Food Policy for First Nations

Presented at Growing Local Conference
Food Matters Manitoba
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Objective

• Explore what is food policy, how it is relevant to First Nations communities and how it directly affects First Nations
About AFN

- Is a representative organization for more than 630 First Nation communities in Canada
- The Chiefs meet annually to set national policy and direction through resolution
Health & Social Secretariat (HSS)

• Mandate
  – We are responsible to protect, maintain, promote, support, and advocate for our inherent, treaty and constitutional rights, (w)holistic health, and the well-being of our nations.
  – This will be achieved through policy analysis, communications, and, most importantly, lobbying on behalf of, representing, supporting, and defending First Nations’ communities and individuals to ensure properly funded services and programs are delivered at the same level enjoyed by all Canadians.
  – The ultimate goal is First Nations’ control of the development and delivery of all health and social services, and programs.
Quick Icebreaker:

What is your favourite food?
Assembly of First Nations

HOW DID WE GO FROM THIS! TO THIS?!
What is a Policy?

• A policy are rules that guides our decisions/actions to make rational outcomes.

• A policy:
  – Outlines rules
  – Provides principles that guide actions
  – Sets roles and responsibilities
  – Reflects values and beliefs
  – States an intention to do something

Adapted from “Thought about food? A workbook on Food Security & Influencing Policy.”
Why would a policy be developed?

- Basic needs are not being met
- Inequity and unfair treatment
- Current policies/laws are not enforced/effective or exist
- Current situation may result in threat to public health, safety, education or well-being

Source: “Thought about food? A workbook on Food Security & Influencing Policy.”
What is food policy?

• A food policy is a plan of action to meet a society’s food and nutrition needs
  • It is a legislative or administrative decision made by a government agency, business or organization which effects how food is produced, processed, distributed, and purchased. A food policy is designed to influence the operations of the entire food and agricultural system.
What is Food Policy?

• Considerations:
  – A food policy is extremely complex having to incorporate the challenges presented by health, environment and social justice
  – A food policy must also reflect the values and traditions/beliefs of the population it serves.
  – A food policy must addresses the four dimensions of food security: access, availability, utilization and the long-term stability of the other three dimensions.
Examples of Food Policies

- A decision by school officials whether to purchase foods raised by local farmers;
- A decision to ban junk foods in schools;
- The eligibility standards that allow low-income residents to participate in food assistance programs;
- The regulatory health and safety requirements for food based business;
- Food ingredient labeling;
- Laws regulating the use of production contracts by corporate meat and poultry operations;
- The percentage of a food ingredient which qualifies a food product as being "organic".
Why do we need food policies?

- Food insecurity is an important public health issue in Canada (especially First Nation communities) and a key social determinant of health
  - Obesity
  - Childhood Health
  - Diabetes
  - Cancer, etc.
- The current food system is not managed in the public interest
- Canada does not have a coordinated approach to government policies that address food, nor do they adequately prioritize the needs and wishes of the majority
- Food policy would address environmental degradation & contamination concerns
- Community food security promotes social equity as a basis for full participation in the food system (Dieticians of Canada, 2007).
Why food policy? Con’t…

• Household Food Insecurity is greater in Aboriginal households than non-Aboriginal households
  – In Canada, 33% of Aboriginal households are food insecure compared to 9% non aboriginal households
  – In 3 northern communities, > 70% households experienced food insecurity
  – In BC First Nations study: 41% of FN households were affected by food insecurity
  – In MB, 49% First Nations indicated in the RHS that “the food purchased did not last and there wasn’t enough money to get more” in the past 12 months.
How do we meet the goals of a food policy?

- Policy tools are actions that help a community, government, organization, etc. achieve the goals of its policy. The following is a list of possible policy tools:
  - Information
  - Education
  - Legislation
  - Regulation
  - Guidelines
  - Standards
  - Procedures
  - Programs
  - Grants
  - Subsidies
  - Expenditures
  - Taxes
  - Public Ownership

Adapted from “Thought about food? A workbook on Food Security & Influencing Policy.”
Special considerations for First Nations Food Policy
Special considerations …

• Aboriginal & Treaty Rights
• Traditional foods – hunting, fishing, gathering
• Cost of hunting, fishing, gathering, etc. (this is NOT free!)
• Importance of traditional foods in First Nations cultures
• Access to land
• Rising cost of food – especially in northern, remote and isolated communities
• Environmental factors
  – Climate change, contaminants, endangers/extinction of species, etc.
• Health concerns - high rates of diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancer, etc.
• Lose of interest in procurement and eating of traditional foods
• Food safety, food sharing networks & community feasting
Assembly of First Nations

How did we go from THIS! to THIS?!
Examples of personal food policies:

“MAKE AND TAKE YOUR OWN LUNCH TO WORK.” MY FATHER HAS ALWAYS DONE THIS, AND SO HAVE I. IT SAVES MONEY, AND YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE EATING. — HOPE DONOVAN RIDER

AVOID SNACK FOODS WITH THE “OH” SOUND IN THEIR NAMES: DORITOS, FRITOS, CHEETOS, TOSTITOS, HOSTESS HO HO OS, ETC. — DONNA DAVID
Develop a Food Policy Development Strategic Plan!

• Structure:
  – Vision
  – Mission Statement
  – Goals & Actions
  – Resources (human & otherwise)
  – Execution
  – Timeline

Use the 5W+H
- What?
- Why?
- Who?
- Where?
- When?
- How?
Thank you!
For more Information

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