Participatory Food Costing: Making the Connection

The Second Nova Scotia Food Security Gathering: Making the Connection II

On behalf of the NSFSN Participatory Food Costing Working Group
December 5th 2008, Debert Hospitality Centre
What is Food Security?

- …all community residents obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance, and equal access for everyone”
  (Dietitians of Canada, 2007)

- a prerequisite for and fundamental determinant of health
- A priority of Healthy Eating Nova Scotia
Figure 1. Determinants of Food Security

Food Supply

Indicators of a Local Sustainable Food Supply

- Agricultural & Aquatic Ecosystem Health
- Producer Viability
- Quality/Quantity of Food Products
- Price, Value & Wage
- Processing/Infrastructure
- Diverse & Accessible Retail Options

Food Security for all exists when food production and consumption is:

- Sufficient
- Reliable
- Nutritious
- Safe
- Culturally Appropriate
- Sustainable
- Socially Just
- Environmentally Sound

Food Access

Resources and Capacity to Acquire and Use Food

- Financial Resources
- Transportation to Food Retail Outlets
- Knowledge & Skills
- Growing, Storage, Preparation & Cooking Facilities
- Time
- Social Support
- Marketing & Advertising

Thought About Food? Part 1—Understanding Food Security

(NS Participatory Food Security Projects Policy Working Group, 2006)
Prevalence of income-related food insecurity in Canada in 2004

Figure 3.2: Income-related household food insecurity by province, 2004

CCHS Cycle 2.2, Health Canada, 2007
Participatory Food Costing in NS

- Conducted first in 2002 and again in 2004/05 (spring and fall)
- Model for ongoing food costing developed in 2004/05
  - Stratified random sampling of grocery stores
  - Training/Support for food costers/support people (CAPC/CPNP FRC/P’s, community groups, Public Health etc)
  - National Nutritious Food Basket (NNFB) with “local food” component
  - Annual Partnership Workshop and capacity building activities
- Sustainable funding for annual participatory food costing model from Dept of Health Promotion and Protection starting in 2006
Aims of Food Costing Model

- To gather credible, current, and relevant data on the cost of a basic nutritious diet in NS through participatory approaches.
  - To engage, mobilize, and build capacity to address the issue of food insecurity and inform healthy public policy at both individual and system levels.
  - To use quantitative data to augment qualitative data to confirm the reality of food insecurity.
  - To foster knowledge development for individuals and organizations on the cost of food and the factors that affect the cost of food.
  - To compare the cost and affordability of nutritious food throughout regions of the province and across the country over time.
Guiding Principles

- Food security for all Nova Scotians.

- Capacity building, social inclusion, collaboration, and community mobilization through participatory approaches to food costing.

CAPC and CPNP funded Family Resource Centers /Projects and other community-based organizations as Core Partners
Participatory Process

- Participatory research involves community partners in decision making, data collection and analysis and the use of the research results.

- It involves the participation of those most involved, affected, or potentially affected by food insecurity as well as government and other partners who can work to influence policy.
Collaborating CAPC/CPNP-funded NS Family Resource Centres /Projects and other community-based organizations
Nova Scotia Nutrition Council
NS Public Health Services
Departments of Health Promotion and Protection; Health; Community Services; and Agriculture
Universities: Acadia, Dalhousie (AHPRC), MSVU, St. FX & UOIT
Health Canada; Public Health Agency of Canada
Atlantic Canadian Regional Organic Network
Ecology Action Centre’s Food Action Committee
Food Security networks and coalitions across Canada
National & Provincial Advisory Committees

Funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and the NS Dept of Health Promotion and Protection is gratefully acknowledged.
How much does a basic nutritious diet cost each month for a household of four in NS?

*The reference household of four is comprised of a mother and father between the ages of 25-49, a girl aged 7 and a boy aged 13.*
What does a basic nutritious diet cost in communities throughout NS?

* Monthly cost of the NNFB for the reference household of four
Can low income Nova Scotians afford a basic nutritious diet?

  - Reference household of four
  - Female Led Lone Parent with 2 children
  - Lone Adult Male with no Children
  - Pregnancy and Breastfeeding (income assistance only)


- Supports for university students

- Supports for persons with a disability
What was the availability of locally-produced* foods in grocery stores in Nova Scotia?

- In over 50% of the stores sampled the least expensive item was produced locally for:
  - apples, potatoes (both Oct 2004 and June 2005)
  - cabbage, carrots (Oct 2004 only)
  - onions (June 2005 only)
- No local pears, celery, green pepper, iceberg lettuce, or romaine lettuce were available in any of the surveyed stores.
- Overall lack of clear and accurate signage and labeling

* Defined as produced in Atlantic Canada
Key Activities and Accomplishments

- Press Conferences and release of reports in 2004, 2006 and 2008
- Publications in Peer Reviewed Journals
- Presentations at Conferences, e.g. Food Secure Canada, International Community Development Assoc., CIHR Institute Gender of Health
- Food Costing data was key evidence used in Utility Review Board Hearing on NS and Dal Legal Aid Challenge to NS Power rate increases for those living in poverty
- Submission to Minimum Wage Review Committee
- Increases to Income Assistance Personal Allowance and Shelter rates
Tools for Building Capacity for Systems Change to Support Food Security

Participatory action research… Food costing; Story sharing; National scan of strategies for influencing policy; National, Regional and Community Level Dialogues; Survey of Atlantic food security initiatives; Advocacy workshops and media releases of research findings, etc..

2000 Ongoing

Working together across sectors and jurisdictions to develop policy tools

- Workbook “Food Security & Influencing Policy”
- DVD “Food Security: It’s Everyone’s Business”
- Understanding the Relationship Between Public Policy and Food Security in Nova Scotia: A Background Paper and Policy Lens

www.foodthoughtful.ca
Eating right proving pricey

ALTH

Andrea MacDonald — The Daily News

The bad news is getting worse for some Nova Scotians, who are
struggling between paying bills and feeding their families.

That’s the conclusion of a food expenditure study that shows many fam-
ilies can’t afford a basic nutritious diet.

Researchers found an eight per cent increase in the cost of a healthy
meal per person in the last two years. They measured prices in 2002.

Lead researcher and Mount Saint Vincent University nutritionist Pat-
Williams says some families are struggling to afford basic foods that
are essential to a healthy diet. They are losing ground.

This is happening despite an increase in the cost of nutritious
food, and some of these families are struggling to make ends meet.

“‘It doesn’t mean that they’re necessarily going hungry,’ she said yest-
ey. ‘They’re just eating less healthy food.’”

The researchers say it is an issue of concern.

Williams said the implica-
tions of this finding are frightening, given that almost half of single
mothers are raising their children in poverty.

By the end of the week, she added, single mothers were struggling to
afford fresh produce and other nutritious options.

Boosts in minimum wage and in-
social assistance have been good,
but Williams says she is seeing
more families struggling to afford
nutritious food. At $7.15 per
hour, Nova Scotia has one of Cana-
d’s lowest minimum wages.

“I’ve been worrying for 16 years,”
said Debbie Williams, a single moth-
er of two from Yarmouth who also
works as a food stylist.

“The stress is constant and frus-
ting. It builds up and builds up. We don’t have anything to replace it. It’s just getting by, but just that — getting by,”

Williams says her children use birthday and Christmas mon-
ey for special outings such as movies. She only buys fruits and
vegetables occasionally because they go bad. The single mom has no car, no
lunch money, nor funds for certain clothing. Her kids are on medica-
tion.

Debbie Reimer works with low-income families. It’s not hard to hear
the anger in her voice when she talks about the misconceptions sur-
rounding low-income families, such as the idea that they can’t budget or
blow all their money on bingo.

$617 for basic, nutritious diet

Researchers calculated the cost of a basic, nutritious diet for a family of four at $617.42.

That amount represents a bare-bones diet developed by Health Canada and is for a mother and daugh-
ter between 25 and 49 years old, with a seven-year-old girl and a 14-
year-old boy. In 2002, the cost was $572.90. It also assumes the gro-
ceries came from a mega supermarket.

Cost of purchasing the same nu-
tritious basket of goods from a
smaller grocery store was $632.40 per month.

Single mothers, immigrants, the elderly, aboriginals, and post-secondary students are among the
most likely to experience food insecurity, according to the food costers.

In fact, single mothers from Nova Scotia are three times more likely than those from other Atlantic
provinces to experience it.

The food costers priced their food at 42 grocery stores in various Nova Scotia communities.

Research took place in October 2004 and June 2005, since spring and fall repre-
sent the times of year with the least seasonal variability in food cost.

Funding came from the provincial Office of Health Promotion and Protection.

— Source: Working Together for On-
going Food Costing and Policy Solu-
tions to Build Food Security: Partici-
patory Food Costing 2004/2005

“People do know what a basic nutriti-
on diet looks like — they just can’t afford it.”

Researchers are pushing for po-
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amacdonald@sfnews.ca

JUST GETTING BY: Single mom Debbie Williams worked as a food stylist.

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Voices... community partners

“And not just that but you are giving a voice to the people who are living it. And it’s not that they haven’t been saying it for a long time, it’s just nobody has really been listening. And that’s the whole main thing to me with this project is giving people the power and voice. It’s not just professors or students, it’s people who are actually living in this type of circumstance.”

(Participatory Food Costing Participant, Johnson C, MScAHN Thesis, 2004)
Participatory Food Costing Project: Working Group members

- Christine Johnson, Dept of Human Nutrition, St FX University
- Debbie Reimer, AVH Kids Action Program
- Becca Green, Ecology Action Centre Food Action Committee
- Karen LeBlanc, Maggie’s Place Family Resource Centre
- Ilya Blum, Dept of Mathematics, MSVU
- Michelle Murton, Department of Health Promotion and Protection
- James McGrath, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch
- Polly Ring, Public Health Services, South West Health
- Tina Killam, Parent’s Place Family Resource Centre
- Karen Fraser, Family Place Family Resource Centre
- Rita MacAulay, Public Health Services, CDHA
- Michelle Florence, Participatory Food Costing Coordinator
- Patty Williams, Principal Investigator, Dept of Applied Human Nutrition, MSVU
For More Information

Reports:
NSNC Website www.nsnc.ca
AHPRC Website www.ahprc.dal.ca
www.hpclearinghouse.ca

Workbook and DVD:
Thought About Food?
www.foodthoughtful.ca

Email – foodsecurity@msvu.ca

Thank you!