

CONNECTING WITH FOOD: THE IMPLICATIONS OF CORONAVIRUS
CASE STUDY: CANADIAN FOOD POLICY ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

To help understand what is next in our future, using the Food Policy Council's (FPC) around Canada as exploratory case studies on how Canadians react to the pandemic and its impact on their experience with food. This research will help predict trends, better understand what is still at risk and what has strengthened as an outcome of the pandemic—particularly looking into Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. Their ways of addressing the conditions created by the coronavirus and their community-focused approaches to mitigating those concerns. In combination with secondary data that endorses the observed growing concerns, Canadians have toward their food sources and continued interest in eliminating plastic packaging despite potential safety concerns brought on by the pandemic.

KEY WORDS

Food policy councils [FPC], food policy organizations, food policy networks, COVID-19, coronavirus, pandemic, food experience, food motivation, locally grown, sustainability, plastic-free, food stability, food instability, food security, food insecurity, food supply chain, Canada, Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, community-supported agriculture [CSA] Boxes, farmers' market

INTRODUCTION

Whether you label it SARS-CoV-2, Coronavirus, COVID-19, or the pandemic, they all amount to the same thing and are used interchangeably throughout the gathering process of data collection during this exploratory research. Despite what you call it, one thing is for sure that coronavirus has taken the world by storm. With it passing the one-year mark of a national pandemic, access to essentials has become an on-going concern in everyday life. While this research explores the connection between food stability during a pandemic and the development of community-supported agriculture [CSA], it also explores how coronavirus has impacted how Canadians connect with food sources. This research examines any changes, particularly the perspective of where food comes from and the relationship to food in the Canadian context.

To understand the current relationship with food, you also need to acknowledge the past, such as the previous research pointing to the importance of a local Farmers' Market and how historically, communities relied on Farmers' Markets for their food supply (Stanciu, 2015). However, that does not seem to be just in the past. Currently, there is evidence in consumers' interest in returning to purchasing their produce from those local markets again (Parkins & Craig, 2009; Stanciu, 2015). Attending a local market helped in creating a connection to place and community within those areas; as consumer motivations changed focus towards cost and convenience, the popularity of the markets dwindled as well.

Farmers' Markets are similar to the Slow Food Movement initiative and Local Food Movement that strengthens the relationship between a community's wellbeing and the connection to its local economy, culture, and food supply (Delind, 2006; Pietrykowski, 2004; Stanciu, 2015). In addition

to consumers wanting to take time to enjoy their food and take an interest in where their food is grown, they are also proving to become more invested in the way it is packaged. As the concern for the environment increases, so does the obstacle of plastics in packaging and a desire for more sustainable options. In light of the coronavirus, the need for safety measures in a world of face masks and sanitizer may be outweighing the importance of eliminating plastics.

Furthermore, investigating consumers' motivation to food and understanding if there has been a notable change in perspective or possible noteworthy developments created explicitly by the coronavirus (Food Communities Network, 2021a). Due to current policy restrictions regarding the on-going coronavirus, the ability to conduct in-person research for the subjects and the researcher was unsafe. However, the world has gone virtual, which allows for a new data collection opportunity. The following examines an exploratory case study discovering what impact coronavirus has on our relationship to food surrounding Canadian Food Policy Organizations with a specific interest in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia as samples. It further explores the public interest in the relationship to food being of importance and if there is enough evidence to warrant further in-depth applied research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

HISTORY OF FOOD

Pulling from a collection of reports and articles across the world, it suggests our relationship to food is essential. Looking back at the beginning when Carlo Petrini founded the Slow Food Movement in 1989 (Guthrie et al., 2006; Pietrykowski, 2004; Stanciu, 2015), which desires “the preservation of local foods and cuisines by creating and strengthening networks of social relations

between consumers and producers” (Pietrykowski, 2004, pg318). Farmers’ Markets were historically the way in which cities were fed; local farmers and producers would bring their extra produce to the city or small towns and set up markets to sell (Stanciu, 2015). It was the primary way to source their food until the railway and refrigeration options took off, and food could travel long distances much quicker and safer (Stanciu, 2015). That transition led to the creation of supermarkets, which started the disconnection of the community found at Farmers’ Markets and uncertainty for what food we are putting into our bodies (Parkins & Craig, 2009; Stanciu, 2015). With interest in slowing down, the next wave for the Slow Food Movement was started, called the Local Food Movement (Delind, 2006). Delind talks about connecting with the community, acknowledging what they are eating, and becoming more cautious of their health and nutrition (2006). Consumers want to see the farmer who grew the food they are buying and ask them questions while getting real answers (Delind, 2006).

CONNECTION TO FOOD

There is also the school of thought that not only does food transfer traditions and creates meaningful connections, but it is also a way of connecting to place through the food they eat (Parkins & Craig, 2009; Pietrykowski, 2004). That thought is along the lines of ‘you are what you eat,’ that by eating locally sourced food, they are, in fact, acclimatizing to the location where they live (Delind, 2006; Pietrykowski, 2004). For example, research into eating locally made honey and how it could help with outdoor allergies because consumers are already introducing them into their system through the honey (Delind, 2006). It is mentioned that when we travel, certain foods do not digest correctly for us, but the locals have no problem (Delind, 2006; Pietrykowski, 2004). If they regularly eat food that is shipped long distances and that is not grown near them, then their body

could continue to see these items as foreign and not digest them properly (Delind, 2006). Though further research needs to go into this area, Delind speaks to the connection of body, place and culture through local food (2006).

INTEREST IN ORIGINS OF FOOD

Over the last few years, the public's interest has become more invested in where food is coming from, not only that, but a debate of organic vs local (Delind, 2006; Dodds et al., 2013). Their concerns were becoming pertinent during past pandemics such as mad cow disease or SARS (Delind, 2006; Guthrie et al., 2006; Pietrykowski, 2004). As seen in Italy, they took immediate action to understand the eating habits and lifestyle changes caused by COVID-19 on public health through a survey collecting first-time data (Di Renzo et al., 2020). They also acknowledge the limitations of their sample study and need further investigation (Di Renzo et al., 2020). Enter Food Policy Councils (FPCs), which “have emerged as a critical structure for organizing community-based responses to multiple food system issues” (Palmer et al., 2020, pg 223). With the ever-evolving and on-going coronavirus, it begs the question, what precautions and developments regarding food sovereignty will the future hold for Canada. As of 2018, over 80% of Canadians were living in cities, which required municipalities to “play a more proactive role in developing sustainable, resilient and health-focused food systems. One way they're doing this is through the development of food policy councils” (Cooper, 2018).

FOOD POLICY BACKGROUND

The website for Food Policy Networks describes that “Networks of food system stakeholders go by various names. In North America, food policy council (FPC) is the most commonly used term”

(Driver, n.d.-a). For this research, a ‘food policy organization’ is defined as any council, coalition, association, network or group appearing in support of food sustainability and sovereignty within a specific location or group of areas. In addition to the multitude of names that define a FPC, when searching for a national umbrella organization of food policy councils for Canada, there appears to be no official website. Instead, a few sites provide directories and similar supports that a unified umbrella organization would: including Food Secure Canada (n.d.), Food Communities Network (2021b), and The Food Policy for Canada (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2020a,b). While they share similar motivations, only Food Secure Canada (n.d.) and Food Communities Network (2021b) provide online directories; that said, neither seems to thoroughly represent all provinces and territories. The Food Policy for Canada appears to be the official representation nationally; however, the site is more of an explanation of what constitutes a council and explains their values but offers little resources available as external links (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2020b).

Of the available FPC sources across Canada, only a few sites actively reference coronavirus. Of those listed, the researcher selected three provinces as samples for the case study that could provide any documented correlation directly to coronavirus implications on the consumer’s approach to food stability. Besides providing a directory for FPC across Canada, Food Secure Canada has an ongoing campaign called Eat Think Vote (Food Secure Canada, 2019a). Eat Think Vote promotes “working together to advance food security and food sovereignty through three interlocking goals: zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems” (Food Secure Canada, 2019a). With Food Secure Canada’s online directories having eleven in total (n.d.) and Food Communities Network with fifty-six in total (2021b), there still seems to be gaps in representation, with not all

provinces fully included and especially not in the territories. After conducting independent online searches involving terminology around food policy council, food security and organizations, the researcher collected some form of food-related reference from all regions across Canada. Still, some locations seem to have no official council representing it despite Palmer et al., suggesting that FPCs are critical structures for the future (2020).

METHODOLOGY

METHOD

The researcher conducted exploratory observations through online fieldwork consisting of a case study, recent news articles and secondary survey data. The fieldwork was gathered and analyzed regarding the actual and perceived implications of coronavirus on our relationship to food, surrounding Canadian Food Policy Organizations, and if there is enough evidence to warrant further applied research.

CASE STUDY

The case study used for this research focuses on 3 provinces concerning Canadian Food Policy Organizations and additional resources connected to food sustainability. The sections are Ontario, Manitoba and Nova Scotia due to the accessibility of their open online platforms providing the most up-to-date and relevant information associated with the current pandemic.

SECONDARY SURVEY DATA

On behalf of Local Leaf Farms, a public survey was conducted by Ipsos to better understand their consumers through online interviews (Simpson, 2020). The data was conducted between May 28

and June 1, 2020, sampling 1001 Canadians aged 18+ (Simpson, 2020). The Ipsos poll utilized quotas and weighting to ensure the sample correctly reflects the population according to the Canadian census and measured using a credibility interval with an accuracy of ± 3.5 percentage (Simpson, 2020).

RESULTS

1 CASE STUDY

1.1 Ontario

Ontario has over nineteen listings in the online directory with the Food Communities Network (2021b), with one of the largest organizations being the Toronto Food Policy Council (n.d.). In addition to their initial food stability supports in the community, they are one of the most active at creating various initiatives to help with food insecurity in Toronto, including #NOURISHKIDSNOW – The Push for Healthy School Food During COVID-19 (Toronto Food Policy Council, n.d.). There are also articles and posts recently considering how best to support the community during the COVID-19 pandemic (Toronto Food Policy Council, n.d.). Toronto has also been including youth in these conversations by creating the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council (n.d.). Simultaneously, there does not seem to be much data to support the youth's current involvement in addressing the coronavirus, that said, they do appear actively involved in general.

Outside of the more official FPC options in Ontario, the organization 'Second Harvest' redistributes fresh produce that would otherwise perish to Canadians (Second Harvest, n.d.-a). In light of coronavirus, 'Second Harvest,' like others, has experienced health and safety issues based on their food delivery. To mitigate that, they have adjusted their programs and services as

recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the World Health Organization (Second Harvest, n.d.-a, b). Furthermore, they created a Food Rescue App to help them moving forward in supporting the accessibility of food throughout their communities (Second Harvest, n.d.-a, b).

1.2 Manitoba

Food Matters Manitoba (2020) is a unique organization that offers programs and services to help build food stability and growth in and around Manitoba. They have created a two-part online workshop called ‘Beyond Our Plate,’ which allows youth to engage in critical thinking and making community change (Food Matters Manitoba, 2021a). “The pandemic has shone a bright light on inequitable food distribution across Manitoba. Students are curious about food security in their communities & how to influence positive change” according to Food Matters Manitoba (2021a).

Furthermore, they have created The Food Action Hub as an innovative response to the community’s food security needs (Food Matters Manitoba, 2021d) and the Partnerships Program supporting Northern and Community capacity building (Food Matters Manitoba, 2021c). The Food Hub offers blog posts regarding community support (Food Matters Manitoba, 2021b) and a call-to-action surrounding COVID-19 and food security (Food Matters Manitoba, 2020).

1.3 Nova Scotia

According to Make Food Matter, Nova Scotians experience some of the highest rates of food insecurities in Canada and they want to change that (FoodARC, 2020). The Halifax Food Policy Alliance is in the process of creating a Food Action Plan for the Halifax Region (HFPA, 2020). Still, they are taking the opportunity to reach out to the community and let them share their stories

through an online survey or an online story-sharing, i.e., videos, photos, or other creative means (HFPA, 2020). They want to learn about how the community relates to food and if those experiences have changed during COVID-19, by using the responses to understand its impact better and how to best move forward when addressing future challenges (HFPA, 2020). By asking questions regarding the changes related to COVID-19 “such as new challenges, new ways [they have] discovered to access food; new food skills like learning to or spending more time gardening, cooking; and challenges to the way [they] normally access food” (HFPA, 2020), will allow for a better understanding of the consumer’s motivation towards their connection to food.

When looking at the Agri-Food Analytics Lab (2020) in partnership with Dalhousie University, they are researching COVID-19 food autonomy. The impacts caused by COVID-19 are now pushing the Government to look into food autonomy as a priority and further address the importance of supporting local supply chains (Agri-Food Analytics Lab, 2020). The research is also being mobilized through seminars such as the ‘Rapid Consumer Insights: Shaping the Canadian Agri-Food System’ where they covered topics from best practices to impacts of COVID-19 on food knowledge and choices over the last year (Agri-Food Analytics Lab, n.d.). One of the latest studies they conducted suggests that 4 in 5 Canadians would pay extra for locally grown produce, leaving very few Canadians still believing that where the location of their produce grows is unimportant as a motivation (Agri-Food Analytics Lab, 2020). While looking towards the future is necessary, Nova Scotia is also addressing the current environment that impacts food stability. By providing a guide for accessing local food in Nova Scotia while continuing to acknowledge the issues created from COVID-19 and how they are addressing them in day-to-day situations (Ecology Action Centre, 2020).

2. SECONDARY DATA SURVEY

2.1 Totals

The Ipsos survey consisted of 7 questions in total, compiled in Likert scale questions and multiple-choice questions (Simpson, 2020). Where 1001 Canadians answered those questions, and the responses were gauged by region, household income, household composition, gender, age, education, and generation age group (Simpson, 2020). Based on the case study, the researcher was able to make the following comparisons and contradictions.

2.2 Regions

The regions provided in the sample survey split into 6 categories, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan/Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic (Simpson, 2020). Compared to the online databases of FPCs across Canada, this breakdown of regions correlates with the data collected. The main difference between the Ipsos survey and the FPCs would be the combination of specific provinces into representative groupings (Simpson, 2020). Regarding the 56 online directories from 9 different regions Canada-wide, they also recognized 4 FPCs as being on Indigenous Lands (Food Communities Network, 2021b).

2.3 Impact

Ipsos asked to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic has made on the importance of food safety during Canadian consumer purchasing decisions. In total, across the board, more than 2 in 3 (68%) responded with much more important (41%) or somewhat more important (27%), in comparison 29% indicated that it has no impact on their choices (Simpson, 2020). That leaves only a few percent reporting that COVID-19 has had a somewhat less important or much less important role

in their decision making (Simpson, 2020). These results do not appear to have much fluctuation between regions, household composition, age, or education; however, there are slight differences in the other categories (Simpson, 2020). Examining the 68% of importance-based responses, females appear 6% more invested in the importance of food safety than males (Simpson, 2020). However, it does not clarify whether gender non-binary, genderqueer, agender, bigender, and others are included in these results.

Also indicated that household incomes of \$60k or higher hold food safety with greater importance; as well, the age group category suggests that Gen X and Boomers consider food safety essential during the pandemic (Simpson, 2020). It is worth noting that those pointing towards the pandemic having no impact or less importance on food safety seem level regardless of the demographic and do not support the above trends indicated between gender, age group, and household income (Simpson, 2020).

2.4 Food Safety

The survey asked respondents how important food safety is in their decision to buy lettuce and produce, where nearly 9 in 10 Canadians (88% of 1001 participants) felt it was very important (65%) or moderately important (23%) (Simpson, 2020). In comparison, these results show the pandemic has contributed to the status of food safety lowering by 20% (Simpson, 2020). The results suggest that females again carry food safety in high regard, with 92% considering it significant in food choices, dropping 21% due to COVID-19, which matches the changes in the overall totals (Simpson, 2020). When looking at the difference between genders for food safety, there is only a 7% change compared to the 6% shown with COVID-19 impacts (Simpson, 2020),

suggesting that food safety is still of equal importance. Still, the added effect of COVID-19 may have changed the significance towards accessibility and stability.

The respondents were also asked their top concern regarding food safety, though no answer was staggering in popularity; the highest was 48% concerned with product handling safety standards with no significant differences in the categories or demographics (Simpson, 2020). After safety standards, the following ranked as cleanliness of growing environment (25%), traceability or visiting the farm where food was grown (11%), water used in growing produce (9%) and other (8%) (Simpson, 2020). These results compared to the usual female response of being more concerned with food safety, it reports that men appear 4% more concerned with traceability and farm visits than women (Simpson, 2020).

2.5 Local

Regarding where Canadians prefer their source of produce or leafy greens and herbs to be grown looks at 41% prefer them to be products of their province, 34% prefer them to be products of Canada and 21% selected locally grown within your community or less than 100km from your store (Simpson, 2020). There appears to be a divide regionally on the importance between products from their province, with Quebec (51%) and British Columbia (47%) (Simpson, 2020). In comparison, the importance of products from Canada seems of more significance with Saskatchewan/Manitoba (51%) and in the Atlantic provinces (45%) (Simpson, 2020). Still, there seems to be more clarity and further research required in order to fully understand if their motivation is being impacted by availability and cost as well (Simpson, 2020).

2.6 Plastics and Sustainability

In the past years, the importance of plastic-free and more sustainable options has come to the forefront of conversations especially looking at food packaging and production. The Ipsos survey results convey that despite the safety concerns during the pandemic regarding food handling, Canadians still appear invested in environmental sustainability (Simpson, 2020). Suggesting that more than 2 in 3 (68%) of Canadians say that eliminating plastic is very important (36%) or moderately important (32%), with this response being more vital to females, anyone with higher education and the households that have children (Simpson, 2020). As a surprising result, of all household income categories it appears that respondents residing in homes with an income of \$40k or less hold the notion that eliminating plastic from food packaging to be the most important of the choices (Simpson, 2020).

When given an option, of the 51% of Canadians polled say they like their leafy greens and herb packages made of a non-plastic, compostable, or plant-based material (Simpson, 2020). That appears to be the general opinion across all demographics; however, the only notable change would be in the age group category, with Generation Z (60%) more interested in utilizing plastic-free alternatives (Simpson, 2020). In addition to eliminating plastics, the survey also asked what sustainability factors motivated their purchasing decisions the most. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) selected local – ability to buy produce from community growers instead of outside their province or of Canada (Simpson, 2020). Generational age groups seem to be a factor in selecting sustainable options, they indicate buying locally grown produce is the most important across the board and it suggests that the Boomers, aged 55 and over, are most inclined (58%) (Simpson, 2020). While the younger generation – Gen Z - is the least supportive of local grown (15%) and

instead regarding sustainable motivations they are more concerned about environmentally friendly packaging (33%) over locally sourced options (Simpson, 2020).

3 COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Canadian communities are not shy to speak out on the positive and negative implications that COVID-19 has brought on their food experience. In addition to case studies, surveys, and academic journals, exploring within online fieldwork allowed for discovering numerous news articles addressing the current state of food insecurity nationwide.

3.1 Positive Outcomes

The impact of coronavirus can have positive outcomes, as seen in Nova Scotia. Where they are excited by with food security growing in popularity where the interest in gardening has skyrocketed, and evidence that Atlantic Canadians “are either starting a garden or expanding the one they have” (Cervelli et al., 2020). In Ontario, the pandemic has heightened the demand of food availability and food accessibility, where communities are hoping to #BUILDBACKBETTER by promoting progressive agendas with initiatives, such as, a Toronto-based international non-profit offering free courses about farming green roofs (Stahlbrand & Roberts, 2020).

3.2 Community-Supported Agriculture [CSA]

Canada-wide, there has been a massive influx in community-supported agriculture [CSA], with a demand for CSA boxes that provide consumers with healthy, usually organic and local produce in weekly, bi-weekly or monthly shipments (Panico, 2021). In Ottawa, local growers are anticipating a higher than usual “demand for their products this season, as the pandemic continues to influence

people's buying and eating habits" (Panico, 2021). In 2020, one farm reported that their CSA boxes doubled from 200 to 400 orders in reaction to the demand caused by the pandemic (Panico, 2021). In response to the call for food stability, there has been an uptake in virtual platforms providing online food maps for locating CSA boxes and food rescue options in their areas, including Ontario (Second Harvest, n.d.-b), New Brunswick (Food For All NB, n.d.) and Prince Edward Island (City of Charlottetown, 2021a).

Besides supporting local farmers through CSA boxes, the pandemic has created an environment for a deeper community-based connection. Farms can support one another by pooling their resources together when fulfilling CSA box orders by creating farm co-operatives (Panico, 2021). Furthermore, the CSA box idea provided the platform to involve customers on the ground level by getting their hands dirty. One co-op farm in Ontario has offered a 50% discount on their farm boxes for customers who spend four hours a week as a farmhand growing the produce that will eventually end up on their kitchen table (Panico, 2021).

3.3 Food Insecurity

According to the Toronto Food Policy Council, some advocates are concerned that food has become a commodity where grocery stores profit while the vulnerable struggle to put food on the table (Moon, 2020). In Canada, food insecurity is having a lack of access to affordable food of sufficient quantity and quality (Cooper, 2018). Food insecurity is not a new problem in the Northwest Territories. Still, the pandemic has exacerbated those concerns, and any solution will look different for each community, given they have diverse needs and differing expertise levels (Desmarais, 2020). In light of the challenges facing food stability, Northwest Territory

organizations will receive \$640,000 for food security from federal funding to help mitigate those struggles territory-wide (McBride, 2020).

That said, the pandemic has created an environment for change. Northwest Territory farmers believe now is the time to teach people the importance and ability to grow their food and alleviate the pressure off grocery stores in case of a future disruption anywhere in the food supply chain (Desmarais, 2020). Considering the pandemic as an opportunity to tackle food insecurity through innovative ideas. Such as, online classes in growing produce could help communities self-sustain (Desmarais, 2020) or using online Farmers' Markets to support local food by facilitating purchasing and knowledge-sharing, though they note this option does not replicate the open-air or social experience of a traditional Farmers' Market (Radcliffe et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The limited scope of this research does not allow for a comprehensive examination of the challenges from COVID-19 on food sustainably across Canada. It does, however, provide a framework that may expand knowledge regarding the impacts and motivations surrounding future food choices in Canada. It appears the phenomenon of coronavirus has had a significant impact on consumers' relationship with food, though not unanimously across the board. What does not appear to be clear is the food policies' connection to those impacts; they seem to be addressed in the news and how people purchase items but not in the initiatives taken on by the councils. However, that may not be noted in the difference of their regular assistance towards food stability and the lack of updating current initiatives online.

Despite the uptake of interest and unease in the news and academic journals depicting Italy's food stability concerns (Di Renzo et al., 2020) and the rising distress shown in the survey for both plastics and local options, there does not seem to be sufficient action taken across the board from food policy councils. Though further research is needed to understand and clarify the connection of councils across Canada and the regions, it is also unclear how the councils support this newfound interest or if they are overwhelmed by the exacerbation of nationwide food instability.

It has become apparent that the ongoing food instability in the Northwest Territories has been heightened during these times. Still, there does seem to be a positive future with local farmers taking this as an opportunity to remedy their food sovereignty issues by finding ways to become independently sustainable and less susceptible to disruptions with the supply chain (Desmarais, 2020; McBride, 2020; Radcliffe et al., 2021).

The resources found regarding food delivery increase, learning to cook, learning traditional kitchen skills (i.e., sourdough starters, homemade bread, and banana bread), growing their food, gardening, canning, and more, does not appear to be sufficient data. However, looking at the news articles surrounding curiosity in these topics warrants further investigation. Given the upcoming 'Share Your Story' project being conducted in Halifax, their data could assist in a stronger indication of changes in connection to the Canadian food experience (HFPA, 2020).

While evidence suggesting an interest in CSA food boxes (Panico, 2021), along with listings of available resources for communities to purchase them (City of Charlottetown, 2021a; Food For All NB, n.d.), there was no specific corresponding data in the survey or case studies to fully support

this relationship. This gap warrants further exploration involving both the consumer and farmer perspectives. While the online markets in the Northwest Territories may not be sufficient in replacing fresh air and social environment found at a local Farmers' Market, it may prove helpful as a complementary strategy to help enhance the resiliency of local food systems (Radcliffe et al., 2021). When looking at food sustainability across Canada, one of the top considerations is where produce is grown, and the survey data indicates that 96% of Canadians want the greens they buy to be Canadian grown, be it a combination of locally, provincially or nationally (Simpson, 2020).

Despite the horrors that this pandemic has inflicted over the past year, there appears to be hope that this may be a moment for a paradigm shift to occur. Many people worldwide are seeing the inequity of accessible food with a new perspective and understanding the need for local food resilience (Stahlbrand & Roberts, 2020). As stated previously, there was an uptake in concern during previous pandemics; however, it appears the past is quickly forgotten, leaving much to the unknown. Notwithstanding the need for further investigation, the research suggests that Canadian consumers are taking an interest in their connection with food, not only in the source of their produce but also in their interest in participating in the food experience itself.

With coronavirus still an ongoing health and safety issue, those circumstances significantly affected the functionality, and the reliability of accessing in-person results, which would have allowed for more in-depth exploration into the implications coronavirus has on how Canadians connect with food. The research suggests there are several surveys and data collecting initiatives in the works across Canada to help understand the impact COVID-19 has on their respective regions (Food Secure Canada, 2019a, 2020; HFP, 2020; Stahlbrand & Roberts, 2020). While the

government is stepping in to help address these issues, still, questions are being sought about inflation, food scarcity and whether enough is being done to assist the vulnerable populations (Moon, 2020; Stahlbrand & Roberts, 2020).

One thing is for sure, regardless of which region you look into, any ongoing food insecurity issues they have been dealing with have intensified by the disruption the coronavirus pandemic has caused worldwide. In addition to the ongoing region-specific polls, supplementary specific surveys and in-depth interviews are recommended to further investigate the common trends discovered through this exploratory research process. With an uptake in Community-Supported Agriculture initiatives, there could also be room for immense growth and self-sustainability across Canada, both for the farmers and the consumers. Overall, it is clear that Canadians are not only taking notice of how they interact with food and where it comes from, but what appears to be a growing interest in participatory action surrounding the Canadian food experience moving forward.

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