

## CAFS Mission

The Canadian Association for Food Studies (CAFS) promotes critical, interdisciplinary scholarship in the broad area of food systems: food policy, production, distribution and consumption.

CAFS recognizes the need for coordinated interdisciplinary research efforts in response to societal needs for informing policy makers, assessing the outcomes of community-based work, and demonstrating the environmental and social impacts of changes affecting food systems and food policies. Members are drawn from an array of disciplines including (but not limited to) adult education, agriculture, anthropology, economics, environmental studies, health it. studies, home economics, human nutrition, geography, philosophy, policy studies, public health, rural studies, sociology, social work and urban planning. Membership is open to academics, students, professionals and others interested in food studies research.

CAFS encourages research that promotes local, regional, national, and global food security, but does not advocate or endorse specific policies or political platforms.

# CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR FOOD STUDIES

[www.foodstudies.ca](http://www.foodstudies.ca)

## An Exciting New Organization

By Mustafa Koc

The Canadian Association for Food Studies is a new interdisciplinary association joining the annual congress of the Canadian Federation of humanities and social sciences. Our two day conference at the beginning of June will be our first annual general meeting. Despite very limited promotion of our conference we will have 24 sessions and two plenary panels. For a brand new organization this is a major accomplishment. I would like to thank those who have spent time and energy making this event a reality. In all fairness though, our success likely has more to do with our ability to respond to a collective need than our organizing skills.

On April 19, 2005, following a meeting at Ryerson University, a group of academic and community-based researchers decided to organize an association to promote critical, interdisciplinary scholarship in the broad areas of food production, distribution, and consumption. As of early May we had 130 registered members. To demonstrate the diversity of our members, let me offer you some figures. We had 65 members from Ontario, 18 from Quebec, 17 from BC, 17 from the Prairies, 6 from Atlantic Canada and 7 international members. Of these, 94 of them came from the academic community, 27 from community organizations and 9 from government. The academic disciplines of our members include (in alphabetical order) anthropology, contemporary studies, communication studies, development studies, English, environmental studies, folklore,

geography, health sciences, history, justice studies, liberal studies, medicine, nutrition, political science, psychology, public health, religion, social work, sociology, and women's studies.

Those of us who have been working in the diverse fields of research dealing with food practices, structures, institutions and policies emphasize the need for a broader systemic perspective. As Ken Dahlberg argues, "food is a process not a product". Looking at food as a process implies careful scrutiny of interlinkages and interconnections among these practices, processes and structures. This awareness, in return, implies the need for interdisciplinary collaboration so that we can benefit from the different methodological and analytical strengths of diverse academic disciplines. Research in food studies, for this reason, cannot be confined to laboratories and requires close cooperation among researchers in academic, public, and civil society-based organizations. Focusing on the interconnections, a food systems perspective should not take anything at face value, but try to uncover meanings attached to complex behaviour, language, discourses, practices and policies dealing with food.

We began our journey in 2005 with a number of priorities. We hope to review these in our annual general meeting in Toronto. The list includes:

- Bringing researchers from diverse disciplines working at universities, public and

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## Priorities include communication

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community based organizations to meet regularly to identify research priorities and to share research findings;

- Creating a platform for exchange of information on key research questions, common funding concerns, curriculum development, graduate studies in food studies in Canada;
- Coordinating interdisciplinary research efforts in response to societal needs for informing policy makers, assessing the outcomes of community-based work, and demonstrating the environmental and social impacts of changes affecting food systems and food policies;
- Facilitating closer communication and cooperation among Anglophone and Francophone researchers in Canada;
- Encouraging a systems view in food studies to have a better understanding of interconnectedness among diverse processes, structures, institutions and policies;
- Encouraging applied research that would respond to broad societal concerns, needs of policy makers, and community organizations;
- Advocating for new research grants that will respond to societal concerns and encourage new partnerships between academic, public and civil society organizations.

Our draft bylaws are developed and available at our web site at [www.foodstudies.ca](http://www.foodstudies.ca). We encourage you to examine these. We will open these to our members' approval at the annual general meeting on June 2nd 2006.

# Improving the food system in Waterloo Region

By Marc Xuereb

Region of Waterloo Public Health is leading a process of analysing the food system in Waterloo Region and assessing strategies for intervening in it to improve its health. In November 2005, Public Health released an Interim Report - Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region - to Regional Council and proposed a consultation process to gather input on the report's proposed strategies. Council accepted the Report, and public consultations took place in February 2006. A final report is expected in October.

The Report advocates taking a food system approach to health, which goes beyond analyzing individual dietary behaviour and examines the broader context in which food choices occur. This broader context is reflected in four component studies on Waterloo Region's food system:

- The Food Flow Analysis Study sought to determine the percentage of food consumed in the Region of Waterloo that has been grown, raised, and/or processed in the Region. It found widely varying results for each product, but overall, the Waterloo Region content was very low, and the Ontario content ranged from very low to very high.
- The Food Miles Study examined the distances travelled by imports of 58 commonly-eaten foods to Waterloo Region and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with their transport. It found that imports of these

foods, all of which can be grown or raised in Waterloo Region, travel almost 4,500 km on average and generate more than their own weight in greenhouse gas emissions.

- The Redundant Trade Study looked at the availability of both locally grown and imported produce at local supermarkets and farmers' markets at peak harvest times for locally grown fruits and vegetables. It found imported produce to be widely available and Waterloo Region produce not readily available.
- The Optimal Nutrition Environment Study looked at the potential of the Waterloo Region land base to supply enough healthy food for the growing population. The study found that the future optimal nutritional needs of the local population could be supplied by local agricultural lands with a 10-12% shift in production.

The Report then proposes several strategies to improve the health of the food system, including: increasing urban agriculture programs, expanding local farmers' markets, establishing farm-to-institution programs, and encouraging the local processing and distribution sectors of the food industry. The Final Report will include the findings of the consultations with nearly 100 stakeholders in the local food system and identify the most promising strategies for Waterloo Region...

The Report and four component research studies can be found on the Region of Waterloo website at [www.region.waterloo.on.ca/rgms](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/rgms) (look for "Community Food System Plan")

## Thanks For Getting CAFS Off the Ground

By Mustafa Koc

Thank you to Ryerson University for offering us office space and for handling our accounts through their financial services. The Faculty of Continuing Education at Ryerson is also hosting our inaugural party. The Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University, and the Centre for Urban Health Initiative (CUHI) at University of Toronto have supported some of our expenses.

CAFS has been the product of a collective effort of many of our members. Many others volunteered but we were not yet ready to benefit from their enthusiasm. I would like to thank the members of the program committee, especially Elaine Power and Catherine Phillips who went over many drafts of

this conference program with great patience and attention. Robin Kortright and Irena Knezevich were the backbones of our organizing effort. They spent many hours working on the web site and making membership contacts. Lauren Baker and Preena Chauhan helped with local planning and logistics. Jennifer Welsh came back from a well-deserved retirement break to help us with our organizing efforts. Sarah Wakefield, Steffanie Scott, Alison Blay-Palmer and many members of our first all-volunteer interim executive made this event a reality. Finally, I would like to thank the editor of the CAFS newsletter, Rachel Engler-Stringer. Our table is getting bigger, our menu is getting richer and we are in good company. Bon appetit!

# IJJS Call for Papers for a Special Issue: Local Food Systems and Direct Marketing

**Local Environment:** The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability seeks submissions for a special issue focused on Direct Marketing (DM) initiatives and their place within local food systems. More specifically this means initiatives, practices, and conceptual ideas focused on bringing producers and consumers more closely together, with the longer-term goals of more sustainable and just food systems.

We welcome the submission of papers that address one or more of the themes below. These themes suggest some of the most visible components of direct-marketing, but we also see them as being tied to a realm of other local food system ideas and processes, which can have direct relevance to the broader intent of this special volume.

•**The place of the farmers' market.** The farmers' market is often accorded special status in the realm of local food systems. We would like to see ongoing studies of farmers' markets addressing issues of their stability and evolution, of changing customer profiles and interests, of vendor and producer perspectives, new directions and trends in farmers' markets and DM, with special attention to their transformative potential (or not) in the realm of LFS development, etc.

•**Community Supported Agriculture – CSAs.** What does consumer supported or shared agriculture portend with respect to direct-marketing hopes and local food systems? What are some of the issues from the perspective of the CSA producers, and from its shareholders, and what of new and emerging variants on the CSA of which local food system proponents might take note?

•**Other Direct Marketing avenues.** What other sorts of venues or forms of direct-marketing do researchers and advocates see in the works or on the horizon – new or neglected forms perhaps? Are their permutations of these that help to fill gaps in the realm of local food systems, and, which respond to the specific conditions and situations of the 'local' wherever that may be?

•**Social embeddedness and relations of regard.** The hopes for DM venues like farmers' markets and CSAs are often associated with recognizing and broadening the values associated with food transactions. What research

is being done which highlights or cautions us of the potential or perceived importance of these values and transaction choices in our food systems?

•**Beyond Direct Marketing:** What other sort of work needs to be carried out around direct-marketing? What are the broader issues of networking, alliance-building and connection for successful DM efforts? What are the sustainability and justice issues which could or should be addressed by DM efforts? Factors like access, community food security, governance, inclusion-exclusion, geographic and environmental issues, are all relevant to DM of food in various places around the globe.

**Deadline for submissions:** July 31st 2006.

**Local Environment:** The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability is a refereed journal which focuses on local environmental, justice and sustainability policy, politics and action. It is a forum for the examination, evaluation and discussion of the environmental, social and economic policies and strategies which will be needed in the move towards 'Just Sustainability' at local, national and global levels.

The special issue will include both full-length articles and shorter viewpoints. For background on this journal and instructions for authors, go to: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/carfax/13549839.html>

Final decisions about papers for this special volume is at our discretion, though all papers which meet reviewers' requirements as publishable according to the Local Environment mandate and guidelines will be accepted. Those not getting into this special volume will be worked into future issues of the journal. For discussion about paper ideas, please make contact with the Special Issue Coordinator before 1st May 2006. Send enquiries and final paper submissions, along with contact information of potential reviewers as per instructions on the website, by July 31st 2006, to:

Robert Feagan,  
Special Issue Coordinator  
Contemporary Studies  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
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## RESEARCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Steffanie Scott** (Dept of Geography, U of Waterloo, [sdscott@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:sdscott@fes.uwaterloo.ca)) is conducting research for a SSHRC-funded project entitled "Agrarian transition and the re-making of local food systems in Vietnam: Land markets, livelihoods, and food system governance"

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We are looking for volunteer editors of future newsletters. Please contact Rachel Engler-Stringer at [rr.engler-stringer@umontreal.ca](mailto:rr.engler-stringer@umontreal.ca)

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# Canada's Dual Role in Promoting GMOs Needs Detailed Academic Scrutiny

By Michael Heasman

Canada's dual role as a promoter of GM agriculture and food supply solutions in its domestic market but also on international platforms should make the country a prime candidate for progressive academic research on the meaning of food security and the future of food supply.

Already a GM future for Canada's domestic food system appears as a taken for granted fact: from the planting of GM crops, to massive investments in R&D within Canada's science base, to developing genetically modified 'nutraceuticals' with enhanced health benefits as a 'cure' for Canada's burden of diet-related disease.

Two recent examples illustrate Canada's increasingly important place in a GM food supply and in altering the perception of GM technologies.

At the end of 2005, for example, Canada became the home of a 'good news' PR coup for GM giant Monsanto when the company, through its Canadian seed division DEKALB, entered into a sponsorship agreement with Easter Seals to run a Crops for Kids fundraising initiative.

Easter Seals is a Canadian charity that operates as a network to deliver programs and services to children with physical disabilities in their community. The sponsorship venture - Easter Seals Crops For Kids - is described as an international agricultural initiative developed to give children aged 12 to 14 a better understanding of the current practices and future potential of farming, while teaching them the importance of giving back to the communities in which they live, farm and grow. Monsanto and DEKALB call it a commitment to "growing minds, growing communities".

Through Easter Seals Crops For Kids, children will be able to grow an acre of a select DEKALB hybrid canola variety, which they will be encouraged to donate to Easter Seals at the end of harvest. Proceeds from crop donations will go towards programs that benefit children

with disabilities. As part of the 'package' there will also be an in-school educational component about the future of agriculture.

Canada is also part of the group trying to in effect end the de facto global moratorium on so-called 'terminator technology' - plants that are genetically engineered to produce sterile seeds at harvest. Canada, through its government agency Agri-Food and Agriculture Canada, is therefore regarded as contributing to a major threat to developing world food security in the eyes of campaigners.

Despite the efforts of Canada, together with Australia and New Zealand, supported by the US government and the biotechnology industry, to undermine the moratorium, the recent United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, held in March, rejected ending the moratorium. It was the interventions by civil society groups and organizations, including those based in Canada, that played a key role in upholding the moratorium.

These activities, and more, all lead to a potentially vast research program for Canada's social science community to unpack how Canada has become a global hub in the introduction and promotion of GM technologies, in particular the relationship between the introduction and promotion of a GM food supply and developing and developed world food security. A new research agenda might include:

## **GMOs and civil society**

For example, the role of civil society in shaping debates around the future of food, the introduction of science and technology, and GMO technology in particular; participatory decision-making in the introduction of new food technologies; the impact of GM decision-making on rural and farming communities; campaigning on food issues and making connections between domestic concerns and those on the international stage; and, ethical issues around food supply, food

citizenship, and GMOs.

## **Business/government relations**

Competition and the responsibilities and regulation of monopoly/oligopoly suppliers and markets; regulatory and agency 'capture', whether through government agencies or scientific agendas; safety issues and the processes of regulatory control and approval of new food technologies; and, the 'framing' of information and debates about the future of agriculture.

## **Policy options**

Policy responses to citizen concerns about food, health and food and agriculture technologies; governance of food related issues and public involvement; supporting 'alternatives' to a GM dominated future; policy solutions in monopoly/oligopoly market situations; developing policy scenarios and solutions for a 'food secure' Canada; developing and supporting local and regional food systems.

## **Progressive futures/alternatives**

What if Canada decided to become a GM-free zone; what would a 'sustainable' food secure Canadian agriculture look like; developing alternatives and policy for food business development as social enterprises and for community economic development, etc.

Some of this work is already being undertaken within Canada and there are also international models to draw upon. Canada's role in shaping one particular version of the future of food in which GM plays a major role should to be researched more fully, not least to investigate how this came about, how it is unfolding, and if this is the only feasible solution for Canada and its citizens.

*Michael Heasman PhD, is founder and editor of Food for Good ([www.foodforgood.com](http://www.foodforgood.com)) that reports on trends and issues impacting sustainable food businesses and corporate social responsibility and ethical leadership in the food industry. He can be contacted at Michael.Heasman@shaw.ca*