

FACT SHEET

Wake-Up Call: California Drought & B.C.'s Food Security

Vancity commissioned food systems expert Brent Mansfield, co-chair of the BC Food Systems Network, to review existing studies and literature on the sustainability of B.C.'s local food system. Mansfield reviewed 18 sources and provided findings and conclusions in an October 2014 report titled Wake-Up Call: California Drought & B.C.'s Food Security. Highlights and conclusions follow:

Report highlights

- Drought has persisted in California over the past three years, with the majority of the state in "extreme" or "exceptional" drought, the two worst categories.ⁱ
- B.C. currently gets 67% of its imported vegetables ⁱⁱand 44% of its imported fruits from the United States, over half of which is from California. This includes **95%** of all broccoli and **74%** of all lettuce.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Price increases of between **20%** and **34%** have been predicted for a variety of fruits and vegetables across North America this year due to the drought in California.^{iv}
- Between July 2103 and 2014, produce prices in B.C. have increased between 5.7% and 9.6%. If these trends continue for the next five years price increases of 25%-50% are predicted for many fruits and vegetables, adding an extra \$30-\$60 to the average B.C. household's monthly grocery bill.^v If broccoli was \$2.36/lb the assumption is that if prices increase by 25% each year for five years, a pound of broccoli could cost up to \$7.^{vi}
- In B.C. levels of food production have decreased for a variety of crops, including the overall area in vegetable crop production having fallen by **20.4%** between 1991 and 2011, with much more significant decreases in several staple crops.^{vii}

- As water becomes scarce in more regions and the climate becomes more variable, a system based in any substantive way on large volumes of imports will continue to be vulnerable and more unpredictable, with food price spikes a likely result.
- With further support for and investment in the local food economy the \$2.8 billion in total farm gate sales in B.C. in 2012, could potentially support up to \$9 billion circulating in the local economy.viii
- If the average B.C. households were to direct **50%** of their food spending on local food, up to an extra \$6,457 per family would circulate in the local economy.ix
- Putting under-utilized small parcels of land near cities, into production has the potential to play a significant role in meeting local consumptions of vegetables and fruit for local consumption for six months of the year.x

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Conclusion

- The dependence on a supply of food available from imported sources ultimately has led to decreased production and decreased self-reliance.
- The on-going drought in California underscores the need to increase B.C.'s food self-reliance, especially in regards to vegetables and fruits that B.C. is able to produce locally, yet has become dependent on California and other locations for.
- For B.C. to have a resilient and secure food system – one that ensures access to affordable, healthy food in the midst of global challenges such as climate change – more must be done to support a local food system that increases food self-reliance.

ⁱ Drought Levels from August 2013 to August 2014

ⁱⁱ A Snapshot of the Canadian Vegetable Industry 2010

ⁱⁱⁱ USDA Economic Research Service, California Drought 2014: Farm and Food Impacts.

^{iv} Professor Timothy Richards of the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State

University has estimated increased prices for a variety of fruits and vegetables, including increases this year of up to a 34% increase for lettuce and 22% for broccoli.

^v Statistics Canada Consumer Price Index.

^{vi} Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, A Snapshot of the Canadian Vegetable Industry 2010; Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, A Snapshot of the Canadian Fruit Industry 2009.

^{vii} 2011 Census of Agriculture: British Columbia Highlights

^{viii} Based on calculations if there were similar development of the value-added businesses as has been documented in Abbotsford, based on extrapolating from economic impacts of agriculture in Abbotsford (Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, The Economic Impact of Agriculture in Abbotsford; 2012 British Columbia Agrifood Industry Year in Review).

^{ix} Ken Meter of the Crossroads Resource Centre in Minnesota, who has carried out numerous studies in a variety of different contexts, is that buying local food has a multiplier effect of 1.4-2.6 throughout the wider local economy.

^x Mullinix et al., Beyond protection: Delineating the economic and food production potential of underutilized, small-parcel farmland in metropolitan Surrey, British Columbia, 2013.