



Participatory Food Systems Governance Project 2020 Survey Summary

The Participatory Food Systems Governance Project aims to identify effective, innovative, and collaborative approaches to food systems governance for building healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems. Moreover, it aims to develop a deeper understanding of the possible trade-offs, limitations and paradoxes associated with civil society organizations' active participation in multi-stakeholder and collaborative governance arrangements. With a focus on Canada and Indigenous Nations, and in relation to similar efforts in Australia and the UK, the research project will critically analyze the social history, current context and future possibilities for building healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems.

The Participatory Food Systems Governance survey ran in French and English from November 2019 to March 2020. The survey was distributed via listservs and sent directly to a range of organizations and individuals known to the research team. We received 57 complete English responses and 12 complete French responses. The information in this survey summary provides an overview of the data we collected.

The research is part of a larger project about food systems governance being conducted by a team of researchers in partnership with Food Secure Canada, Plenty Canada, Food Communities Network, and Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming. This research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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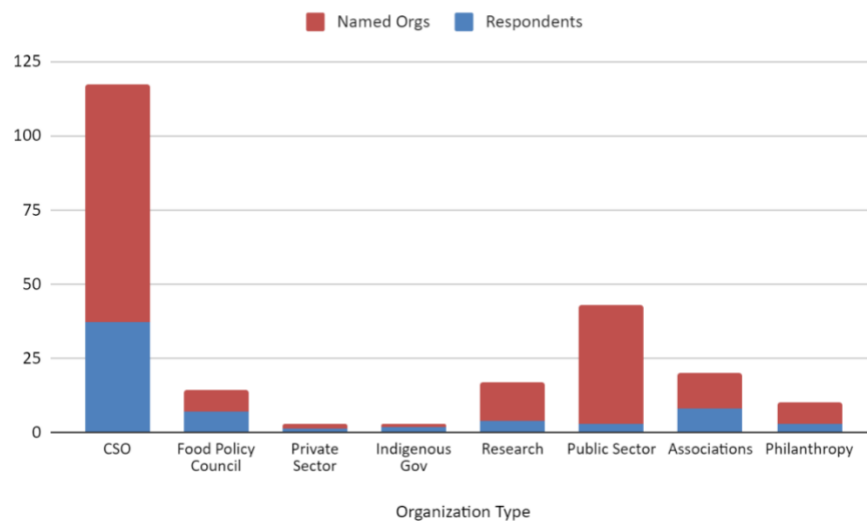
Project Website: <https://foodsystems.lakeheadu.ca/participatory-food-governance/>

Organizations Engaged in Food Systems Governance

Survey respondents were asked their name and the organizations they collaborate with at different scales. The following charts show organizations that responded to the survey (in blue) and all the organizations that were named by survey respondents (in red). This information provides an overview of an emerging network of organizations involved in food systems governance initiatives.

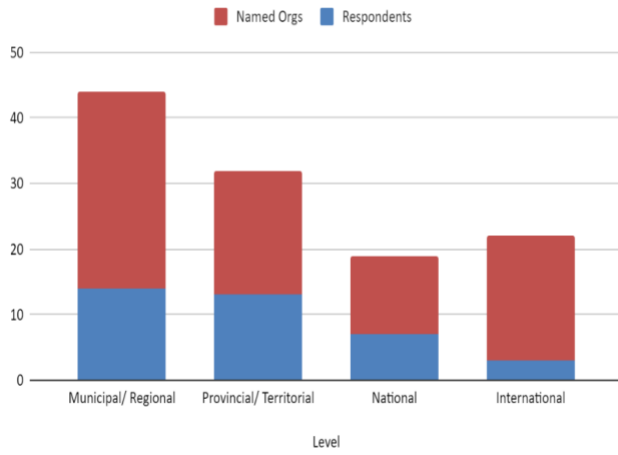
Based on responses from 69 different organizations, we learned that the majority come from civil society organizations and the public sector. For future research, we will follow up from this survey by holding more in-depth discussion with organizations from other sectors to gather a broader range of perspectives about participatory food governance efforts.

Survey Respondents and Named Organizations (Summary)

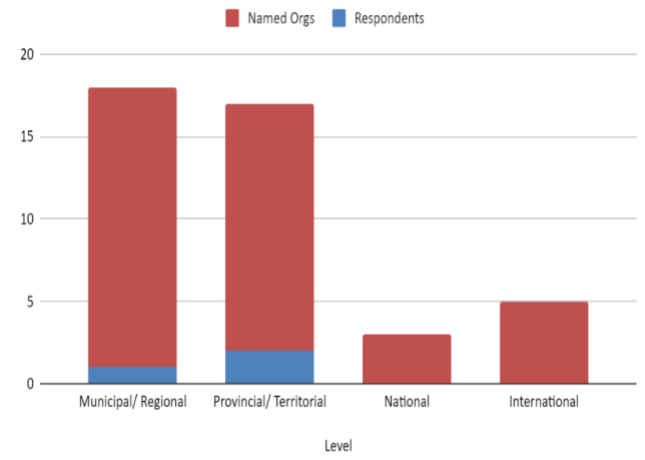


On the next page, we present more detailed graphs of select survey results showing who is involved in food systems governance initiatives at the various scales. These charts reveal that the majority of civil society organizations and public sector organizations focus their efforts at the municipal/regional level and at the provincial/territorial level. The results also show that researchers and associations tend to focus their work at the provincial/territorial and national levels.

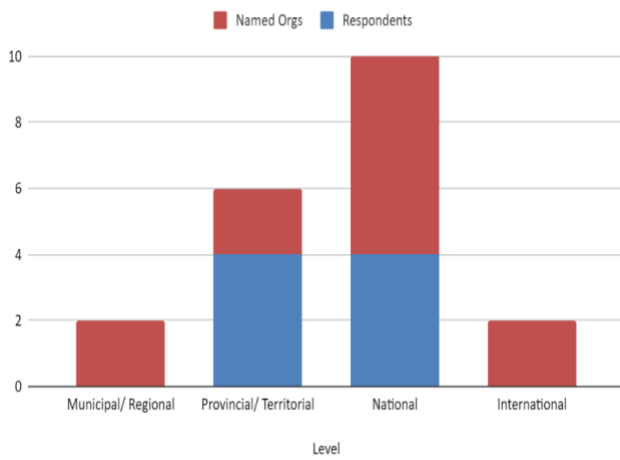
Civil Society Organizations



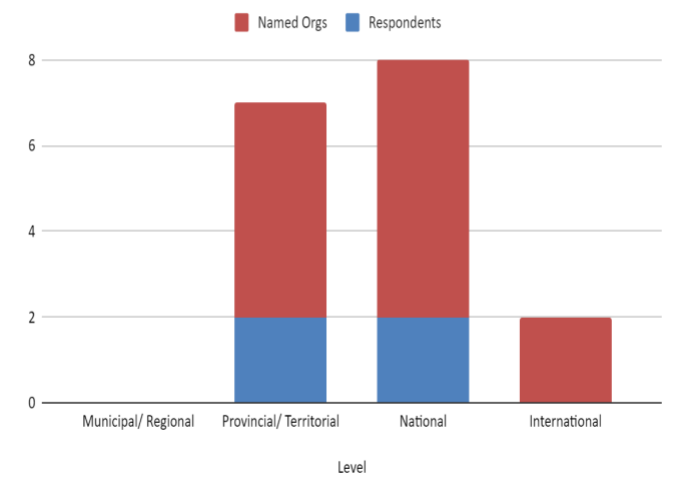
Public Sector



Associations

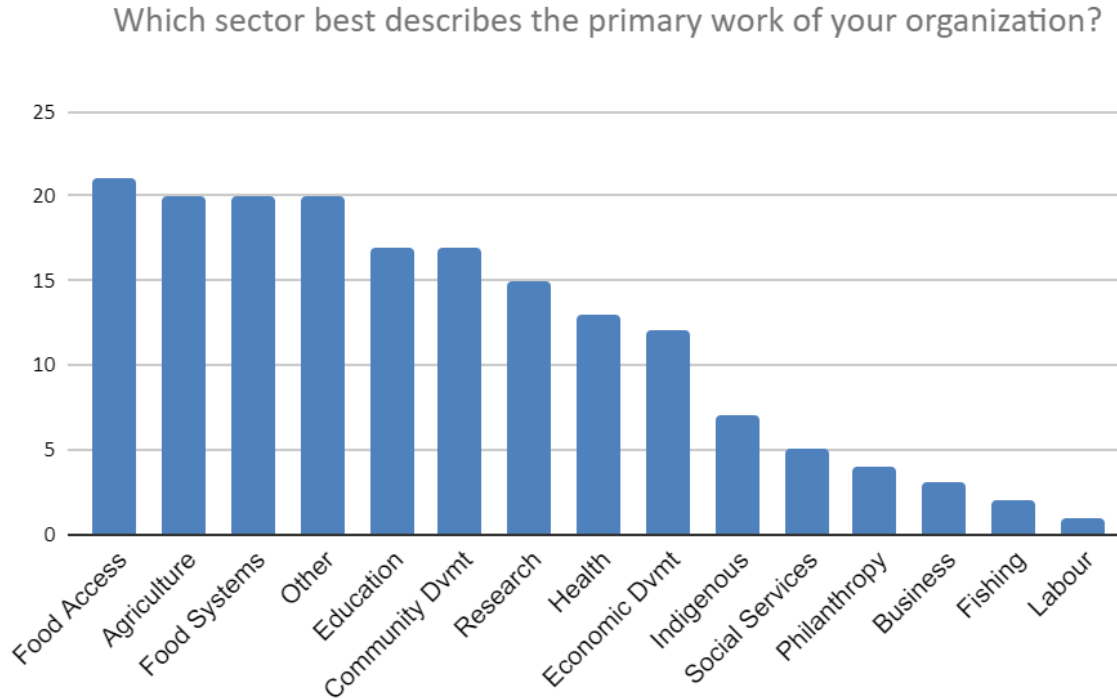


Research



Organizations' Sectors of Work

The graph below shows the most common responses organizations involved in food systems governance identified as their primary focus. The most common primary areas of work were community food access, agriculture, and food systems. These results also show a gap in the reach of the network of respondents in respect to labour, fishing, and private business. In follow-up interviews, we will investigate this gap and aim to seek out perspectives from these other sectors.



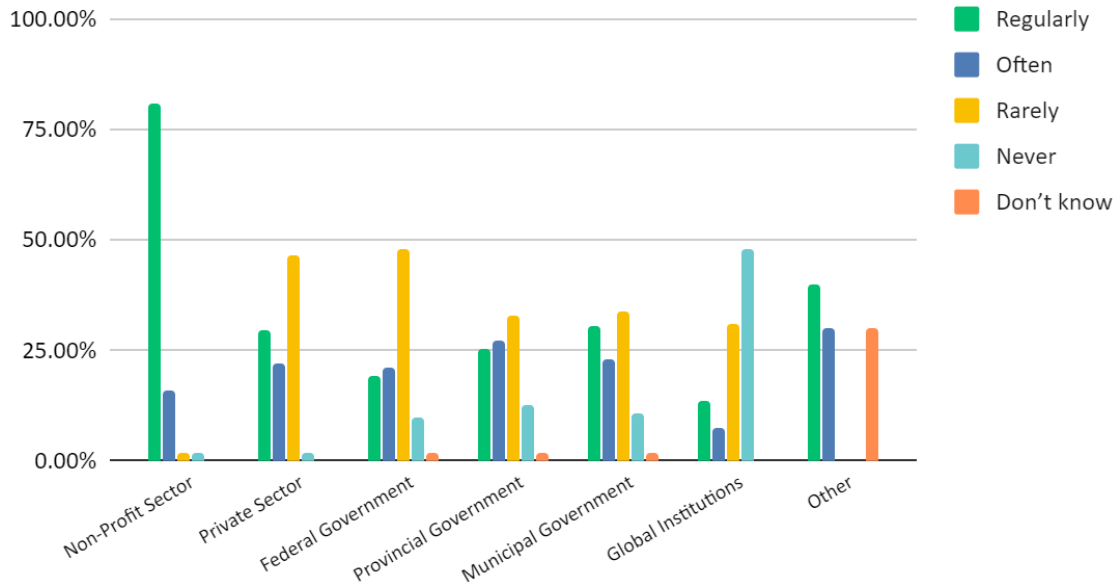
Twenty organizations did not see their primary area of work reflected in the survey options. Below is a list of selected "Other" responses:

- Health
- School Food
- Environment
- Municipal Food Policy
- Cooperatives
- Social Justice
- Technology

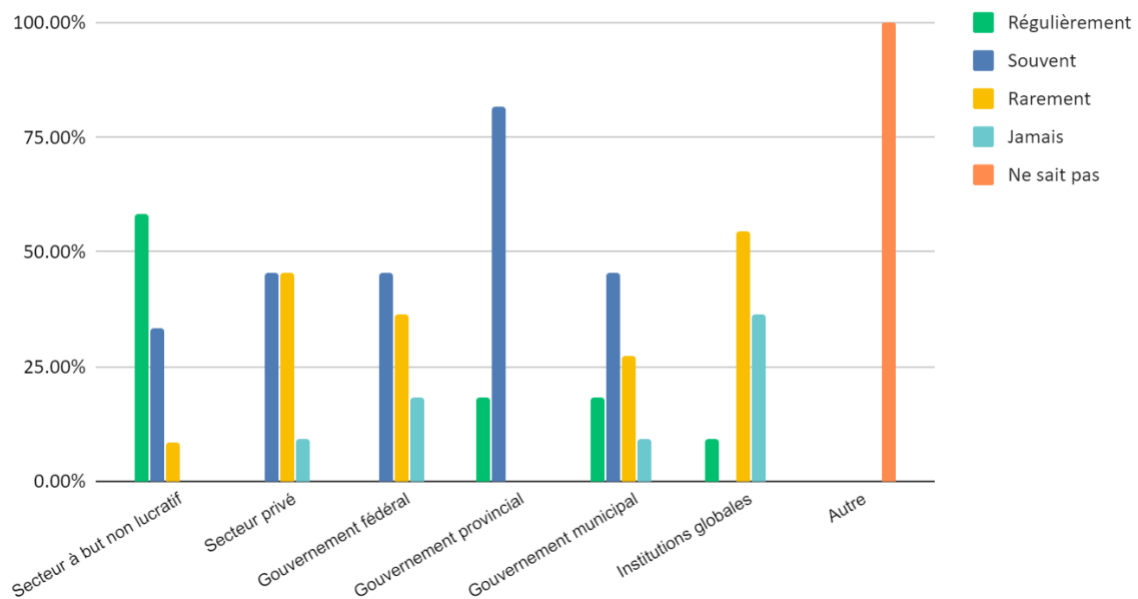
Contact Among Sectors

Over 90% of respondents indicated that they had been in contact far more frequently with the non-profit sector in respect to food systems governance. There was a greater mix of responses regarding contact with state governments and the private sector. Over 70% of respondents rarely or never contacted institutions working at the global scale.

English Responses



French Responses



Role for Civil Society in Food Systems Governance

Over 90% of respondents thought that civil society organizations (CSOs) and social movements should be more engaged in national-level food systems governance. Below are some of the benefits, limitations and other issues that respondents raised about engagement in food systems governance.

Benefits of CSO engagement in food systems governance:

- CSOs are poised to think more creatively and offer solutions they know would be accepted on the ground.
- CSOs are accustomed to working in a collaborative manner, to gain buy in, support, and ultimately get the best results.
- Social movements drive change: they build power in communities closest to the issues and concurrently can create the political will, clarity, and urgency for action at other scales in governments and markets.
- CSOs are uniquely positioned in terms of bridging those most affected by the issues with the policy realms. We are frequently not supported to play this role, but it is an essential function in terms of capacity building, convening, and working to generate creative solutions.
- Civil society organizations and social movements play an integral role in the food system and often represent individuals who do not have a voice in the dialogue.
- Grassroots solutions that have local knowledge are better suited to lobbying for food systems governance through intersectoral collaboration and systems change efforts.

Limitations of CSO engagement in food systems governance:

- I don't understand the issues well enough.
- National food systems governance and policy work seems complex and where/how/who to get involved with is tricky.
- Lack of capacity: most of us are too busy or underfunded to work at that level – lack of coordinated effort, integrated funding to ensure cross sector grassroots representation nationally.
 - Most organizations are busy doing their own immediate work; those that have the resources or passion at the national level have more influence.
- Government policies are often heavily influenced by extremely powerful corporate lobbyists who promote export-oriented, chemical intensive monoculture agriculture.
 - National level policy is driven by corporations and trade considerations.
- Usually only national associations are represented at national food system governance and usually the makeup of these associations is primarily large corporations. Civil organizations, social movements and small businesses are not represented yet make up a majority of our national population.
- Les décisions sont prises en vase clos et favorisent certains gros joueurs au dépend de la souveraineté alimentaire des communautés.
- Nous ne pouvons nous imposer, il faut être invité. Nous ne disposons pas de moyen d'engager un/des lobbyistes.
- Nous ne sommes pas reconnus à ce niveau, donc nous devons nous battre pour y participer et y être invité.

Other comments regarding of CSO engagement in food systems governance:

- In Canadian context this requires a priority to address the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and also achieving food sovereignty of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.
- Municipal/local/regional government is often missing from the table
- Governments need to rely on independent science (not industry backed studies) to make informed decisions and develop policies that will benefit the common good, not a few powerful corporations.
- Multi-stakeholder conversations are the only way of driving innovation and change.
- There needs to be reconciliation at the national level in terms of food systems governance.
- Addressing complex problems requires collective efforts across sectors.

Food Systems Governance Initiatives

46 respondents offered 104 examples of food systems governance initiatives they were engaged with. Initiatives were relatively evenly distributed across all levels: 31 initiatives were at the municipal level, 25 were at provincial level, and 36 were at national level (this includes initiatives that were named more than once).

These responses suggest that respondents have a broad understanding of governance. Respondents listed some initiatives that could be seen as only tangentially related to policy making or traditional understandings of governance (such as education initiatives and convening). Most governance initiatives listed fell into the category of government consultation or advocacy.

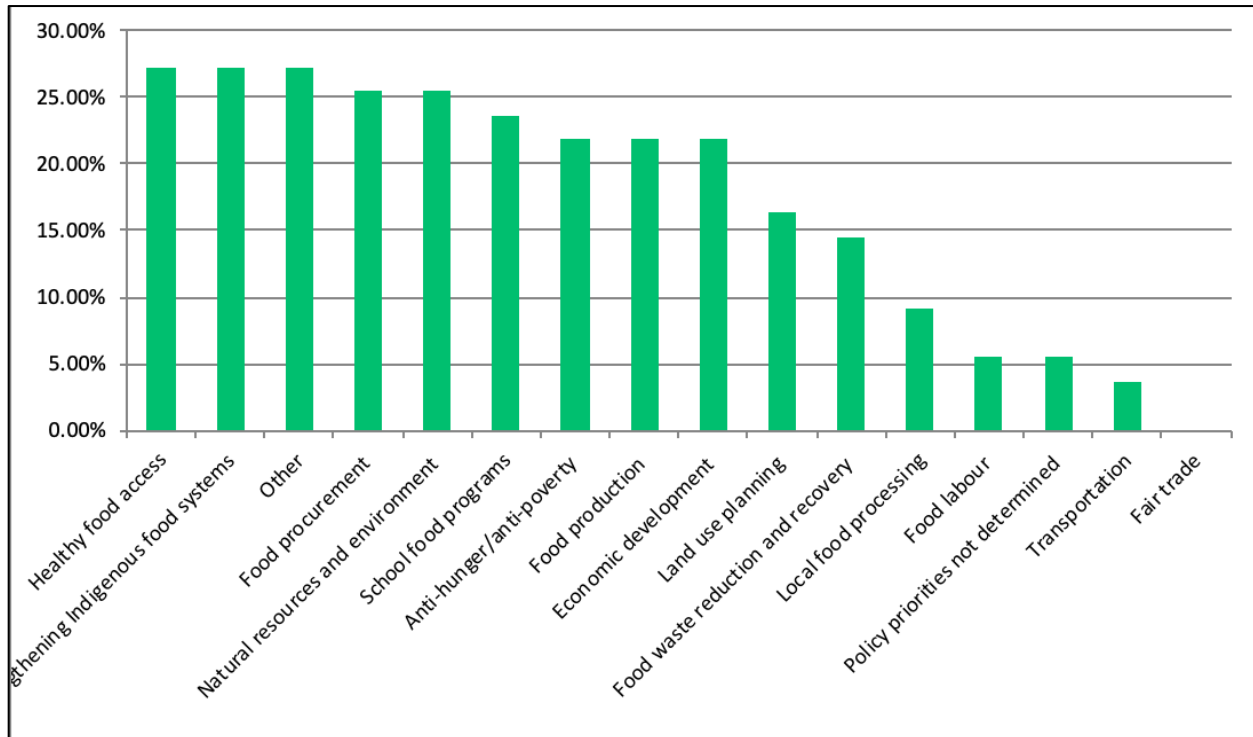
Below is a list of food systems governance initiatives named by respondents.

Acting Together for Food Policy Workshops	Consultation publique sur l'agriculture urbaine à Montréal	Healthy Eating Strategy
Ad-hoc Working Group on National Food Policy Council	County and city official plan development	Winnipeg Food Council 2008-2017
Dietitians of Canada's Sustainable Food Systems initiative	Création d'une table de mobilisation sur la sécurité alimentaire	Federal Election
Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy (2010-2018)	Developing regional food action plans (Halifax & Cape Breton): 2019-2021.	Federal Government Food Waste Report
Canada Food Guide (Guide alimentaire canadien)	Development of a Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council in the early 2000's	Federal Pre-Budget Consultations and Submissions 2019, 2020
Canadian Food Security Policy Group - hosted by CCIC	Development of the Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy, 2010 to 2017	National School Food Program - Submitted house of commons petitions in November 2019.
Climate Smart Agriculture project (2020-)	Eastern Ontario First Nations Working Group (South Nation Conservation Authority)	Flocking Options - successful campaign to influence change in provincial chicken policy
Coalition for Healthy School Food	Eat Think Vote 2015 Election Campaign	Municipal (and Regional) Food Policy Network
Coalition to Ban Terminator Seeds in Canada		Vote ON Food - provincial and municipal election campaigns
Commission sur les pesticides		Food Action Network - Thunder Bay

Food and Agriculture Economic Development Forum (2019) - Haliburton County	Local Wild Game Access Regulations - Indigenous Food Circle, Health Unit, 2018-2020	led to "Local Food Systems" section and a Local Food Action Strategy
Food policy forums organized by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs	Procurement Policies	Politique bioalimentaire du Québec
Foodscares Bus Tour (2019, Halifax) for public officials and community partners	Thunder Bay & Area Food Strategy	Health Eating Strategy (Stratégie canadienne de saine alimentation)
Halifax Food Charter	Thunder Bay Food Charter	Provincial initiatives impacting food producing lands
Forum agroalimentaire MRC Papineau (2015 and 2020)	Meat Industry Engagement Panel 2019	Public Trust Steering Committee (pan-Canadian)
GMO Inquiry - 2015	Municipal election – Ottawa	Régie des Marchés agricoles
Greater Sudbury Food Strategy (2017)	Municipal official plan revisions	Rencontres pour l'élaboration de la Politique bio- alimentaire du Québec
Greenbelt Plan, Growth Plan, Provincial Policy Statement, etc. (consulted and provided feedback)	OFA National Food Strategy initiative	Rural Agricultural Innovation Network Roundtables
Held a consensus conference on front-of-package, shelf and menu labelling	Ontario Poverty Reduction Plan	Safe Food for Canadians Consultations (CFIA)
Held a consensus conference on unhealthy food and beverage marketing (2011)	Organic Value Chain Round Table and Seed Sector Round Table	Seeds Act and Seeds Regulations in Canada
Indigenous Food Circle Roundtables 2018-19	Organized a collective action for a universal school food program with 12 other orgs and farms and the CSDM	Supporting Our Food Southeast NB's Food Pledge
Local Food and Farm Coops regional roundtables	Ottawa Food Policy Council	Système alimentaire montréalais
Kingston's Community Gardens Policy	Participation à une série d'initiatives suite au dépôt d'avis d'opposition au renouvellement pour 15 ans des herbicides à base de glyphosate	Table Faim Zéro from Fondation du Grand Montréal
	Participation in City of Greater Sudbury Official Plan review beginning in 2013 -	Toronto Food Policy Council
		Toronto Poverty Reduction Plan

Top Policy Priorities

We asked a question about organizations' top three policy priorities. The chart below shows the most common responses.



Below are some observations on how the policy priorities map across different scales and sectors of work:

Scales

- Policy priorities predominantly found (i.e. overrepresented) at municipal level: land use planning, food waste, and to a lesser degree, healthy food access and economic development.
- Policy priorities predominantly found (i.e. overrepresented) at the provincial-territorial level: school food programs and Indigenous food sovereignty.
- Policy priorities were most diverse at the national level (i.e. lack of consensus).
- Two mentions of food sovereignty in the “other” category were both at the national level.
- Local food processing was present at municipal and provincial-territorial scale only.
- School food program was predominantly named as a provincial-territorial and municipal issue.

Sectors of Work

- There was some indication of clusters among survey respondents – certain areas where there is silo-spanning work happening, and gaps.
- Organizations who list agriculture as one of their primary areas of work do not list anti-hunger/anti-poverty as a policy priority.

- Organizations who list agriculture as a primary area of work are less likely to list Indigenous Food Sovereignty as a policy priority.
- None of the organizations who list food systems as a primary area of work listed food labour as a policy priority.
- Organizations who listed food systems as a primary area of work were somewhat less likely (than the average) to list Indigenous Food Sovereignty as a policy priority.

Organizational Involvement in Past Named Food Policy Initiatives

In the survey, respondents indicated their level of involvement in a series of past food systems governance initiatives at the national scale.

People's Food Commission (late 1970s): Only four respondents indicated involvement. Of note, most of the organizations indicated that they were not established at the time of the Peoples Food Commission.

People's Food Policy (2007-2011): Only 13 of 66 respondents indicated active involvement. Three organizations noted they were not yet established, and 14 indicated they did not know what it was.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Mission to Canada (2012): Similar to engagement with the People's Food Policy, 13 of 66 respondents indicated active involvement.

Food policy for Canada (2017-2018): 33 organizations noted a significant level of participation of various kinds.

These results point to the value of documenting and sharing these food systems governance histories to increase awareness and understanding of how the food movement has grown and evolved over time. The research team is now working on video, audio and written documentation to capture the stories and experiences of this history.