

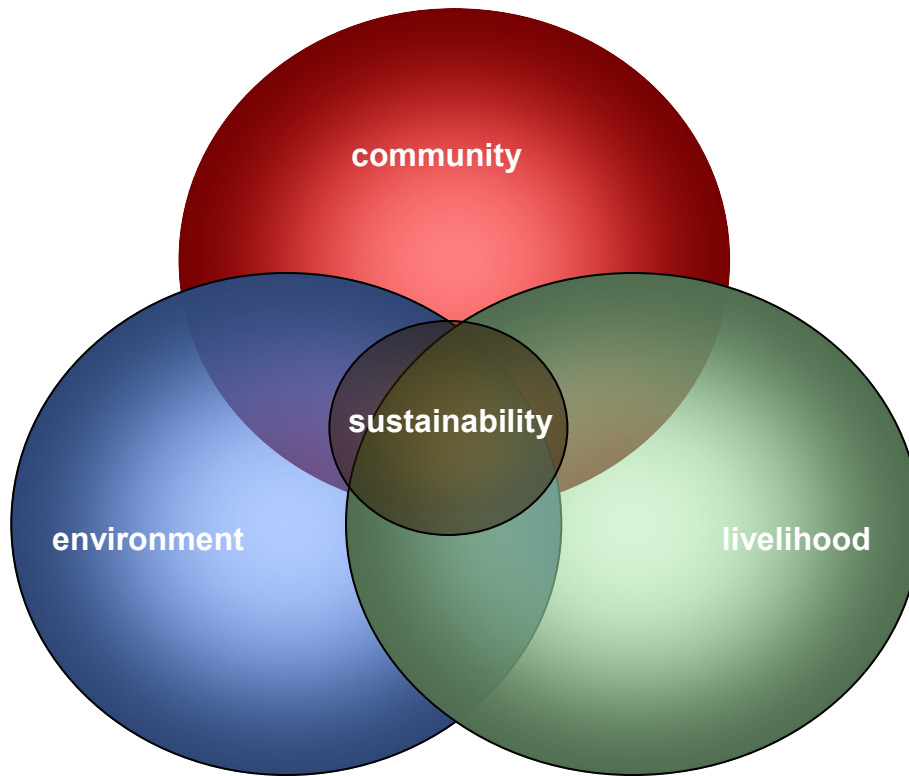
**Introduction to:
Sustainable Development
and
Local, Organic Foods**

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Sustainable Development and Local, Organic Foods

The Pillars Of Sustainable Development



The Big Picture, Localism and Food

The indigenous roots of all people, the 'worlds' of our ancestors, were based in a refined awareness and knowledge of the natural world. Needs were met within the boundaries that defined collective and individual experience; shelter, clothing, food, medicines and amusement were available within respective territories. People lived interdependently with one another and the natural world. This knowledge and awareness were their livelihoods. Much knowledge and awareness of place to ensure livelihood is still held by Elders/ Seniors in our communities and those who have learned from them.

Even though there is knowledge of place as the primary source of livelihood, most people have lost this relationship with place, the natural world and each other, and with that loss, knowledge of place that ensured life for our ancestors.

Replacing this knowledge are frequent and divergent forays into the world of fantasy worlds, largely dependent on technology. Instead of being in full awareness of the world outside, we experience it, largely, in virtual ways. We are separated from our neighbors. We buy “stuff” to meet needs and wants and most of it is from other parts of the world. We’ve become disconnected from the place where we live, as our livelihood, as our source for health and wellbeing.

Having separated from place and one another we have also lost the awareness of our actions on the world, the resources that we use, and how our culture of individualism can and does harm health and wellbeing in our communities and beyond. Concerns abound regarding current and future natural crises and the role of human activity in their creation. Solutions also present themselves, often rooted in the common sense of lived experience rather than scientific inquiry.

To enhance health and wellbeing many people are looking to their surroundings to meet more of their needs. At the base of these efforts, and at the foundation of health is the reconnection to place as a source of nourishing food. There is an international movement to recreate local and regional food sourcing, to help ensure food security and that crises of human impact can be mitigated or avoided, especially by lessening our ecological footprints on the earth through healthier food decisions.

Each step to meeting needs locally and regionally, and reducing consumption generally, reduces human impact. Collectively, there can be many benefits: socio-cultural, economic and/ or ecological. A common area of focus in collaborative work across Saskatchewan, Canada and elsewhere is to become, as much as possible, locally and regionally more self-sufficient in terms of food, connecting with each of the potential benefits noted above.

In addition, further development and redevelopment of local cuisines can provide interesting opportunities for rural communities. The socio-cultural value of food growing and preparation cannot be overestimated; participating citizens become aware of local sources of sustenance, and enjoyment of local cuisines, contributing to community food security and wellbeing.



Food Miles and the Call for Local Food

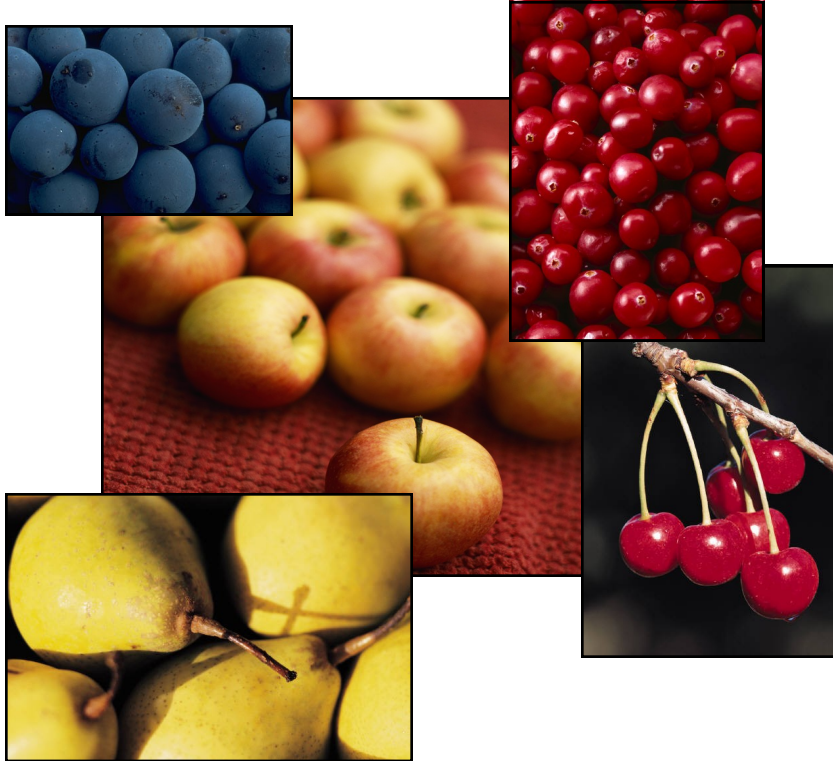


It is a rare person who is not tied to global consumer markets in terms of their homes, clothes, technology, furniture, vehicles, entertainment, innumerable small items, and food. Globalization and the consumer cultures of the second half of the twentieth century have changed the earth more rapidly than ever before in human history. No part of the remaining natural world is untouched by human activity (human-created elements are found even in the snows of high mountains and in Arctic ice where it otherwise looks pristine) and much of it is threatened. Climate change is here and uncontested; people, and especially those of consumer cultures, have the most important role in efforts to lessen human impact. A key way to do this is to change some, perhaps more, of our food choices to focus on nourishing foods in our locales and regions.

Most items of our standard meals in Saskatchewan have traveled thousands of kilometers to our plates, and to trace the journey and treatment of even one item is complex, illustrating our disconnection from food, a transition that took at most two or three generations, yet still exists in our communities among some people. As Michael

Pollan, author of 'In Defense of Food', suggests, the whole food of our grandparents and great grandparents is what we are meant to eat to be healthy, and any food that has an ingredients label of more than three items is not that food.

Food, rather than being what we can grow, enjoy seasonally and preserve, has been transformed and packaged to ensure shelf life and to turn a profit. The family farm that provided all but a few items (such as sugar or coffee) two or three generations ago has diminished in numbers. Yet, in response to the need and call for sustainability principles and practices, it is this type of producer that is being called on to help recreate local and regional sourcing of as many foods as possible.



some of the many fruits available in Saskatchewan

Sourcing foods closer to home has potential benefits of which carbon reduction is only one, albeit critical. Rural economic development and revitalization are supported when small farmers and value added industry develop stable, local and regional markets. Fortunately, small scale, intensive farms and value added industry exist throughout Saskatchewan, providing a diversity of foods. They can be found, at the moment, mainly at Farmers' Markets or their farm gates. As well, those producers with organic practices ensure that many other toxins are not introduced into the environment.

Among these efforts are farmers and producers who, with organic certification, regulate the integrity of growing and production processes. Certified organic growers and producers spend significant amounts of time, effort and expense to ensure that common standards are met, assuring the best quality possible. The website of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) summarizes the commitments and responsibilities of certified organic producers www.saskorganic.com.

Principles of Local, Organic Food in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's certified, organic producers provide added assurance that food and fiber are grown and produced with practices that not only result in ethically produced products but also, healthy ecosystems, the foundation of which is maintenance of ecological diversity in the soil, and among flora and fauna. The perspective is holistic; all components of organic production are integrally interconnected and interdependent.

SOD's website (www.saskorganic.com), ideas generally shared by organic producers anywhere, notes the following principles of organic production:

- Enhancement of biological cycles within the farming system, involving micro-organisms, soil flora and fauna, plants and animals;
- Maintenance of long term fertility of soils;
- Promotion of the healthy use and proper care of water resources;
- Use of renewable resources in locally organized production systems;
- Creation of a harmonious balance between crop production and animal management;
- Providing livestock conditions of life with due consideration for the basic aspects of their natural behaviour;
- Allowing people working in organic production a quality of life which meets their basic needs and allows an adequate return and satisfaction from their work, including a safe working environment; and
- Progressing toward an entire production, processing and distribution chain which is both socially just and ecologically responsible.



An Invitation to Explore Saskatchewan's Organic Foods

These resources, ranging from elementary to high school, are intended to introduce Saskatchewan young people to local, organic food production in the province, the ways in which it benefits our people, economy and environment, and how young people can be actively involved from growing to purchasing to consumption.

Teachers, young people and their families are invited to use these materials and to learn from producers at www.saskorganic.com.

