Community Farms on Public Conservation Lands: Exploring Implications for Local Food

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ABSTRACT

Community Farms on Public Conservation Lands:
Exploring Implications for Local Food

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Community farms are a relatively new type of local food initiative, defined by working landscapes that integrate producers into a supportive social environment in order to facilitate the long-term development of sustainable local food systems. In Ontario, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is the first, and presently the only, conservation authority providing public lands to community farms. In this case study of the TRCA, the conditions for the establishment of community farms on public conservation lands in Ontario are examined, and the implications for local food systems are discussed. Two of the four community farms based on TRCA lands are closely investigated, revealing that one focussed on supporting new farmers by developing an incubator farm, while the other developed a multi-functional project with food at the centre of a place-based community initiative.
Acknowledgments

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I would like to thank the farmers and farm managers: thank you for your gift of time and knowledge and allowing me to spend time on your farms. I would like to especially thank you for sharing your unique insights and aspirations regarding how you imagine a future food system with community farms on public lands in Ontario. I would also like to thank those research participants who helped organize a tour of the McVean Farm and Albion Hills Community Farm as part of the Toronto Urban Agriculture Summit in August 2012. At a time when my writing was waning, the opportunity to co-lead this tour allowed me to meet other researchers, graduate students, farmers and government workers with similar research interests. I would also like to thank the staff and faculty of the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph,
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Research Context and Problem

This thesis is situated within two fields of human-environment or nature-society geographic scholarship; that is, local food systems and co-management of natural resources. The rationale for including these two seemingly disparate fields of scholarship should become apparent as this research unfolds. Moreover, this research is largely exploratory in nature in that the phenomena of interest, community farms, are at an early stage of development.

Whilst community farms have been documented in the Province of British Columbia since 2007 (Wittman, 2009), the existence of community farms on public conservation land in Ontario and the prospects for local food production have not yet been researched. The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is the only one of 36 existing conservation authorities in the Province of Ontario that has recently emerged in a fascinating fashion in the local food movement, thus warranting further research. Although conservation authorities are better known for resource management, parks, flood and erosion control (Wilkins, 2010), they have a rich agricultural history that has been largely ignored in historical terms and seemingly unexplored in a scholarly context. As the largest public landholder in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), TRCA owns and manages 40,000 acres of land, 3,000 acres of which are dedicated to agricultural production within the Rouge River watershed, Humber River watershed and Duffins Creek watershed (Wilkins, 2010). Between 1957 and 2007, agricultural land was managed on an interim basis and leased to conventional farmers on short-term leases for the production of conventional crops such as corn, soya beans and alfalfa, usually using conventional (i.e.,
industrial) farming methods (Wilkins, 2010). In 2008, as part of its new vision towards sustainable communities, the TRCA developed a *Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy*, which permitted it to lease agricultural lands to non-governmental organizations, small agricultural enterprises, and municipalities (Wilkins, 2010). New permitted uses on community farms include growing crops (such as grains, fruits, vegetables and horticulture), raising livestock, apiaries, agro-forestry, maple syrup production, as well as related uses such as farmers’ markets, pick-your-own, on-farms shops and cooperative food stores (TRCA, 2008).

Since 2008, four ‘community’ farms have been established within the Humber River watershed on TRCA land, ranging in size from eight to nearly 80 acres. Moreover, the sharing of natural resources (i.e., prime agricultural land) and capital (i.e., barns, farm infrastructure) is emerging between conservation authorities and local resource users at these community farms. While the establishment of community farms is a seemingly novel approach to the development of local food systems on public land, the sharing of natural resources between the State (or state agencies) and communities of resource users is well documented in co-management literature (Carlsson & Berkes, 2005; Plummer & Armitage, 2007a; Plummer & Armitage, 2007). Understanding the process and motivations of collaborative partnerships and collaborative (cooperative) management approaches (known herein as co-management) that have led to the development of community farms and local food systems in this TRCA watershed, will be a focal point of this research.

While much literature exists on local food systems and co-management, there is a need to document and better understand the nuanced social, economic and ecological contexts in which local food systems arise (Blay-Palmer, 2008) and develop over time (Renting, 2003). This research therefore attempts to better theorize and tease out the links between local food systems
(Marsden et al., 2000), community farms and co-management on these sites, and aims to answer the questions: What are the material and human/community conditions for the establishment of community farms? And, how do community farms function as a distinctive type of local food initiative?

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The broad aim of the research is to explore conditions for the establishment of community farms on public conservation lands and to elucidate how they function and how they are emerging as a contributor to the localization of food systems.

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Reveal organizational motives, requirements and intentions regarding the provision of public lands for community farms;

2. Identify and characterize key structural and operational commonalities and differences between two community farms; and,

3. Consider the implications of these identified commonalities and differences for meeting local food system objectives.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The following chapters provide the context, methodology, study area, results and conclusions of the research. Chapter Two provides the context for the research and a review of relevant academic literature drawing on two fields of human geographic scholarship - local food systems and co-management of natural resources. Chapter Three provides an explanation of the
research approach and methods, which includes data sources, study sites, sampling strategy and a brief profile of research participants. Chapter Four presents the findings of the first research objective and describes the necessary conditions for the establishment of community farms on public lands. This includes a detailed description of the public landholder motives, intentions and requirements they set related to the establishment of community farms on public lands. The characteristics of collaboration between the public landholder and those operating the community farms are evaluated and a co-management network is presented for each of the two research sites. Chapter Five presents the findings of the second research objective and provides a characterization of the structural and operational features of community farms noting the points of convergence and divergence among them. Chapter Six presents the findings of the third research objective and considers how these identified commonalities and differences contribute to the localization of food systems. Chapter Seven provides a synthesis and conclusion of the research and identifies areas for future research.
2.1 Dominant Agricultural Paradigm in Canada

As Smithers and Johnson (2004, p.193) note, “In general terms, the dominant agricultural paradigm in Canada and most developed economies reflects the adoption of a manufacturing model in food production that has resulted in a so-called industrial agriculture.” Industrialized agriculture in developed market economies can be described as a complex food supply system based on four hierarchical and largely separate sectors; agricultural inputs, farm production, product processing, food distribution and food consumption, which are mediated by forces of state policy, international trade, credit financial markets, and the physical environment (Bowler, 1992).

As noted by Smithers and Johnson (2004) and other geographers such as Troughton, Pierce and Bowler (as cited by Smithers & Johnson, 2004), adoption of industrial production practices and philosophy has led to three major changes in the structural characteristics of farming: intensification, concentration and specialization. First, intensification has been achieved in farming and food production through technology and larger-scale enterprises to achieve economies of scale, “with the most extreme form being factory farming” (Smithers & Johnson, 2004, p.195), as evident in the North American pork sector. Secondly, specialisation represents a desire and necessity of operators to commit to a smaller range of products though on a larger scale (based on being heavily invested in production technologies), which can lead to food being consumed outside of the region (Bowler, 1992) and increased economic and environmental risk
to producers. Lastly, concentration has resulted in a decrease in the number of farms and farmers in most regions and enlargement of those farms (i.e., fewer and larger farms).

2.1.1 Problems faced by producers in industrialized food systems

The crisis of rural communities and small-scale family farming in Canada is well documented. In the province of Ontario, studies by Surgeoner and Dalrymple show that industrialization and globalization of the food system have led to an “unprecedented increase in the productivity and efficiency of the provincial food system over the past several decades” (as cited in Smithers & Johnson, 2004, p.193), while negatively contributing to environmental degradation such as soil erosion, water contamination and habitat loss and a noted ‘disappearing middle’ (Wallace & Smith, 1985) — as the gap between large and small farms widens. As Baker and colleagues note “a brief glance at farm market net income from the mid-1980s to present illustrates the shocking impact of global restructuring” (Baker et al., 2010, p.9). Since 1985 the average market net income for farmers, when adjusted for inflation, has been below 1930s levels and, as a 2005 report by the Canadian National Farmers Union puts it, “For Canadian farm families and their net incomes, 2004 was the second-worst year in history. But for agribusiness, 2004 was the best year in history...clearly our family farms are in crisis” (National Farmers Union, 2005, p.1)

Producers have been impacted by problems associated with human health and food safety, the environment, and the economic viability of rural communities since the 1970s. Goodman (1999) asserts that the public image of agriculture has been dominated by food scandals, while Koc and Dahlberg (1999) report increased competition between producers, processors, retailers, and consumers for policy influence. Other challenges include the uneven
development of food supply chains (Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003; Hinrichs, 2000), the diminished importance of farmers in local life (Joseph, Lidgard & Bedford, 2001), the cost-price squeeze (Pierce, 1994; Renting et al., 2003), the decline of family farms, and an orientation away from, rather than towards, local markets (Ilbery, Maye, Kneafsey, Jenkins, & Walkley, 2004).

2.1.2 Problems faced by consumers in industrialized food systems

A variety of consumer concerns have resulted from the industrialization of food systems since the 1970s. For example, increasing concerns about human health, environmental consequences, ecology, farm animal welfare, fair trade (Marsden, Banks, & Bristow, 2000; Renting et al., 2003), devastation from food scares (Marsden et al., 2000), and consumer distrust in quality food from conventional agriculture (Goodman, 1999) have been noted widely in the literature. Table 1 presents a summary of consumer and producer concerns associated with industrialized agriculture.

Table 1. Consumer and producer concerns associated with industrialized agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer concerns</th>
<th>Producer concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human health and food safety concerns</td>
<td>Human health, economic viability of farming, environmental concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology and environmental concerns</td>
<td>Public image of agriculture &amp; food scandals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm animal welfare</td>
<td>Uneven development of food supply chains (agribusiness vs. family farms), disappearing middle, leaders and laggards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair trade</td>
<td>Diminished role of farmers in local life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust in food</td>
<td>Decline of family farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation away from local markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of a variety of challenges faced by producers and consumers in an industrialized global food system, groups within these two sectors have developed alternative food systems focused on quality characteristics that address both producer and consumer needs.
concerns related to human health, food safety, environmental values, animal welfare and fair trade (Winter, 2003). Within this context, multiple alternative food initiatives have developed and increased academic attention has focussed on the establishment of local food systems.

2.2 Local Food Systems

It has been claimed that growing support for local food has culminated in the establishment of local food movements (LFM), where alternative processes to relocalize food production and consumption have become well established (DeLind, 2010). For the purposes of this research a broad definition of local food systems (LFS) will be employed. As described in Chapter One, local food systems is a term that unites multiple alternative food initiatives such as alternative agri-food networks, community food security, civic agriculture and alternative or shortened food chains (Feagan, 2007). It is well known that scholarship in local food research has expanded over the last 30 years, with evidence of significant empirical and theoretical contributions in North American and European local food discourses over the past ten years. For example, one prominent study identified over 56 published academic papers on local food chains and networks between 2000 and 2004 in seven prominent journals: Area, British Food Journal, Environment and Planning, Journal of Rural Studies, Progress in Human Geography, Social and Cultural Geography and Sociologia Ruralis (Venn, Kneafsey, Holloway, Cox, Dowler, & Tuomainen, 2006). More recently, a comprehensive study of local food initiatives in Canada identified over 2,300 local food initiatives ranging from farmers’ markets to food box programs to restaurant and chef initiatives (Egbers, 2009). Notably, a majority of local food initiatives were identified in the Province of Ontario, such as 149 farmers’ markets, 104 community supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives and 33 food box programs (Egbers, 2009). Results from this study identify a typology of ten local food initiatives in Canada, and outline the number of
local initiatives in Ontario (Table 2). Whilst this study is fairly comprehensive, it does not claim
to have identified all of the potential local food initiatives in Canada. Despite the impressive
breadth of Egbers’ study (2009), this research study will advance this local food typology by
identifying an additional local food initiative which has become increasingly apparent on public
land in Ontario, and has been unexplored in local food systems literature to date.

Table 2. A typology of local food initiatives in Canada and Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Food Initiatives in Canada</th>
<th># (% of total)</th>
<th># of Local Food Initiatives in Ontario (% of Canadian total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/Chef Initiatives</td>
<td>726 (31.3)</td>
<td>200 (27.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ Markets</td>
<td>578 (24.9)</td>
<td>149 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Stores</td>
<td>354 (15.3)</td>
<td>53 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSAs</td>
<td>298 (12.8)</td>
<td>104 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Box Programs</td>
<td>126 (5.4)</td>
<td>68 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Security/Policy Groups</td>
<td>105 (4.5)</td>
<td>33 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culinary Tourism/Regional</td>
<td>42 (1.8)</td>
<td>10 (23.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Procurement</td>
<td>24 (1)</td>
<td>10 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Value Chains</td>
<td>4 (0.1)</td>
<td>1 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other LFIs</td>
<td>55 (2.3)</td>
<td>7 (29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Egbers, 2009*

2.2.1 Attributes of local and global food

Academic interest in local food systems has been noted widely and recent evidence
largely suggests that local food systems generally emerge in opposition or resistance to the
industrialized or ‘global’ food system (Hinrichs, 2003; Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Watts,
Ilbery and Maye, 2005). Furthermore, the benefits and promises of local food systems, although
largely nuanced and sometimes untested, are claimed to hold the potential to forge sustainable
relationships between producers and consumers, unite farm and non-farm interests (Hinrichs,
2003; Lyson, 2003; Smithers et al., 2008; Allen, 2010), and reconcile environmental, economic
and social issues (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Allen, 2010). Despite the fact that local
Food systems do not always map out neatly (Hinrichs, 2003), empirical research suggests that common attributes of local food systems include a focus on place, economic viability for farmers, ecologically-sound production methods, social equity and democracy (Feenstra, 1997). Building on this logic of local food systems, other attributes of local food have been cited in opposition to the global or industrialized food system (Hinrichs, 2003). Other examples of local food attributes include small-scale production, “natural” models, and community well-being (Table 3). Although this global-local binary is criticized as being problematic (Hinrichs, 2003; Blay-Palmer, 2008) since the divide between ‘local’ and ‘global’ is somewhat socially and spatially constructed, it is nonetheless useful to identify these generalized attributes.

Table 3. Attributes of global food and local food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global Food Attributes</th>
<th>Local Food Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Economy</td>
<td>Moral economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics of Price</td>
<td>Economic sociology of quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNCs dominating</td>
<td>Artisanal producers prevailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate profits</td>
<td>Community well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-scale production</td>
<td>Small-scale production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial models</td>
<td>“natural” models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monoculture</td>
<td>Bio-diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations across distance</td>
<td>Relations of proximity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodities across space</td>
<td>Communities in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big structures</td>
<td>Voluntary actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technocratic rules</td>
<td>Democratic participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogenization of food</td>
<td>Regional palates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hinrichs, 2003

2.2.2 Concepts of quality, trust, embeddedness and place

While several attributes of local food systems have been identified, the overarching characteristic of local food systems is widely cited in the European literature as quality, or the ‘quality turn’, as described by Goodman (2003). The quality turn characterizes local food systems as new forms of production-consumption (Holloway et al., 2007), which are developed
to respond to rising concerns over human health, food safety, environmental consequences of globalized and industrialized agriculture (Smithers & Johnson, 2004), farm animal welfare, fair trade (Marsden, Banks, & Bristow, 2000; Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003) and food fears (Blay-Palmer, 2008). Many local food studies, from both producer and consumer perspectives, have sought to describe how quality is constructed and embedded in local food systems and how consumers and producers engage with local food (Smithers et al., 2008; Feagan, 2007). Other widely accepted concepts of local food systems include trust (Goodman, 2003), embeddedness (Hinrichs, 2007; Feagan & Morris, 2009; Sonnino & Marsden, 2006), and place.

The concept of embeddedness describes the non-economic values of local food and seeks to describe economic behaviour in terms of complex social relations that go beyond the narrow price-signal (Hinrichs, 2003). In sum, economic behaviour (e.g., patronage at a farmers’ market) is based on the complex social dimensions of local food systems. Recent studies suggest that local food is embedded not only geographically, but also within political, institutional (vertical embeddedness), and social, spatial and cultural contexts (horizontal embeddedness) (Feagan, 2007; Sonnino and Marsden, 2006). Therefore, further theoretical understandings of local food systems could be advanced by understanding how local food systems are embedded both vertically and horizontally.

In sum, further opportunities for theoretical contributions to local food systems research exist to specifically identify how local food systems are embedded in political, institutional, social, spatial and cultural contexts. This research seeks to build on this research gap. The concept of embeddedness will be incorporated into the theoretical framework of the research design, outlined in Chapter Three. A schematic representation of vertical and horizontal embeddedness is presented in Figure 1.
2.2.3 Local Food Initiatives (LFI)

The local food initiative in academic discourse is a context-specific local food project or initiative that may include processes to relocalize food production-consumption relations, establish new connections between producers and consumers (Venn et al., 2006), resocialize and respatialize food (Marsden et al., 2000), redistribute power (Holloway et al., 2007), develop new associations of interactions between producers and consumers (Ilbery, 2003) and oppose or resist the global or industrialized food system (IFS) (Hinrichs, 2003; Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002; Watts et al., 2005). Examples of local food initiatives include farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), and community gardens. Local food initiatives vary in the degree of connectedness between producers and consumers (Table 4). For example, in local food initiatives such as community gardens and community food cooperatives, producers act as consumers; therefore, there is no separation, or distance, between the producer and consumer resulting in the highest level of producer-consumer connectedness. Local food initiatives such as farmer’s markets and on-farm stands (i.e., farm gate sales) often consist of direct face-to-face interaction between producers and consumers at the site of exchange (i.e., farm stall, farmer’s
market stall) thereby constituting a high level of producer-consumer connectedness. However, in local food initiatives such as online grocers there is a lesser degree of producer-consumer connectedness since food is exchanged via technology and often travels a greater distance from the producer to reach the consumer. Table 4 presents categories of producer-consumer connectedness in various examples of local food initiatives.

**Table 4: Categories of producer-consumer connectedness in local food initiatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Local Food Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Producers as consumers</td>
<td>Community food cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allotment groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer-consumer partnerships</td>
<td>Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct sell initiatives</td>
<td>Farmers Markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Producer Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm gate sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist retailers</td>
<td>Online grocers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specialist retailers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Venn et al., 2006

While it is beyond the scope of this research project to examine each of these initiatives, this research will shed light on one local food initiative that is not yet included in this spectrum, the community farm, which is becoming increasingly visible in the near-urban zone in Ontario.

**2.2.4 Analytical frameworks for local food systems**

Recent empirical studies have sought to develop a methodological framework for describing the complexity, geographic specificity and heterogeneity of local food initiatives. Based on an analysis of over 100 local food projects in the UK, researchers have developed an analytical framework with seven heuristic fields to describe how specific examples of production-consumption are organized (Holloway et al., 2007). The heuristic fields include: the
site of food production, food production methods, supply chain, arena of exchange, producer-
consumer interaction, motivations of participants and the constitution of individuals and groups (Table 5). This analytical framework allows researchers to examine the multiple facets which comprise the ongoing production of local food systems. Further, this model is pivotal in examining how the “ordering and spatiality of particular projects can effectively challenge the centre of power in food supply” (Holloway et al., 2007, p.15) and describe discourse based on being different and doing things differently.

Table 5: Heuristic analytical fields for describing food projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Heuristic analytical field</strong></th>
<th><strong>Examples from sample food projects</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sites of food production</td>
<td>Rented land, allotments, community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food production methods</td>
<td>Consumer participation, organic, biodynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply chain</td>
<td>Local selling, Internet marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arena of exchange</td>
<td>Farmers markets, pick-your-own, farm shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer-consumer interaction</td>
<td>Share/membership schemes, direct selling, e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations for participation</td>
<td>Business success, social/environmental concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of individual and group identities</td>
<td>Participants, customers, children’s groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Holloway et al., 2007*

### 2.2.5 Community Farms

Community farms are an emerging local food initiative characterized by activities of local food production, education and training, conservation, and public access in multiple land use contexts (e.g., rented land, public land, and private land). Community farms are claimed to incorporate notions of “agrarian ideals in which efficient and human-scale agriculture is enmeshed in a multi-functional landscape” (Wittman, 2009, p.3). Furthermore, community farms are described as “working landscapes which integrate local food producers into a supportive social environment that facilitates the long-term development of a sustainable food system”
While the concept and definition of a community farm is attributed to a food researcher in Canada who specifically defined the term in relation to a provincial community farm program three years ago (Wittman, 2009), preliminary web-based research suggests the term community farm has been used to describe a distinct form of local food initiative since 1990. Findings indicate that the term ‘community farm’ can be traced to the establishment of the Intervale Community Farm, part of the Intervale Centre, which originated in Burlington, Vermont in 1990 as an ‘incubator’ farm but has since become one of the largest and oldest CSA farms in Vermont (Berman, 2011). Therefore, the notion of a community farm as a distinct form of local food initiative seems to have been established in practice for over 20 years while only recently gaining academic attention. Moreover, the unique approach of the 350-acre Intervale Centre incorporates multiple local food initiatives including a food hub, community farm, farmer incubator program and claims to be “creating its own revolution with the community food system movement.” (Berman, 2011, p.9)

Recently, a small body of technical reports identified the establishment of over 20 community farms in British Columbia since 2007. The identified community farms featured an orientation toward cooperative farm management, a commitment to farmland preservation and sustainable local food production. In addition, a community farm network subsequently became established in British Columbia as a partnership among new farmers, civil society agencies and landholders in response to the high cost of land and a lack of access to secure land tenure. A 2009 study of 20 community farms identified four common characteristics of community farms (Figure 2). They were local food production, education and training, conservation, and public access (Wittman, 2009). Other than these four defining characteristics of community farms, the operational and structural characteristics seem to result from a unique combination of people,
resources and land in specific contexts. Wittman argues that a community farm movement is evolving and advocates for more research to better understand how community farms become established and how they function in their specific local contexts (Wittman, 2009).

**Figure 2. A schematic of common characteristics of community farms (adapted from Wittman, 2009)**

![Diagram of community farms]

2.3 Co-management

Some community farms are emerging on conservation lands through a seemingly collaborative process of negotiation and shared decision making between state agencies and local resource resources. As such, they exhibit the spirit and selected features of co-management. Co-management is simply defined as the “sharing of power and responsibility between the government and local resource users” (Berkes et al. 1991, p.12, cited in Carlsson and Berkes, 2005). The underlying rationality of co-management is to foster ecologically sustainable livelihoods at the local level (Plummer and Armitage, 2007). Co-management has primarily been
concerned with bringing people as resource users to the decision making table and linking communities with government (Armitage et al., 2009) for the “convening and sharing of rights and responsibilities by the government and civil society” (Plummer and Fitzgibbon, 2004, p.63). Trends towards co-management as a knowledge partnership of joint decision making and problem solving (Berkes, 2009) arose from the limitations of centralized, top-down, bureaucratic, command-and-control management (Holling & Meffe, 1996) to respond to the dynamic and non-linear nature of ecosystems and their complex and uncertain conditions (Levin, 1999). Recent research in co-management suggests that understanding the complex power and resource sharing between state agencies and community users is best approached by assuming that co-management is a problem-solving process rather than a formal structural arrangement (Carlsson & Berkes, 2005; Plummer and Armitage, 2007). Recent methodological tools of co-management will be employed in this research to understand the process, performance and future prospects of community farms on public lands and contribute to scholarship in the community dimensions of local food.

2.4 Relevance to Research

This chapter attempts to position the research interest of the thesis relative to ideas and themes from broad bodies of literature in local food systems and co-management of natural resources. While the establishment of community farms is a seemingly novel approach to the development of local food systems on public land, the sharing of natural resources between the State (or state agencies) and communities of resource users is well documented in co-management literature (Carlsson & Berkes, 2005; Plummer & Armitage, 2007a; Plummer & Armitage, 2007). Understanding the process and motivations of collaborative partnerships and collaborative (cooperative) management approaches (known herein as co-management) that have
led to the development of community farms and local food systems in this TRCA watershed will be a focal point of this research.

While much literature exists on local food systems and co-management, there is a need to document and better understand the nuanced social, economic and ecological contexts in which local food systems arise (Blay-Palmer, 2008) and develop over time (Renting, 2003). A deeper understanding of local food initiatives, such as community farms, provides then a richer place-based contextual analysis in which to better understand the general phenomenon of local food systems. For example, “activity at the ground level – unique local expressions – contain the adaptive possibilities that could offer stability to higher, more abstract levels of a system and resilience as a whole” (DeLind, 2010, p.223). Therefore, this study of community farms as an emerging local food initiative represents local expressions of the larger phenomenon of local food systems and is both exploratory and explanatory in nature. It will address established practical and theoretical research needs, providing a rich description of the complex circumstances in which these initiatives emerge and operate while contributing to new knowledge to the local food systems literature with implications for practice, policy and theory.

This research therefore attempts to develop richer theoretical understandings of local food systems (Marsden et al., 2000), community farms and co-management on these sites. On the scholarly side, this research will add to theory in local food systems and co-management as it addresses current gaps in research. On the practical side, the findings of this study may be transferable to other contexts in which the opportunity to implement local food systems on public lands exist.
Chapter Three

Research Approach and Methods

3.1 Research Approach and Data Sources

This research study adopts a case study approach. Case studies are especially well-suited for developing rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature and thus this study of a new initiative in local food systems seems best approached from an exploratory and explanatory orientation (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). The entire study is conceptualized as a case study of the sustainable near-urban agricultural program of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority which focuses on two community farms exemplars, each contributing “idiosyncratic manifestations of the phenomenon of interest...with myriad dimensions, factors, variables, and categories woven together into an ideographic framework” (Patton, 2002, p.387). The case study approach has been used extensively in local food systems research and thus is well-suited to achieve the aim of this research (Koc & Dahlberg, 1999; Marsden, Banks and Bristow, 2000; Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002; Adler et al., 2003; Venn et al., 2006; Blay-Palmer, 2008; Donald, 2009). In this research, the intention is not to predict or evaluate actions and outcomes as much as to reveal operational features and document patterns, processes and expectations among stakeholders.

The study combines both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, although qualitative information and interpretation is dominant. To initiate the research process, the researcher conducted a site visit to the Albion Hills Community Farm in May 2011, while the McVean Farm site visit and on-site interviews were conducted in August 2011. Since the researcher spent six months working on the McVean Farm as a farm intern in 2010, there was
already a well-grounded knowledge of that site. Consequently, more time was spent at the Albion Hills Community Farm during the research study. However, this was not to the exclusion of the McVean Farm, since an equal number of key informant interviews were conducted at each research site. In total, the researcher conducted 12 site visits at the Albion Hills Community Farm as a participant-observer between May and September 2011. These included attending meetings, farm walks, and on-site events; observing tours; and attending a public harvest festival. The primary purpose of the participant-observations was to allow the researcher to observe the social interactions among the various individual and group identities at the community farms while establishing trust through close participation with the people and organizations involved.

It is important to note that the researcher had insider status due to prior standing and status with some research participants which predated the start of the research study. Data were collected from May 2011 to February 2012 through direct contact and participation with public landholder key informants, community farm key informants, and community farm managers.

3.2 Data Types

Primary data were obtained from key informant interviews (n=11) across three major groups: public landholder (TRCA), community farm organization representatives and community farm managers for each site. Secondary data regarding the study sites was collected from web-based information from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, FarmStart, and the Albion Hills Community Farm. Information from the Statistics Canada 2011 Census such as population data and land area was obtained in order to provide a contextual description of the towns and cities in which each of the two community farm study sites was located. Additional secondary data sources such as lease agreements, farm documents, brochures, maps,
and media articles were obtained from research participants in order to provide further information to achieve the research objectives. Social media websites such as Facebook and YouTube were used to obtain publically accessible photos and videos regarding the study sites, as a means of documenting the nature and range of activities at the farm sites.

3.3 Study Area and Sampling Strategy

In order to meet the research objectives and overall goal of the study, one public landholder (TRCA) and two of the four near-urban farm sites were selected to participate in the study. The two research sites are located in the Humber River Watershed within the jurisdiction of the TRCA (Figure 3). It was the original intent of the researcher to include all four of the study sites in the research. However, key informants from one research site declined to participate in the study in 2011 because of time and farming constraints, while the public landholder requested the researcher abstain from directly contacting the other research site based on a pre-arranged agreement. Because of these reasons, the sample size was reduced from the original size of four community farm sites, down to two. This was not seen as impairing the overriding purpose of the research in any way, since there was no intention to “inventory” farms or programs. Indeed, a narrowing of the study frame to two sites allowed for a more in-depth appreciation of the evolving dynamics at each site and amongst participating groups.

The two community farm research sites were the Albion Hills Community Farm in the Town of Caledon (see Figure 5) and the McVean Farm (see Figure 4 photo) in the City of Brampton. Specifically, the small Town of Caledon and the large City of Brampton became the focal sites of study as they represented distinctly rural and urban contexts. In this manner, the study allowed comparison of two community farm sites in distinctly rural and urban contexts.
Research Site 1: Albion Hills Community Farm

The Albion Hills Community Farm is located within the Albion Hills Conservation Area, in the largely rural Town of Caledon, which has a population of 59,460 and 4.2 per cent population growth since 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2011). The land area of Caledon, as defined by its municipal/political boundaries, is extensive at 688 km². The Albion Hills Community Farm, a local non-governmental farm organization established in 2010, manages the site.

Research Site 2: McVean Farm, Brampton

The McVean Farm is located within the Claireville Conservation Area in the City of Brampton, which has a population of 523,911 and 20.8 per cent population growth since 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2011). The land area of Brampton is almost one third that of Caledon, at 266.34 km². FarmStart, a Guelph-based non-governmental farm organization established in 2008, manages the site.
Figure 3. Map of Research Area

Source: Puddister, 2012
Figure 4. The McVean Farm in Brampton

Source: FarmStart, 2011
Figure 5. The Albion Hills Community Farm in Caledon

Source: Albion Hills Community Farm, 2011
3.4 Interview Guide Design & Methods of Analysis

This section provides a description of the interview guide design and methods of analysis for each of the three research objectives of the study. Given the use of mixed methods in the research, the objectives and associated methods of analysis are presented sequentially. The chapter concludes with a brief description of research participants.

3.4.1 Objective One: To reveal organizational motives, requirements and intentions regarding the provision of public lands for community farms

In objective one, the research sought to uncover the motives, requirements and intentions regarding the provision of public lands for community farms. For this purpose, two recent methodological tools were used from the co-management literature to bring out the organizational motives, requirements and intentions for the provision of public lands for community farms. First, basic information on the co-management partnerships was collected. The public landholder was willing to share a general lease agreement as a template for the study. In using co-management methods, this research approach assumed that each community farm site represented a complex social-ecological system where collaborative problem-solving existed under the rationale of producing sustainable local food systems (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005).

Consequently, this objective highlights the process of power-sharing, deliberation, and negotiation that led to the provision of public lands from the public landholder to various communities of resource users, or community farms (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005). To achieve this objective, data collection was mainly in the form of document analysis and key informant interviews with the TRCA and the founding partners of two community farms. It is important to note that within this objective the public landholder sometimes reflects on the establishment of
its four community farms. Therefore, at some level, all four community farms are implicated in the research while only two community farms are intensively studied at the farm-level in Objective Two.

To meet objective one, data was collected through a document analysis of public landholder documents and through semi-structured key informant interviews with public landholder staff. A variety of documents were reviewed in order to analyze the organizational motives, requirements and intentions of the public landholder regarding the provision of public lands for community farms. A research database, QSR NVivo 10, was used to organize, analyze and explore primary and secondary data sources. Since there was a vast amount of qualitative data obtained from interviews, documents, and videos the database facilitates the grouping of similar data (i.e., responses to certain questions) in order to explore possible emergent themes and ideas related to the objectives. A total of 21 documents were reviewed, as presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Data sources obtained for the document analysis of this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th># of data sources</th>
<th>Date of publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual reports, TRCA</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2002-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable near-urban agriculture policy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate website</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Living City</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lease agreement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper &amp; media releases</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request for Proposals (RFP)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eleven semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with the TRCA and key informants from the two community farm organizations, FarmStart and Albion Hills Community Farm. The research approach, outlined below includes a list of sample interview questions. The four-step research approach to fulfill objective one draws from literature on co-management and collaboration and is adapted from Carlsson and Berkes (2005) and Plummer and Armitage (2007a).

**Step One: Describe the social-ecological system under focus and evaluate collaboration.**

The units of analysis will be the two near-urban community farm sites located within two conservation areas in the Humber River Watershed. A basic overview of motives (between TRCA and community user groups) and characteristics of collaboration will be determined for each community farm site based on the general process parameters of evaluation as determined by Plummer and Armitage (2007a) and presented in Table 7.

**Table 7. Generic process parameters of evaluation for (adaptive) co-management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Collaboration</th>
<th>Communication and negotiation</th>
<th>Transactive decision-making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pluralism and Linkages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multiple types of stakeholders</td>
<td>• Dialogue builds consideration and appreciation</td>
<td>• Decisions reached through dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diversity of interests</td>
<td>• Perspectives exchanged and modified via discursive communication</td>
<td>• Diverse inputs present in decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Plummer and Armitage, 2007a*
To meet objective one and reveal the organizational motives, requirements and intentions regarding the provision of public lands for community farms, the researcher developed a series of semi-structured questions to ask the public landholder informants (TRCA) and key informants from the two community farm institutions, FarmStart and Albion Hills Community Farm.

Sample questions are presented in Table 8 while a copy of the complete interview guides for the public landholder and community farm organization key informants are included in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, respectively.

**Table 8. Sample questions from interview guide for Objective One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Landholder Key Informants</th>
<th>Community Farm Organization Key Informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question Set 1:</td>
<td>Question Set 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe your motives for provisioning (i.e., leasing) public lands to community farms.</td>
<td>1. Please describe your motives for establishing this community farm on public land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Please describe your intention for provisioning public lands to community farms.</td>
<td>2. Please describe your intention for establishing this community farm on public land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Describe the requirements for provisioning (i.e., leasing) public lands to community farms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Set 2:</td>
<td>Question Set 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. In your experience, are there multiple types of stakeholders present on community farms? If yes, please explain.</td>
<td>a. In your experience, are there multiple types of stakeholders present on community farms? If yes, please explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. In your experience, is there a diversity of interests represented on community farms? If yes, please explain.</td>
<td>b. In your experience, is there a diversity of interests represented on community farms? If yes, please explain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step Two: Map the essential management tasks to be performed and the problems to be solved**
The second step in the interview collection method involves understanding what management tasks are performed at each community farm. Sample questions for the public landholder key informants included:

- What activities are permitted on public lands leased to community farms?
- How are problems related to the management of community farms on public land resolved?
- What are the short-term, medium-term and long-term tasks and management decisions to be made at community farms? Who is entitled to make decisions for each task?

Similarly, sample questions for community farm key informants and farm managers included:
- List the activities performed at your community farm. Who participates in these activities?

**Step 3: Clarify the participants in co-management activities**

The third step involved defining who participated in each of the activities listed under step two. This was done to map the web of relations between the various actors participating at each community farm by management task. The logic was that by beginning to map activities (starting at the bottom) and the actors involved, a deeper understanding of how power is shared and diffused amongst actors at each site would emerge.

**Step 4: Analyze linkages**

A basic map of activities, or co-management network, was produced for each community farm to reveal how local user groups at each community farm were linked to the TRCA by management activity. That is, an understanding of how decision making (from policy) was translated from the central level to the TRCA to the local community farm user group was mapped and analyzed through this process. In the co-management network, each activity is associated with a letter of the alphabet while participants in activities are named and represented.
by a line connecting them to the activity. To simplify what may appear to be a complex network of relations and activities, a simple table accompanies each of the two co-management networks.

**Figure 6. Example of a co-management network (Revised from Carlsson and Berkes, 2005)**

**Data Analysis**

Data were collected and analyzed primarily using qualitative methods resulting in a description of the motives, intentions and requirements for the provision of public land to community farms. Additionally, a co-management network as presented in Figure 6 was produced for each community farm site. The letters identify specific activities performed by particular actors at the community farm sites.

**3.4.2 Objective Two: Identify and characterize key structural and operational commonalities and differences between two community farms**

An analytical framework for describing local food initiatives (Holloway et al., 2007) was employed to describe the morphology of community farms and to identify and characterize their key structural and operational commonalities and differences. Data requirements for each of the two community farm sites included qualitative data on the seven variables of: the site of food
production, food production methods, supply chain, arena of exchange, producer-consumer interaction, motivations of participants and the constitution of individuals and groups (Holloway et al., 2007). Data collection occurred primarily through semi-structured producer questionnaires, based on the successful methods employed by Bunce and Maurer (2005) in a recent study of GTA farmers.

Semi-structured questionnaires were designed with close-ended questions and open-ended questions (Bunce & Maurer, 2005) to collect data on the seven heuristic fields (or variables). The farm managers or farm program managers at each of the two community farm sites were interviewed. Each questionnaire took approximately one hour and was accompanied by a farm tour, where possible. As there were multiple farmers at the McVean Farm site and most of the data was obtained from the farm program manager, the researcher only sampled two producers on-site. A prepared questionnaire was used as a guide and producers and farm managers were encouraged to focus or expand on questions as they saw fit. The first part of the questionnaire involved close-ended questions about the first three variables, the site of food production (land base, acreage rented, farming background, type of enterprise), food production methods (main products, quality definitions of local food, labour), and the supply chain (farmers’ markets, on-site farm gate sales, CSA). The second part of the questionnaire involved open-ended questions regarding the producer-consumer interactions, motivations for participation, and constitution of individual and group identities. As per the University of Guelph Research Ethics policies, interviews were recorded, transcribed and stored in a secure location. In addition, documents collected from Objective One also provide secondary sources of data which were used to triangulate the results obtained from Objective Two. Upon completion of questionnaires, the data was transcribed and grouped by heuristic field and by community farm site. Grouped
data was then entered into a research database in order to categorize and associate data with themes, properties and issues.

3.4.3 Objective Three: Consider the implications of these identified commonalities and differences for meeting local food system objectives.

The final objective considers the implications of identified commonalities and differences for meeting local food system objectives. This was achieved by a comparison of the structural and operational characteristics of community farms between the research sites. Areas of divergence and convergence were identified and research participants were asked to consider how, in light of these revealed features, community farms on public lands help to meet local food system objectives.

3.5 Research Participant Profiles

There were eleven people (n=11) who participated in this research study: two key informants from the public landholder (TRCA); three key informants and one farm manager from the Albion Hills Community Farm (n=4); and one key informant, one farm manager and two farmers from the McVean Farm (n=4). Another key informant, from a bridging organization which helped facilitate the formation of community farms, was interviewed. In sum, there were four research participants (n=4) from each of the two community farm sites, two research participants from the public landholder (n=2), and one research participant who had an association with all of the participating organizations.
Chapter Four

Understanding conditions for the establishment of community farms on public lands

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the organizational motives, requirements and intentions regarding the provision of public lands for community farms. Sections 4.1 to 4.3 describe the organizational motives, intentions, and requirements related to the establishment of community farms on public land. Section 4.4 explores the nature of power sharing between the public landholder and community farm organizations and evaluates the characteristics of collaboration between the two parties such as components of decision-making, communication and negotiation. Section 4.5 concludes the chapter with a presentation of co-management networks for each of the research sites. These co-management networks provide a basic map of activities that explore the complex web of activities that link the public landholder to a diverse set of actors.

4.1 Organizational Motives of the Public Landholder

Public landholder key informants were asked to describe their motives for the provision of public lands for community farms. Prompts were used in semi-structured interviews to better understand the organizational context of the public landholder. Findings from the interviews and the archival search of print and web-based documents reveal three organizational motives. The initial primary motive of the public landholder was found to be grounded in a new sustainable communities’ vision which was established in 2002 and 2003. The deterioration and decline of public agricultural lands between 1947 and 2007 when agriculture was an interim use of the TRCA emerged as a secondary motive. Thirdly, engagement in farmland preservation was noted as a third motivating factor in TRCA’s involvement in and with community farms.
4.1.1 Sustainable communities and the “Living City”

When the public landholder was asked to describe their rationale and motives for provisioning public lands to aspiring community farm groups, they described their primary motive as making a contribution to sustainable communities through agriculture and, by extension, food. Their response was linked to the development in 2002/03 of an explicit initiative and corporate objective to promote sustainable communities. Before this time, sustainable communities were not a corporate objective of the public landholder. At the same time as the new sustainable communities’ objective emerged, the public landholder was developing its new corporate vision for the environmental future of the Toronto region. One respondent describes the public landholder motive in this way:

I think the primary motive was for TRCA to make another contribution to sustainable communities... We always had sustainable communities embedded in our work but never was it a standalone corporate objective.

The same respondent asserted that new corporate leadership and a new corporate vision provided favourable conditions for the establishment of a sustainable communities’ objective which laid the groundwork for a future policy that would permit new forms of agriculture on public lands. As the respondent explains:

It wasn’t until there was new corporate leadership whose interest was very much around sustainable communities - hence the new Living City vision, hence the new objective of sustainable communities, hence us being told let’s use some of our land to make a contribution to sustainable communities through agriculture.

In short, the incorporation of a clear ‘sustainable communities’ objective within the core mandate of the conservation authority provided to be a catalyst for innovation in thought and strategic action.
As one of the key informants stated:

It was with the creation of the new vision, the sustainability vision - the Living City vision - that we started looking at all kinds of non-traditional contributions we could make to contribute to a sustainable community.

In both the interviews and in the assessment of secondary material, the corporate-level orientation to sustainable communities found its first and clearest expression in the “Living City” vision. The “Living City” vision was characterized as a holistic re-imagining of the watershed as a living city of nature and people where harmonious human-environment relations flourish and a restored natural environment could be re-established. One source document describes this vision using the ‘city region’ as the defining ecological phenomenon of the twenty-first century.

The quality of life on Earth is being determined in rapidly expanding city regions. Our vision is for a new kind of community, The Living City, where human settlement can flourish forever as part of nature’s beauty and diversity. (Source: TRCA, 2008b)

This vision extends into the twenty-second century and is built on nature and society relations grounded in environmental values such as ecological protection. As one source document explains:

*The Living City* is TRCA’s vision for a healthy, attractive, sustainable urban region extending into the 22nd century, based on a foundation of Healthy Rivers and Shorelines, Regional Biodiversity, Sustainable Communities and Business Excellence. (Source: TRCA, 2008b)

Although sustainable communities were described as the primary motive for provisioning public lands for community farms, the *Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy* that permitted these community farms did not emerge until 2008 (TRCA, 2008b). However, evidence suggests the theoretical groundwork and the sustainability principles, which supported the re-thinking of agriculture and the establishment of community farms on public lands, seem to have emerged during the seminal period of 2002 to 2007.
4.1.2 Deterioration and decline of the agricultural land base

The secondary motive of the public landholder for provisioning lands to community farms was based on the deterioration and decline of the public agricultural land base, and that this was a motive in causing the public landholder to re-examine its role in agriculture and thus shift toward a new vision for sustainable agriculture on its lands.

Agricultural History & Land Tenure (1948-2007): Agriculture as an Interim Use

Toronto Region Conservation Authority is the largest public landowner in the Greater Toronto Area with over 40,000 acres of land (Wilkins, 2010). Evidence suggests that land acquisition occurred from 1948 to 1956, through the work of the TRCA’s predecessor, the Humber River Conservation Authority, and was continued by the TRCA from its inception, in 1957, until 1960 when the majority of agricultural land was acquired (Wilkins, 2010). Agricultural land was acquired for a variety of purposes, such as flood and erosion control, natural heritage, recreation and education, and agriculture. This land acquisition program resulted in an inventory of agricultural land holdings that were historically rented “on an annual basis for conventional crops such as corn, soybeans, alfalfa and some livestock pasturing” (Wilkins, 2010, p. 1).

When asked to describe their motives and intentions for provisioning public lands for community farms, key informants began by describing the agricultural history of the TRCA. Agriculture on TRCA lands is described in two time periods: from 1948 to 2007 it is described as an interim use; and from 2008 to 2011, when sustainable agriculture, and some community farms, are introduced. One key informant describes the history of acquisition of agricultural land by the TRCA in this way:
We’ve always been in agriculture. I keep telling people this. We’ve always been in the agricultural game. We own all this land. When it was originally purchased, we ended up purchasing entire farms. TRCA only wanted the valley land. They ended up getting the whole farm, probably out of sympathy to the farmer so we weren’t leaving him with little bits and pieces of land and taking the majority of it.

In this description, the key informant casts the acquisition of productive agricultural land as a by-product of valley land and floodplain management efforts that “may” have worked to the advantage of the original landowner (farmer), but may also have led to the abandonment of productive land. The two interrelated factors which explain the decline and deterioration of the public landholder agricultural base between 1948 and 2007 are competing land uses and the lack of agricultural preservation policies and short-term land tenure. These factors are summarized below.

**Competing land uses & lack of agricultural preservation policies**

Between 1948 and 2007 agriculture was described as an interim use because the long-term intent of acquiring the land was to use it for non-agricultural purposes such as reforestation. Therefore agricultural land was either leased, on an annual basis, back to the original farmers whose land was expropriated from them by TRCA or it was reforested. Public agricultural lands often became reforested during this time period without any consideration for the long-term preservation of agricultural lands, or food production, which resulted in a loss of public agricultural lands. As one key informant explained:

The unwritten policy up to a certain point in time was let somebody use it for agriculture until we want it for something else. Every year, usually the something else was let’s get another 50 acres of farmland and we’ll plant trees on it. Nobody ever objected to that because nobody was seriously thinking long-term about our contribution to agriculture or local food…We were losing a lot of good agricultural land to grow food on because one of the competing uses is the demand to take that land back to restore – to grow trees on.
Permitting multi-purpose uses on conservation authority lands (i.e., camping) has a long history in the operational side of conservation authority lands in Ontario, if not explicitly mentioned in the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

**Short-term land tenure**

Between 1948 and 2007, farming on TRCA lands was characterized by annual leases, industrial practices, and production of conventional crops such as corn, soybeans, alfalfa and some livestock pasturing (Wilkins, 2010). As a result of short-term land tenure, the public landholder noted deterioration in the quality of agricultural land due to poor stewardship practices by farm tenants. As one key informant reflected:

> We had thousands and thousands of acres in our inventory. We rented that out. It steadily declined because they were annual lease agreements and that wasn’t encouraging farmers to make an investment in our land or infrastructure.

The simple point here, well established in the literature, is that rented (non-tenured) land is often pushed, exploited or over-farmed compared to owned land, where farmers have greater incentive for stewardship. In sum, the public landholder attributed the decline and deterioration of its agricultural land base from 1948-2007 to several factors, which in turn became a motive in 2008 to provision lands for community farms through the introduction of a *Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy*. As one respondent reflected:

> The motive was for us to make a contribution by way of using our land for agriculture because we were on a steady decline taking land out of agriculture to meet other objectives such as reforestation or natural heritage. Over the years the acreage was going down and down and down and nobody was really getting in the way of that.

**4.1.3 Farmland preservation motive: Agricultural land becomes a vital resource**

A commitment toward farmland preservation was noted as a third organizational motive which informed the public landholder’s decision to provide public lands to community farms.
Farmland preservation was described by the public landholder in a variety of contexts. First, starting in 2008 a strategic corporate decision was taken to conserve the existing inventory of agricultural land for agriculture. The farmland preservation motive was manifested in the adoption of a Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy (Appendix 5). One key informant describes the farmland preservation motive and evolution of the Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy:

We wanted to conserve what we had in our agricultural inventory and preserve that for agriculture. That’s where the policy came around…We got serious about agriculture. This new kind of agriculture. This seriousness was manifested in the policy. Without the policy, we would continually be at odds, and we still are, with the natural heritage people who want the land every year to plant trees on. The policy makes it far more difficult now for them to just submit a request to the property department saying we want X acres of farmland starting spring of 2013. When his lease comes up for renewal, don’t renew it. It was that simple.

The Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy ensured the preservation of 1000 acres of public agricultural land. As one respondent explained:

The policy said that whatever acreage we had at the time of the adoption of the policy, that is our benchmark and we don’t want it to go down. It only includes lands that TRCA owns and manages.

In 2008, approximately 3,000 acres of TRCA-owned agricultural land remained in agricultural use; however, the policy preserved approximately 1,000 acres while the other 2,000 acres (800 hectares) in the Rouge River watershed were managed by the Rouge Park Alliance through a management agreement with TRCA. Therefore, the farmland preservation benchmark was set at 1000 acres (approximately 400 hectares). Data related to the farmland inventory from 2008-2011, upon adoption of the Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy, are presented below.

- 1,000 acres of farmland preserved for sustainable near-urban agriculture in 2008:
- 870 acres are in annual leases employing conventional agriculture practices

- 130 acres are designated to four sustainable near-urban agriculture “signature” sites which receive 5-year longer-term land tenure (13% of the farmland preserved via the policy achieves longer-term land tenure).

- 900 acres (360 hectares) in the Humber River watershed, of which 130 acres is designated for four “signature sites” (14.4% of the public agricultural land in the Humber River watershed is operated by four new farms since 2008; the other 85.6% is farmed on short-term leases although farmers can apply for 5-year leases via the policy):
  - 35 acres at the McVean Farm, Claireville Conservation Area, is leased to FarmStart in 2008 with 10 more acres added in 2011 for a total of 45 acres;
  - 76.5 acres at the Albion Hills Conservation Area, Caledon, is leased to Albion Hills Community Farm in 2010;
  - 10 acres at the Kortright Conservation Area is leased to MatchBox Garden Company in 2011 and subsequently Rosenkrantz Sustainable Agriculture in 2012; and
  - 8 acres at the Black Creek Conservation Area is leased via management agreement to the City of Toronto from 2004 to 2011 for community garden programs. However, at the time of the writing of this report in 2012 a request for proposals (RFP) was in progress for a new tenant for this property. In August 2012, the Black Creek Community Farm (www.everdale.org/blackcreek) was established.

- 60 acres (24 hectares) in the Duffins Creek watershed.

The public landholder farmland preservation motive was based upon a corporate recognition that “agricultural land is a vital resource which must be conserved” (TRCA, 2008b, p.1). This is
reflected in their *Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy*, which defines sustainable near-urban agriculture as:

The practice of growing food and production of livestock in a way that preserves and enhances the environment, provides economic opportunity and good health for individuals and communities, and connects people to the land around them. It generally avoids long distance travel, striving instead to create fresh, healthy produce for local consumption. It focuses on both processes and produce. It is as much about the systems that create our food (i.e., who grows it, where, and how much) as it is about the food itself. (TRCA, 2008b, p.1)

With the recognition of public agricultural lands as a vital resource, the public landholder declared a new intention to play an active role in provisioning this vital resource to contribute to sustainable communities. Subsequently, the agriculture-related role of the public landholder shifted from more conventional roles, such as promoting environmental farm practices (e.g., reducing rural water pollution from farm activities), to supporting the development of a strong local food system through its *Sustainable Near-Urban Agricultural Policy* and consequently, community farms (TRCA, 2010). As one source document explained:

Since its inception in 1957, TRCA has been involved in agriculture, from reducing rural water pollution to conserving agricultural land. Today, TRCA continues to play an active role in building a strong local food system through the implementation of its Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy (2008) and efforts at the Toronto Urban Farm in the City of Toronto, the McVean Incubator Farm in the City of Brampton and, very recently, the Albion Hills Community Farm in the Town of Caledon (TRCA, 2010).

In sum, this section has described the motives of the public landholder for provisioning public lands to community farms. Section 4.1.1 described the sustainable communities and Living City vision; Section 4.1.2 described the deterioration and decline of the agricultural land base, while Section 4.1.3 described the stated logic and rationale for farmland preservation. Table 9 presents a summary of the three motives of the TRCA for provisioning land to sustainable near-urban community farms.
Table 9. Summary of public landholder motives for provisioning public lands for community farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Summary of Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Communities’ Vision</td>
<td>• Sustainable communities’ becomes a corporate objective (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Living City vision challenges TRCA to re-imagine a new kind of sustainable community living within its natural limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Public landholder participates in global and regional sustainability events (WSSD, CASE, Earth Charter) and commits to transforming the Toronto city region into a showcase of sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deterioration &amp; Decline of the Agricultural Land Base</td>
<td>• From 1948 to 2007 agriculture was an interim use</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 41,000 acres of farmland acquired for flood and erosion control</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• In 2008, approximately 3,000 acres was in agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Short-term land tenure to farmers encouraged “conventional” crops on public lands (e.g., corn, soya beans) and discouraged production of those requiring personal and financial investments (e.g., greenhouse, fruit and vegetable). Poor stewardship of land resulted.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Competing land use resulted in a decline in the area of agricultural land as farmland was used to meet other objectives (e.g., reforestation)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of agricultural policy restricted farmland preservation and “good land to grow food on” was lost to reforestation and other objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmland Preservation</td>
<td>• In 2008, resulting from the above two motives, agricultural land is declared a vital resource which must be preserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Near-urban agriculture is declared essential to the re-vitalization of agriculture in TRCA jurisdiction and deemed an essential contributor to sustainable communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy</strong> is passed in 2008 which provides long-term farm leases and fosters “new crops, new partnerships, a new way of doing business”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Four new community farm sites are established on 130 acres of TRCA agricultural lands beginning in 2008: McVean Farm in Brampton, Albion Hills Community Farm in Caledon; Living City Farm in Vaughan; and the Black Creek Urban Farm in Toronto; another 870 acres may become available for similar projects when future farmers retire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Organizational Objectives of the Public Landholder

The purpose of this section is to elaborate the strategic intentions of the public landholder with respect to the provision of public lands for ‘community’ farms. Key informant interviews and document analysis revealed fourteen specific intentions or objectives that span social, economic and environmental elements (Table 10).

Table 10. Public Landholder Intentions (or Evaluation Criteria) for ‘Community’ Farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intentions (or Evaluation Criteria) for Community Farm on Public Lands</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental (3)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reduced ecological footprint, food miles, GHG emissions, and impact of climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sustainable &amp; innovative agricultural practices, production methods and technologies, environmental goods and services and best management practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positive influence on adjacent natural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social (7)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promotes social equity, health and food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helps public agency meet its local food procurement targets by providing food to public agency food services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides education and training for residents (in partnership or with assistance from public agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides opportunities for celebrating cultural diversity through ethno-cultural crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides jobs, training and skill development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides opportunities for collaboration and cooperation with other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is consistent with near-urban agriculture models including conventional farming, community gardens, community supported agriculture, farmers’ markets, pick-your-own, on-farm shops, cooperative food stores, agri-tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic (4)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase the amount of local food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supports community economic development by reducing food imports and providing local meaningful employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides revenue to the farmer and TRCA and offers a value-added feature to properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creates opportunities for skill development, training and leadership for the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TRCA, 2012

The following sections will describe the social, environmental and economic intentions for community farms on public lands. These intentions can also be seen as a set of evaluation criteria.
for the establishment of new community farms and indeed are used as such in the TRCA’s evaluation of new applications.

4.2.1 Social Intentions

The research revealed seven social intentions for community farms on public lands. Evidence for these was gleaned from key informant interviews and document analysis.

**Promote health, social equity and food security**

For the TRCA, one intention of community farms is to improve community health or human health, social equity and food security. One source document explains that the public landholder wants to improve social equity and food security at the community-level through the establishment of community farms on public lands. The intention is that community farms on public lands would contribute to human health or community health, while also improving food security and social equity. This would be achieved by using public land for community farms which would thereby increase accessibility to fresh, healthy foods. One source documents describes this criterion in this way:

Promote social equity and food security in communities by providing opportunities for increased accessibility to fresh, healthy foods (TRCA, 2012).

There is an assumption within this intention that community farms on public lands will improve accessibility to fresh, healthy foods. However, the next chapter will discuss the structural and operational characteristics of community farms, thereby helping to elucidate the extent to which community farms on public lands actually meet this intent.
Local food procurement to public agency food services

Food procurement is a key social intention for community farms on public land, and this is in order to assist the public agency in meeting its local food procurement objective. One key informant explained this intention in the following way:

We are looking for local food to go to the TRCA food services. We have a local food procurement policy that states we should source at least 40 per cent local food. And, we are trying to meet that…We’d like to see a healthy dinner plan at our field centres.

Education

Education is a social intention for community farms on public lands. One key informant explained that there is an expectation that community farms on public lands provide educational opportunities as well as engage with other institutions, such as conservation area field centres which are located within some conservation areas. One key informant explains this intention in this way:

We expect an educational opportunity. Again, at the Albion Hills Community Farm we have field centres so we are hoping there is a strong synergy between the farm and the field centres.

In this instance, the public landholder is hoping that community farms engage with other TRCA-owned facilities such as field centres, which provide experiential education opportunities to schools and community groups. The development of mutually beneficial partnerships between community farms and other educational facilities of the public landholder is a key social intention for community farms. One source document revealed a second educational intention for community farms on public lands was to “provide education and training for residents in partnership or with assistance from TRCA” (TRCA, 2012). As one key informant asserted “We’d like to see solid agricultural education…agriculture-related events which are attracting
the community.” The education intention of the TRCA also includes making provision for innovative and sustainable local food production technologies such as energy efficient greenhouses (TRCA, 2008b). For example, during the study the TRCA was planning the donation of a sustainable greenhouse to the Albion Hills Community Farm and developing a site plan. It was asserted that the provision of a sustainable greenhouse would provide another educational opportunity related to sustainable production. As one key informant reflected:

It is to extend the growing season and provide more food production. It is another education opportunity to demonstrate sustainable technology.

**Incorporate Near-Urban Agriculture Models**

The fourth social intention relates to local food production models or modes which may be employed on public lands. Community farms on public lands must adopt at least one of these eight local food production modes identified by TRCA in its Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy: conventional farming, community gardens, community supported agriculture, farmers’ markets, pick-your-own, on-farm shops, cooperative food stores, or agri-tourism (TRCA, 2008b).

**Provide opportunities for celebrating cultural diversity through ethno-cultural crops**

The fifth social intention is for community farms to provide opportunities for celebrating cultural diversity through ethno-cultural crops on public lands. Two public landholder source documents explained the importance for community farms to provide a “space for celebrating cultural diversity of communities by growing a new range of crops sought after by new Canadians” (TRCA, 2012). Within the source document excerpts, community farms are implicated as spaces for celebrating and connecting new Canadians in urban and near-urban areas of the GTA with ethno-cultural or diverse crops. Findings in Chapter Five will reveal that
this intention was achieved at both community farms sites through participation in an ethno-cultural food initiative called the World Crop project.

**Provide jobs, training and skill development**

The provision of jobs, training and skills development is the sixth social intention for community farms on public lands. Here the broader notion of agricultural skills development links to the specification of allowed modes of production thus promoting expertise in non-industrial or non-conventional farming. Chapter Five will discuss the operational and structural characteristics of community farms on public lands which describe training and skill development at both research sites.

**Provide opportunities for collaboration and cooperation with other stakeholders**

The seventh social intention for community farms is to provide opportunities for collaboration and cooperation with other stakeholders. Section 4.4 will discuss the nature of collaboration between the public landholder and community farms as well as provide a co-management network to provide a functional understanding of the different actors involved in community farm activities.

**4.2.2 Economic Intentions**

There are four economic intentions (stated or implied) for community farms on public lands. These include revenue generation for farmers and the public landholder, increased local food supply, community economic development and skill development, leadership and training opportunities.
**Provide revenue and a value-added feature to public lands**

The first economic intention for community farms on public land is to provide revenue to the public landholder and the community farm while also providing a value-added feature to the conservation area. In one instance, the public landholder expresses how community farms on public land provide a value-added feature to conservation area properties, thereby providing economic benefits to both the public landholder and the community farm. Economic benefits for the community farm could result from direct food purchasing by conservation area visitors, while economic benefits to the public landholder could result from increased entrance fees. One key informant explains this intention with reference to the Albion Hills Community Farm:

We are trying to add a value-added feature to our properties. For example, having a farm at Albion would probably be another reason for people to come to Albion. They can go swimming; and over time if they know that they go swim, have their picnic and then go buy carrots at the end of the day perhaps it would be a value-added feature where Albion Hills Community Farm gets customers and the park gets customers.

**Increase Local Food Supply**

For the TRCA, a second economic intention for community farms on public lands is to increase the supply of local food to local markets by using acceptable production modes such as community gardens, community supported agriculture and conventional farming. One key informant described that “growing food and supplying to local markets” was a key intention for the establishment of community farms on public lands. While it is an economic intention for community farms to increase the supply of local food, the public landholder explained that this is a broad, long-term intention with no identified metrics related to production. As one public landholder key informant explained:
There is the whole notion of production. We have never set a target. For example, for the Albion Hills Community Farm we have never said in five years we want you to be producing X pounds of potatoes… We don’t have numbers but we’d like to see production steadily go up year after year.

While an increase in the supply of local food is categorized as an economic intention, it should be noted that this would also increase other embedded non-economic values linked with local food that are social and environmental in nature such as those described in Section 4.2.1 and Section 4.2.3. The simple point here is that while this intention is categorized as economic, is not mutually exclusive of other associated social and environmental values linked with local food production.

**Support community economic development by reducing food imports and providing local meaningful employment**

The third economic intention for community farms on public land is to support community economic development by reducing food imports and providing local meaningful employment. Community economic development and local food-related employment opportunities associated with community farms on public lands will be further explored in Chapter Five.

**Creates opportunities for skill development, training and leadership for the community**

The fourth economic intention is to create opportunities for skill development, training and leadership for the community. It is noteworthy to mention that the provision of jobs, training and skill development was also listed as a social intention as described in Section 4.2.1. This simply highlights that community farms are intended to provide jobs, training and skill development which are associated with mixed social (e.g., skill development) and economic (e.g., jobs) benefits. As one public landholder key informant explained in a video file:
It is about making a contribution to the economy by providing some public land to individuals who need an affordable opportunity to get training and experience to be a successful farmer (TRCA, 2011b).

4.2.3 Environmental Intentions

Three environmental intentions of community farms on public lands emerged from the research which involve reducing ecological footprints, food miles, greenhouse gas emissions, and the impacts of climate change; providing a positive influence on adjacent natural heritage; and utilizing sustainable and innovative agricultural practices, production methods and technologies, environmental goods and services, and best management practices (TRCA, 2008b).

Reduced ecological footprint, food miles, GHG emissions, and impact of climate change

The first environmental intention of community farms on public lands is to reduce ecological footprints, food miles and GHG emissions, and to mitigate the impact of climate change. One key informant reflected “We are trying to make a contribution to mitigate climate change.” In 2011, the public landholder produced a video explaining its near-urban farm initiatives. Within this video source, the public landholder references their involvement with agriculture citing the environmental intentions of community farms:

TRCA is involved with agriculture for three reasons. First, there are the environmental benefits: producing food locally reduces transportation and energy consumption thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the chief cause of climate change (TRCA, 2011b).

Sustainable & innovative agricultural practices, production methods and technologies, environmental goods and services and best management practices

A second environmental intention of community farms on public lands is to incorporate sustainable and innovative production methods and technologies, environmental goods and services (EG&S) and best management practices (BMPs). As one source document explains:
Today, a vision for a new form of agriculture on TRCA lands includes continuing to make their agricultural lands profitable through the use of new and innovative agricultural production methods (e.g., a combination of technology, BMPs, Community Shared Agriculture (CSA), community gardens, etc.), which can be a contrast to the traditional agricultural industry. These options support the local food system, are often community-based and promote environmental sustainability.

The public landholder defined BMPs as “practical affordable approaches to conserving a farm’s soil and water resources without sacrificing productivity”, while EG&S are defined as the positive environmental benefits that Canadians derive from healthy ecosystems, including clean water and air, and enhanced biodiversity (TRCA, 2008b). The EG&S concept includes market goods produced from ecosystems such as food, fibre, fuel, and fresh water; the benefits of ecosystem processes such as nutrient cycling, climate regulation, and water purification; and non-material benefits such as aesthetic values and recreation (TRCA, 2008b).

**Positive influence on adjacent natural areas**

A third intention for community farms on public lands is to provide a positive influence to the surrounding natural environment in which they are located. In sum, Section 4.2.3 has described the fourteen intentions, or evaluation criteria, for community farms on public lands. The next section describes the process for recruiting and selecting community farms.

**4.3 Organizational Requirements for Community Farms on Public Lands**

The previous two sections have outlined the motives and intentions of the public landholder regarding the provision of land for community farms. This section will describe the requirements for community farms on public lands. Analysis of public landholder documents revealed four distinct requirements for community farms on public land: general requirements, educational programming requirements, farming practices and annual reporting requirements.
The four requirements for community farms on public lands will be explained in this section. Once again, the discussion on these requirements will provide some sense of the context within which such community farms frame their efforts towards local food systems.

### 4.3.1 General Requirements

It was found that there are currently seven general requirements for community farms. These requirements relate to certification, soil testing, soil amendments, water supply and distribution, infrastructure and land use investments, and property improvements associated with community farms (TRCA, 2008b). Many of these requirements were gleaned from the legal lease agreement between the community farm organization and the public landholder and the *Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy*. First, it is required that community farms on public lands obtain any organic certification that they desire for their farm (e.g., organic, Local Food Plus). Second, soil testing and analysis is required of community farms. Third, any application of soil amendments (e.g., compost, fertilizer) must meet public landholder policies related to pest management. Fourth, community farms are required to secure and maintain their own water supply and distribution systems. Fifth, community farms are required to ensure that any infrastructure (e.g., greenhouse) and land use investments meet local and regional policies such as official plans, municipal zoning and bylaws. There is evidence that the public landholder assists community farms in ensuring new infrastructure meets existing policies (e.g., new greenhouse donated by public landholder). Sixth, community farms are required to pay for all costs and fees associated with property improvements that facilitate agricultural use. For example, this would include new temporary structures such as equipment storage facilities. And seventh, community farms must advise the public landholder and get their approval for any structures and improvements to be built on public lands (TRCA, 2008b).
4.3.2 Educational Programming

There are two educational programming requirements for community farms on public lands. The first requirement stipulates that community farms must allow the public landholder access to the farm for agricultural tours or events as long as sufficient notice is given. This means that conservation authority staff would be permitted to conduct tours or events on-farm if reasonable notice was given to the community farm institutions. The second requirement relates to educational programming and stipulates that community farms must consult with the public landholder when developing educational programs to ensure that there are no conflicts with existing programs provided by the public landholder, to avoid any duplication in programming.

4.3.3 Farm Practices

Document analysis revealed ten requirements, *Rules of Good Farm Practice*, which represent the farming and land care requirements of community farms on public lands. These ten farming practice requirements encompass farm practices related to cultivation, manure storage, cover crops, erosion control, livestock and ecological farming. The public landholder *Rules of Good Farm Practice* are presented in Appendix 4. As discussed, the public landholder intentions for community farms involve sustainable agricultural practices and progressive environmental stewardship of public lands (TRCA, 2008b) which encompass a variety of environmental intentions.

4.3.4 Annual Reporting Requirements

Key informant interviews with the public landholder revealed that an annual report is required each year from community farms. Community farms must collect data related to
fourteen parameters. The provision of an annual report from community farms to the TRCA provides information and data related to agricultural initiatives and accomplishments instituted on public lands. Annual reporting also allows the TRCA to translate agricultural and local food accomplishments of community farms into what one key informant described as “something that is meaningful and will turn into a good (food) story”. The public landholder noted that since they are not involved in the day-to-day operations of community farms these reports provide a better understanding of the accomplishments of community farms. One respondent asserted:

We are trying to track production over time. For example, how much is being grown, what kind of crops, what the markets look like, what educational programs are taking place, how many farm tours, how many events, how many participants, how many farmers are being trained.

The annual reporting requirements for community farms on public land involve providing information to the public landholder related to fourteen parameters.

1. Total area of leased agricultural farm land
2. Total area of leased agricultural farm land actually being farmed
3. Types of crops being grown and livestock
4. Number of participating farmers
5. Number of participants engaged and total volunteer hours
6. Number of events/workshops/programs
7. Estimate weight of total food produced by variety
8. Number of livestock
9. Markets for selling produce
10. Any implemented Best Management Practices (BMPs) to address the Environmental Farm Plan recommendations and costs
11. Any compliance reviews performed: number of audits, number of recommendations carried out, number not carried out, and associated costs
12. Any cost-sharing between the tenant and Landlord (i.e., BMPs)
13. Any investments in the farmhouse, outbuilding, other or new infrastructure
14. Images capturing any of the above

Source: TRCA, 2010
4.4 Co-management networks on public lands

Two co-management networks are provided in this section for both community farms in the study, the McVean Farm and the Albion Hills Community Farm. Co-management network mapping is employed here in order to investigate the relationship between the State, as represented by the public landholder (i.e., TRCA), and the Community, as represented by the community farms. This methodological tool provides a better understanding of the rich web of relations and the multiple interactions that link the public landholder (i.e., TRCA) to various actors involved in the functioning of the community farm. The co-management network approach argues that co-management should be understood as a continual problem-solving process involving networks of public and private actors rather than a simple fixed structural arrangement between a unitary state and a homogenous community (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005).

Co-management networks identify the actors linked with particular management tasks, or activities, thus showing it is the totality of all relations which comprise the system. Showing how management tasks, or activities, are organized and distributed highlights that power-sharing is the result of the process and not the starting point. The argument is that better understanding of the processes of co-management, or its function, can provide a more solid foundation for research and collective action (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005). The co-management networks are provided here as a general introduction before turning to the structural and operational components of the community farms in Chapter Five.

The co-management network of the McVean Farm is presented in Figure 7. Both the public landholder (i.e., TRCA) and the community farm organization (i.e., FarmStart) are illustrated as a set of pyramids to show that each organization consists of multiple components, such as institutional departments or individual actors. Seventeen activities were identified and
labelled A to Q. Participants in each of the identified activities are listed, in general terms, in the seven boxes. Dotted lines indicate involvement in how the activity was performed. For example, in Activity A the identified activity was to prepare an environmental farm plan. The dashed lines linked to community farm organization (i.e., FarmStart) indicate their direct participation in this task while the dotted line linked to the public landholder indicated their involvement in how the plan was implemented. Similarly, Activity H indicates that the public landholder provided land to the community farm organization with a 5-year rolling lease term. The dotted line in Activity H is linked to the Ministry of Natural Resources because, in this instance, the time scale of five years for a lease of public conservation land is governed by existing legislation of the Conservation Authorities Act where special permission is required for leases beyond the five-year term. A list of the seventeen activities is presented in Table 1. The research findings suggest that there are likely more than seventeen activities that occur within the co-management network. For example, there are many activities related to the function of each of the identified 17 farm enterprises that were not explored within the scope of this research study.
Figure 7. Co-management network of the McVean Farm

LEGEND

indicates direct participation in an activity
indicates involvement in how the activity was performed

A. Prepare an environmental farm plan
B. Implement the farm restoration plan
C. Manage all public farm land using best management practices and sound ecological farming practices
D. Repair roads and laneways and provide site maintenance as necessary
E. Provide capital funding for irrigation
F. Establish signage for farm property
G. Assist with marketing and promotion of farm programs and events via website and social media
H. Provision land to community farm organizations with a 5-year rolling lease
I. Operate farm programs to support a new generation of farmers
J. Manage the heritage barn and associated heritage features on-site
K. Sub-lease land from non-governmental farm organization to establish farm enterprises and to support community groups
L. Respond to public inquiries from neighbours regarding public access
M. Respond to vandalism of infrastructure (e.g., barn)
N. Pay for rent of land and utilities (e.g., water, electricity)
O. Purchase and install shared farm infrastructure (e.g., storage, refrigeration, post-harvest wash station) and equipment
P. Pay fee for shared farm infrastructure and equipment (e.g., subsidized cost or full cost)
Q. Obtain and managed organic certification requirements
Table 11. List of activities and actors involved in the co-management network of the McVean Farm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Actors Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Prepare an environmental farm plan</td>
<td>CFO, PL*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Implement the farm restoration plan</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Manage all public farm land using best management practices and sound</td>
<td>CFO, PL*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ecological farming practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Repair roads and laneways and provide site maintenance as necessary</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Provide capital funding for irrigation</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Establish signage for farm property</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Assist with marketing and promotion of farm programs and events via</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>website and social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Provision land to community farm organizations with a 5-year rolling</td>
<td>PL, MNR*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Operate farm programs to support a new generation of farmers</td>
<td>CFO, FA*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Manage the heritage barn and associated heritage features on-site</td>
<td>PL, HA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Sub-lease land from non-governmental farm organization to establish</td>
<td>FE, CP, CFO*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm enterprises and to support community groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Respond to public inquiries from neighbours regarding public access</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Respond to vandalism of infrastructure (e.g., barn)</td>
<td>PL, FE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Pay for rent of land and utilities (e.g., water, electricity)</td>
<td>CFO, FE, CP, PL*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. Purchase and install shared farm infrastructure (e.g., storage,</td>
<td>CFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refrigeration, post-harvest wash station) and equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Pay fee for shared farm infrastructure and equipment (e.g., subsidized</td>
<td>FE, CP, CFO*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cost or full cost)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. Obtain and managed organic certification requirements</td>
<td>CFO, FE, CP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CFO=community farm organization; PL=public landholder; MNR=Ministry of Natural Resources; FA=funding agencies; HA=heritage association; FE=farm enterprises; CP=community partners; *indicates involvement in how the activity is performed

Similar to the description above, the Albion Hills Community Farm co-management network shows the complex web of relations that link the public landholder (i.e., TRCA) to a heterogeneous set of actors involved in function of the community farm. Both the public landholder (i.e., TRCA) and the community farm organization (i.e., Albion Hills Community Farm) are illustrated as a set of pyramids to show that each organization consists of multiple components, such as institutional departments or individual actors. The co-management network is presented in Figure 8. Nineteen activities were identified and labelled A to S. The results are presented in Table 12. Participants in each of the identified activities are listed, in general terms,
in the seven boxes. Dotted lines indicate that the actor was involved in how the activity was performed.

**Table 12. List of activities and actors involved in the co-management network of the Albion Hills Community Farm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Actors Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Prepare an environmental farm plan</td>
<td>CFO, PL*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Implement the farm restoration plan</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Manage all public land using best management practices and sound ecological farming practices</td>
<td>CFO, CG, LCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Repair roads and laneways and provide site maintenance as necessary</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Provide capital funding for irrigation</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Prepare site plans and obtain permits for a donated greenhouse from the public landholder</td>
<td>PL, CFO*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Provision land to community farm organizations with a 5-year rolling lease</td>
<td>PL, MNR*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Commit to raise funds to establish the farm facility</td>
<td>CFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Expand and sustain farm programs</td>
<td>CFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Pay for rent (e.g., land and house) and utilities</td>
<td>CFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Use farmhouse for office-use only until repairs or renovations are negotiated</td>
<td>CFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Operate farm programs, events, community gardens, and education programs</td>
<td>CFO, FA*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Provide 3600 student visits per year for farm-based outdoor education programs through pre-existing arrangement with school boards and public landholder</td>
<td>OEC, PL*, CFO*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Establish signage for farm property</td>
<td>PL, CFO*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. Assist with marketing and promotion of farm programs and events via website and social media</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Invest in capital improvements to farm infrastructure (e.g., barn) where possible</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. Obtain and manage organic certification requirements</td>
<td>CFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Develop a vision plan and map for the community farm site</td>
<td>CFO, PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Negotiate local food contract for TRCA food services at Albion Hills Conservation Area</td>
<td>CFO, PL*, OEC*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CFO=community farm organization; PL=public landholder; MNR=Ministry of Natural Resources; FA=funding agencies; LCF=local custom farmer; CG=community gardeners; OEC=outdoor education centre; *indicates involvement in how the activity is performed*
Figure 8. Co-management network of the Albion Hills Community Farm

LEGEND

-- -------------- indicates direct participation in an activity
-- ------------- indicates involvement in how the activity was performed

A. Prepare an environmental farm plan
B. Implement the farm restoration plan
C. Manage all public land using best management practices and sound ecological farming practices
D. Repair roads and laneways and provide site maintenance as necessary
E. Provide capital funding for irrigation
F. Prepare site plans and obtain permits for a donated greenhouse from the public landholder
G. Provision land to community farm organizations with a 5-year rolling lease
H. Commit to raise funds to establish the farm facility
I. Expand and sustain farm programs
J. Pay for rent (e.g., land and house) and utilities
K. Use farmhouse for office-use only until repairs or renovations are negotiated
L. Operate farm programs, events, community gardens, and education programs
M. Provide 3600 student visits per year for farm-based outdoor education programs through pre-existing arrangement with school boards and public landholder
N. Establish signage for farm property
O. Assist with marketing and promotion of farm programs and events via website and social media
P. Invest in capital improvements to farm infrastructure (e.g., barn) where possible
Q. Obtain and manage organic certification requirements
R. Develop a vision plan and map for the community farm site
S. Negotiate local food contract for TRCA food services at Albion Hills Conservation Area
4.5 Characteristics of collaboration between the public landholder and community farms

As explained in Section 3.4, the characteristics of collaboration were explored for each community farm site based on a comprehensive evaluation framework determined by Plummer and Armitage (2007a). A variety of questions relating to collaboration, negotiation and decision-making between community farms and public landholders were asked of key informants from both parties (Appendix 2 and Appendix 3) in order to better understand the nature and process of these partnerships. For example, the following questions were asked:

- In your experience, are there multiple types of stakeholders present on your community farm? If yes, please explain.
- In your experience, is there a diversity of interests represented on your community farm? If yes, please explain.
- In your experience, do you believe that dialogue between the public landholder (TRCA) and your community farm helps build consideration and appreciation? If yes, please explain.

4.5.1 Stakeholders and Interests

Public landholder key informants shared that there were three distinct types of community farm stakeholders at the four community farm sites: non-governmental organizations, farm enterprise businesses and a municipality. While the focus of this research project is on the McVean Farm and the Albion Hills Community Farm, it is helpful to note the stakeholders at the other two sites as can be seen in Table 13.
Table 13. Sites of public landholder community farms and managing stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Managing Community Farm Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McVean Farm, Claireville Conservation Area</td>
<td>NGO, FarmStart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albion Hills Community Farm, Albion Hills Conservation Area</td>
<td>NGO, Albion Hills Community Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kortright Conservation Area</td>
<td>Farm enterprise, business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto Urban Farm</td>
<td>Municipality, City of Toronto (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Creek Community Farm</td>
<td>NGO partnership, Everdale (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One public landholder key informant explains the four types of managing stakeholders at its four sustainable near-urban community farms:

What comes to mind starting with the Toronto (Urban) Farm is there is a municipality as a partner. We turned over the Toronto Farm to the City of Toronto, who is one of our stakeholders…We have for-profit, which is MatchBox, who is doing it to make a livelihood. We have NGOs such as the McVean Farm…Then there is the collaborative at the Albion farm, which is a registered non-profit too.

A diversity of interests was revealed at community farms on public lands. Four categories of interests were identified through a qualitative analysis of responses from public landholder and community farm key informants. The three main categories of interests identified were farmer interests, public landholder interests, and community farm organization interests. Since the public landholder interests were sufficiently explained in early parts of this chapter, and Chapter Five will focus on describing farmer and community farm organization interests associated with the McVean and Albion Hills farms, no further explanation is provided herein.

4.5.2 Communication, Negotiation and Regulation

Communication and negotiation is a characteristic of collaboration that was explored in detail with the public landholder and community farm organization key informants. Within the theme of communication and negotiation, two components were explored: whether dialogue between the public landholder and community farms built consideration and appreciation and
whether perspectives were exchanged and modified via dialogue. Emerging from these inquiries were four themes: communication, partnerships, bureaucracy and plurality of use. Table 14 presents a summary of community farm responses related to these themes.

Table 14. Community farm responses related to communication, partnerships, bureaucracy and plurality of use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Farm Responses (n=3)</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses (n=27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need better dialogue with other public landholder departments and key informants or need a bridging organization</td>
<td>8 (29.63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating investments in infrastructure is part of a landlord-tenant relationship</td>
<td>4 (14.81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnerships</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public landholders enable and create space for innovative approaches to agriculture</td>
<td>3 (11.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative nature of farm projects requires clear rights and responsibilities and unequal recognition for projects sometimes results</td>
<td>2 (7.41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bureaucracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with public landholders can be difficult and frustrating</td>
<td>2 (7.41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many people involved so it takes longer</td>
<td>1 (3.70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced positive support</td>
<td>1 (3.70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plurality of Use</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoration and naturalization projects on community farms create difficulties for farm organizations – establishment and maintenance of renaturalized areas needs to be clarified to ensure ecological agriculture and renaturalization are compatible</td>
<td>5 (18.51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built heritage features required moving temporary structures</td>
<td>1 (3.70%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i) Communication

There are six observations with respect to the theme of dialogue between community farms and the public landholder. First, eight responses (29.63%) from community farm key
informants identified the need for better dialogue with other public landholder departments and their key informants or the need for a bridging organization. As one respondent notes:

Everything still needs to go through one person at TRCA. We want the ability to be able to talk directly to the different departments. But, I understand why…they are still trying to figure out their policies around some of this stuff and what they can agree to do. I understand they want to be in control of it to some degree.

The same community farm key informant reflects on having repeatedly requested an annual stakeholder meeting to facilitate dialogue across departments, which was denied. Community farm informants felt it was also important to either “have someone on the inside” who could effectively work across departments or to have an external bridging organization who could “talk to the different departments”. As one respondent explains:

We have repeatedly asked “Can we have a meeting at the beginning of the season to talk to everyone at TRCA who has an investment in the property?” I think that would be a functional way to go about the management of these properties. But it hasn’t happened.

If they are going to do this kind of work they either need an interface, someone who is going to talk to the different departments and knows the different departments… Or they need someone on the inside who is going to be constructive and helpful and facilitate that process.

Another respondent thought dialogue was more top-down, and that better two-way dialogue was needed, along with consistent consideration of the existing community farm plan. As one respondent explains:

I think they forget that we have a long-term farm plan put in place. And we have a five-year plan drilled down in place. I think they want to come and say "you need to do this on the farm". There needs to be better two-way dialogue and not just us responding to their requests, and more consideration of the plan that is in place that they agreed to when they signed the lease.
Another key informant notes that in some cases dialogue with the public landholder has touched on private farm business matters that the public landholder was not supposed to be involved with, such as profit margins and planting plans. As one key informant explains:

They have to remember that with other farms that they have had historic leases with, they would never, ever even think of going to them and asking "How much did you make on your corn this year?" "What's your planting plan for next year and what is your profit going to be?"

Similarly, the same key informant explained that involvement of the public landholder in the overall work plan of the farm was perhaps stretching their mandate; however this was part of the learning process:

TRCA was never supposed to get involved with the overall work plan of the Farm which I think is still a grey area that they are toeing around sometimes in being a little too involved in the daily activities of the Farm versus being involved in the overall picture of the Farm. I think because it is such as new concept everybody has to find their balance in this. I think it is just one of the growing pains of this new process. It is a unique process in that way.

With respect to dialogue between the public landholder and community farms, there were four responses (14.81%) related to negotiating investments in infrastructure as part of the landlord-tenant relationship. Some community farm respondents explained the dualism between functional farm infrastructure and the public landholder desire for more attractive infrastructure:

We have said if you want these kinds of things, you can pay the difference. We will fundraise and establish functional stuff. But if you don't want orange fencing around the farmers’ property then you build fencing or you have fencing that they can rent that is reasonable that is the same cost as the orange fencing.

Similarly, two responses explain the importance of the public landholder in supporting irrigation infrastructure for the community farm properties. One respondent explains the sometimes contentious negotiation related to infrastructure improvements, reflecting:
When we try to get them to put money into the property it is always like pulling teeth. They want to invest in the property. At the end of the day, we have had them put money into things such as infrastructure, like gravel for parking. They have given us some money for the really heavy pipelines for the irrigation equipment. Some things are more moveable that we might take with us but if we are asking for money it is for the sign upfront.

We are opening up a property down the road, the 10 acres down the road and it doesn't have water. For us, that is a leasehold improvement that they have to do because we cannot use the property. There is no accessible hydrant that is really easy for us to use. They have to do that work to figure out how to get water to the property. We will work on that with them but some of that is a leasor and a landlord relationship and you have to treat it as such. It is money that we will never be able to get back if we move. It is money that only adds value to their property if they are going to use it for agriculture. You have to be a bit ruthless. You also have to be collaborative in projects.

ii) Partnerships

Three responses (11.11%) related to partnerships explain that public landholders enable and create space for innovative approaches to agriculture. As one respondent explains:

It takes an institution like TRCA pairing with a small, nimble, creative organization like FarmStart to make something happen. I think that is the way it will only ever happen. I don't think that large, institutional organizations such as cities, conservation authorities, or land trusts are the ones that will make something innovative happen. What they can do is enable it.

Second, community farm respondents indicated that conservation authorities can create new opportunities. As one respondent explains:

I think TRCA is a leader in the conservation movement and, as I said, they have a visionary leader who is creating the space for innovative and creative projects to happen on their lands, which is what institutional folks like conservation authorities can do. They can share how they do that work with other conservation authorities.

And third, community farm respondents indicated they believed TRCA could encourage other public landholders to enable similar farm projects on other conservation area public lands.

They have let us build something that is amazing. And if they will talk to other conservation authorities and encourage them to let other people build amazing things on their properties then that is great.
Two responses (7.41%) explained that the collaborative nature of farm projects required clear rights and responsibilities and that even when present unequal recognition of projects sometimes occurred.

One respondent explained:

There is the collaborative nature of the project. TRCA likes to take credit for our project and there have been times when TRCA has presented the project and not even mentioned our farm organization in the presentation. At the end of the day for us, it's fine. Most people know it is our project. We know it is our project. If TRCA feels great about the project, that is all the better. It is going to be the nature of a little organization working with a big institution.

The same respondent elaborates on the importance of establishing clear rights and responsibilities:

Yes. I think there are two things. One, you need to have really clear rights and responsibilities. Your lease has to be really clear: who is responsible for what, who has decision making authority over what, and when do you have to talk about certain things.

iii) Bureaucracy

With respect to bureaucracy, some community farm respondents indicated an appreciation of the bureaucracy related to working with the public landholder (3.70%). As one respondent explains “There has been positive support. How can we help? What can we do? Or, we can assist with this?” One response (3.70%) indicated that there were many people involved which resulted in a longer process. And, other community farm respondents felt that working with the public landholder was frustrating and difficult (7.41%). One respondent explained that “TRCA is still a very bureaucratic and fairly frustrating organization to work with,” while another explained that:

Sometimes it has been harder than not to work with them to build this project and they are happy with it now. They come to our fundraiser and they are so happy.
iv) Plurality of Use

Six responses (22.21%) related to the dialogue theme focussed on the multiple uses of farm properties on public lands. Five responses (18.51%) explained that restoration and naturalization projects on community farms created difficulties for farm organizations and that the establishment and maintenance of renaturalized areas needed to be clarified to ensure ecological agriculture and renaturalization were compatible. One response (3.70%) indicated some difficulty with built heritage features on public lands noting that, in one case, a temporary structure needed to be moved in order to preserve a natural heritage vista.

While the public landholder indicated they made it very clear which areas are designated for restoration and heritage, community farm key informants felt otherwise. As one respondent explains:

Then there are the multiple uses of the property: there are naturalized areas on the farm and getting into another arrangement, I would be clear from the start exactly where they think those naturalized areas start and end. And, where do our productive areas start and end. How they manage those areas has become really important. If we could start again, I would establish that really clearly.

Community farm respondents also explained difficulties related to the development of the restoration plans which are initially completed by the public landholder without consultation with the community farms, which in one case “cut up the land into completely unworkable pieces of land.” One respondent explains:

It is a fine line. When we started they had drawn up this map which cut up the land into completely unworkable pieces of land. They were throwing their stumps around and didn’t talk to us…First of all, I had to stop them from extending their renaturalized areas all over the place. We had to sit down and agree upon a renaturalization plan that works for them as well as for us.

Similarly, the same community farm respondent explained the difficulties experienced by farmers because of the renaturalized areas and lack of management by the public landholder.
The respondent explains:

I think it is a question “Which part of these farms do we re-naturalize and which parts do we continue to use? And, ecological agriculture is compatible with re-naturalization but it is hard…We have these renaturalized waterways which they hadn’t touched before we started operating at the farm. But when we started, then they developed their renaturalization plan for the farm because it was manageable. They were just going to renaturalize the waterways, which they couldn’t do if there was a cash cropper on the property. But because we had small plots we developed our plot sizes around the natural waterways of the farm and they became natural barriers between different plots. They (TRCA) were able to come and throw their stumps all over the place and their refuse. And it is a bit of a problem because they are full of weeds and the TRCA doesn’t manage the weeds. Our farmers get furious when the weeds start to fly which last year was ridiculous, it was terrible. There are struggles but if they (TRCA) were actually going to manage the weeds, they could still have a renaturalization pattern for those areas and they would still be compatible. Ecological agriculture is not harming the renaturalized areas. It is actually inversed: renaturalized areas are harming the farmers’ ability to grow.

Similarly, another respondent expressed concerns related to restoration plans for their community farm property expressing uncertainty related to how future restoration plans may interact with the current farm plan stating “Does the restoration plan trump the farm plan?”. However, unlike the previous respondent, this informant had not yet experienced any difficulties and therefore was not concerned, noting “I do not see us having to be concerned at this point”.

There is a restoration plan for the farm which includes developing a protected area around the wetland and swale that goes around the main farm site… Much of the Albion Hills farm has a restoration plan. Does the restoration plan trump the farm plan?...I think right now we have a five-year agreement and agriculture is at the forefront. I do not see us having to be concerned at this point.

With respect to built heritage features on community farms, one response (3.70%) indicated some difficulty with built heritage features. One key informant explained:

We built a storage shed and we built it right at the top of the property as you come up the drive but we had to move it because it wasn’t acceptable to the heritage association because it ruined the vista of the barn. So, we had to move it.
4.6 Summary

In sum, Chapter Four explored the conditions for the establishment of community farms on public lands. The organizational motives, intentions and requirements regarding the provision of public lands for community farms were identified and described using a case study approach drawing on methodological tools from co-management literature. Two co-management networks were produced for the community farm research sites to introduce the complex networks of public and private actors involved in the function of community farms, thus showing it is the totality of all relations which comprise these initiatives. To conclude this Chapter, the characteristics of collaboration were explored between the public landholder and community farms in order to better understand the continual process of problem-solving, communication and negotiation associated with these partnerships. The next chapter will reveal the structural and operational characteristics of community farms on public lands using a comprehensive and convenient device for unpacking specific local food initiatives in terms of their material and symbolic elements.
Chapter Five

Structural and operational characteristics of community farms on public lands

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and characterize key structural and operational commonalities and differences between the two community farms in this study. As explained in Section 3.4 a methodological framework consisting of seven inter-related fields used for describing local food initiatives (Holloway et al., 2007) was employed to achieve this objective (Table 15). This framework provides a convenient yet comprehensive device to unpack specific farms in terms of their material and symbolic elements. Using the analytical framework helps structure a description of how community farms are socially and materially constructed and allows us to better understand how they function and develop as a distinctive type of local food initiative in their specific local contexts.

Table 15. Methodological framework for describing local food initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heuristic analytical field</th>
<th>Examples from sample food projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sites of food production</td>
<td>Rented land, allotments, community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food production methods</td>
<td>Consumer participation, organic, biodynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply chain</td>
<td>Local selling, Internet marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arena of exchange</td>
<td>Farmers markets, pick-your-own, farm shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer-consumer interaction</td>
<td>Share/membership schemes, direct selling, e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations for participation</td>
<td>Business success, social/environmental concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of individual and group</td>
<td>Participants, customers, children’s groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Holloway et al., 2007

Similar to the co-management networks described in Chapter Four, this analytical framework allows us to explore the complex, relational ways in which community farms are structured and how they attempt to socially and spatially re-construct the farm as an alternative economic and socio-cultural space that resists prevalent power relations associated with the
mainstream food system. Underlying the analysis is an assumption that community farms serve as sites of oppositional activism (Goodman, 2003) where re-imaged and re-structured relations, arenas and processes attempt to provide new visions for possible food systems and possible food economies that improve upon existing ones. Within this context, agency is provided to the material and non-material aspects of the community farm: the food, sites, spaces, arenas, actors, producers and consumers, and embedded significance of the farms within their local context. A description of each community farm is provided in this chapter, along with Table 17 and Table 19, which summarize the structural and operational characteristics of each community farm.

5.1 Structural and Operational Characteristics of the McVean Farm

This section assembles a description of the McVean Farm based on the seven interrelated variables of the site of food production, food production methods, supply chain, arena of exchange, producer-consumer interaction, motivations of participants and the constitution of individuals and groups. It describes how the McVean Farm functions in its specific local context and presents its vision for training the future farmers needed to build economically-viable and ecologically-oriented local food systems of the future.

5.1.1 Site of food production

The McVean Farm site is located on 45 acres of agricultural farmland, with 30 acres under production, in the Claireville Conservation Area in the City of Brampton in the Regional Municipality of Peel in the Greater Toronto Area. The population of Brampton was 523,911 in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011). The 45-acre farm is surrounded by new housing development on McVean Drive, and was designated as a heritage resource under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act in 2006 due to its exceptionally important cultural landscape, architectural, historical and
contextual heritage features (City of Brampton a, 2006; City of Brampton b, 2006). The McVean Farm is associated with a significant early settler, Alexander McVean, and his family (City of Brampton a, 2006; City of Brampton b, 2006). It is considered a cultural landscape because of heritage attributes associated with early settlement life and architectural features associated with early Upper Canada farming operations, such as a very rare Double English Wheat Barn, which was built in the 1840s, and which processed wheat using the ancient method of using the wind to separate the wheat kernel from the chaff (City of Brampton a, 2006; City of Brampton b, 2006). Today the historical agricultural property remains largely inaccessible to the neighbouring public, except for one or two annual events such as open houses or harvest festivals. The site primarily serves as a training or ‘incubator’ site for new farmers from surrounding areas who want to start small, locally-oriented, organic or ecological farm operations in the GTA, but face barriers to land or capital. Access to the farm is restricted to farm staff, volunteers, and new farm enterprises through a gated entrance on McVean Drive. The site was originally leased for 35 acres in 2008, but expanded to 45 acres between 2008 and 2011. As one key informant explains:

We started off with 35 acres and subsequently they gave us 10 more acres. There are 45 acres, although 30 are under production.

Its location is described as near-urban because of its close proximity to Toronto and its location within the GTA. Before being leased in 2008 to the Guelph-based non-governmental farm organization, FarmStart, this site was fallow for 5 or 6 years, before which it had been used for cash crop production. As discussed previously, the land is owned by the TRCA and leased to FarmStart on a long-term lease. The farm location in southeast Brampton is in close proximity to a large population of urban consumers and several arenas of exchange for local food, including farmers’ markets in Brampton, Mississauga and Toronto.
One key informant explained the importance of the location in relation to local food markets:

> Because of its location, because it is so near-urban it is so closely plugged into that local food movement. It is been both ways. McVean supplies produce to the local food markets. At the same time the tremendous growth in the local food movement in the last 3 or 4 years has really helped McVean in many ways. The demand for local food has increased.

The farm site also contains aesthetic value because of the juxtaposition of 45-acres of agricultural land, which retains rural character and a cultural landscape surrounded by new urban housing development. One key informant described the site related to its aesthetic values, reflecting “It was a beautiful piece of land that cried out to have people growing on it”. Another document describes the site as “a refreshing island of diverse, ecological food production surrounded by suburban development” (FarmStart, 2011). The site is also described in source documents in relation to its vibrancy, viability and uniqueness, which provides a new model for near-urban agriculture. Since the overall objective of this site is to encourage, support or ‘incubate’ new farm businesses, the 30 acres of the site that are in production have been divided into 21 separate parcels, or plots, ranging in size from a quarter acre to four acres. Individual plots accommodate a variety of farm enterprises at various stages of business development. Onsite infrastructure includes permanent structures such as a designated heritage barn, owned by the TRCA, and temporary structures such as a refrigerated container, post-harvest handling station, 2,000 to 3,000 feet of above-ground irrigation pipelines, and storage structures for tractors and machinery. Farm machinery and equipment onsite include a tractor, a walk-behind tractor, and a small rototiller. The site contains heavy clay soil and the farmland is certified organic. Furthermore, the site is described as an unstructured learning space for aspiring farmers to learn how to become a farmer.
As one key informant reflected:

You learn as you go, you make your mistakes, you listen to advice. It is a space. The McVean Incubator is a space which is not structured. You can come in and learn in whatever fashion appeals to you. We do not define that. If you learn best this way, go ahead and learn it. If you learn best making mistakes, go ahead. You have the space to make mistakes. You are not put on a pedestal and judged at the end of the year against someone else. We understand that people have different styles of learning so we accommodate everything.

One farmer, in his first year at McVean Farm, explained how the site served as a learning space and allowed opportunities for trial and error and continual learning and also learning from neighbouring farmers. The site provided opportunities for new farmers to learn from those who had more experience with farming in Canada.

At the beginning, I made so many mistakes but little by little I am solving them. I am keeping up with marketing, with good production and finding new customers…

I am very lucky because I have good neighbours. Here is my neighbour and his father. I have a chance to learn from them. They know about the soil, the weather. They are like guides for me. Also, my other neighbouring farmer, he teaches me a lot…not only the things they teach me directly, also the things you see the other farmers doing.
5.1.2 Food production methods

The way in which food is grown at the McVean Farm challenges the dominant industrial mode of food production which requires intense investment in land, labour and capital. In contrast to large-scale agricultural modes of food production, the McVean Farm food production methods focus on developing ecologically and economically viable farm businesses, ranging
from very small (i.e., 0.25 acre) to small (i.e., 4 acre) scales. There were 19 farm enterprises (i.e., businesses) and two community partners at the McVean Farm in 2011. Food production methods and land care protocol were premised on the principles of ecological agriculture and the farm was certified organic, but did not “label” itself as such. As one key informant explained:

   We do not label ourselves as organic but as ecological agriculture because we always walk the fine line between conventional and organic. Our mandate is more encouraging people to farm. We do not want to say we are for this and against that. We need farmers. There is a place for conventional farmers. There is also a place for small-scale to mid-scale farmers.

While the McVean Farm did not label itself as organic, although it was organically certified and followed organic practices, farmers could choose whether they wanted to use the organic certification label. As one key informant explained:

   We are organically certified but our farmers are not required to be certified. They can piggyback on our certification if they do their own paperwork but they are required to not compromise someone else’s ability to be certified or the farm’s ability. They have to practice in accordance with organic standards but they do not have to do the certification themselves.

Food produced at the McVean Farm consisted of over 100 different varieties of crops which were mostly vegetables produced by the 19 farm enterprises and 2 community groups. Honey was also produced by two beekeepers on site. One key informant described the diversity of crops grown onsite like this:

   There are more than 100 different varieties of crops grown. It is highly diverse. It is not just tomatoes and potatoes…The vegetables include the traditional stuff that is grown here and sold at farmers’ markets. Some farmers whose country of origin is different are trying to grow their vegetables.

Food production methods at McVean reflected a working landscape of 21 farms comprised of 19 farm business and 2 community groups integrated into a supportive social environment. The supportive social environment which facilitated small-scale ecological agriculture at the McVean
Farm consisted of three components: risk reduction, mentorship and training and support and encouragement. Table 16 lists the various components associated with the supportive social environment at this site. One key informant explained the supportive social environment at the McVean Farm:

As we started it, we realized it is not just about the incubator farm it is about everything else that surrounds that, which helps new farmers on the farm and off the farm. Everything we have done at FarmStart is in response to what we see our farmers needing. The incubator farm is a really important piece for some people who are trying to get into the system — into food production. The incubator farm model provides access to land, equipment, infrastructure and mentorship.

**Table 16. Components of the supportive social environment at the McVean Farm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of the Supportive Social Environment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship and Training</td>
<td>● Experienced farm manager onsite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Learning opportunities on-site and off-site (e.g., workshops, farm tours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Number of new farmers within shared landscape and shared infrastructure creates learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Unstructured space fosters experiential learning and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Sourcing inputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk Reduction</td>
<td>● Custom tractor work (e.g., ploughing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Affordable access to land, equipment, infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Shared facilities and equipment with cost structure suited to level of farm business development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Encourage gradual transition into farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Assess farmers capabilities annually through business plan and reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support &amp; Encouragement</td>
<td>● Farm Manager assists farmers to troubleshoot farm-related challenges as they arise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Farmers’ meetings encourage sharing &amp; feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.3 Supply chain

There were 21 separate supply chains identified at the McVean Farm, each of which was developed by the 19 farm enterprises and two community groups on-site. Since all 21 farms were not sampled individually, sufficient data was not acquired to effectively describe each of the supply chains. However, key informant interviews with the Farm Manager indicated that food from the McVean farm primarily moved to local arenas of exchange through low-tech methods of local supply. For example, key informant respondents indicated that most farmers sold their produce directly to consumers at local farmers’ markets and through CSA schemes while a smaller number sold to restaurants, wholesale, and retail supermarkets. A document analysis of five farmer case studies coupled with two farmer interviews provided data related to seven supply chains at the McVean Farm. Results indicated that six out of seven farmers (85.7%) sold directly to consumers at farmers’ markets or through CSA schemes. Five farmers (71%) sold directly to consumers at farmers’ markets. Four farmers (57%) sold directly to consumers through CSA schemes. Three farmers (43%) incorporated direct sales to consumers at both farmers’ markets and through CSA schemes. Two farmers (29%) engaged in direct sales to restaurant or catering companies; one farmer engaged (14%) in direct sales to retail food outlets; one farmer (14%) sold to other McVean farmers, and one farmer (14%) used the on-site McVean Farm stand.

5.1.4 Arena of exchange

The arenas of exchange include the concrete and meaningful spaces (i.e., the physical sites) in which food is exchanged and a description of the material and non-material exchanges between producers and consumers at the sites (Holloway et al., 2007). In this study, consumers
were not sampled explicitly; therefore, the non-material motivations associated with consumer purchases of local food such as regard, locality, and production methods were not analysed from the consumer perspective. The sample of seven producers (Table 26) revealed three arenas of exchange that involved direct transactions between consumers and producers. These included farmers’ markets, CSA pick-up locations, and the McVean Farm stand.

Farmers’ markets were revealed as a concrete and meaningful space for McVean farmers to directly sell their produce. As explained, five of the sampled farmers (i.e., two interviewed and five case studies reviewed) identified one or more farmers’ markets as an arena of exchange for their produce. McVean Farm respondents identified using a variety of farmers’ markets in the GTA as arenas of exchange. Respondents identified seven farmers markets, four in Toronto, and three in other parts of the GTA including Brampton, Oakville and Woodbridge. Because the sample size was small, there are likely many other farmers’ markets that could be identified by the other 14 farmers not sampled in this study. CSA locations were identified as another arena of exchange with four of the seven sampled farmers identifying them as arena for exchange. However, the specific CSA locations were not all identified. Responses and document analysis revealed that some CSA locations for consumers were located at the McVean Farm while others were located in various locations across the GTA. For example, one farmer who had four CSA locations in Toronto indicated having one at a temple in partnership with a social justice committee.

“For each of the CSA’s, there’s a community partner I partner with to outreach to the community. So for example, on the Tuesday Temple Sinai has a Social Action Committee so I work with them to outreach to the community. We organize talks and posterizing and Internet-based stuff. So it’s not just me. I’ve got a committee for each CSA.” (FarmStart, 2010b)

In this example, the CSA is positioned as an arena of exchange for the material component of the
organic food boxes which are distributed and also for the non-material components associated with the food such as social justice and notions of community. Another farm respondent indicated having started a CSA pick up at his plot at the McVean Farm. The respondent indicated having a very small CSA scheme where customers came to his plot once per week to pick up their box of local produce. The respondent explained:

We have five CSA members and I am gaining some experience with that. I was scared from the CSA because I was not sure if I would be able to keep up with the supply but we had a good experience this year. I will try to extend my CSA next year.

The McVean Farm stand, or farmer’s market, was identified as a third arena of exchange which was used by only one of the farmers sampled. Responses indicated that the McVean farm gate, or farmer’s market, was identified as a valuable arena of exchange for test croppers in their first year at McVean who farm on a quarter-acre of land. As one respondent explained:

There is also an onsite farmers’ market (farm gate) which is very slowly picking up because the community there is not aware of good food, unfortunately. It has been very useful for the test croppers who do not have their markets set up to sell through the farm gate, although we need to do a bit of work with them.

Because the sample size consisted of seven farmers out of a possible 21 farm enterprises it is likely that the study only identified some of the possible arenas of exchange. A full sample of the 21 farm enterprise would reveal a more complete data set of all possible arenas of exchange.

5.1.5 Producer-Consumer Interactions

A variety of material, symbolic, formal and informal meeting points of producers and consumers are described in this field. Because there were such a large number of farms established on the McVean Farm, each with its own specific interactions with consumers, there are limitations to the descriptions offered in this section since the researcher did not spend any
extended amount of time with individual farmers. Therefore the producer-consumers interactions presented herein were largely gleaned from document analysis and a few key informant interviews.

First, producer-consumer interactions were intentionally limited by FarmStart, the managing organization of the McVean farm, since its overall objective was to support the development of farmers and farm businesses rather than to facilitate community involvement. For example, one respondent indicated that the public was only allowed access to the farm for special events since the focus of the farm was not for educational purposes. As one respondent explained:

It is an operating farm. We keep the public off of the farm except for a few public open house days. That has to do with liability and the security of the farm operations. We design the farm to be the most practically designed for farmers to run farms. It is not necessarily pretty all of the time. Our goal is to be functional rather than pretty.

Second, producer-consumer interactions were limited to annual open house days which provided an opportunity for the public to visit the farm, meet the farmers and participate in farm tours. One respondent reflected that the open house days at the McVean Farm brought people to the farm to interact with producers in very emotionally powerful ways. This relates to the non-material aspect of social connections and hope that people experienced at the McVean Farm. As one key respondent emphasised:

What we have seen is that this kind of operation brings people to farm and it brings people to interact with the farmers. When we have open houses, it is crazy the way people interact with that farm. We weren't ready to open the farm to the public in the first season. But in the second season we opened it up and we had about 400 or 500 people come from the surrounding community and from Toronto. It was as if people were seeing old friends and relatives. It was so emotionally powerful to see people find this place and find farmers who were from their countries and find food that they can’t even find here, growing in a piece of land that is right next door.
Similarly, one respondent reflected that the immigrant experience in the GTA was characterized by a disconnection from rural life and farming, which could be re-kindled through participation at the McVean Farm either as a farmer or by attending public events (e.g., open house). As one respondent indicated:

Especially for new Canadians who feel so disconnected from the agricultural community. They don’t live near farms when they move to Canada. They move to urbanized areas. They have no connection to the farm community…They feel so totally, completely disconnected from where their food comes from. That is the immigrant experience.

5.1.6 Motivations for participation

The focus of this section is to explore how participants described and explained the reasons for their own participation in the McVean Farm and how this related to the way people think about food including imagining how things could be done in a different way. The motives of founding members of FarmStart will be explored as well as the motives of farmers sampled in the study which was obtained through key informant interviews and document analysis of farmer case studies.

5.1.6.1 Motives of FarmStart

The McVean Farm, referred to as the McVean ‘Incubator’ Farm in 2011 and the McVean ‘Start-Up’ Farm in 2012, was modelled after the Intervale Farm in Burlington Vermont, which was established in 1990. One of the founding members of FarmStart visited the Intervale Farm in the late 1990s and aspired to start a similar farm model in Ontario if and when land became available. As one key informant noted:
What I saw there that I did not see anywhere in Ontario is a supported community to help people start their farm businesses... The Intervale started in 1995. By the time I went there, there were 7 or 8 different farm operations. They had a huge composting facility that was actually making them money. And, it was 250 acres of floodplain land that used to be a dump in the middle of Burlington, Vermont. They cleaned it up and started to get people farming on it. It was run as an incubator farm but I think it has evolved into a community farm.

In the mid-2000s, one of the key informants began studies at the University of Guelph and began exploring existing farms on public lands, such as the Black Creek Farm, which was operated by the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department. In 2006 FarmStart became incorporated and started its first incubator farm, the Ignatius Farm, on a rented piece of land in Guelph, Ontario. Due to complications, this FarmStart initiative was short-lived, though it continues today under new management. In 2007 FarmStart became involved in a research and outreach project with the University of Guelph, Centre for Land and Water Stewardship (CLAWS) called New Places to Go, New Places to Grow. CLAWS was involved in a component of the project, which involved taking new Canadians to the countryside, while FarmStart explored prospects for land that could accommodate future Ontario farmers, namely new Canadians and young people from the GTA. In 2007 FarmStart went with CLAWS and the TRCA to explore prospective future farmland in the GTA that could accommodate an incubator farm. The McVean Farm was selected because of its proximity to Toronto. In 2008 the McVean Farm started its first growing season. Key informant participants explained their reasons for starting the McVean Farm were based on a variety of reasons, including three existing gaps: in provincial service delivery to provide affordable land; training and support for both new Canadians from farm and non-farm backgrounds, and young farmers from non-farm backgrounds, who wish to start small to mid-scale farm operations.
As one respondent explained:

There are so many things that you need to learn and there are no support systems in the province to help farmers from non-farm backgrounds. There was nothing. You couldn’t go to OMAFRA and get help. You just had to do it on your own. There were a few of them in the CRAFT program, which was established in southwestern Ontario. There were some really good farmers coming out of that program and there was nothing to help them take the next step.

One key informant reflected that the greatest crisis in the future of the food system is a lack of future farmers, which was one reason the McVean Farm was established:

To me, it was the number one challenge to the future of the food system "How do we have farmers who are really viable farmers on the ground, today and in the future?"

Furthermore, the key informant reflected on experiences and observations of friends who were trying to develop viable farm enterprises but needed a supportive community to start their farm business.

I came through University, a lot of my friends are farming and a lot of my friends were trying to farm. They were either finishing up as head farm managers, they had done internships, or they were trying to figure out what their next steps would be.

That is why I started FarmStart here, partly because the land came up here and I could see something like the Intervale existing on this property here. And as we started it, we realized it is not just about the incubator farm it is about everything else that surrounds that, which helps new farmers on the farm and off the farm.

Key informants were very clear that their motivation for starting the McVean Farm was not local food production, per se, but rather farmer production which stemmed from an ultimate goal to revitalize rural communities, rather than simply trumpeting the benefits of local food to urban consumers.

Everybody in the city was talking about how local food was so great. Everyone wanted to buy more and they trumpeted the Good Food Box as the solution. And to me if we didn't have the farmers it didn’t matter what kind of distribution or marketing or promotion that you had in the cities. It really mattered whether or not we had the farmers.
Similarly, another key informant explained the motive of the McVean Farm as such:

Our mandate is not food production; it is farmer production. We feel there is a lot of buzz and interest and passion for local food. Access to local food, how good it is, how to get it into institutions, how do people with low income get good food - although that is probably not in the spectrum right now. But there is very little emphasis on who grows that food. I think that a lot of us are missing that point. If there are no farmers, there is not going to be any local food. You can talk about it from here to the Himalayas.

Furthermore, respondents reflected that the McVean Farm provided opportunities for new farmers from urban and near-urban areas to make a gradual transition from public near-urban farms to their own rural farms once they had developed a viable farm business at McVean for up to five years. One respondent reflected on the motive of farmer production at McVean which would ultimately revitalize rural communities by providing the skills and lived experiences future farmers need to stay on the farm and handle the challenges associated with farming.

When all is said and done, urban agriculture, community gardens, allotment gardens, rooftop gardens they will produce food but they are not going to feed the population… That has to happen in the rural areas. That is where food production has to happen, has always happened and needs to continue to happen. We know we are losing population and farmers in rural areas like there is no tomorrow. I think the concept of the Incubator Farm is ideally placed to help in that transition.

5.1.6.2. Farmer Motives

Farmers motivations for participating in McVean Farm is explained in this section based on document analysis of six farmer case studies produced by FarmStart in 2010, from two farmer interviews in 2011, and an interview with the Farm Program Manager. One key informant reflected that each of the 21 farm enterprises likely had their own individual reasons for participating at the McVean Farm, but that developing a re-connection to farming in some fashion may have motivated them.
I do not know what motivates them. Each of the 21 farmers may have 21 different reasons. The only common strand I could see, which I would not give very much weight, is that all of them are connected to farming in one way or another. Either they have grown up on a farm or they have been farmers themselves and they want to get back to that…. Each one of them has a uniquely different reason.

Four broad themes emerged from the data analysis of farmers’ explanations for participating in the McVean Farm. These were broadly categorized as: new Canadian motives to transition into farming; new farmers want to cultivate health (social, environmental, personal, economic); farm business as social justice; and new food career motives. Although these four broad categorizations have been established based on the data, it is important to note that within each category, there are specific examples of how each farmer envisioned their farm business and their behaviour within the operation of their farm.

5.1.7 Constitution of Individual and Group Identities

A variety of individual and group identities were identified at the McVean Farm. The most prominent group identity was associated with new Canadian immigrant farmers. One document indicated that 80 per cent of the population of farmers were new Canadian immigrants from over 15 countries (Pajwani, 2012). Documents revealed a global cultural mosaic of farmers at the McVean Farm from countries including Barbados, Columbia, China, Canada (Collingwood, Toronto), Dominica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guyana, India (Kashmir, Pubjab), Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Trinidad & Tobago, and Zimbabwe. In a 2011 video about the farm, one respondent compared the group identities at the McVean Farm to the United Nations explaining “There are people from all different continents represented. It is a United Nations here” (TRCA, 2011b). The new Canadian group identity is produced by the many farmers from the various farm enterprises and community groups, who together represent what FarmStart called the ‘new faces of farming’ or
its ‘new generation of farmers’. In addition, some of the FarmStart staff also reflected this identity. A secondary identity revealed at the McVean Farm was associated with young Canadian farmers from non-farm backgrounds living in urban areas. Key informants identified two to four young Canadian farm enterprises present at the McVean Farm. When the McVean Farm started in 2008, the first few farmers consisted mainly of young Canadian farmers from cities, some new Canadians, and some community groups. But over time, the new Canadian identity came to dominate the farm landscape and the young Canadian city farmers became less prominent. As one respondent reflected:

What has become really clear to us is that this kind of farm in a near-urban area like this serves the new Canadian population really well.

A tertiary identity identified at the farm consisted of the civil society group identity which was represented by two community groups at the McVean Farm. One of the community groups was from Toronto and operated seasonal agriculture programs for youth of African descent. The other group operated a local, community-oriented food security program to benefit residents including seniors and youth. FarmStart was also included within this category since it represented an agriculturally focused civil society organization from Guelph, Ontario. In sum, the civil society identity included youth, senior, agriculture and environmental group identities from multiple locations.

A quaternary identity was associated with the group categories of farmers at McVean Farm. There were three group identities related to the farmers’ stage of business development and the duration of stay at the McVean Farm. These identities were called test croppers, start-up farmers, and enterprise farmers. In 2011, there were six farmers associated with the test cropper identity which translated into having a quarter acre of land to farm for one year. There were 13
farm enterprises associated with the start-up farm identity which included two beekeepers. Start-up farms were able to obtain larger plots of land (up to four acres), based on having farmed at McVean for less than four years and having demonstrated adequate farming. A summary of the structural and operational characteristics of the McVean Farm is presented in Table 17.

**Table 17. Summary of structural and operational characteristics of the McVean Farm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heuristic Analytical Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site of food production</td>
<td>45 acres of leased public conservation land; 30 acres in production divided into 21 small-scale agricultural parcels of various sizes ranging from 0.25 acre to 4 acres; historical agricultural property juxtaposed by new urban development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food production methods</td>
<td>Labelled as ecological agriculture; farm is certified organic; shared facilities and equipment; custom tractor work provided; farm business development services such as workshops; 100+ varieties of crops mostly vegetables, mushrooms, honey, fruit; highly diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply chain</td>
<td>21 locally-oriented short supply chains individually developed by farm enterprises; dominated by low-tech methods of local supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arena of exchange</td>
<td>Farmer’s markets, CSA, restaurant/catering, retail, other farmers, on-farm stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer-consumer interaction</td>
<td>Diverse interactions each cultivated by 21 farm enterprises; open houses, annual harvest festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations for participation</td>
<td>Organization motives: farmer production, support new farmers Farmer motives: transition into agriculture, health motives, social justice, second career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of individual and group identities</td>
<td>New Canadian immigrants, young city farmers, civil society groups, test croppers, and start up farmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Structural and Operational Characteristics of the Albion Hills Community Farm

Following the pattern set by Section 5.1, this section assembles a description of the Albion Hills Community Farm, focused on its structural and operational features. It describes how the Albion Hills Community Farm functions in its specific local context, and presents its vision of a multi-functional project with food at the centre of a place-based community initiative involving education, community gardens, local food production and the development of a food and farming hub.

5.2.1 Site of food production:

The Albion Hills Community Farm consists of 76.5 acres of farmland, 60 per cent of which is located within the Albion Hills Conservation Area in the Town of Caledon, just north of the City of Brampton, in the Regional Municipality of Peel in the Greater Toronto Area. The site is located approximately 40 minutes northwest of Toronto, near the village of Palgrave and the town of Caledon East. The population of the Town of Caledon was 59,460 in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011). The main sites of food production are located within the conservation area and include two approximate 10-acre fields, which are used for small-scale organic vegetable and one 20-acre field used for field crops. Other sites of food production included off-site farm parcels that were used for field crops, including corn, barley and soya beans. The farm is located on the Oak Ridges Moraine, which is within Ontario’s Greenbelt — the world’s largest protected green space (1.8 million acres; www.ontariogreenbelt.ca). The farm site is located within the conservation area, close to two outdoor education centres and far from the main entrance. Thus it does not receive much pedestrian traffic from the over 100,000 annual visitors to this multi-purpose facility. The farm has its own entrance on a rural road, and it is located close to other farms and rural estate properties. The farm site operated as a former dairy demonstration farm
(Figure 10), which offered agricultural education programs to students at the two adjacent field centres, operated by the Toronto District School Board and the TRCA, until 2008. The farm is located just north of Bolton, which represents a majority of the town population and opportunity for consumer engagement at its Caledon farmers’ market. It is also located close to the City of Brampton, which represents a major source of urban consumers (nearly ten times the population of Caledon). This site began its first season of food production in May 2011 and thus represented a very new community farm model.

**Figure 10. Photo from Albion Hills Community Farm research site showing its history as a demonstration farm** *(Source: unknown)*
5.2.2 Food production methods

Food production methods at the Albion Hills Community Farm consisted of three agricultural methods. First, there was mechanized mid-scale production of approximately 115 tonnes of conventional field crops, including corn (62 tonnes), soya beans (22 tonnes) and barley (32 tonnes), which occurred at some of the off-site farm fields (AHCF, 2011). The mechanized farming was done by a local farmer who was hired to do the mechanized field cultivation and planting. Second, there was small-scale market garden production of several acres which included a wide variety of vegetables grown and cultivated mainly by farm staff and temporary summer students with some input from volunteers during community ‘work bee’ days. The market garden operation included test plots of new varieties of crops, including over 26 varieties of heritage potatoes; a world crop test plot with callaloo, Chinese eggplant, yardlong beans, hot peppers and okra; a sweet potato test plot; and a variety of other vegetables. Since it was the first season of production, the farming methods focussed on larger-scale production of field crops that had established markets. This was combined with smaller-scale production of market garden vegetables while new markets were tested and developed. The third type of production included community gardens, which were rented to individuals, community groups, and the onsite outdoor education centres. Community gardens were used for food production that would provide local food security and community-based education opportunities. One respondent, who was part of the local 4H club, described how they used their community garden space:

The 4H Club is basically about growing different kinds of crops so we can learn about it, maybe try it at home. We plan on doing a meal one night where we use much of the stuff we've grown. We are getting some money by selling some of the excess. (TRCA, 2011b)
Food production methods for the field crops involved conventional methods since the farm was not ready to start its organic certification paperwork in its first year of operation. Food production methods of the market gardens and community gardens were organically managed.

As one key informant explained,

I would say organically managed which is the same as ecological; except the difference to me between saying those things is that organically managed is knowingly saying: I know I’m in compliance with the organic standards, I’m just not certified. Some people can farm ecologically but still use some things that organic would never allow.

In sum, a diversity of production methods were identified including mid-scale mechanized farming of field crops, small-scale organic farming of market garden vegetables including test varieties of heritage and world crops, and community gardening methods. In addition, some food was processed at a local community kitchen; a public health certified facility located in the basement of a local church, which had produce washing and cooking facilities.

5.2.3 Supply chain

Based on the variety of production methods listed in the previous section, a variety of supply chains were associated with the Albion Hills Community Farm. First, the majority of field crops produced conventionally were sold locally to a grain elevator in the nearby town of Tottenham while a smaller amount was sold directly to a local dairy farmer in Bolton. The transportation and sales were coordinated by the local custom farmer on behalf of the Albion Hills Community Farm. This supply chain accounted for the majority of the volume of food produced. Secondly, the market garden production involved a supply chain which consisted of a variety of consumers. While this was the first year of production for this farm, nine new markets for organically-grown vegetables were established, which reached a variety of consumers at the local field centre dining hall operated by the TRCA; the local municipal office cafeteria and the
local regional office; an organic wholesale food box delivery service in Brampton; an on-site CSA, two farmers’ markets, a countryside retail shop and a local café. One key informant described that there was an opportunity to provide produce for up to 30,000 meals annually to the adjacent field centre students. However, the details of the procurement had not been determined at the time of the study. Table 18 lists the nine markets established for distribution of market garden vegetables, their locations and the distance from the Farm.

**Table 18. Arenas of Exchange for Albion Hills Community Farm market garden vegetables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arenas of Exchange for Vegetables</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Distance from Farm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mini-CSA farm stand</td>
<td>Albion Hills Community Farm</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Area Field Centres</td>
<td>Albion Hills Conservation Area</td>
<td>500m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Wholesale Company</td>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>35 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ Market</td>
<td>Inglewood</td>
<td>20 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ Market</td>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>12 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Retail Farm Market</td>
<td>Caledon</td>
<td>24 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional government office, employee-directed program</td>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>35 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal government office, cafeteria</td>
<td>Caledon East</td>
<td>7 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cafe</td>
<td>Caledon East</td>
<td>7 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.2.4 Arena of exchange**

As discussed in the previous section, nine concrete and meaningful arenas were established in which food was exchanged between producers at the Albion Hills Community Farm and local consumers. Table 18 revealed that the majority of consumers of market garden vegetables from the Albion Hills Community Farm obtained vegetables at arenas of exchange located within 35 kilometers of the farm. However, since some produce was provided to a local organic wholesale delivery company in Brampton, it is likely that some produce was delivered
throughout the GTA. The nine arenas of exchange represented a diversity of spaces for exchange of local food. Although consumers were not sampled in this study, the data suggests that the exchange of food also contained non-material components, such as political support.

5.2.5 Producer-Consumer Interactions

The concept of embeddedness introduced in Chapter 2 will be discussed in this section to explain some of the producer-consumer interactions at this site. Data in Table 18 revealed that employees of a government agency, a municipal cafeteria and an institutional partner (i.e., the TRCA food services) were sites of exchange for local food from Albion Hills Community Farm. This suggests the food was embedded with non-material meaning such as political and institutional support for local food and farmers. Furthermore, the farm was supported through provincial and municipal community funding grants and thus was supported politically by various levels of government. In September 2011 a harvest festival was hosted at the farm, attracting over 350 people. At this event, the mayor of the Town, the public landholder and other public dignitaries attended and gave public remarks to show their political support for this new local model of agriculture on public land.

Local food produced at the Albion Hills Community Farm also contained social embeddedness. For example, the social embeddedness or non-economic, non-material components of the Albion Hills Community Farm food related to community learning, community participation and educational partnerships at the farm. For example, one farmer at Albion Hills indicated that community support, education and learning were important for consumers at this site.
As one respondent explained:

People in this community are excited to learn about their food and there seems to be a lot of interest for the educational part…

The community is very into what is going on here and they feel very much a part of it. I think that is what a community farm is: it breaches the distance between the farmer and the consumer. They get to come out and meet the farmer and see how the food is grown…

A lot of the people I met at the Bolton farmers’ market started coming to the farm gate because they know us and they feel they know the farmer now. And, that is really important for them to know the farmer.

Other forms of social embeddedness related to how the food contained educational value, such as providing opportunities for students at the nearby outdoor education centre to come to the farm to see how their food was grown, participate in harvesting, then eat the food in either their lunch or dinner meal. As one key informant explained:

We have the outdoor education schools right next to us and students get to come and combine learning about farming with hands-on farming experience.

For example, during 2011 it was reported that 3,600 meals featuring food from the Albion Hills Community Farm were served at the Albion Field Centre Dining Hall (e.g., 2,400 potato-based meals were served in vegetable or squash soups, or served as roasted vegetables). When the food was served it was highlighted on the menu, as well as announced before the group lunch or supper meals. In this instance, the food represented symbolic meanings around the educational and experiential connections to food that students from Toronto could experience at the outdoor education centre and the farm.

Other informal meeting points of consumers and producers occurred through a variety of mediums including website, social media, and print publications such as newspapers and
magazines. Each of the newspaper or magazine articles featured images of consumers as producers. Images featured students harvesting and eating vegetables grown in the field, students from a kids’ cooking camp eating an on-farm salad made with potatoes they harvested themselves. In sum, local newspapers and food magazines represented a venue for one-way communication about the farm project with a particular representation of the community farm as a site where participants could adopt both producer and consumer identities.

5.2.6 Motivations for participation

The focus of this section is to explore how participants described and explained the reasons for their own involvement in the Albion Hills Community Farm and how this related to the way people think about food, including imagining how things could be done differently. The motives of founding members of Albion Hills Community Farm will be explored, as well as the motives of farmers sampled in the study obtained through key informant interviews.

5.2.6.1 Organizational motives

The Albion Hills Community Farm was initiated by a group of local residents, local food organizations, and farmers who had a vision to re-establish farm education programs for students at the adjacent outdoor education centre while also introducing community gardens, local food production and sustainable agriculture programs on-site. As discussed, the farm was a former dairy demonstration farm that was decommissioned by the TRCA in 2008. Therefore, a request for proposals (RFP) was initiated by the public landholder in 2009. Five individuals associated with the local food and farming organizations of Palgrave Community Kitchen, Eat Local Caledon, Chesslawn Farms, Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre, and Peel 4H, came together to propose a new model of sustainable agriculture that would be aligned
with the TRCA’s *Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy*. As one key informant from one of these organizations indicated, “I had a connection to the farm and wanted to see it prosper and continue”. Another key informant, who was an outdoor educator at the adjacent field centre for 25 years, indicated that one of the highlights of student visits to the outdoor education centre was the visit to the former dairy farm. The informant indicated being motivated to re-establish a connection to food and farming for student visitors. Key informants also indicated that several local food organizations already established in the town were working on a variety of local food programs, and were supportive of the community farm concept. Since some of the founding members of the Albion Hills Community Farm had worked together on previous local food initiatives, and some of their local food work was starting to overlap, the concept of initiating a community farm seemed like a natural progression. As one key informant noted, “It was a next step. Some would think it was a huge leap, but it was almost a natural progression.” For example, a community kitchen had been recently established near the farm site by a local church organization which provided community access for food processing to support local food entrepreneurs and community groups. Furthermore, at the time of the RFP, the Palgrave Environment Committee, which established the Palgrave Community Kitchen, was looking for community garden space to support their programs. One of the founding members was looking for community garden space in Caledon and while exploring alternative options of leasing land from other farmers it was discovered that land was available at Albion Hills. Shortly thereafter, in 2009, the five founding members put together an application to the public landholder, TRCA, which was successful. In 2010, the founding members incorporated Albion Hills Community Farm as non-profit organization with a charitable mandate to increase the public’s understanding of local food and farming in the Caledon area through the establishment of a community farm.
and learning centre. An active fundraising campaign was initiated in 2010, in which a four-year grant was established to help develop the community farm concept from 2011 to 2015. The initial objectives of the farm were education, food production, community gardens, and as one key informant explained, “looking at the whole food system,” which included incorporating sustainable design and technology into the operation of the farm and its buildings. A conceptual map was developed by some of the founding members, which translated their broad food systems ideas into a ‘mind map’ or ‘inspiration map’ that referenced how the community farm would operate its programming in relation to various actors in various arenas. For example, the map featured various programs and activities that could be operationalized at the farm, including a food hub, food production, education, community gardens, a near-urban sustainable agriculture centre, and permaculture. As one key informant commented:

> It also helped us to visualize that we are working on education, that we are working on food production, that we are working on being sustainable as a centre or a building, and that we are working on community gardens.

During the time of this study, the Albion Hills Community Farm was in its first year of production. Therefore, the vision largely represents the aspirations and motives of the organization since many of the components were not initiated in 2011. The long-term motive of the organization is to incorporate local food production into the community farm and to establish sustainable learning opportunities. As one key informant explained:

> The long-term intent of the farm is a sustainable learning centre, everything from New Canadians to young farmers who want to gain equity to transition into farming…The vision includes having the educational component where there is community use. Schools can come and learn about agriculture, nutrition, healthy eating and how that contributes to a healthy environment.
5.2.6.2 Farmer Motives

Only one farmer was employed in a full-time capacity in 2011 during the time of this study; therefore, the sample size of farmers was small (n=1). The farmer’s motives for working at the Albion Hills Community Farm were related to the learning and labour combination available at this farm and previous experience working on a state college organic farm in the US. For example, the farm respondent indicated obtaining a university education in ecological agriculture from the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. The respondent indicated having worked at the Evergreen State College organic farm as an intern, student and farm aide while living in the farmhouse. The respondent explained “Learning about farming on a farm was the most amazing experience I had.” Furthermore, the respond indicated that the combination of learning programs at the Albion Hills Community Farm and physical labour made the job much more enjoyable and sustainable.

5.2.7 Constitution of Individual and Group Identities

Multiple individual and group identities were identified at the Albion Hills Community Farm by key informants. The six types of stakeholders (n=6) identified included non-governmental community food and environment organizations (n=3), youth agri-food education projects (n=3), the public landholder (TRCA, n=1), education specialists from outdoor education centre (n=2), a field trial project involving etho-cultural crops (n=1), and funding agencies (n=3). The data suggests that there is a group identity associated with local, non-governmental organizations that represented the founding members of the Albion Hills Community Farm. Second, there is also a youth identity associated with a variety of youth agri-food projects including camps and community gardens established at the farm in partnership with local
community organizations. Third, funding agencies can be seen as an identity associated with the farm since it was supported by municipal, regional and provincial government granting programs. Fourth, there was an outdoor education identity associated with the two outdoor education centres, their staff and visiting students who were consumers and participants at the farm. Fifth, the public landholder was an identity associated with the farm as their relationship was defined as a partner in the farm. And, the sixth identity related to ‘world’ crop production which represented a small, innovative program with experimentation and partnerships at the farm involving the Vineland Research & Innovation Centre and the STOP Community Food Centre in Toronto. In 2011, the World Crop project, in which the Albion Hills Community Farm participated, was awarded the Premier’s Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence.

5.2.8 Summary

A summary of the structural and operational characteristics of the Albion Hills Community Farm is presented in Table 19. The next section will discuss points of convergence and divergence in order to identify the commonalities and differences between the community farm sites.
Table 19. Structural and operational characteristics of the Albion Hills Community Farm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heuristic Analytical Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site of food production</td>
<td>76.5 acres of leased public conservation land; rural town location; former demonstration farm with connection to public outdoor education facilities; publicly accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food production methods</td>
<td>Organically managed small-scale market garden vegetable production; mid-scale mechanized farming of field crops (e.g., corn, soya beans, barley); community gardens. Combination of farmers including contracted local farmers, paid staff and community volunteer gardeners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply chain</td>
<td>115 tonnes of field crops to local grain elevator and direct sales to local farmers; 3 tonnes of market garden vegetables distributed to 9 local arenas of exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arena of exchange</td>
<td>10 arenas included local grain elevator, mini-CSA farm stand, conservation area field centres, wholesale, farmers’ markets, countryside retail market, direct sales to government offices and local café within 35 km of farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer-consumer interaction</td>
<td>Food embedded with institutional, political, and social values. Variety of media (e.g., newspaper, magazine) represented one-way communication and informal meeting points for producers-consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations for participation</td>
<td>Re-establish farm education programs for public education students and establish demonstration farm for sustainable agriculture with learning component and community use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of individual and group identities</td>
<td>Founding members (NGOs), youth agri-food projects, outdoor education, public landholder, funding agencies, partnerships and programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Commonalities and differences between community farm sites

A summary of the commonalities and differences between the two community farms in this study are presented in Table 20. Evidence suggests that both sites served as sites of ‘oppositional activism’ (Holloway et al., 2007) which the author describes as re-imagined and re-structured relations, arenas and processes attempting to provide new visions for possible food systems and possible food economies which improve upon existing ones. For example, the
McVean Farm attempted to re-structure the 45-acre farm into a new ‘incubator farm’ space to train new Canadians and young urban farmers from farm- and non-farm backgrounds as future farmers for Ontario. In this case, a possible new food system was one that included new Canadian farmers and farmers from non-farm backgrounds who traditionally have been marginalized from participating in agriculture. In contrast, the 76.5-acre Albion Hills Community Farm had operated for many years as a demonstration farm, which served Toronto area students who would come to gain first-hand farm experiences while completing their outdoor education curriculum at the adjacent field centre. Therefore, when the farm became decommissioned in 2008, it was largely local individuals and organizations with a sense of place and connection to this site who sought to re-establish it as a community farm that would combine local food production with learning opportunities and community use. The new possible food system at the Albion Hills Community Farm included a variety of production methods and producers operating community gardens, market gardens, and field crop sites that showcased sustainable production and consumption models of agriculture.
Table 20. Structural and operational commonalities and differences between community farm sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heuristic Analytical Field</th>
<th>Commonalities and Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site of food production</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commonalities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45 acres or more of agricultural conservation land in the GTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Include barns and some infrastructure and shared equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sites are being reconfigured by a variety of new actors to accommodate new visions of near-urban agriculture suited to local contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm landscapes reflective of past or present rural character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban vs. rural location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm neighbours vs. non-farm neighbours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public accessibility – McVean is publicly inaccessible (e.g., locked gate); Albion is publicly accessible (via conservation area or rural road)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albion has recent history as a demonstration farm for students (1950+); McVean history reflective of early 1800s farming in Upper Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food production methods</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commonalities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both farms are governed by TRCA land care protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on ecological agriculture practices with or without organic “label”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Included a variety of producers &gt;4 at each site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One farmer provide mechanized farming services (e.g., planting, cultivating) to other farmers on-site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FarmStart adopts ecological agriculture practices; the farm is certified organic; each farm enterprise may use the organic label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albion Hills intends to start the organic certification process in 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McVean focussed on farm business development – many independent enterprises (21); Albion Hills is a place-based multifunctional project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albion Hills model included field crops, “demonstration” plots, and community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supply chain</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commonalities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short supply chains with a focus on direct agricultural marketing to consumers at local arenas including farmers’ markets or CSAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McVean farmers developed their own short supply chains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albion Hills supply chains were developed by the farm organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McVean more than 21 supply chains; Albion Hills 10 supply chains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heuristic Analytical Field</td>
<td>Commonalities and Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arena of exchange</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commonalities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both sites had a farmers’ market stand for sales to local consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many on-farm and off-farm arenas of exchange were established by both farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McVean farmers’ served a variety of Toronto and GTA farmers’ markets and CSA locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Albion Hills’ arenas of exchange were in Caledon or Brampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albion Hills provided some institutional food procurement contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived support of local food by surrounding community in Caledon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived non support of local food by surrounding community in Brampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Producer-consumer interaction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commonalities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual public events (e.g., harvest festivals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food embedded with political, institution and social values at Albion based on a new ‘made in Caledon’ farm model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each farmer at McVean cultivates their own interactions with consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumers discouraged from engaging with McVean farmers except for special events; Albion Hills encourages consumer interactions with the farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivations for participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commonalities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both models re-imagined new modes of agricultural production envisioned to provide an opportunity in light of a current or future perceived crisis in agriculture in Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both models ultimately want to contribute to a sustainable, regional food system in GTA and healthy rural communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McVean focuses on farmer production; Albion focussed on local food production, education projects, community uses and learning component. McVean learning model is farmer- focussed to serve new farmers from urban and near-urban areas. McVean sustainability = more future farmers for Ontario. Albion learning model is consumer-, community- and institution- focussed to serve new and established connections with educational centres on-site and the broader local food and community food networks in Caledon. Albion sustainability = established community farm and learning centre for Caledon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heuristic Analytical Field</td>
<td>Commonalities and Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of individual and group identities</td>
<td>Commonalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple identities identified at each site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McVean primary group identity is new Canadian farmers; secondary identity is urban farmers; tertiary identity is community groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albion Hills identities are community and education focused: NGOs, youth agri-food projects, education centre, new partnerships and projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sum, Section 5.1 to 5.3 of Chapter Five has fulfilled the second objective of this research study which was to identify and characterize key structural and operational commonalities and differences among and between selected community farms. Chapter Six will consider the implications of these identified commonalities and differences of community farms on public lands, as presented in Table 20, for meeting local food system objectives.
Chapter Six

Implications for meeting local food system objectives

This chapter considers the implications of the identified commonalities and differences of community farms on public lands for meeting local food system objectives. Two sources of data were used to elucidate how these two community farm exemplars contributed to the localization of food systems. First, the findings from Table 20 were analyzed in order to extrapolate how the identified commonalities and differences contributed to the localization of food systems. Second, research participants in this study were asked to reflect on how community farms on public lands helped to achieve local food system objectives. Since participants were not given a definition of local food systems objectives, they were asked to reflect upon their own subjective understanding of this concept. As a result of this research question, a variety of rich qualitative data was obtained in relation to current and future prospects for community farms on public land.

The goal of this chapter is to show how the constitutive elements of community farms serve to redistribute power, largely in the supply side of the food chain, to individual and community networks that aspire to reconstitute more democratic (Lyson, 2008; Koc, 2010) local food systems with civil society actors and networks as the drivers of change (Blay-Palmer, 2010).

6.1 Community Farms as Civil Society Drivers of Change for Local Food Systems

6.1.1 Site of food production

The two community farms examined in this study were located on underutilized public agricultural lands; that is, productive farmland with soils suitable for growing a variety of crops. Sites of food production may be in urban or rural contexts. In this study, both sites were
described as near-urban because of their location within the GTA. However, the McVean Farm was entirely surrounded by new housing development with few social connections to the neighbouring community, while the Albion Hills Community Farm was located in a rural location within a multi-functional conservation area with existing social connections to the surrounding community. Therefore, community farms may function in multiple contexts as long as the existing land base is agricultural and of sufficient size to allow the operation of many individual enterprises or various modes of food production. Because of the limited sample and the use of a case study approach it is not possible to discern either maximum or minimum limit on size – but the two exemplars do illustrate that a significant range exists and is viable. Since farm enterprise or community garden plots may be as small as 0.25 acres each, smaller community farms may be functional at various sizes. In this study, community farm sites represented new visions of agriculture characterized by a better food system than the one existing today. Sites of food production for community farms on public land must be functional for production agriculture while accommodating occasional public use such as seasonal festivals. If infrastructure such as barns and storage facilities are not present on the site they may need to be implemented. Community farms may be integrated within the surrounding environment, such as within an accessible multi-purpose conservation area (i.e., Albion Hills), or segregated from its neighbours in the case of where a farm is located on publicly inaccessible conservation lands adjacent to housing developments as in an urban neighbourhood. Near-urban community farm sites may provide opportunities for farmers living in urban areas to keep their city job while gaining part-time experience in operating a small-scale farm business. In the case of the McVean Farm ‘incubator’ model, the near-urban site of food production provided a stepping stone for urban farmers from non-farm backgrounds or new Canadians from farm- or non-farm
backgrounds to transition from the city, to the near-urban farm and hopefully, after farming for several years, to relocate to rural farms. It is hoped that community farm sites of food production may be structured as multi-functional landscapes that create a supportive social environment in which farmers and a sustainable food system can be fostered at a variety of temporal scales. One key informant commented on the importance of public land: “I think public land is appealing. At the end of the day that land is held in the public interest.” Since both community farms were at different stages of development (i.e., between one to four years) and adopted different operational elements, it is impossible to predict how sites of food production may develop and change over time. However, in the case of the McVean Farm, the study highlighted that significant growth in attracting farmers to the site was achieved in the short-term (i.e., four years) as the farm grew from four original farmers to twenty-one farmers (e.g., full capacity). In fact, one key informant reflected on the implications of community farms, as sites of local food production, to provide future solutions:

I think it is going to be the future. For the local economy, for the ecological way, water and energy. Not only the food. It is the whole thing: people, energy and land. I know I am part of the solution.

6.1.2 Food production methods

Food production methods for community farms may need to meet identified criteria set forth by the public landholder, such as a Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy, which includes land care protocol and best management practices. In this study, community farms were required to operate in accordance with best management practices, adhere to Rules of Good Farm Practice (Appendix 4), and submit an annual report to the public landholder. Food production methods in this study focussed on ecological or organic agriculture principles. Both
community farms in this study had one farmer associated with the farm who provided mechanized farming services with a tractor and implements for planting or cultivating, to other farms on-site (i.e., on a fee-for-service basis). In one case, the farmer was an employee of the farm and in the other case the farmer was an established local farmer from the surrounding rural town.

6.1.3 Supply chains

Short supply chains focussed on direct agricultural marketing to consumers at local arenas of exchange, such as farmers’ markets and CSAs, dominate community farms on near-urban public lands. Several supply chains may be developed by individual farmers in the case where multiple farm enterprises exist on community farms or they may be developed by the management of the non-governmental farm organization. One key informant reflected on the implications for local food systems:

It is playing its part. Whatever this little piece of land can supply locally, it is doing…There is a lot of demand that has to be met. Many vegetables are coming from the US, the Caribbean, and China. That all has to be grown locally and the McVean Farm is doing its part to supply locally whatever it can.

6.1.4 Arena of exchange

In this study, both community farms on public lands included an onsite farm stand which was accessible to consumers during certain days of the week. In the McVean example, the inclusion of an onsite farm stand, or farmers’ market, served as a useful arena of exchange for small-scale farmers (i.e., 0.25 acres) at an early stage of farm business development. However, it was not preferable for more experienced farmers (i.e., 4 acres) with larger amounts of produce to sell who preferred attending larger Saturday farmers’ markets. Even though an on-site farmers’ market or farm stand is likely to produce lower economic returns in the short-term compared to
established farmers markets, it serves as an arena of exchange for very small-scale producers to connect with consumers, sell smaller volumes of produce, and gain valuable marketing experience. Depending on the number of farmers at a community farm and the operational characteristics of the farm, many on-farm and off-farm arenas of exchange may be established. Rural community farms (e.g., Albion Hills Community Farm) may prefer to develop ‘local’ arenas of exchange first within their rural community if there is perceived political and community support for such a place-based community initiative. Urban community farms (e.g., McVean) preferred to service established urban arenas of exchange (e.g., Toronto farmers’ markets) for higher economic returns since proximate relations with the neighbourhood, or community, were not explicitly important. For example, decisions related to arenas of exchange made by individual farm enterprises in the ‘incubator’ model may be primarily based upon economic objectives, while decisions related to arenas of exchange in other community farm models may be based upon a more holistic approach to achieving broader community food objectives (e.g., servicing small rural farmers’ markets).

6.1.5 Producer-consumer interactions

Community farms may involve a variety of producer-consumer interactions depending upon the operational characteristics of the farm. Community farms with a farmer-oriented ‘incubator’ model, such as McVean, may choose to limit producer-consumer interactions in order to minimize distractions to the farmers who are focussed on farm business development and rely upon a functional farm environment. Alternatively, community farms that adopt a multi-functional, place-based approach that are located on public lands integrated within active conservation parks may prefer to encourage producer-consumer interactions in order to maximize exposure to possible consumers and meet other social-ecological objectives. In this
study, both community farms offered at least one accessible annual public event such as an open house or a harvest festival.

6.1.6 Motivations for participation

A variety of motivations underpin the establishment of community farms on public land. The public landholder’s motives of sustainable communities and sustainable near-urban agriculture were described in Chapter Four. The motives of the public landholder will likely be aligned with some of the motives of community farms such as implementing new visions of agriculture which contribute to a variety of social, environmental and economic intentions for more sustainable communities. Motivations for participation of community farm stakeholders may be informed by a transformative desire to provide new opportunities and solutions to a perceived current or future crisis in agriculture. For example, community farms may seek to become established to provide training opportunities for aspiring farmers from non-farm backgrounds or new Canadians in order to address a future crisis in agriculture based upon an anticipated shortage of farmers. Community farms may also become established with a variety of social, economic and environmental intentions in order to develop to a more sustainable ‘local’ or ‘community’ food system for the neighbouring community which may be defined with or without geographic or political boundaries, such as the ‘town’ or the ‘region’. For example, the Albion Hills Community Farm served as a multi-functional place-based initiative that established farm- and community- programming focused on education, local food production and community gardening in order to foster a deeper appreciation and support for local food and farming at the community level.
6.1.7 Constitution of individual and group identities

Depending on the motives of the community farm stakeholders, a variety of individual and group identities are likely to be involved. For example, the McVean ‘incubator’ farm constituted a farmer-focused initiative with primary identities of new Canadians, young urban or second career farmers and community groups. Conversely, the multi-functional community initiative at the Albion Hills Community Farm engaged a diverse array of identities including non-governmental food agencies (e.g., local food, food security, etc.), youth (e.g., schools, camps, outdoor education centres, 4H projects), local farmers (e.g., demonstration plots, custom projects) and partnerships (e.g., world crop projects). At both places there was a common notion or feeling of community which was expressed in multiple ways. For example, one key informant from the Albion Hills Community Farm expressed:

I think community farms are like hubs. They are transparent and people have access to them…At the community farm people go there because they want to learn about compost, or they want a community garden, or they want to see how the farmer does it.

Key informants at the McVean Farm expressed notions of community related to common interests developed amongst farmers rather than with consumers or the broader community. As one key informant noted:

That is why I say it is not a community farm; it is not where the community comes together. It is very individualistic.

Another key informant at the McVean Farm expressed:

There is a community now but we did not strive to build that, it happened organically. You will see there are a lot of interactions between the farmers. There are a lot of fights. There are a lot of supports they draw off each other…They draw strength from each other knowingly and unknowingly. In that sense it is a community but that community might leave. We don’t see ourselves as a community farm in the true sense of the word because it is not run collectively at all. It is like a family of teenage daughters. They are still a family.
Similarly, one McVean farmer reflected:

That is what we like about the McVean Farm. It is a community kind of environment here. All the farmers are doing the same work, having the same objectives and sharing the same problems. That is the best thing about McVean: the community, one group doing one thing in common. We will miss this when we buy a farm, this kind of environment.

6.2 Summary

Community farms on public lands have a variety of implications for local food systems. First, using existing near-urban public agricultural lands such as conservation areas for the establishment of community farms provides new sites for local food production close to the majority of the population in urban areas. In this study, the two farm sites operated on 115.5 acres of land in total, included over 19 farm enterprises, were managed by two non-profit organizations, involved multiple community groups, and employed staff at each site. Since public agricultural lands and farm buildings may become a liability to public landholders in the future, this study exemplified how non-profit farm organizations were able to transform the sites of food productive into innovative spaces with a variety of social, economic and environmental intentions. While only four community farm projects exist on TRCA public land, there are future prospects for other community farms since 1,000 acres are preserved for sustainable near-urban agriculture uses. For example, the public landholder confirmed that as the existing farmer population of the other 884.5 acres of public agricultural land ages and retire more land will become available for community farms. The public landholder is committed to developing more community farm projects though they must wait for the existing farmers to retire and give up the land. Second, community farms on public land adhere to principles of ecological or organic agriculture; therefore, the implications for local food systems is a greater supply of local, organic or ecologically-produced food to local markets in the GTA. Third, community farms focussed on
developing short supply chains which often involved the supply of a diversity of fresh vegetables to local markets and arenas of exchange including farmers’ markets, CSAs, and public and private institutions (e.g., small government cafeterias, restaurants, cafes, small grocers). Fourth, community farms provided an opportunity for a variety of individual and groups to develop viable, ecologically-oriented and economically sustainable farm businesses and social enterprises. Community farms on public land provided opportunities for social, ecological and economic activities at a variety of scales (e.g., individual, organization, community, region) which include a variety of actors such as youth, new Canadians, farmers from non-farm backgrounds, and non-governmental organizations. If public landholders continue to provision public land for community farms certainly more unique sustainable near-urban agricultural projects will arise, each involving a variety of actors, business models and new visions for a future food system and future food economies which are more socially, economically and environmentally oriented than the ones existing today.
Chapter Seven

Synthesis and Conclusions

This thesis adopted a case study approach to explore conditions for the establishment of community farms on public conservation lands and to elucidate how they functioned and how they were emerging as a contributor to the localization of food systems. The intention of this research was not to predict or evaluate actions and outcomes as much as to reveal operational features and document patterns, processes and expectations among stakeholders. The small sample size of two community farms provided rich descriptions of the evolving dynamics at each site and amongst participating groups. This chapter provides a summary of key findings, a reflection on results from the study, and identifies areas for future research.

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

7.1.1 Public Land for Local Food Systems

A key finding of this thesis was the identification of the organizational motives, requirements and intentions regarding the provision of public land for community farms. The data reported in Chapter Four described three inter-related motives of the TRCA which led to the provision of public land to community farms beginning in 2008. They were a sustainable communities’ vision, the deterioration and decline of the agricultural land base and a farmland preservation motive. The overarching motive of the public landholder was to use its public lands to make a contribution to sustainable communities and a strong local food system, since it had historically (i.e., 1947-2007) been taking its land out of agriculture for other uses. The vision for sustainable near-urban agriculture on TRCA lands emphasized an equal focus on local food processes, produce, and systems of production (i.e., who grows it, where, and how much). The
data revealed fourteen broad local food systems objectives of the public landholder which spanned social, economic and environmental elements. These were identified as a broad set of evaluation criteria which the public landholder used to assess new community farm initiatives. These fourteen local food system objectives were largely reflective of common attributes of local food systems in the literature, such as a social equity, democratic participation, economic viability for farmers, ecological production methods, small-scale production and community well-being (Hinrichs, 2003; Feenstra, 1997; Allen, 2010). The findings also identified future prospects for community farms on public lands. At the time of this study, there were four community farms on TRCA lands which comprised approximately 130 acres while 870 acres were leased to farmers engaged in industrialized farming practices. The public landholder asserted that when the existing farmers retired, new community farms would be initiated on public lands. As one key informant explained:

We’d like more farmers at the other sites beyond the four. Our only challenge is that we cannot do it quickly enough. We cannot get the land, the partnerships and the farmers out there quickly enough…

The issue is that we cannot take that land away from a conventional farmer. We are waiting for those people to give it up and than any of those could become community farms.

7.1.2 Co-management and Characteristics of Collaboration

A second key finding of this thesis related to the characteristics of collaboration between public agencies and community farm institutions which were explored using the concept of co-management. The definition of co-management used in this research was a joint problem-solving process between government and civil society groups which aims to foster sustainable livelihoods at the local level (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005; Plummer and Armitage, 2007).
Common underpinnings of co-management are its explicit association with natural resource management, a focus on partnerships between civil society and public actors, and an orientation toward understanding it as a process of continual problem-solving, collaboration, and social learning (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005; Plummer and Armitage, 2007). Understanding co-management as a joint problem-solving process that requires collaboration and on-going dialogue is useful since divergent views and misunderstanding are inherent in the complex relational networks associated with community farms. For example, data reported in Chapter Four identified complexities and misunderstandings related to the multiple uses of community farms on public lands and divergent views related to dialogue. This revealed that complications are to be anticipated on community farms due to their complex relational networks involving multiple public and private actors and the plurality of use of the land (i.e., agriculture and restoration). Data revealed that while these partnerships were noted as important to both parties, a need for better dialogue was reported by community farm respondents. This further demonstrates the need for both parties to understand community farms as partnerships which require continual problem-solving processes. For example, some community farm respondents noted they wanted the ability to talk directly to the multiple TRCA departments associated with their community farm, but they were not yet allowed. As one key informant summarized:

    Everything needs to go through one person at TRCA…But I understand why…they are still trying to figure out their policies around some of this stuff and what they can agree to do. I understand they want to be in control of it to some degree.

The following summarize the key findings regarding communication, negotiation and regulation between the TRCA and community farms:

- Community farm key informants identified a need for better dialogue with other public landholder departments and key informants or recommended a bridging organization;
• Restoration and naturalization projects implemented by the public landholder created difficulties for community farm organizations which need to be better managed and communicated;

• Public landholders enabled and created spaces for innovative projects on public lands which consequently required clear rights and responsibilities and on-going dialogue given their complex nature; and

• Contentious negotiations are to be expected related to infrastructure or property improvements on public land (e.g., facilitating municipal water supply to properties).

7.1.3 Democratizing Local Food Systems

A third key finding of this thesis related to the how the constitutive operational and structural elements of community farms were oriented toward democratizing local food systems (Koc, 2010; Lyson, 2008) based on new personalized, sustainable visions for local food systems (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Holloway et al., 2007; Lyson, 2008). Data revealed that these visions were implemented largely at the community level by civil society networks led by non-government organizations (e.g., FarmStart or Albion Hills Community Farm).

As one key informant expressed:

I think this movement started off at the very grassroots level: the local food movement, the organic movement, and so on…I think the change is going to happen from here. Policymakers are eventually going to wake up to this after the movement has gathered a bit of speed. I only hope I live to see that day.

While the McVean Farm was explicitly oriented toward democratizing the local food system by providing spaces for new farmers, the Albion Hills Community Farm developed a multi-functional project where food was at the centre of a place-based community initiative.
Data presented in Chapter Five and Chapter Six using a methodological framework for understanding local food initiatives (Holloway et al., 2007) reflected the complexity, geographic specificity and heterogeneity of each community farm exemplar showing how each represented a space for local food system change at the local level (Blay-Palmer, 2010). Key findings from Chapter Five and Chapter Six regarding the potential of community farms to democratize (Lyson, 2008, p.19) local food systems are presented below.

i) Farmer production

The McVean Farm was explicitly oriented toward creating a more just and democratic local food system by providing spaces for new farmers. Its focus was on providing land and a supportive social environment for new farmers to develop economically-viable and ecologically-oriented farm businesses. Key informants argued that the provision of space to train, support and mentor new farmers was an essential requirement for the future sustainability of local food systems. In fact, key informants explicitly noted that discourse on local food system was too focussed on consumption aspects of food (e.g., who is eating it, why, how good it tastes) rather than on production elements of local food systems; that is, farmers. For example, one key informant asserted:

The McVean Farm is helping to build the people who will eventually build our local food systems. Without those people, you are missing the first brick of the whole system.

Another key informant noted:

Everything we have done at FarmStart is in response to what we see our farmers needing. The incubator farm is a really important piece for some people who are trying to get into food production. It provides access to land, equipment, infrastructure and mentorship.

Specifically, data indicated that the most prominent group identity at the McVean Farm was that of new Canadians. 80 per cent of the population of farmers at the McVean Farm were new Canadian immigrants from over 15 countries (Pajwani, 2012). These findings suggest that near-
urban community farms on public lands provide unique opportunities to engage new Canadian populations as possible future farmers for Ontario. They provide a supportive social environment in which the necessary skills and experience can be acquired to prepare new farmers for operating their own rural farm businesses.

ii) Multi-functional project with food at the centre of a place-based community initiative

The Albion Hills Community Farm served as a space for local food system change at the local level (Blay-Palmer, 2010) by providing community-based programming focused on local food production, education, community gardens and food systems thinking. Its vision for a more democratic local food system was as much about local food production as it was about youth engagement (e.g., schools, 4H), community gardens, increasing the supply of local food to local markets and developing new partnerships (e.g., world crops). Data from Chapter Five and Chapter Six revealed that the Albion Hills Community farm represented a multifunctional place-based initiative at the community scale rather than a farmer-focussed model. This was identified as an important distinguishing feature between the two community farms since the McVean Farm explicitly did not engage the community in the farm and the Albion Hills Community Farm was premised upon community engagement. One key informant noted that community access was an important component in a variety of aspects:

I think community farms are like hubs. They are transparent and people have access to them. You could have an organic farmer down the road, and you could see him at the farmers’ market. You might be interested and you might be able to go to the farm but it is more of a close door thing – they are running a business and you are buying from them.

Whereas, at the community farm people go there because they want to learn how to manage compost, or they want a community garden, or they want to see how the farmer does it. Come to the community farm and find out.
The establishment of community-scale connections with other organizations and institutions was a key component of this community farm. For example, key informants from the farm provided input into a local food strategy developed by the Town of Caledon. They developed a partnership with the local municipal cafeteria in order to supply local food to the cafeteria once per week. They also developed connections with like-minded community food organizations, such as the Palgrave Community Kitchen, in order to provide workshops related to food preparation (e.g., preserving seasonal local foods). Similarly, they developed community garden programs for youth such as the local 4H club. As one key informant noted:

One thing I really like is how the farm is connecting with the 4H group. The agricultural community talks about the aging agricultural population, farm succession and the reluctance of the younger generation to want to get into farming because the work is not profitable. However, I think working with the youth where they decide what they want to grow, how they want to grow it, and the marketing side. I think we are showing another generation of what can happen in a local food system…We are teaching a new way of thinking to a new generation of farmers.

In sum, the Albion Hills Community Farm represented a multi-functional project with food at the centre of a place-based initiative. It represents a rural example which sought to engage the community in reconstituting new possible modes of production, new partnerships and demonstration projects which exemplified the importance of civil society (e.g., youth, schools, farmers) as the drivers of change for more democratic local food system.

7.2 Reflection on Results

This research set out to explore conditions for the establishment of community farms on public lands and to elucidate how they function and how they are contributing to local food systems. This section summarizes the results of the research, addresses scholarly and practical contributions and considers areas for future research.
Chapter Four presented the conditions for the establishment of an emerging form of local food initiative, the community farm, on public conservation lands in Ontario. The definition of community farms as working landscapes that integrate farmers into a supportive social environment to facilitate the development of sustainable local food systems was reflective of the structural and operational characteristics of community farms in this study (Wittman, 2009). Local food production, education and training regarding local food systems processes and practices, conservation in a variety of realms though focused on agricultural activities as they fit with ongoing local food systems development, and public access were features of the community farms in this study (Wittman, 2009). While the McVean Farm in this study did not self-identify as a community farm it fit the definition used for the purpose of this study. By exploring characteristics of community farms in Chapter Four, this study highlighted how civil society farm organizations (e.g., NGOs) were able to transform the sites of food productive into multi-functional spaces with a variety of social, economic and environmental intentions.

Chapter Five of this research study identified and characterized key structural and operational characteristics of community farms and explored how they functioned as a contributor to the localization of food systems. The findings suggest that using existing near-urban public agricultural lands such as conservation areas for the establishment of community farms provides new sites for local food production close to the majority of the population in urban areas. Community farms on public land in this case study adhered to principles of ecological or organic agriculture, and therefore the implications for local food systems was a greater supply of local, organic or ecologically-produced food to local markets. Community farms also focussed on developing short supply chains which often involved the supply of a diversity of fresh vegetables to local markets and arenas of exchange including farmers’ markets,
CSAs, and public and private institutions (e.g., small government cafeterias, restaurants, cafes, small grocers) while eliminating the many aspects of the food-chain often associated with the industrial food system model. Community farms provided an opportunity for a variety of individuals and groups to develop viable, ecologically-oriented and economically sustainable farm businesses. They provided opportunities for social, ecological and economic activities at a variety of scales which included multiple identities including youth, new Canadians, farmers from non-farm backgrounds, and non-governmental organizations. In conclusion, if public landholders continue to provision public land for community farms certainly more unique models will arise, each involving a variety of actors, business models and new visions for a future food system and future food economies that are more socially, economically and environmentally oriented than the ones existing today.

7.2.1 Scholarly contributions

This study has enhanced understanding of local food systems by contextualizing an emergent and distinctive local food initiative which has been relatively unexplored in the literature; that is, the community farm on public land. It has incorporated ideas and themes from broad bodies of literature in local food systems and co-management of natural resources to demonstrate that the establishment of community farms is a novel approach to the development of local food systems on public land which requires the sharing of natural resources between the State (or state agencies) and communities of resource users (Carlsson & Berkes, 2005; Plummer & Armitage, 2007a; Plummer & Armitage, 2007). This study has provided evidence that collaboration is an essential element of community farms which involves on-going communication, negotiation and regulatory partnerships between civil society and public agencies (i.e., TRCA). By using a case study approach that adopted interdisciplinary
methodological tools from co-management (i.e., network mapping and framework of collaboration) and local food systems (i.e., heuristic analytical framework) this study has furthered understanding of the nuanced social, economic and ecological contexts in which community farms as a distinctive type of local food initiative emerge (Blay-Palmer, 2008) and develop over time (Renting, 2003). It has also provided evidence that these interdisciplinary methodological tools provide a comprehensive and convenient framework for understanding both the local food system elements and the co-management elements of community farms on public lands. In fact, Hinrich (2010) advocates for local food researchers to adopt more interdisciplinary approaches for advancing understandings of local food systems in theory and practice.

7.2.2 Practical contributions

Community farms on public lands are complex local food initiatives involving multiple interests, multiple uses of public lands, and complex relational networks. While only four exist today in practice on TRCA lands, this study identified future prospects for establishing more community farms in the future. The results of this research will be provided to the participants in the study (i.e., public landholder and community farms) in order to provide a platform for shared understanding and also for future research. It is hoped that the results will provide new insights to public landholder and community farm participants especially in relation to recommendations for developing stronger mutual understanding of the complexities of dialogue, communication, partnerships and plurality of use of the land. These results could also provide practical contributions to new community farms that may be working with a public landholder for the first time and want to develop a deeper understanding of their motives, intentions, and requirements.
Finally, the various operational and structural features of community farm presented in this study may provide practical ideas to aspiring community farms wanting to develop similar initiatives.

### 7.2.3 Areas for Future Research

While this research study focused on one of 36 conservation authorities in Ontario, there is an opportunity for further research to explore future prospects for community farms on other public agricultural lands including conservation lands, municipal lands, and federal lands. An inventory of public agricultural lands by sector would provide an opportunity for public agencies, civil society agencies and farmers to identify new opportunities to establish community farms on public lands in a way that benefits both parties through a collaborative approach to co-management that offers long-term tenure arrangements. There is an opportunity within Ontario to specifically determine the existing inventory of public agricultural lands held by conservation authorities and to determine ideas related to their future use. As one research participant asserted:

> We would love a survey of all conservation authorities in Ontario to determine their agricultural land holdings and their ideas around what to do with them. We have done a rough estimate on the amount of public conservation lands in Ontario that could be used for food production. Our estimate is that we could feed one million people off of the land that conservation authorities held if we were conservative about the number of acres that they would put into production.

There are also opportunities to further research the various models of community farms that are emerging on public lands, and to evaluate their social, economic and environmental impacts.
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Appendix 1: Copy of Research Participant Information Letter & Consent Form
Research Participant Information Letter & Consent Form

Re: Community Farms in Ontario: Exploring Prospects for Local Food on Public Land

June 14, 2011

Mrs. …..
President, Albion Hills Community Farm
16555 Humber Station Road
Caledon, Ontario

Dear ….,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our research project dealing with community farms and local food on public land in Ontario. The central purpose of our research is to understand the necessary material, human and community conditions for the establishment of community farms on public land. As community farms on public land are new in Ontario (e.g., since 2008 with TRCA), we are interested in researching how they function as a distinctive type of local food initiative and what their implications are for meeting local food objectives. Our research is focussed on four near-urban community farm sites on TRCA public land in the Humber River watershed (i.e., McVean Farm in Brampton, Albion Hills Community Farm in Caledon, Toronto Urban Farm in Toronto and the Kortright Farm in Vaughan).

The participation of Albion Hills Community Farm is vital to our work and your time and insights are greatly appreciated. In order to make the most efficient use of your time we have included a list of questions for your review that will be discussed with you and other ‘key’ members from your organization when we meet. Feel free to jot down any thoughts about these questions.

Please be assured that any and all information that is provided through the interview will be treated as confidential and only reported in a general fashion. If a specific comment is made that
we would like to use in our report we will ask permission – and even then it would be quoted anonymously. We will respect your wishes in all cases concerning the interview process, including eventual withdrawals from the project. Please also be aware that you are free to answer any question(s) you would prefer not to answer.

Thank you again for your contribution in this project. Please contact either of us if there are any questions on the above or any other issues you may wish to discuss. We look forward to meeting you soon.

Best regards,

Deanna Coop (Graduate Research Assistant)  John Smithers (Professor & Chair)
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Hi, my name is Deanna Coop and I’m a graduate student at the University of Guelph. Thank you for taking part in our research dealing with community farms and local food on public land in Ontario. The term community farm is a relatively new term used to describe working landscapes which integrate local food producers into a supportive social environment to facilitate the long-term development of a sustainable food system. Activities on community farms may include local food production, environmental education, agricultural mentorship and training, conservation, and social services. As you may be aware, community farms are emerging on public lands in Ontario providing new prospects for local food and exciting opportunities for research. This research is being undertaken in the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph under the direction of Dr. John Smithers. As the lead field researcher, I am working toward a graduate degree in geography and this research forms an important part of my studies.

The purpose of this project is to understand the necessary conditions for the creation of near-urban community farms on public land. We would like to understand your motivation for establishing a community farm on public land; and the details of the farm site and enterprise. In addition, we would like to understand how the community perceives the value of these farms.

Our research involves the collection of information concerning your farm operation through a personal interview at a place and time that is convenient for you. We hope in most cases this would involve a visit to the farm. We are asking for no more than 1 hour of your time— but if you wish our chat to be either shorter or longer that’s fine. A summary of the final results of the study will be provided to you (by mail) if you wish to receive them. In addition we hope to share our findings with other farmers, farm groups, and government landholders and with people interested in promoting similar farming models on public land. We sincerely hope that the research will provide benefits to farmers, public landholders and community members.

It is standard practice at the University of Guelph to inform all study participants of their rights and our obligations to them. Please note the following items:
Rights of Participants

1. You may decline to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study.

2. You may withdraw your consent at any time and/or have the information you provided removed without any consequences to you.

3. You can expect the researchers to treat you with respect and courtesy and honour any reasonable requests you may make for the scheduling of interviews or examination of the information we have taken down.

4. You are not waiving any legal rights of any kind because of your participation in this research project.

Confidentiality

5. Your information will only be used for our research purposes and will not be shared with external parties (competitors, etc.). We do intend to summarize our findings for research participants— but only in a general way.

6. Your identity and personal details are confidential. We will not identify you in the reporting of results. Any quotations from interviews used to illustrate a point will not be attributed to the speaker unless permission is given to do so.

Risks and Benefits

7. There are no foreseeable risks of any kind associated with this research

8. In recognition of your contribution of valuable time we can offer a payment of $30 at the conclusion of this interview

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator Telephone: 519-824-4120 ext. 56606
University of Guelph E-mail: reb@uoguelph.ca
437 University Centre Fax: 519-821-5236
Guelph, ON. N1G2W1
Thank you for participating in this study and sharing your ideas and experiences. We will be very pleased to provide any additional information you might want either now, or in the days and weeks following our interview. If you have any questions or comments about the research please feel free to contact either of us at the addresses below:

John Smithers (Professor & Chair)  
Department of Geography  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, ON. N1G2W1  
519-824-4120 (ext. 56722)  
jsmither@uoguelph.ca

Deanna Coop (Graduate Research Assistant)  
Department of Geography  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, ON. N1G2W1  
647-227-0226  
dcoop@uoguelph.ca

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT:**

_I have read the information provided for the study “Community farms in Ontario: Exploring Prospects for Local Food on Public Land”. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form for my records._

________________________  ___________________________  _________  
Name (please print)  Signature  Date

**SIGNATURE OF WITNESS:**

________________________  __________  
Signature  Date
Appendix 2: Copy of Public Landholder Interview Guide
Interview Guide for Public Landholder Key Informants

Objective 1. To reveal organizational motives, requirements and intentions regarding the provision of public lands for community farms.

Question Set 1:

1. Please describe your motives for provisioning (i.e., leasing) public lands to community farms.

2. Please describe your intention for provisioning public lands to community farms.

Prompts:

Describe policies and procedures which permit the lease of public lands to community farms.

Explain the events leading up to the development of such policies and procedures.

Describe the number and type of community farms that exist on TRCA land.

What is the short-term and long-term intention for provisioning public lands to community farms?

3. Describe the requirements for provisioning (i.e., leasing) public lands to community farms.

Prompts:

How is public land designated for lease to community farms?

Explain the recruitment process for establishing community farms on public lands.

What are the expectations of community farms on public lands?
Describe how the performance of community farms is evaluated and measured.

**Question Set 2:**

1. **The following questions relate to collaboration, negotiation and decision-making between public landholders and community farms.**

   a. In your experience, are there multiple types of stakeholders present on community farms? If yes, please explain.

   b. In your experience, is there a diversity of interests represented on community farms? If yes, please explain.

   c. In your experience, do you believe that dialogue between the TRCA and community farms helps build consideration and appreciation? If yes, please explain.

   d. In your experience, do you believe perspectives between TRCA and community farms are exchanged and modified through communication? If yes, please explain.

   e. In your experience, do you believe decisions between the TRCA and community farm are reached through dialogue? If yes, please explain.

   f. In your opinion, do you believe diverse inputs exist in decision making between the TRCA and community farms. If yes, please explain.

2. What activities are permitted on public lands leased to community farms?

3. How are problems related to the management of community farms on public land resolved?

4. What are the short-term, medium-term and long-term tasks and management decisions to be made at community farms? Who is entitled to make decisions for each task?
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Short-term</strong></th>
<th>Who makes management decisions?</th>
<th><strong>Medium-term</strong></th>
<th>Who makes management decisions?</th>
<th><strong>Long-term</strong></th>
<th>Who makes management decisions?</th>
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<td>Site 1 (McVean)</td>
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<td>Site 2 (Albion Hills)</td>
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**Question Set 3:**

In your opinion, how do community farms on public land meet local food objectives?
Appendix 3: Copy of Interview Guide for Community Farm Organization Key Informants
Interview Guide for Community Farm Organization Key Informants

**Objective 1.** To reveal organizational motives, requirements and intentions regarding the establishment of community farms on public lands.

**Question Set 1:**

1. Please describe your *motives* for establishing this community farm on public land.

*Prompts:*

Describe your community farm organization and the events leading up to its establishment.

Does your community farm organization operate at this one site only or at multiple sites? Explain.

What attracted you to establishing a community farm at this site?

2. Please describe your *intention* for establishing this community farm on public land.

*Prompts:*

What is the intention for this community farm on public land?

Describe the mission and mandate of your community farm on public land.

Describe the short-term and long-term intentions for this community farm.

3. List the *activities* performed at your community farm. Who participates in these activities?
**Activities**  
Local Food Production  
Agricultural Mentorship/Training  
Environmental Education  
Social Services/Public Access  
Conservation  
Other (please specify)

**Who participates**

**Question Set 2:**

1. **The following questions relate to collaboration, negotiation and decision-making between community farms and public landholders.**

a. In your experience, are there multiple types of stakeholders present on your community farm. If yes, please explain.

b. In your experience, is there a diversity of interests represented on your community farm? If yes, please explain.

c. In your experience, do you believe that dialogue between the public landholder (TRCA) and your community farm helps builds consideration and appreciation? If yes, please explain.

d. In your experience, do you believe perspectives between the public landholder (TRCA) and your community farm are exchanged and modified through communication? If yes, please explain.

e. In your experience, do you believe decisions between the TRCA and your community farm are reached through dialogue? If yes, please explain.

f. In your opinion, do you believe diverse inputs exist in decision making between the TRCA and your community farm. If yes, please explain.

3. How are problems related to the management of your community farms on public land resolved?
4. What are the short-term, medium-term and long-term tasks and management decisions to be made at your community farm? Who is entitled to make decisions for each task?

| Site 1 (McVean) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Short-term**  | Who makes       | **Medium-term** | Who makes       | **Long-term**  | Who makes       |
|                 | management      |                 | management      |                 | management      |
|                 | decisions?      |                 | decisions?      |                 | decisions?      |

**Question Set 3:**

In your opinion, how does your community farm on public land meet local food objectives?
Objective 2. Identify and characterize key structural and operational commonalities and differences among and between selected community farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heuristic analytical field (variables) (Holloway et al., 2007)</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Site of food production</td>
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<td>Food production methods</td>
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<td>Supply chain</td>
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<td>Arena of exchange</td>
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<td>Producer-consumer interaction</td>
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<td>Motivations for participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constitution of individual and group identities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question Set One:

1. **Site of food production**
   Describe the site(s) of food production at your community farm.
   
   **Prompts:**
   Is there one main site of food production or multiple sites?
   How large is the community farm site (i.e., acres)?
   What outbuildings or capital assets do you have onsite (e.g., barn, greenhouse)?
   Tell us about the history of this site and its prior agricultural uses?
   When did you obtain this site?
   How has the site of food production changed since you’ve had it?

2. **Food production methods**
   Describe the food production methods used at your community farm.
   
   **Prompts:**

iii) Interview Guide for Community Farm Organization Farm Managers
After request for resources (e.g., farm plan, annual reporting requirements, community farm reporting documents, policies/procedures, etc.)
How many food producers are there onsite? What methods do they use? Describe the types of crops and products grown at the community farm site (e.g., market garden crops, field crops, greenhouse products).

3. Supply chain

Describe the local food supply chains at the community farm.

Draw as many supply chains that you know exist on your community farm.
   Farmer (producer) →→→→→→→→→→→→→ Customer (consumer)

Prompts:
How many different local food supply chains exist at your community farm? Describe how the local food products and crops from the community farm get from the farmer(s) to the consumer (e.g., direct marketing, CSA, farmers’ markets, wholesale)?

4. Arena of exchange

Describe the arenas of exchange for products and crops from your community farm noting their geographic location (e.g., St. Lawrence Market, Toronto; CSA, Brampton)?

Prompts
Describe how and where farmers at your community farm sell their crops and products? Identify the number and location of CSAs, farmers markets, farm gate sales, restaurants, wholesale that are used by your community farm? List as many arenas of exchange that you know exist for your community farm.

5. Producer-consumer interaction

Describe the interactions between producers and consumers at your community farm – both onsite and offsite?

Prompts
How many producers are there at the community farm (identify the # of paid, volunteer and intern farmers)? Approximately how many consumers are served by the community farm? Describe how farmers (producers) interact with consumers at the community farm?
Are there regular opportunities for consumers to participate in activities at the community farm?
Describe how farmers (producers) interact with consumers offsite of the community farm?

6. **Motivations for participation**
   In your opinion, what motivates farmers (producers) to participate in your community farm?
   Have you conducted producer surveys on this topic?
   In your opinion, what motivates consumers to buy from your community farm?
   Have you conducted consumer surveys on this topic?

7. **Constitution of individual and group identities**
   List the individual and group identities at the farm (use a diagram if helpful).

   Individual identities       Group identities (e.g., 4-H garden club)

**Question Set 2:**

In your opinion, how does your community farm meet local food objectives?
Appendix 4: Rules of Good Farm Practice for Community Farms on Public Lands
1. The tenant agrees to carry out proper cultivation practices in compliance with recognized crop production methods.

2. All manure shall be promptly removed from the immediate barn area and shall not be placed or be permitted to lie against the walls of any buildings on the said property.

3. Areas under cultivation must be tilled and maintained in accordance to sound ecological farming practices, and shall be seeded down in a good and workmanlike manner with a suitable cover crop or a mixture of legumes and grasses equivalent to the current "Field Crop Recommendations for Ontario" published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

4. All straw and manure arising out of the farm operations must be utilized in fertilizing the areas under cultivation or grazing in each and every year of the lease; including the last year. It must not be removed from the property or otherwise disposed of without the approval of the landlord in writing.

5. The responsibility of control of noxious weeds as laid down in the Weed Control Act of Ontario shall rest upon the tenant and the landlord shall have the right to have weeds destroyed at the expense of the tenant.

6. All seed grain sown shall be of a quality equivalent to or better than the "Commercial" grade as defined by the Seeds Act, Canada Department of Agriculture.

7. All orchard, fruit, shade or ornamental trees on the property shall be carefully pruned and cared for as often as they may require it and protected from horses, cattle or sheep.

8. All woodlots, beaver or muskrat swamps, watersheds, ponds or springs shall be preserved in their natural state and where necessary fenced to restrain persons or domestic animals from use and trespass thereon.

9. The tenant shall keep all underdrains, ditches or watercourses open and free from obstructions and in good running order and the tenant shall exercise normal erosion control.

10. The tenant agrees that the number and head of livestock kept on the property shall at all times be in proper relationship to the acreages cropped and/or grazed.
Appendix 5: Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy
1.0 PURPOSE
The purpose of this policy is to permit and encourage agricultural uses for lands owned and directly managed by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA).

All TRCA agricultural land holdings are defined as "near urban" based on their location in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

This policy is to be read in conjunction with TRCA’s Operational Procedures and Guidelines for Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture (draft).

TRCA recognizes that agricultural land is a vital resource, which must be conserved, and that progressive environmental stewardship in the farming/agricultural sector will be a requirement for TRCA to collectively realize The Living City vision for a healthy, attractive, sustainable urban region extending into the 22nd century, based on a foundation of Healthy Rivers and Shorelines, Regional Biodiversity, Sustainable Communities and Business Excellence. A vision for sustainable near-urban agriculture on TRCA lands includes the use of diverse crops and innovative and sustainable agricultural production methods, (i.e. a combination of appropriate technology, Environmental Goods and Services (EG&S), Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs), Community Shared Agriculture (CSA), and community gardens, etc.) which may be on a smaller scale than the typical agri-food industry approach and do not compromise other TRCA objectives (i.e., the Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy, The Living City objectives).

Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture can be defined as:

…. the practice of growing food and production of livestock in a way that preserves and enhances the environment, provides economic opportunity and good health for individuals and communities, and connects people to the land around them. It generally avoids long-distance travel, striving instead to create fresh, healthy produce for local consumption. It focuses on both processes and produce. It is as much about the systems that create our food (i.e., who grows it, where, and how much) as it is about the food itself (Adapted from The Food Project: http://www.thefoodproject.org/agriculture/index.asp).

Planning Frameworks
An analysis of regional Official Plans and strategic plans in TRCA’s jurisdiction (regions of York, Peel and Durham) was undertaken to determine the range and direction of agricultural policy in TRCA’s jurisdiction. The following themes were found to be consistent:
• Protection of Prime Agricultural Areas for long-term agricultural use. Prime Agricultural Areas consist of areas where prime agricultural lands predominate (class 1 to 3 soils for Peel Region, class 1 to 4 for York Region and class 1 to 3 for Durham Region under the Canada Land Inventory System).

• Implementation of BMPs, conservation measures and sustainable farming practices that will protect agricultural lands and minimize negative impacts to the environment.

• Promotion of economic viability for the agricultural industry.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan are also two strong pieces of provincial legislation that recognize these issues as a concern for the future of agriculture in Ontario. These plans are guided by the Provincial Policy Statement which requires regional and local municipalities to protect Prime Agricultural Areas and lands. Agricultural lands are designated Protected Countryside in the Greenbelt Plan (which covers the existing Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan area). The Protected Countryside contains an Agricultural System, Prime Agricultural Areas and rural areas which are designated within municipal Official Plans.

An analysis of TRCA agricultural related plans and staff reports (i.e. Rouge and Humber River watershed plans) also acknowledge the above issues identified in provincial and regional planning frameworks, including the need to:

• Establish a permanent agricultural base to ensure a local food source for the GTA.

• Provide opportunities for community economic development by helping to reduce the number of imports and by creating jobs and meaningful work for the local people.

• Reduce TRCA’s jurisdictional ecological footprint by providing locally grown, raised and sold food, reducing food miles and greenhouse gas emissions related to food transportation and help reduce the impacts of climate change.

• Provide a space for celebrating the cultural diversity of communities by growing a diverse range of crops.

• Promote social equity and food security in communities by providing opportunities for increased accessibility to fresh, healthy foods.

• Partner with organizations to pilot and implement on TRCA lands, sustainable agricultural practices and programs which include BMPs and EG&S.

• Partner with existing organizations to develop innovative educational programming focused on themes of sustainable near-urban agriculture including agricultural BMPs, food security, food sources and food costs.

• Support the implementation of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan.

Agricultural Context
TRCA’s agricultural objectives framework expands upon provincial and regional planning frameworks and builds on the GTA Agricultural Action Plan initiative. Near-urban agriculture is essential for fulfilling TRCA’s Sustainable Communities objective under The Living City vision:

"The quality of life on Earth is being determined in rapidly expanding city regions. Our vision is for a new kind of community, The Living City, where human settlement can flourish forever as part of nature’s beauty and diversity."
TRCA can play a role in helping to revitalize agriculture in the GTA by conserving its current inventory of agricultural lands and by making its lands available to near-urban agriculture. In order for farming to be viable in TRCA’s jurisdiction, the adjacent farm communities must be supported as well. TRCA will lead by example and work with municipalities within its jurisdiction to implement sustainable near-urban agricultural practices on its land.

2.0 SCOPE
TRCA currently has approximately 409 hectares (ha) of land that it directly manages in agricultural use. 382 ha are in the Humber River watershed, 9 ha in Rouge River watershed (outside Rouge Park), and 18 ha in the Duffins and Carruthers watersheds combined. TRCA lands within the Rouge Park are excluded from this policy. The Rouge Park currently does not have an agriculture policy in place. However, references to agriculture in the Rouge Park can be found in the Rouge Park Management Plan (1994). It is anticipated that an agriculture policy will be developed for the Rouge Park in the future. The policy does not apply to TRCA land under management agreement with municipalities or other agencies.

This policy affects all employees, existing and new tenants, lease agreements, partners, or any entity that may use, monitor, or support sustainable near-urban agricultural initiatives on land owned and directly managed by TRCA.

3.0 DEFINITIONS
Definitions for all terms that are italicized in this policy can be found in Appendix A.

4.0 POLICY

Existing Tenancy
The following is applicable to all existing tenants on lands owned and directly managed by TRCA:

- Existing tenants are permitted to apply for lease extensions for a period up to five years at the time of renewal if all terms and conditions of the lease agreement are fulfilled, including a completed Canada-Ontario Environmental Farm Plan (EFP). Existing tenants without an EFP will be subject to a revised lease agreement that incorporates new environmental and agricultural stewardship practices outlined in the EFP.
- TRCA will continue to work with existing tenants who have a valid EFP to help them meet the terms and conditions of the EFP over a mutually agreed period of time.
- Existing tenants must adhere to all applicable local, provincial and federal environmental laws and regulations and additional standards set by TRCA for the property EFP including those identified in site assessments and other conservation policies and plans.

New Agricultural Proposals
- As lands become available (through leases that have been terminated or cancelled), TRCA will investigate suitable, sustainable near-urban agriculture opportunities and/or advertise through a “Call for Proposals”.

Proposal submission and review must follow TRCA’s Operational Procedures and Guidelines for Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture (draft).

- Proposals must adhere to TRCA’s Principles for Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture on TRCA Lands identified in the Operational Procedures and Guidelines for Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture (draft).
- Successful proposals will be matched to available TRCA lands according to project scope, land-use capabilities and site restrictions.

**Infrastructure and Land Use to Support Near-Urban Agriculture Needs**

a) The following infrastructure and land use investments and requirements to support near-urban agriculture are the responsibility of the tenant:

- All certification (i.e., organic, Local Food Plus, etc.).
- All required soil testing and analysis.
- Application of soil amendments, pest and weed control products in accordance with generally accepted practices (i.e., TRCA’s Pest Management Policy).
- Implementation of BMPs and the EFP.
- Securing surface and groundwater or municipal water supplies and distribution system.
- Ensuring infrastructure and land use investments are in compliance with Official Plans, policies, municipal zoning and bylaws, and all applicable TRCA Land Management Plans and additional TRCA programs and policies.

b) TRCA at anytime may request from the tenant in writing, proof of compliance with Official Plans, policies, municipal zoning and bylaws or other requirements as they arise.

c) Any infrastructure and land use investments and requirements to support near-urban agriculture which are not included in the lease agreement will be subject to TRCA approval.

**Lease Agreements**

The following are the general terms and conditions that apply to all farm leases on TRCA lands:

- No person shall implement agricultural practices except under a lease issued by TRCA.
- Leases up to five years will be permitted.
- Pursuant to the Conservation Authorities Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.27, any lease over five years requires approval from the Minister of Natural Resources.
- Tenants pay fair-market rental rates through lease agreements unless other arrangements are made between TRCA and the tenant due to circumstances that provide desired benefits to TRCA and the tenant.
- Financial considerations (e.g. reduced rental rates) may be considered for tenants who financially invest to pursue sustainable agricultural initiatives on TRCA lands.
- Lease agreements are site-specific and will be negotiated accordingly.
- Lease agreements are subject to terms and conditions and BMP prescriptions that must be followed by the tenant.
**Organic Certification and Other Certification Programs**

- TRCA recognizes that farmers are important stewards of our environment and encourages farmers to use sustainable farming practices that are a holistic approach to agriculture, encompassing environmental, social and economic aspects of the farm enterprise.
- TRCA does not exclusively promote certified organic agriculture or any other certification programs for its agricultural lands and practices, although the rigorous standards in organic certification can prove an effective way for a farmer to convey their ecological management practices to the end consumer.
- TRCA recognizes the broad range of certification for food safety, pesticides, food labeling and on farm management.
- Tenants are responsible for having all appropriate certification(s) in place to substantiate promotional and marketing messages.

**Permitted Agriculture and Related Uses**

a). Agriculture uses include:

- growing legal crops, including grains, alfalfa, heirloom and current varieties of fruits and vegetables and horticulture;
- raising livestock;
- apiaries;
- agro-forestry;
- maple syrup production; and
- associated on farm buildings and structures, including accommodation for farm labour that is in accordance with Official Plans, policies, municipal zoning and bylaws.

b). Related uses include:

- farm-related uses that are small scale and directly related to the primary farm operation (such as roadside stands to sell produce, maple syrup production and other value-added products);
- activities associated with on farm buildings and structures, which include:
  - Farmers’ Markets;
  - Pick-Your-Own;
  - On-Farm Shops;
  - Cooperative Food Stores.

**Prohibited Use**

TRCA agricultural lands may not be used for:

- political propaganda, rallies or other public demonstrations;
- unlawful activities;
- activities that conflict with TRCA policies;
- uses that contravene applicable legislation or policies or municipal by-laws.

**Land Monitoring, Maintenance and Insurance**

Tenants must take full responsibility for establishing, monitoring and maintaining the site, including insurance coverage satisfactory to TRCA and to satisfy such other conditions as TRCA may require.
**Enforcement**
In the event of non-compliance with the lease agreement by any person or persons, TRCA shall have the right, at its sole discretion to terminate leases at anytime as directed by the Authority.

**Delegation of Authority**
Conservation Lands and Property Services staff is authorized to enforce this policy with the technical support of Watershed Specialists and Stewardship staff.

**Accompanying Policies**
TRCA Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Operational Procedures and Guidelines. All farm tenants using TRCA lands must adhere to all applicable environmental laws and regulations and additional standards set by TRCA in the Operational Procedures and Guidelines for Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture (draft).

**Review Cycle**
This policy is to be reviewed every five years or earlier with cause to do so, as determined by TRCA. Lease agreements and EFPs will be reviewed every three years or earlier with cause to do so, as determined by TRCA.
REFERENCES

Ontario Environmental Farm Plan Coalition. 2004. The 3rd Edition Canada-Ontario Environmental Farm Plan Program Workbook. Canada: Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF).


APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)
Practical, affordable approaches to conserving a farm's soil and water resources without sacrificing productivity.
Source: http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/environment/bmp/series.htm

Canada-Ontario Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)
Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) are assessments voluntarily prepared by farm families to increase their environmental awareness in up to 23 different areas on their farm. Through the EFP local workshop process, farmers will highlight their farm’s environmental strengths identify areas of environmental concern, and set realistic action plans with time tables to improve environmental conditions. Environmental cost-share programs are available to assist in implementing projects.
Source: http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/environment/efp/efp.htm

Community Gardens
Community Gardens are commonly shared spaces on public or private lands where individuals work together to grow and care for vegetables, flowers and native plant species for their own consumption/use. The gardeners divide responsibilities amongst themselves to organize, maintain and manage the garden area. Other forms include: school gardens, youth leadership projects, or communal growing projects where people grow food for the food bank. Another approach is a communal field where farmers share the responsibility of producing a crop where the cash proceeds are donated to local food banks and similar FoodShare organizations.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
Community Supported Agriculture provides opportunity for consumers to enter into a direct relationship with a farmer. This happens when a group of consumers agree to share the costs and benefits associated with food production. Consumers pay a share of the projected farm production in advance, assisting the farmer with the initial costs of planting and assuring that the farm will get an income once the produce is harvested. The harvest is distributed amongst the consumers every week or month according to the shares and the quantity.

Cooperative Food Stores
Co-operative food stores are voluntary driven by members who own an equal share in the business and therefore, provide mutual economic and democratic participation in the enterprise. The benefits of this type of model is that it allows for the collaborative to market individual farm products as a whole, providing a larger variety of products to the consumer while providing the producer with a larger business support network. Occombee Farm in the United Kingdom is an example of a co-operative store that has also incorporated interactive demonstration projects and recreational uses.
Ecological Footprint
Ecological footprint tries to measure human demand on the Earth's ecosystems and natural resources. It compares human consumption of natural resources with planet Earth's ecological capacity to regenerate them. It is an estimate of the amount of biologically productive land and sea area needed to regenerate (if possible) the resources a human population consumes and to absorb and render harmless the corresponding waste, given prevailing technology and current understanding. Using this assessment, it is possible to estimate how many planet Earths it would take to support humanity if everybody lived a given lifestyle. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_footprint

Environmental Goods and Services (EG&S)
Environmental Goods and Services are the positive environmental benefits that Canadians derive from healthy ecosystems, including clean water and air, and enhanced biodiversity. The EG&S concept includes market goods produced from ecosystems (e.g. food, fibre, fuel, fresh water, generic resources, biochemicals, etc.), the benefits from ecosystem processes (e.g. nutrient cycling, climate regulation, water purification, waste treatment, pollination, etc.) and non-material benefits (e.g. aesthetic values, recreation, etc.). Source: http://www.agr.gc.ca/pol/egs-bse/index_e.php

Farmers Markets
Although farmers markets are not production methods, they are popular secondary agricultural uses which can compliment various production models. Farmers markets are usually seasonal and community driven operations which host a number of vendors selling a variety of products such as: fruits and vegetables, crafts and value-added products (i.e. preserves, baked goods, meat, fish, dairy products). Vendors have to pay a small rental fee for a stall at the market. These markets are usually located at a convenient location to the public. Some markets typically exclude organizations that are not growers or direct processors of locally grown products.

Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Agricultural Action Plan
The GTA Agricultural Action Plan is a document produced in partnership and endorsed by all four of the GTA Regional Councils (York, Peel, Durham and Halton), GTA Federations of Agriculture, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and local municipalities. The purpose of this plan is to identify and act on steps required to keep the GTA agricultural industry competitive in the face of economic, land use and environmental pressures. There are 37 key action policies identified in the plan.

Local Food System
A "collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies - one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption is integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place" [1] and is considered to be a part of the broader sustainability movement. It is part of the concept of local purchasing and local economies, a preference to buy locally produced goods and services. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_food
**On-Farm Shops**
Where planning policies allow, on-farm enterprises such as a farm shop enables producers to directly marketing their commodities as produced or processed (i.e. jams, butchered meats, ice cream parlour, etc). On-farm shops allow for fresh product to directly reach the consumer and often incorporate well with pick-your-own operations.

**Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture**
The practice of growing food and production of livestock in a way that preserves and enhances the environment, provides economic opportunity and good health for individuals and communities, and connects people to the land around them. It generally avoids long-distance travel, striving instead to create fresh, healthy produce for local consumption. It focuses on both processes and produce. Its about the systems that create our food-who grows it, where, and how much as it is about the food itself (Adapted from The Food Project: [http://www.thefoodproject.org/agriculture/index.asp](http://www.thefoodproject.org/agriculture/index.asp)).

**Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy (TNHSS)**
A document developed by TRCA to identify core habitats and corridors, and provide guidelines for the protection and restoration of terrestrial habitat.

**The Living City**
The Living City is TRCA’s vision for a healthy, attractive, sustainable urban region extending into the 22nd century, based on a foundation of Healthy Rivers and Shorelines, Regional Biodiversity, Sustainable Communities and Business Excellence. The vision: "The quality of life on Earth is being determined in rapidly expanding city regions. Our vision is for a new kind of community, The Living City, where human settlement can flourish forever as part of nature’s beauty and diversity."