the most radical food movement discourse and rivals the corporate neoliberal food system.
- a right to food that is of quality, healthy, and culturally appropriate
- recognition and respect of women's role in food production
- social justice
- environmental sustainability
- recognition and respect for traditional knowledge and Indigenous Peoples
- agrarian reform including collective land rights and protection of Indigenous Peoples' Lands
- 're-commoning' land and right to defend land from transnational corporations
- against trade liberalization

# Food Security

**We need to think beyond sustainability and food security to address root causes of food problems – we need to build food sovereign localities.**

**Food Security** – Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO):

- Food security, at the individual level, household, national, regional and global level [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (1996)

**Via Campesina (1996)**

- Long-term food security depends on those who produce food and care for the natural environment. As stewards of food producing resources we hold the following principles as the necessary condition for achieving food security...Food is a basic human right. This can only be realized in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed. **Food sovereignty** is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security

La Via  
Campesina  
Position at the  
World Food  
Summit  
(Desmarais,  
2017)

Right to produce and access to land

Food is a basic human right

Agrarian reform

Protecting natural resources

Reorganizing food trade

Social peace

Democratic control

# Food Regimes (Wittman, 2011)

**Table 1: Food Sovereignty: An Emerging Alternative Food Regime?**

	Corporate/Neoliberal Food Regime	Food Sovereignty Regime
<b>Feeding the World</b>	Food access/security through intensive production based on principle of comparative advantage and distributed through market mechanisms.	Food access/security through prioritizing local agricultural production and protecting local markets from dumping/subsidized food imports.
<b>Role of Agriculture in Advancing National Development</b>	Increase positive trade balances through increased exports of agricultural commodities. Economically successful communities will invest in infrastructure to improve community well-being (e.g., hospitals, schools).	Sustainable agriculture as part of a diversified economy will improve national well-being through improving food security and ensuring a healthy environment. Fair trade will spur economic growth.
<b>Role of Technology in Advancing Agricultural Development</b>	Increases in productivity come through scientific innovation, adoption of technology, and modern management. Problem solving based on a compartmentalized approach to problems of soil fertility, disease, pest infestation, etc.	Farmers must become efficient and competitive through diversifying production, using alternative technologies, and minimizing use of external inputs. Problem solving is based on a holistic approach to adoption of appropriate technology, including agroecology.
<b>Environmental Stewardship</b>	Protected areas, national parks, and environmental regulations are sufficient, as long as they do not harm the potential for the expansion of agricultural export crops.	Agriculture and environmental policy cannot be separated; sustainable agriculture protects biodiversity and leaves space for conservation areas.

*Note:* for other comparisons between the food sovereignty model and corporate/ neoliberal/ second food regime paradigms see Desmarais (forthcoming); Rosset (2003); Fairbairn (2010); Reardon and Perez (2010).

Table 14.1

Politics, production models, and approaches

	Corporate food regime		Food movements	
Politics	Neoliberal	Reformist	Progressive	Radical
<i>Discourse</i>	<i>Food enterprise</i>	<i>Food security</i>	<i>Food justice</i>	<i>Food sovereignty</i>
Main institutions	International Finance Corporation (World Bank); IMF, WTO; USDA; Global Food Security Bill; Green Revolution; Millennium Challenge; Heritage Foundation; Chicago Global Council; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; ONE Campaign	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank); FAO; UN Commission on Sustainable Development; International Federation of Agricultural Producers; mainstream fair trade; Slow Food Movement; some Food Policy Councils; most food banks and food aid programs	Alternative fair trade and many Slow Food chapters; many organizations in the Community Food Security Movement; CSAs; many Food Policy Councils and youth food and justice movements; many farmworker and labor organizations	Via Campesina, International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty; Global March for Women; many food justice and rights-based movements

**Table 14.1**  
(continued)

<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Corporate</i>	<i>Development</i>	<i>Empowerment</i>	<i>Entitlement</i>
Model	Overproduction; corporate concentration; unregulated markets and monopolies; monocultures (including organic); GMOs; agrofuels; mass global consumption of industrial food; phasing out of peasant and family agriculture and local retail	Mainstreaming/ certification of niche markets (e.g. organic, fair, local, sustainable); maintaining northern agricultural subsidies; “sustainable” roundtables for agrofuels, soy, forest products, etc.; market-led land reform	Agroecologically produced local food; investment in underserved communities; new business models and community benefit packages for production, processing, and retail; better wages for ag. workers; solidarity economies; land access; regulated markets and supply	Dismantle corporate agrifoods monopoly power; parity; redistributive land reform; community rights to water and seed; regionally based food systems; democratization of food system; sustainable livelihoods; protection from dumping/ overproduction; revival of agroecologically managed peasant agriculture to distribute wealth and cool the planet
Approach to the food crisis	Increased industrial production; unregulated corporate monopolies; land grabs; expansion of GMOs; public-private partnerships; liberal markets; international sourced food aid Guiding document: World Bank 2009 Development Report	Same as neoliberal but with increased medium farmer production and some locally sourced food aid; more agricultural aid but tied to GMOs and “bio-fortified/climate-resistant” crops Guiding document: World Bank 2009 Development Report	Right to food; better safety nets; sustainably produced, locally-sourced food; agroecologically based agricultural development Guiding document: International Assessment on Agriculture Science Technology and Development	Human right to food sovereignty; locally sourced, sustainably produced, culturally appropriate, democratically controlled focus on UN/ FAO negotiations Guiding document: Peoples’ Comprehensive Framework for Action to Eradicate Hunger

# Community Food Sovereignty

Communities can control food production, processing, distribution and waste management.

- Urban Farms, edible community landscapes, collective growing spaces
- Food Hubs and/or Community Food Centres
- Collective kitchens
- Cooperative food distribution organizations
- Local markets and CSA
- Agroecology
- Food banks (surplus from distribution organizations and urban farms)
- Food advocacy organizations
- Social justice!

# 2007 Nyéléni Principles of Food Sovereignty

Focuses on food for people

Values food providers

Localizes food systems

Puts control locally

Builds knowledge and skills

Works with nature



# Alternative Food Initiatives

Alternative food initiatives

Community food security

Food sovereignty

Collaborative food networks

- In Canada
  - People's Food Commission (1977-1980)
  - Provincial Network Organizations (1998)
  - [Canadian Association for Food Studies \(2005\)](#)
  - [Food Secure Canada \(2006\)](#)
  - [Community Food Centres \(2012\)](#)
  - [The Depot](#)

Challenges

- Not adequately addressing social justice
- Over focus on consumer-based solutions



# Loyola Farm

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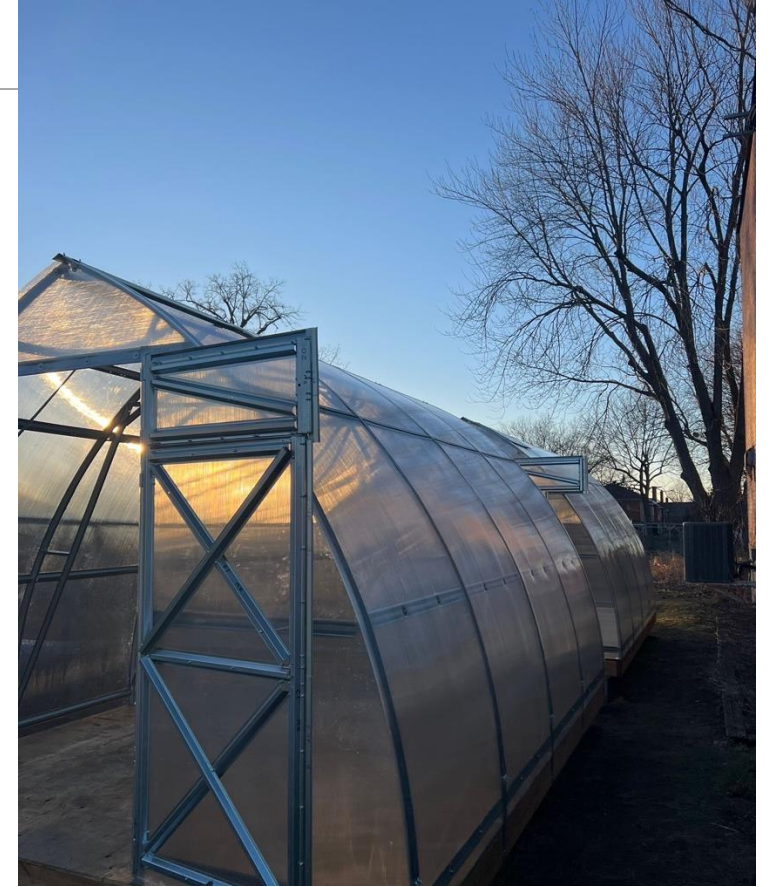
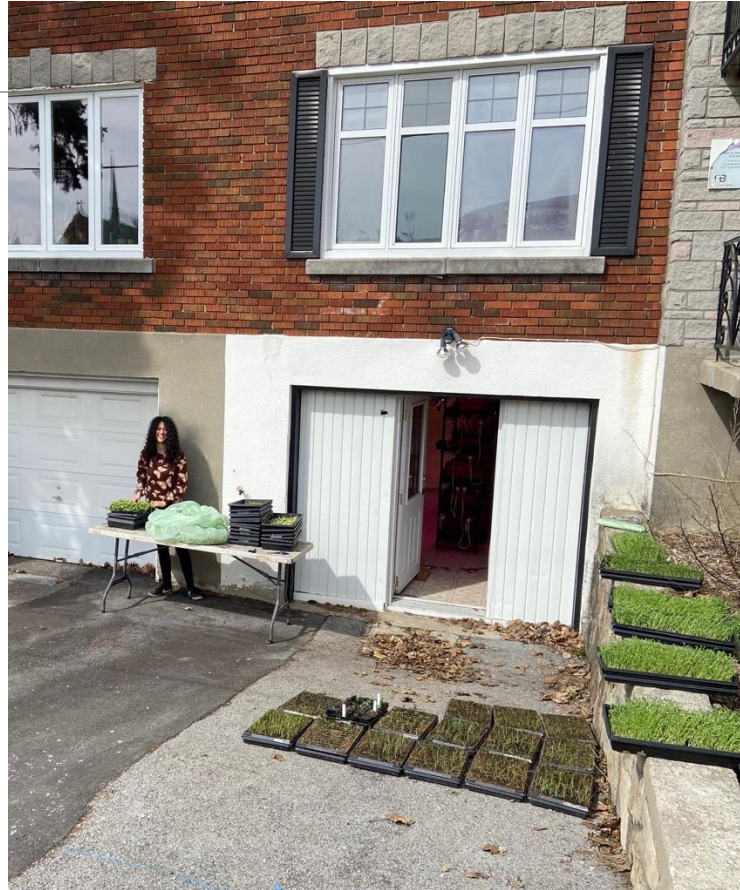
















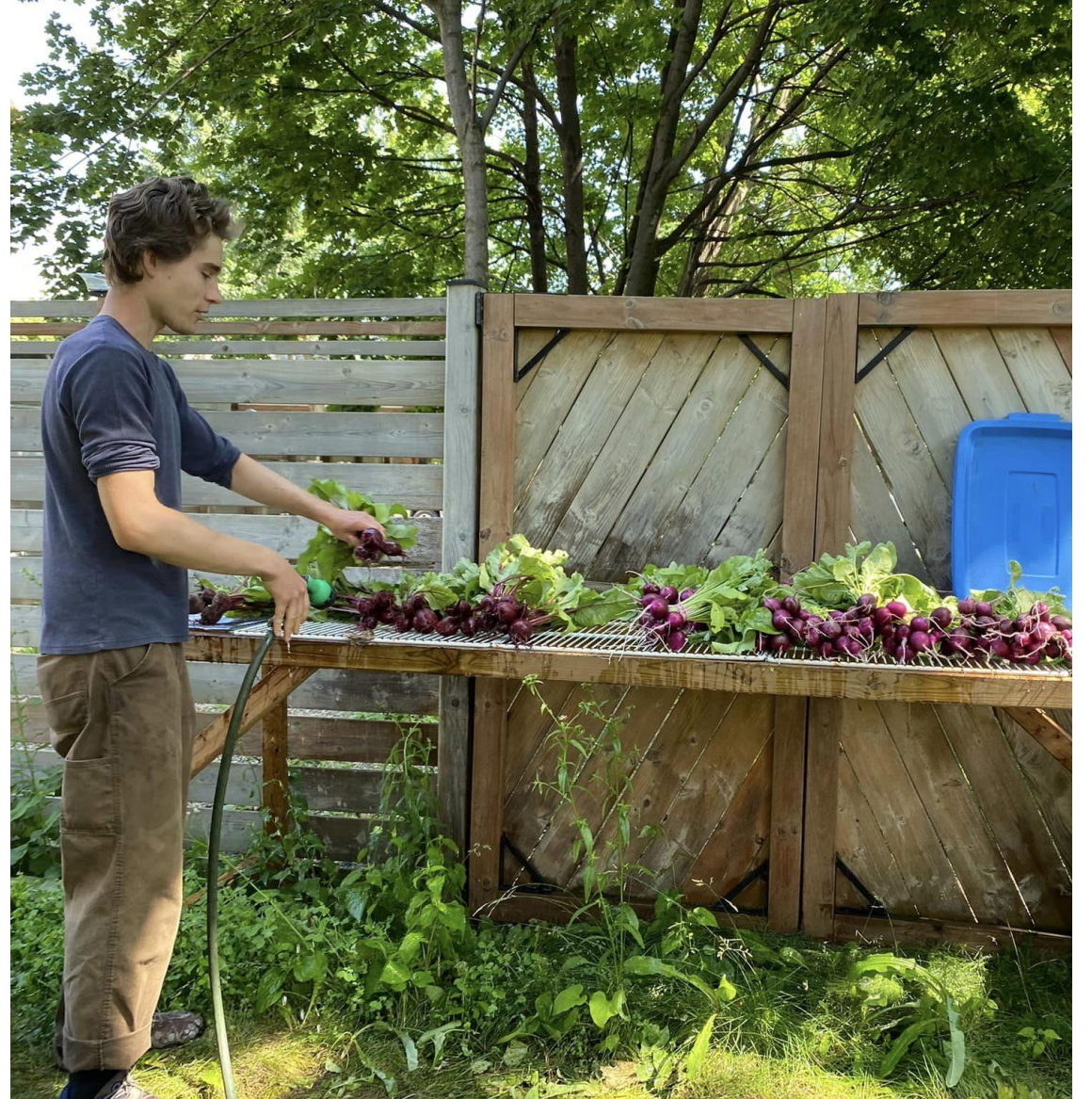
















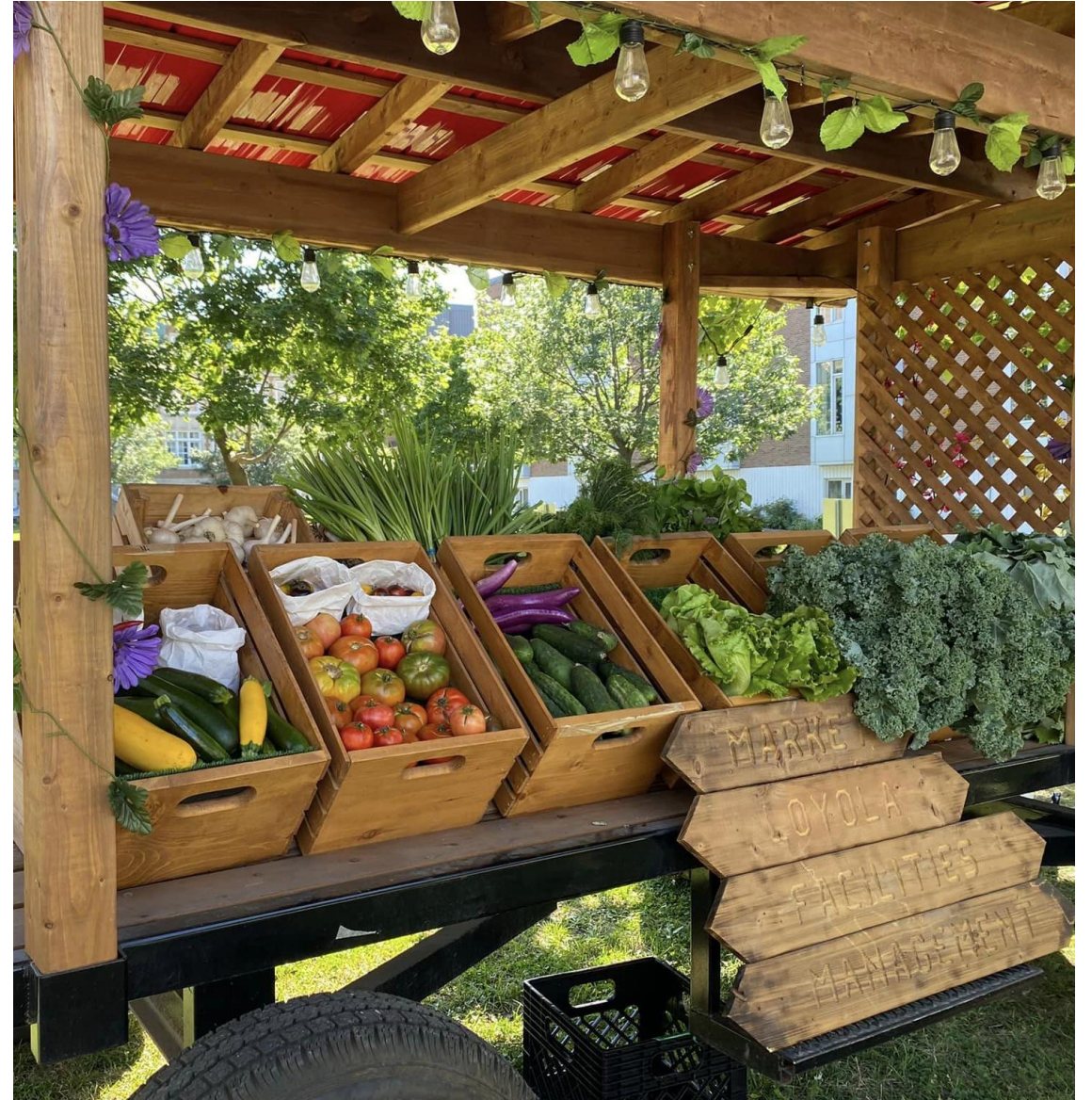
















# Senneville Farm

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A photograph of a group of people working in a field. In the foreground, a person is kneeling and working with the soil. In the middle ground, another person is crouching, and a third person is standing. The background is filled with trees. The text "Impact of CultivAction Solidarity Cooperative" is overlaid on the image.

# Impact of CultivAction Solidarity Cooperative

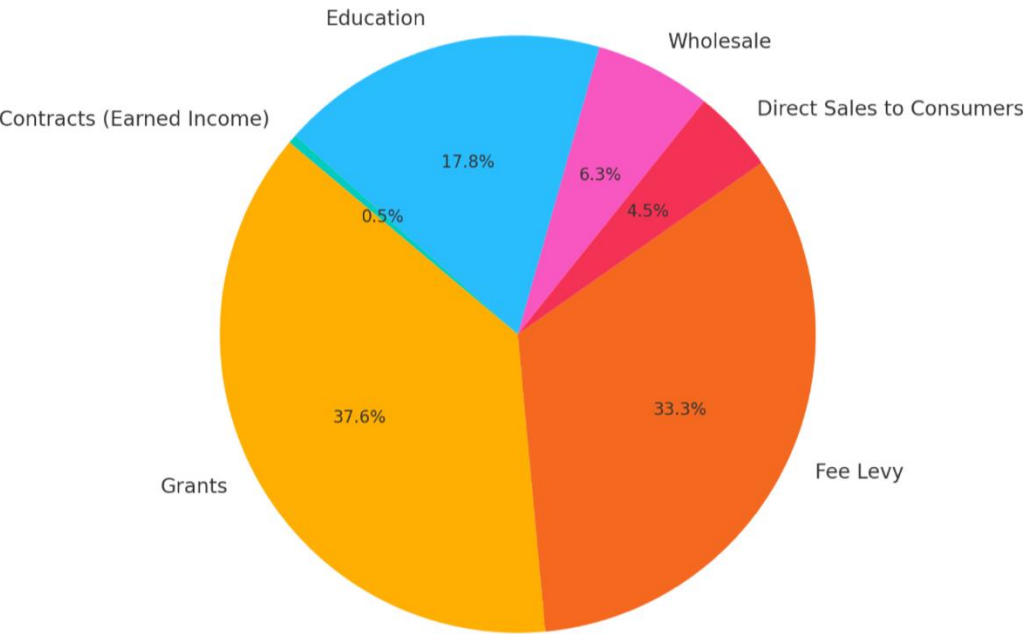


# Gibson Graham – Take back the Economy

*Gibson-Graham, J.K., Cameron, J., Healy, S. (2013) Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Communities, University of Minnesota Press*

LABOR	TRANSACTIONS	PROPERTY	ENTERPRISE	FINANCE
Wage	Market	Private	Capitalist	Mainstream Markets
<b>ALTERNATIVE PAID</b> Self-employed Reciprocal labor In-kind Work for welfare	<b>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</b> Fair trade Alternative currencies Underground market Barter	<b>ALTERNATIVE PRIVATE</b> State-managed assets Customary (clan) land Community land trusts Indigenous knowledge (Intellectual Property)	<b>ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST</b> State owned Environmentally responsible Socially responsible Non-profit	<b>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</b> Cooperative Banks Credit unions Community-based financial institutions Micro-finance
<b>UNPAID</b> Housework Volunteer Self-provisioning Slave labor	<b>NON-MARKET</b> Household sharing Gift giving Hunting, fishing, gathering Theft, piracy, poaching	<b>OPEN ACCESS</b> Atmosphere International Waters Open source IP Outer Space	<b>NON-CAPITALIST</b> Worker cooperatives Sole proprietorships Community enterprise Feudal Slave	<b>NON-MARKET</b> Sweat equity Family lending Donations Interest-free loans

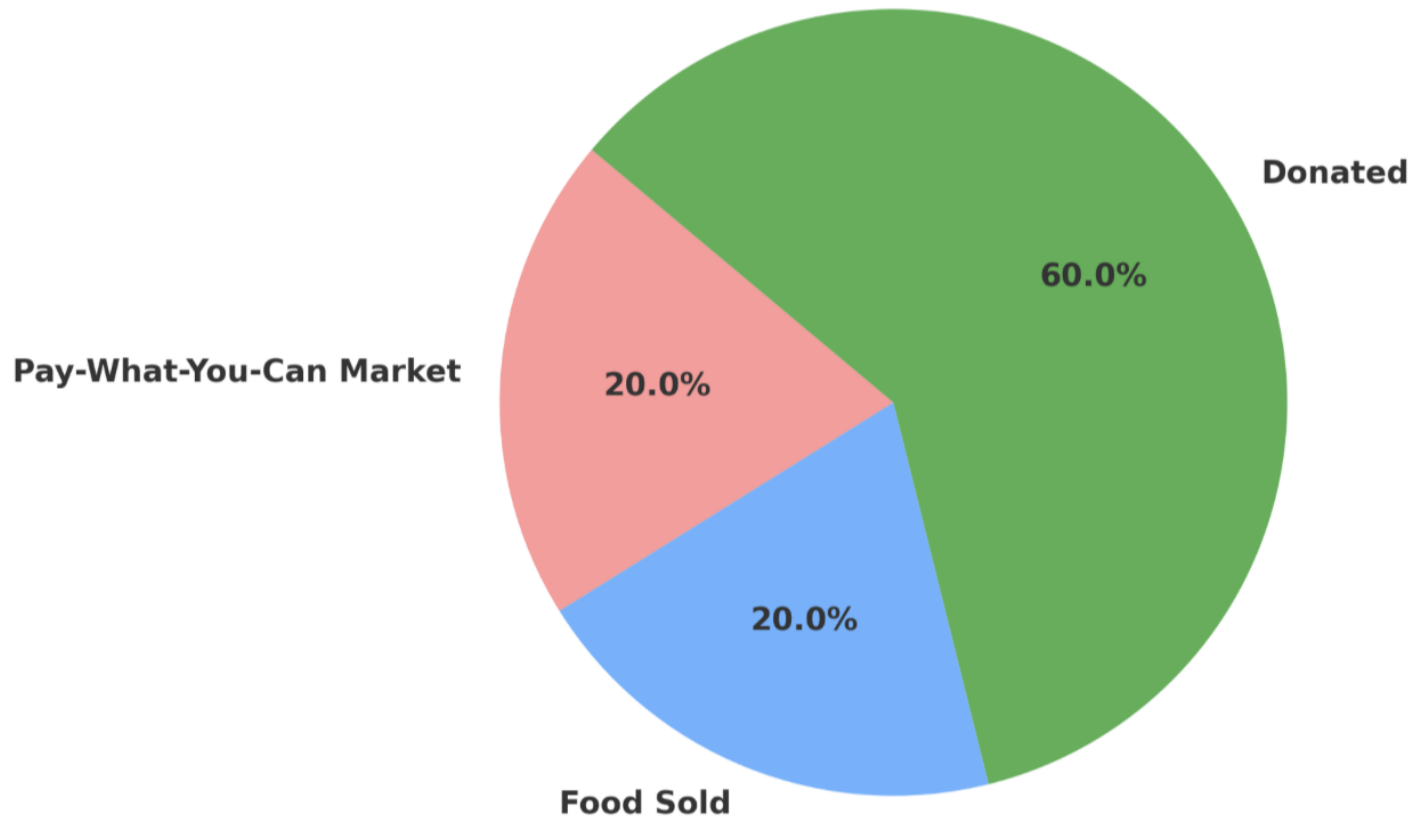
Income Distribution for 2024 (Total: \$180,411.32)



Income Category	Amount (CAD)
Grants	\$67,810.94
Fee Levy	\$60,000.00
Direct Sales to Consumers	\$8,149.35
Loyola Market	\$5,365.85
Microgreens	\$1,059.00
Mushrooms	\$220.00
Seedlings/Houseplants	\$1,389.50
Tea/Medicinals	\$115.00
Wholesale Sales	\$11,433.53
Loyola	\$8,818.53
Microgreens	\$157.50
Medicinals & Teas	\$665.00
Seedlings & Houseplants	\$1,792.50
Education	\$32,167.50
Earned Income (Contracts)	\$850.00
Total Income	\$180,162.71

# Financial Income

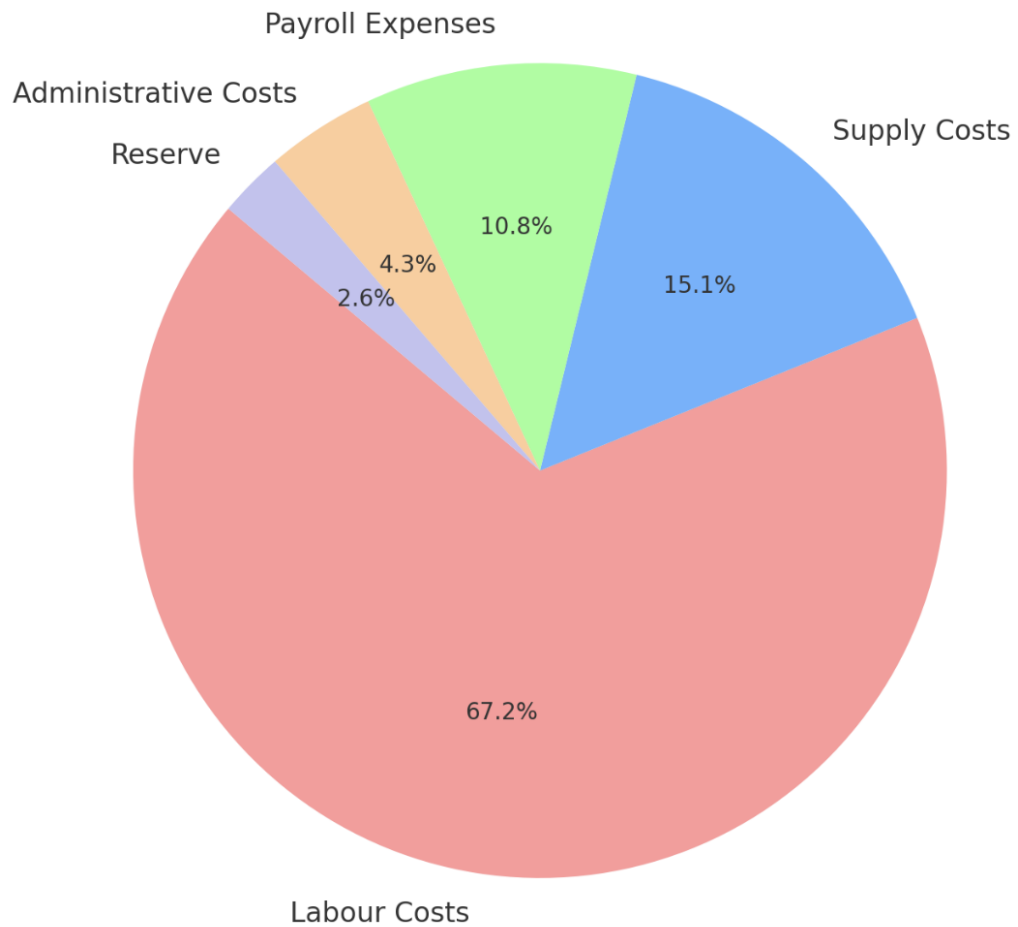
**Food Distribution Breakdown**



# Food Distribution

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CultivAction Expenses Distribution



# Expenses

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# Non-Market Farm Practices

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Volunteer labour

Community involvement

Foraging/gleaning

Connecting community via social events

Soil building (limited)

Incorporating chickens and quails

Sweat equity

Worker managed cooperative





# Alternative Market Farm Practices

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Worker and community owned enterprise

Hybrid of markets and non markets

Ethical principles (food sovereignty)

Fair treatment of employees

Rooted in community

Market viability and non-market advantages





# Positive Impact

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**Social capital** – We connect people to each other and to food.

**Financial capital** – We are helping young farmers build projects.

**Living capital** – We create fragments of urban biodiversity.

**Intellectual capital** – We share knowledge of how to grow food.

**Experiential capital** – We provide hands-on experience for growing food.

**Spiritual capital** – We connect people to nature and the Earth.

**Cultural capital** – We grow lots of varieties of food from many cultures.

Roland, E.C., Lanuda, G. (2013) Regenerative Enterprise. Optimizing for Multi-Capital Abundance





# Contradictions

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- Labour vs food price.
- Growing time vs productivity.
- Food donations vs sales.
- Farmers markets vs increased labour.
- Volunteers and paid workers.
- Free labour vs viability.
- Farm space vs labour hours vs productivity.
- Indigenous reconciliation/reparations vs land use.
- Community involvement vs community interest.
- Soil building vs time.
- Animals vs care.
- Funding sources vs stability.
- Community value vs profit.
- Internal conflicts vs organizational stability.
- Democracy vs efficiency.
- Food waste vs sales vs donations.
- Administrative assistance vs hinderance.
- We cannot feed the entire community but can inspire others to create new projects.





# The Communal Lunch Project

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Campus Food Group Events

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DevOur Campus

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National Food Survey

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Mapping George Brown College

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National Food Coalition

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National Campus Mapping Exercise



Production	Transformation	Distribution	Waste Management	Support & Advocacy
<b>FOOD</b> <b>GROWING FOOD ON CAMPUS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAP Community Garden</li> <li>• Sustainability Squad (Growing Grounds)</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> </ul> <b>PROCURING FOOD ON CAMPUS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> <li>• SNAP</li> </ul> <b>PROCURING FOOD OFF CAMPUS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal Lunch Program</li> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> <li>• Chef on the Run (via ICC)</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> <li>• SNAP</li> <li>• Organic Campus Project (via ICC)</li> </ul> <b>PRODUCING EQUIPMENT TO GROW FOOD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> </ul> <b>GROWING FOOD OFF CAMPUS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enactus</li> </ul> <b>GLEANNING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAP Community Garden</li> </ul> <b>KNOWLEDGE</b> <b>EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal Lunch Program</li> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> <li>• Chef on the Run</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> <li>• Sustainability Squad</li> <li>• SNAP</li> <li>• SNAP Community Garden</li> <li>• Organic Campus Project</li> </ul> <b>SOCIAL CAPITAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal Lunch Program</li> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> <li>• SNAP</li> <li>• SNAP Community Garden</li> </ul>	<b>FOOD TRANSFORMATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal Lunch Program</li> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> <li>• Chef on the Run</li> <li>• Enactus</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> <li>• Sustainability Squad</li> <li>• SNAP</li> </ul>	<b>CAFÉ/RESTO/CAFETERIA</b> <b>MARKET BASED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> <li>• Chef on the Run</li> </ul> <b>NON-MARKET BASED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal Lunch Program</li> <li>• Sustainability Squad</li> </ul> <b>PRODUCE/GROCERY OUTLET</b> <b>MARKET BASED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> </ul> <b>NON-MARKET BASED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAP</li> <li>• SNAP Community Garden</li> <li>• Enactus</li> </ul>	<b>INITIATIVES</b> <b>EDUCATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability Squad</li> </ul> <b>REUSABLE DISHES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal Lunch Program</li> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• CHCA Café (beginning Fall 2024)</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> </ul> <b>COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal Lunch Program</li> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> </ul> <b>RE-PURPOSE FOOD PACKAGING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• SNAP</li> </ul> <b>FOOD LOSS/WASTE REDUCTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Food Market</li> <li>• SNAP</li> <li>• CHCA Café</li> <li>• Chefs' House Restaurant</li> <li>• Chef on the Run</li> <li>• Enactus (food waste into new products)</li> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> </ul> <b>SEED SAVING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second Nature Apiary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Food Market)</li> <li>• Enactus</li> <li>• Sustainability Squad</li> </ul> <div>  <b>COMMUNAL LUNCH PROJECT</b> </div>

# George Brown College Campus-Community Food Systems Map



	Corporate Approach to University Food Services	Weak Sustainability Approach to University Food Services	Food Sovereignty Approach to University Food Services
Who runs food services	External Corporation	External Corporation or self-operated (administration run)	Campus-community stakeholders – partnerships with faculty, students, administrators, staff, and the community at large
Approach to sustainability	None	Weak sustainability or triple bottom line approach	A transformative approach to sustainability that includes social justice, decolonization, and anti-racism
The goal of campus food services	Profit from a captive market of resident students	Provide food to a captive market of resident students	Improve the foodscape on campus and in the surrounding communities
The business model of food services	For-profit (profit and loss)	For-profit or non-profit	Social enterprise or social innovation approach
Involvement of faculty	Faculty are potential customers	Faculty are potential customers and consultants	Faculty are stakeholders and co-create the food system through research and community-service learning projects
Involvement of students	Students are the main customers	Students are consulted about their food preferences	Students are co-creators of the campus food system
Involvement of community at large	The community at large are potential customers or not important	The community at large are not the main focus of food services	Beneficiaries of and partners with a campus food system that creates community value
Consultations about campus food services	Part of a marketing strategy to increase profit	Consultations about food preferences, led by the administration	Led by a federation, coalition and/or network of campus-community organizations
How to address food insecurity on campus	None - Student residents are the primary customer and must purchase a meal plan as a condition living in residence	Food banks and emergency food relief for hungry students	A holistic approach of connecting people to food production, processing and distribution on campus and in the community at large
How food service employees are treated	Driving down the cost of labour is key to maximizing profits	Labourers treated with respect and are paid fair wages – but are excluded from decision making and not paid their true value	Labourers are involved in decision making, are not exploited via wages, and given proper benefits to lead a fulfilling life
Food procurement	Bulk purchasing from large distributors to drive down the cost of produce	Purchasing food from local farmers at the lowest price possible	Purchasing food, at a fair price, from a network of local farmers that hire workers for fair wages and/or where possible, grow food on and around campus through farmers coops of faculty, students and the community at large
Environmental Stewardship	Externalize environmental costs maximize profits	Reduce waste and procure food locally when possible	Holistic approach that reconnects people to the biosphere through food practices, regenerative agriculture and decolonization

# Food Sovereign Campus Framework



	<b>Corporate Approach to University Food Services</b>	<b>Soft Sustainability Approach to University Food Services</b>	<b>Food Sovereignty Approach to University Food Services</b>
<b>Who runs food services</b>	External Corporation	External Corporation or self-operated (administration run)	Campus-community stakeholders – partnerships with faculty, students, administrators, staff, and the community at large
<b>Approach to sustainability</b>	None	Soft sustainability or triple bottom line approach	A transformative approach to sustainability that includes social justice, decolonization, and anti-racism
<b>The goal of campus food services</b>	Profit from a captive market of resident students	Provide food to a captive market of resident students	Improve the foodscape on campus and in the surrounding communities
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	<b>Corporate Approach to University Food Services</b>	<b>Soft Sustainability Approach to University Food Services</b>	<b>Food Sovereignty Approach to University Food Services</b>
<b>How food service employees are treated</b>	Driving down the cost of labour is key to maximizing profits.	Labourers treated with respect and are paid fair wages – but are excluded from decision making and not paid their true value.	Labourers are involved in decision making, are not exploited via wages, and given proper benefits to lead a fulfilling life.
<b>Food procurement</b>	Bulk purchasing from large distributors to drive down the cost of produce.	Purchasing food from local farmers at the lowest price possible.	Purchasing food, at a fair price, from a network of local farmers that hire workers for fair wages and/or where possible, grow food on and around campus through farmers coops of faculty, students and the community at large.
<b>Environmental Stewardship</b>	Externalize environmental costs to maximize profits.	Reduce waste and procure food locally when possible.	Holistic approach that reconnects people to the biosphere through food practices, regenerative agriculture and decolonization. Animals, nature and people form a relationship of reciprocity and interdependence and not exploitation.



# Discussion

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How can we achieve campus-community food sovereignty?



# Thanks!

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Questions or concerns?