



Food System Change 2023

A New Way for Food in Our Communities

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Closing the Supply Gap (CSG)

CSG is a collaborative initiative in the Capital Region to create food system change and build a resilient, values-based local food supply chain, one that will bring socio-ecological, cultural, and financial benefits to every part of the region.

CSG is building local food system leadership. The leaders include farmers, fishers, food processors, grocers, restaurants, distributors, and community organisations. They are bringing their experience, expertise, and focus to building a robust local food short supply chain.

CSG research underpins actions that are addressing the infrastructure gaps that limit availability and access to local food into the mainstream of our food supply.

CSG collaboration is identifying barriers that limit the availability of locally produced and harvested food—farmed, fished, and foraged. The solutions are coming from the people who are working in the food system across the whole region.

Action Momentum

✚ **CSG is building unique collaboration among local food businesses and organisations for food system change...**

- Regional inclusion in a leaders table and task groups. The region spans the southern gulf islands, Saanich peninsula, eight urban municipalities, and the western communities of southern Vancouver Island.
- Collaborative development of a values proposition to underpin food system change, using a circular economy model. **The key values that define the proposition are social and ecological sustainability, fairness, financial and social equity, cultural inclusiveness, local profitability, and community resilience.**
- Two region-wide symposiums that brought food sector businesses and community organisations to the table. Participants shared understandings of the issues and the opportunities affecting their work in the food sector and their perspectives on priorities for food system change. They built consensus.

✚ **CSG is conducting unique local food system research...**

Closing the Supply Gap has been uniquely positioned as an academic and grassroots **Participatory Action Research** initiative with ethical certification and peer review. Throughout its design and development it was associated with Royal Roads University and now is collaborating with the Simon Fraser University Food System Lab in the School of Resource and Environmental Management. The research to date includes:

- **Focus groups** across the region that gathered detailed information about farmers' perspectives on a variety of questions including on-farm and off-farm infrastructure needs, marketing preferences and issues, and similarities and differences from one part of region to another.
- In-depth individual interviews with a selection of food sector business owners (farmers, fishers, grocers,

Survey Snapshots

- 39 % of farmers and processors said they could accommodate increased production while 61% indicated that their facilities are only marginally adequate for their current production.
- Only 14% of farmers indicated that they sell to processors and 5% said they sell to institutions. 60% of processors indicated that it is not easy for their business to order from local producers.
- 100% of the fishers said that increased local processing and cold storage for their catch are critically important for them to function directly in a local food supply chain.
- 80% of the community food organisations said their physical facilities and operational capacities could not accommodate expansion of their services
- 100% of the grocers agreed strongly or somewhat strongly with the statement that their customers like to buy local foods at their stores. **75% said they have more demand for local food than they can supply and 80% said that demand for**

chefs, processors) about their **business relationships** within the local food sector.

- A **demonstration project** with farmers and a selected grocer that tested operational obstacles to increasing availability of local produce in grocery stores.
- An expert workshop for farmers on **GAP certification**¹. The workshop took into account farmers' needs as smaller scale producers, cost-benefits, additional investment requirements, and support through the application process and follow-up.
- Many cross-sectoral discussion circles having to do with system change planning and management, local food system values proposition, collaborative processes, infrastructure gaps, shared business-risk, supply chain components and design.

+ **Addressing local food sector fragmentation**
CSG collaboration and participatory research is building consensus across the region—food producers, fishers, processors, and non-profit and for profit distributors streams—toward the development of a cohesive local food short supply chain. The aim is not to homogenise region but value difference and in that honouring strengthen community resilience...

- In a **region-wide and sector-wide survey** this summer we gathered information about food sector capacity and infrastructure gaps. 98 farmers, fishers, processors, grocers, restaurateurs, and community food organisations responded. The survey results begin to build a baseline of information about short supply chain capacity.
- One of the most important findings is that there is remarkable consensus from all parts of the food sector

and region on the infrastructure priorities that need to be addressed in order to de-fragment the current local food economy and build a robust local food short supply chain. The survey results show the way for infrastructure development across the region.

¹ General Agricultural Practices (GAP) is an industry assigned certification that establishes a set of on-farm practices aimed at guaranteeing produce quality and food safety. Certification involves field practices, postharvest handling, detailed documentation, and regular third-party audits. GAP is created by and for large scale production; it is not government regularion. Farmers pay for the certification and audits. Many food retailers and most institutions require GAP certification of produce they are purchasing. Selling at farmers markets does not require GAP certification. Livestock and dairy farmers must follow a specific set of government regulations and, therefore are not affected by GAP when they sell to retailers.



Advancing Infrastructure Development and the Short Local Food Short Supply Chain, 2023

This fall CSG organised the [Local Food Economy Symposium: Building a local food short supply chain](#). A regional task group guided the development and content using the survey results as actionable priorities.

Participants were tasked with addressing strengths and gaps, animated by food sector facilitators with experience and perspectives on pinch-points that are local food supply chain obstacles. Symposium participants identified the following priority actions

- Develop centralised distribution channels that address the needs of all primary production and processed local food—produce, meat, and fish.
- Increase emphasis on values-based principles to build more reciprocal business-to-business relationships and a robust local food short supply chain across the whole region.
- Develop digital technology tools that will support short local food supply chain efficiencies and assist in building robust business-to-business relationships across the regional supply chain.
- Increase local investment and the associated social, ecological, cultural, and economic benefits that will accrue.

Leveraging Opportunities

Participants identified other regional priorities that are consistent in values and priorities that are highly compatible with CSG actions in 2023...

- Development of universal school meal program based on local food supply.
- Linking with regional climate action plans to reduce GHGs associated with lack of transparency, external costs, food waste, and social justice in the long supply chain of imported foods.
- Current commitment to development of food hubs around the province, both non-profit and for profit including increasing access and reducing food waste.
- Current emphasis and interest in “buying local”.
- Emergency preparedness planning to include the supply of local foods.

CSG Activities, 2023-24

- CSG participants are building momentum across the local food sector to establish a **local food short supply chain** in the Capital Region using a systems approach.
- The work will **demonstrate concrete systems change**. It will spotlight existing supply chain infrastructure, **prioritise new infrastructure that fills identified gaps**, and **strengthen reciprocal relationships** among farmers, fishers, processors, food distributors, retailers, restaurants, community food organisations, and investors.
- It will **leverage community priorities** that share the same values of resilience, fairness, equity, and local decisionmaking capacity.
- It will continue to be based on **sound research and increased shared knowledge** and meaning.

(See Appendix for regional map and circular food supply chain schematic).



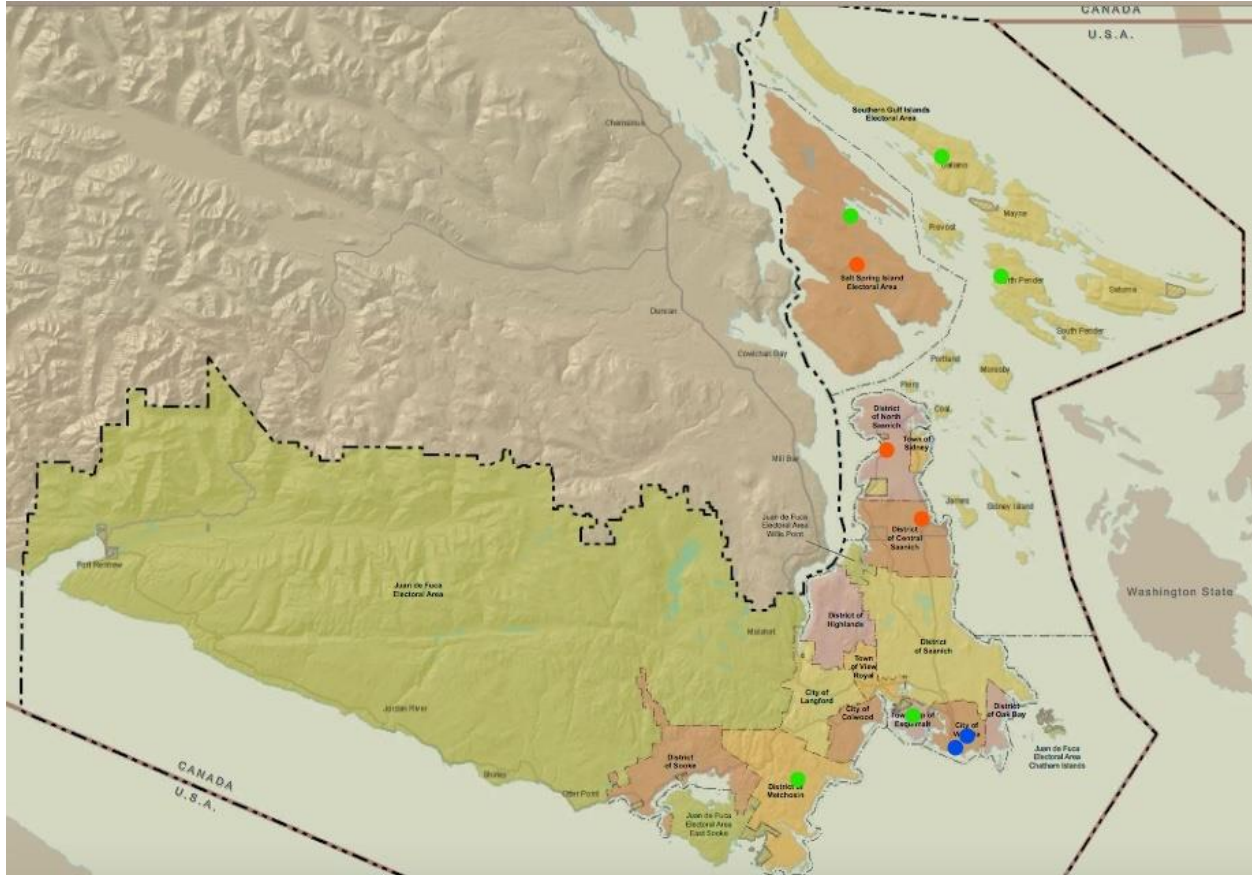
Work Plan Priorities, 2023

- Conduct a collaborative demonstration project for local food distribution component of the local food supply chain. This demonstration may be tested in two or three different applications depending on sector capacity, e.g. comprehensive distribution in the supply chain for a universal school meal program starting with work underway in SD#62, significantly increased distribution of locally caught fish and seafood, and improved culturally appropriate/targeted access to food.
- Engage organisations (non-profit and for-profit) that are providing hub services in discussions about networking across the region. The engagement objectives are to develop a collaborative network that addresses major gaps in services and access and builds a reciprocal system across not-for-profit and for-profit organisations encompassing farming, fishing, processing, and community food programs. The aims are to build a resilient system, avoiding unnecessary duplication. (Some redundancy may be required at specific places in the region in order to ensure resilience.)
- Identify digital tools needed to organise inventory from sources and networks to wholesale and direct distribution outlets based a model used in the local fishing sector.
- Build increased collaborative leadership governance that animates local food system values and incorporates a diversity of organisational structures based on democratising power relationships in the local food supply chain and scales of operation.

Funding priorities are to support CSG's operational capacity:

- 1) **Animate** regional collaboration toward local food circular supply chain model
- 2) **Strengthen** leadership and collaboration capacity at sub-regional level, e.g. priority areas Sooke area (remote, fragmented), Saanich Peninsula, (under-developed, fragmented), Gulf Islands (remote, isolation with high potential).
- 3) **Facilitate** food hub networking ensuring for and not for profit collaboration.
- 4) **Communicate** to build links within the circular supply chain model that become functional across sectors and time.
- 5) **Administration** assistance for organising logistics, collaboration meetings and events across the region. At present most organisations (non-profit and businesses) are at capacity and unable to contribute their resources for organising events and meetings.

Preliminary Map of Food Hub Facilities, Capital Region, 2023



Model Local Food Chain Schematic, 2022

