The Impact and Potential Roles of Community Food Centres on Local Food Distribution in the Southwestern Ontario Context

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Abstract

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Community Food Centres (CFC) are a novel approach to connecting consumers to local food. This thesis sought to identify the ways in which a CFC creates new markets for farmers. Using a case study approach, interviews and surveys were conducted to determine whether farmers and consumers perceived their ability to access local food markets increased as a result of a CFC’s presence in their community. The data collected were also used to quantitatively assess a CFC’s impact on farmer income. Finally, an assessment of what farmers and consumers would do in the absence of a CFC was completed. Using results from these three sections a determination was made for each of the case studies individually. A thorough reflection on where the supporting organization, Community Food Centres Canada, fits within the larger political climate was also conducted to identify areas of improving what they can offer local, ecological farms.
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**List of Tables**

Table 1. Production and Population Statistics for the Counties and Municipalities where CFCs reside ...........................31

Table 2. Data Collection Methods and Number of Interviews for Each Case Study ...............................50

Table 3. Farmer Interviews – Quantifiable Information ..................................................62

Table 4. Comparing incomes of farmers practicing differing marketing strategies .........................70

Table 5. Comparing incomes of farmers practicing differing marketing strategies .........................71
Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... iii
List of Tables .................................................................................................................... iv

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Issues Within The Canadian Food System ............................................................. 1
  1.2 Research Aim and Objectives ............................................................................... 5
  1.3 Thesis Outline ....................................................................................................... 7

2 Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 7
  2.1 The Theoretical Literature On Neoliberalism ......................................................... 8
  2.2 Marketing Option 1: Cooperatives ........................................................................ 12
    2.2.1 Shortcomings Of The Cooperative Model ....................................................... 13
    2.2.2 Cooperatives’ Contributions To Overcoming Marginalization ......................... 14
  2.3 Marketing Option 2: Community Supported Agriculture ..................................... 15
    2.3.1 Shortcomings of the CSA Model ...................................................................... 16
    2.3.2 The CSA’s Contributions to Overcoming Marginalization ................................. 18
  2.4 Marketing Option 3: Farmers’ Market ................................................................. 18
    2.4.1 Shortcomings of the Farmers’ Market Model ................................................. 19
    2.4.2 Farmers’ Markets’ Contributions to Overcoming Marginalization .................... 19
  2.5 Summary of the Three Models’ Shortcomings .................................................... 20
  2.6 A New Marketing Option: The Emergence of Community Food Centres .......... 21
    2.6.1 Food-Related Initiatives and their Relation to Neoliberalism ......................... 23
    2.6.2 Conflating Superficial Reform with Structural Change ................................. 24
    2.6.3 Response to the Critiques ............................................................................... 25
    2.6.4 CFCs - Inherently Neoliberal, or Operating in the Between Space? ................. 26
  2.7 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 27

3 Methodology ................................................................................................................ 29
  3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 29
  3.2 Study Areas .......................................................................................................... 29
  3.3 CASE STUDY 1: The Regional and Organizational Context of Lanark County and The Table CFC .................................................................................................................. 30
    3.3.1 Organizational Context – The Table CFC ....................................................... 33
  3.4 CASE STUDY 2: Regional and Organizational Context of the Stratford Area and The Local CFC .................................................................................................................. 35
    3.4.1 Overview of local food markets/outlets in the Stratford area ............................ 36
    3.4.2 Organizational Context - The Local CFC ........................................................ 37
  3.5 CASE STUDY 3 - Regional and Organizational Context of York Regional Municipality and The Stop CFC ........................................................................................................ 41
    3.5.1 Overview of local food markets/outlets in the City of Toronto ....................... 42
    3.5.2 Organizational Context - The Stop CFC .......................................................... 42
  3.6 Interviews, Surveys, Secondary Data, and Recruitment ........................................ 44
    3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews with Farmers and CFC Managers ....................... 45
    3.6.2 Consumer Surveys at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market ................................. 47
    3.6.3 Mail Survey with Farmers not Associated with a CFC .................................... 47
    3.6.4 Secondary Data from CFCC ............................................................................. 48
  3.7 Data Analysis ......................................................................................................... 50
4 Results Section..................................................................................................................................................53
5 Results Chapter One: The Farmer Perceptions .................................................................................................54
  5.1 Theme #1: Farmers’ Local Food Sales are Increasing.................................................................................54
  5.2 Theme #2: The Price of Food......................................................................................................................57
  5.3 Theme #3: Communication...........................................................................................................................58
6 Results Chapter Two: Impact of Community Food Centres ..........................................................60
  6.1 Theme #4: Amount of CFC-related sales......................................................................................................61
    6.1.1 Impact of The Table on Farmer Income .................................................................................................63
    6.1.2 Impact of The Local on Farmer Income..................................................................................................63
    6.1.3 Impact of The Stop on Farmer Income ...................................................................................................65
    6.1.4 Direct Sales..............................................................................................................................................65
    6.1.5 Indirect Sales............................................................................................................................................66
    6.1.6 Farmer Profiles and Green Barn Farmers’ Market Attendance.............................................................68
    6.1.7 Green Barn Farmers’ Market Vendor Income ..........................................................................................69
    6.1.8 Consumers who Attend The Green Barn Farmers’ Market .................................................................71
  6.2 Barriers to Non-CFC Farmers? .....................................................................................................................73
7 Results Chapter Three: Evaluating What Farmers Would Do in the Absence of a CFC ........................................................................................................................................73
  7.1 The Table......................................................................................................................................................74
  7.2 The Local......................................................................................................................................................75
  7.3 The Stop .......................................................................................................................................................77
    7.3.1 Farmers who Sell Directly to The Stop ....................................................................................................77
    7.3.2 Distributor..............................................................................................................................................78
    7.3.3 Green Barn Farmers’ Market Vendors .................................................................................................79
    7.3.4 Green Barn Farmers’ Market Consumers ............................................................................................79
8 Results Chapter Four: Summary of Results for Objectives 1 and 2 ....................................................80
  8.1 The Table......................................................................................................................................................80
  8.2 The Local......................................................................................................................................................82
  8.3 The Stop.......................................................................................................................................................83
9 DISCUSSION.....................................................................................................................................................85
  9.1 Connections and Learning Opportunities Between CFCs ........................................................................85
  9.2 The Value of Farmers’ Markets ....................................................................................................................87
    9.2.1 Economic Impact of Farmers’ Markets on Farmer Income ................................................................87
    9.2.2 The effects of farmer management strategies ......................................................................................91
  9.3 CFCC’s Potential to Act as a Political Vehicle to Reverse Neoliberal Policy ...........................................94
    9.3.1 CFCs, Ontario Farmers, and Neoliberalism ............................................................................................95
    9.3.2 CFCC Improving Conditions for Ecological Farms .............................................................................95
  9.4 Policy, Advocacy, and CFCC .......................................................................................................................96
  9.5 Developing and/or Supporting a Food Hub Approach ..............................................................................99
    9.5.1 Opportunities for Implementation in Stratford ......................................................................................104
    9.5.2 Opportunities to Support a Food Hub in Lanark County ....................................................................105
    9.5.3 Farmer Benefits of the Non-Profit Food Hub Model and the Philosophical Alignment with CFCC ..........107
10 CONCLUSION...................................................................................................................................................108
  10.1.1 Farmers’ Market......................................................................................................................................110
10.1.2  Food Hubs .............................................................................................................. 110  
10.1.3  CFCC and Policy Engagement ............................................................................. 111  
10.2  Potential Research Directions .............................................................................. 112  
10.3  Final Remarks ....................................................................................................... 113  

11  References: .................................................................................................................. 116  

12  Appendix A .................................................................................................................. 125  
12.1  Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendor income calculations ...................................... 125  

13  Appendix B .................................................................................................................. 127  
13.1.1  A Summary of Thesis Results, Discussion Topics, and Conclusions: Do Community Food Centres Create New Markets for Farmers? ........................................... 127
1 Introduction

1.1 Issues Within The Canadian Food System

This thesis addresses three issues within the Canadian food system: (1) the accessibility of local, ecologically produced food (defined here as farming operations that follow practices that encourage soil health and reduce or eliminate erosion and do not pollute water or the environment with chemicals and genetic modification); (2) the negative ecological and sociological effects associated with increasing farm sizes and the challenges faced by small farmers to stay in business; and (3) the potential role that a new and novel type of organization, the community food centre (CFC), may play in addressing the first two challenges.

With regard to the issue of nutritious, local, ecologically-produced food products the literature is clear that these foods have traditionally been inaccessible to people of low socioeconomic status, due in part to the higher costs associated with their production (Dowler 2008; Gorton et al. 2009; Ball et al. 2009). This is at least partly because ecological farmers attempt to reduce the negative externalities associated with farming, but this comes at a financial cost (Pimentel et al. 2003), and so they must charge more for their products to recoup costs. This has the effect of further marginalizing those living on low incomes, and perpetuating the divide between income classes (Hinrichs 2000; Born and Purcell 2006). Over the past 20 years, the food bank has risen to become the de facto institution responsible for the weighty task of improving
access to food. Increasingly, however, the food banking system has come under criticism for issues such as a lack of healthy food options, (Tarasuk and Eakin 2005; Starkey et al. 1999; Rush et al. 2007) social stigmas, and undignified screening processes (Poppendieck 1999; Hamelin et al. 2002). This leads Riches (2002) to refer to food banks as “secondary extensions of weakened social safety nets,” and suggests they represent the commodification of social assistance. Despite his critique of the system that surrounds food banks, Riches (2002) also notes their potential to act as educators and advocates for a just system, a sentiment that is echoed elsewhere (Fisher 2005; Power 1999).

The second issue this thesis tackles relates to farm size. A widespread increase in farm size has led to diminished market power of small and mid-sized farms, the latter of which are still too small to access large retail contracts and export markets, yet too large to take economic advantage of traditional local outlets such as farmers' markets and community supported agriculture programs, upon which small farms rely (Paul et al. 2004). This process has been occurring since the 1940s due to several factors that favoured an increase in farm size: the relatively high cost of labour versus investing in capital (Kislev and Peterson 1982; Thirtle et al. 2002; Paris 2008); government payment schemes (Reinhardt and Barlett 1989; Key and Roberts 2007; O'Donoghue and Whitaker 2010); and the fact that once a farm has invested in capital-intensive farm implements downsizing is no longer economically feasible (Sutherland et al. 2012; Cown and Gunby 1996; Wilson and Tisdell 2001). The issue of consolidation of farmland ownership results in damaging environmental consequences such as a loss of
biodiversity (Belfrage et al. 2005) and the pollution of watersheds (Broussard and Turner 2009). The socioeconomic conditions of rural communities are also impacted, with rural citizens experiencing a decline in their wages (Durrenburger and Thu 1996), followed by a decrease in community welfare (Lyson et al. 2001). Attempts at reversing the consolidation trend have been largely ineffective, managing only to create an alternative food system rather than subvert and adapt the current system to allow for small and mid-sized farms. It is argued, therefore, that the situation agriculture is in today is the result of neoliberalism (Clapp, 2012; Eaton, 2013). This topic will be explored in depth in Chapter Two, the literature review.

Concern over these two issues has led to the establishment of agencies described as “food hubs.” Food hubs are a method of aggregating, distributing, and marketing local food, where some hubs also provide philanthropic services to the communities they serve (Barham et al. 2012). Food hubs are a novel approach to food distribution that have the potential to restore a greater market share for small to mid-sized farms, since the aggregation of foodstuffs allows them to access larger retail and wholesale markets that a single farm would not have access to otherwise (Matson and Thayer, 2013). Not all food hubs are values-based, and some organizations, such as CFCs have some food hub-like approaches to food aggregation and distribution, but their primary purpose is to use the food that moves through their chain as a means to provide philanthropic services. A CFC is a short-chain, values-based organization (e.g. Diamond and Barham, 2011; Hardesty et al. 2013) that offers a number of services described
below.

There has been a recent proliferation of CFCs in Canada. In particular, Community Food Centres Canada (CFCC) is a relatively new non-profit agency that seeks to address these issues of social inequality and farmers’ access to markets simultaneously. With respect to the former, CFCC is dedicated to increasing food access and culinary skills among the impoverished, alongside social justice and community health programs. It affects the latter by intentionally working to increase market share for small and mid-sized farms. CFCC programs are offered in several cities within Canada, and are housed in independently-operating buildings titled as CFCs. Its flagship CFC is The Stop Community Food Centre in downtown Toronto, that in addition to the base offerings listed above, offers perinatal programs, civic engagement clubs, a farmers’ market directed towards low-income citizens that is subsidized through profitable programs, as well as the original food bank from which the CFC model emerged (Levkoe 2011). An important philosophy of the CFCC is to purchase food according to its actual cost, and to develop the capacity of all citizens to afford it, rather than looking to decrease the cost of food overall (Levkoe 2011). In doing so, The Stop creates conditions where it is not entirely reliant upon donations of food for its programs. In addition to avoiding the risk of receiving low-quality foodstuffs, this also empowers the organization to support farmers of their choosing. CFCC has been working to address the critiques of traditional food bank programs, and is attempting to create new markets for farmers. It is the latter half of this dual approach to farmer to consumer connectivity that this
thesis project seeks to address.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

This project seeks to find an answer to the question, “to what extent do community food centres create new markets for small to mid-sized farmers and provide a mechanism by which consumers can access locally grown food?” I have proposed three specific objectives to address the research question:

1. To explore the ways in which farmers and consumers perceive a CFC to have impacted farmers’ and consumers’ access to markets.

   Meeting this objective has provided empirical information that demonstrates whether farmers and consumers perceive that they have greater access to local food markets. Negative perceptions are explored and CFCC can use this information to identify ways to improve them. Furthermore, a list of farmer and consumer benefits of participation is identified. Therefore, the information acquired regarding this objective can inform any improvement directives CFCC chooses to implement.

2. An evaluation of what producers and consumers would do without access to a CFC.

   This objective is the counterfactual to Objective 1, and can aid CFCC in identifying improvements to their market programs since both farmers and consumers provided information on how they would improve their own situations. Therefore, CFCC and CFCs could use the information acquired for this objective
to identify necessary improvements. The market could then be adapted accordingly, so that neither farmers nor consumers need to look elsewhere for their respective needs.

3. Identify alternative opportunities for CFCC to create new markets for small to mid-sized farmers/producers, or what could be done differently within current CFCC programming to improve market access.

Based on the results from Objectives 1 and 2, CFCC may decide that there is a need to improve what they offer. If a need for improvement is identified, an environmental scan of other not-for-profits (not limited to Canada) that have the same objective of linking small/medium sized producers to benefit low income community members can inform what alternative schemes CFCC might want to investigate for their sites. Through the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the currently existing markets and farmer/consumer associations, CFCC will receive the necessary data to compare and contrast their own internal market programs and make adjustments accordingly. This objective will be addressed within the discussion section of this document.

In undertaking these objectives, it is hoped that the information acquired, parsed, and analyzed will be useful to CFCC in their pursuit of greater empirical evidence that their programs work as designed, and if not, will form a foundation for improvement, the result of which will be improved market access for small to mid-sized farms and greater consumer patronage. Within the following methods section, I will address the approach taken to investigate each objective, as well
as how CFCC will benefit from the undertaking. The requisite knowledge and inspiration has been drawn from a review of the literature that follows.

### 1.3 Thesis Outline

This thesis is organized by chapters. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature that develops the context of the marginalization of small and medium-sized farms in Canada, and the different strategies some farmers undertake to remain viable in an increasingly industrialized and global marketplace. Chapter Three contains the research methods used to acquire the data, and includes the context and organizational capacities surrounding three CFCs that will be used to be representative of the CFC model and its impacts. Chapter Four contains the results of the study and reflections on whether each individual CFC creates new markets for farmers. Chapter Five ties the results from the three CFCs together in a discussion format, and where CFCC sits within the greater food movement is analyzed. Chapter Six concludes the thesis, and recommendations are made to CFCC that may prove valuable in their pursuit of their organizational goals. Also within Chapter Six, the thesis’ contributions are outlined, along with a reflection on limitations faced and what opportunities exist for future research.

### 2 Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the relevant literature necessary for understanding how the CFC model may or may not address the needs of both
farmers and consumers. In particular, this review will be divided into the following sections. First, I explore the concept of neoliberalism and its socioeconomic and environmental effects on agriculture today, which is important in understanding the constraints in which farmers currently find themselves. Next, I will discuss three specific alternative marketing structures open to small-scale farmers: first, cooperatives; second, community supported agriculture; third, farmers’ markets. The strengths and weaknesses of each of these three models will be evaluated in turn with respect to their ability to overcome the effects of neoliberalism. Finally, the last section of the literature review will introduce the idea that perhaps CFCs could offer something that the above three marketing options cannot: an opportunity to overcome the negative effects of neo-liberalization.

2.1 The Theoretical Literature On Neoliberalism

The ecological and social issues surrounding agriculture in Canada mentioned in the introduction are arguably a result of neoliberalism (Clapp 2012; Eaton 2013). This section serves to provide background to the issues that Canadian farmers face, demonstrating that there are forces at work that go beyond simple supply and demand factors.

Neoliberalism is a broadly-used term that McCarthy (2006) defines as having four pillars: a faith that a self-regulating market will forge optimal social forms; a focus on the individual as the primary social and economic agent; an overt hostility towards state intervention, particularly interventions aimed at regulating goods and services; and a reliance on civil society to redress market failures when they occur. The reliance on the self-regulating market requires that
every object and service be a commodity for trade to allow for its value to be evaluated by economic principles (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). To facilitate this, labour and markets have become deregulated, thus removing impediments to business transactions (Eaton 2013). This component leads to “roll-back” policies that strip down welfare entitlements of citizens and devolve the responsibility for welfare provision to private and non-profit organizations (Andrée et al. 2014). The devolution of responsibility for regulation and welfare provision often occurs without an appropriate transfer of power and capacity (McCarthy and Prudham 2004), leaving gaps in the services offered.

McCarthy and Prudham (2004) contend that neoliberalism has had an equally negative impact on environmental regulation as it has had on labour and social welfare in the U.S. The authors state that the U.S. Reagan administration initially focused very narrowly on reducing and eliminating government-imposed environmental regulations (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). These changes resulted in the further application of the industrial food production model where commodities are grown for export markets by an increasingly smaller number of producers (Andrée et al. 2014). A similar shift occurred in Canada throughout the 1990s. Eaton (2008) chronicles the steps and decision-making involved in the push towards neoliberal governance in Ontario, and demonstrates how environmental and food-based NGOs have responded. Largely, the response has been to implement market-based strategies in their approaches to environmental protection and local food distribution, which has led to a hollowing out of the ecological and social value of their work (Eaton 2008). This shift has
all but eliminated the potential for democratic decision-making related to food production and consumption (Levkoe 2011), with many citizens relying on food banks for sustenance.

Canada has keenly endorsed a neoliberal approach to trade, engaging in a number of free trade agreements. These have benefited the nation to the tune of $27.86 billion in agri-food products alone (last available data from 2006). This makes the nation the third largest agricultural exporter (Pechlaner and Otero 2010), but this profit is not without cost. Some of Canada’s biggest failings resulting from neoliberalism are the decreased environmental regulations mentioned above and by McCarthy and Prudham (2004), and the deregulation of biotechnology (Pechlaner and Otero 2010). Citizens concerned with the effects of widespread use of biotechnology have sought out privately certified organic products in protest, an action described as “voting with food dollars.”

There are a number of problems with the notion of voting with food dollars. First, it excludes low-income consumers who cannot afford the typically higher-priced ecologically produced food (Pechlaner and Otero 2010, Friedman 2005). This effectively eliminates large sections of the “voter” base, which are ostensibly the marginalized populations that CFCC serves. Others note that organic and fresh products are so expensive that only the affluent classes can afford to regularly purchase them (Lockie 2002; Guthman 2003). Second, it allows for food retailers to have an inordinate amount of sway within the food system. When consumers decide that they will take action against GMOs through boycotts rather than through political action, they validate the concepts that allow
the free market to dictate how things are produced (Roff 2007). Thus, producers, retailers, and processors are absolved of any culpability for the resulting environmental problems since they are merely responding to market signals (Johnston 2007; Roff 2007). Third, this practice leaves room for large companies that own multiple brands to capitalize on the opposition one of their brands faces by creating a niche organic product that delivers on what the consumer demands without eliminating the product seen as harmful (Roff 2007).

Voting with one’s food dollar should not be entirely dismissed as an agent of change. Roff (2007) points out that this can be an effective tool in the short term, while larger and longer-term efforts occur simultaneously that are directed squarely at policy change. If a consumer is to vote with their food dollar, they must be able to identify farmers who produce ecologically. CFCC’s role in connecting low-income consumers with ecologically produced food is explored in the discussion section. Similarly, if farmers want to receive that dollar vote, they must identify themselves to the consumers. There are a number of ways that farmers make direct connections with consumers to make sales, several of which predate modern liberalizations of the market. For instance, farmers have been selling via producer cooperative models, through farmers’ markets, and through community supported agriculture (CSA) for many years. In the section that follows, each of these approaches will be described, and then assessed by their potential contributions to farmer livelihood, shortcomings, and effectiveness at overcoming the marginalization effects of the neoliberalization of the food system. Describing approaches that farmers have taken and their relative
effectiveness is important, as this thesis contrasts the CFC approach with these three marketing mechanisms and suggests that CFCs may offer farmers and consumers new ways of reaching markets.

2.2 Marketing Option 1: Cooperatives

With increasing recognition that large agribusinesses were developing market power that was influencing the price of products that farmers were producing, farmers in the early 20th century proactively adopted a cooperative model of business to prevent potential obsolescence (Nourse 1922). The producers’ cooperative model is a method of aggregating products of a localized regional origin meant for the processing and final sale to the consumer.

There are several ways that producer cooperatives competed with the prevailing food distribution model in the early 20th century. First, the model dispensed with unwanted services and their associated costs prevalent among traditional food retailers (Nourse 1922). For example, competition leads producers to differentiate their products through branding and marketing, but when co-ops participated in this strategy the resulting costs were typically lower, resulting in a lower-priced product (Myers et al. 2010; Nourse 1922).

Furthermore, producer cooperatives enabled farmers to achieve greater volumes and scope of production that allowed them to access markets that hitherto lacked incentives for consumers’ patronage (Aldrich and Stern, 1983). Individual farmers had an easier time connecting with customers once they worked in a cooperative to offer a variety of products in bulk in one convenient location. Not coincidentally, achieving economies related to bulk offerings is the strategy larger
agribusinesses often employ that results in lower-priced goods, creating the incentive for farmers to collectivize in response (Cook 1995). The cooperative can also serve to control excessive supply of a particular good on the market (Cook 1995; Rhodes 1983) by collectively deciding how much of a particular product will be produced and distributed, and thereby maintaining reasonable pricing. This strategy is dependent on the widespread adoption of the cooperative model, or the involvement of governments in the free market through a quota system. Collectively marketing their products also allowed farmers to acquire a greater portion of the profit that would normally go to an intermediary body (Moran et al. 1996). Finally, producer cooperatives allowed farmers to share in the risks associated with crop production (Cook 1995; Carter 1987), wherein failure of one crop would not result in the demise of any of the members, since each farm was treated as an equal contributor and thus shared in the collective reward. Agricultural cooperatives in their various incarnations have proven to be a viable business model having survived two centuries of growth and decline.

2.2.1 Shortcomings Of The Cooperative Model

Despite the advantages that cooperatives offer, there are several shortcomings to the model. First, “free ridership” is an issue wherein producers within a shared market take advantage of the price negotiated by a co-op without having involvement in the proceedings necessary to receive that price (Ortmann and King 2007; Cook 1995). Free ridership can also take the form of a new member (a so-called “insider”) acquiring all the advantages of a long-standing
member, including cost per unit of product sold, which could have the effect of saturating a market and reducing the price of the good (Ortmann and King 2007; Cook 1995). Next, despite the advantages listed earlier, Aldrich and Stern (1983) note surprise at the small number of cooperatives that became established in the 1835-1935 timeframe in the United States, and suggest the reason for a low uptake of the model relates to the opportunity cost of doing so, where the economic incentives of the time broadly favoured a solitary effort. Third, Cook (1995) notes that one of the primary reasons for inception of producer co-ops, the attempt at controlling supply or achieving market buying power, is often quite cursory, and as such the effort does not fulfill their desires to improve their situation in the long run. Finally, involved farmers also run the risk of having their property rights unclear, which leads to an uncertainty of whether the cooperative is an agent acting in their favour (Fulton and Giannakas 2001).

2.2.2 Cooperatives’ Contributions To Overcoming Marginalization

These contrary points lead one to question whether cooperatives could be instrumental in overcoming the marginalization effects of the neoliberalization of agri-food. There are two issues that any model will have to overcome in order to instigate an increase in the number of ecological farms in Canada. The first is establishing new markets for ecological farms that efficiently direct their goods to consumers, while maintaining an ability on behalf of the farmers to retain a higher percentage of food dollars (money spent on their food products). This would have the effect of increasing their incomes while keeping food prices low. The second hurdle pertains to the opportunity costs related to labour and capital.
Should the farmer acquire a greater portion of the food dollar, that individual would ostensibly be able to increase employee wages to compete with those of an urban setting. Obtaining a greater share of the food dollar is achievable through the cooperative structure; however, the issue of free-ridership leads one to believe that this model is ineffective in the long-term without government intervention in the form of price setting and quota systems (two actions that run counter to neoliberalization). In an unregulated market, once prices reach a level where farms are more profitable, economic theory suggests that new entrants will enter into the market, produce similar products, saturate the market, and cause the prices to fall back down to where supply equals demand. Furthermore, there is also no regulation on the ecological practices of participating farms. Due to a lack of exclusivity and an inability to overcome the above-mentioned hurdles, producer cooperatives seem an inappropriate model to improve markets for EFs.

2.3 Marketing Option 2: Community Supported Agriculture

CSA is a method of direct marketing used by farmers around the world to sell their vegetables to consumers, who become known as “shareholders”. The shareholders pay in advance for the entirety of the season, receiving vegetables regularly for this duration, which in southwestern Ontario typically runs for 20 weeks through the spring, summer, and autumn. By receiving payment in advance, farmers are able to invest in infrastructure and supplies, such as seed, tools, diesel, and marketing costs. Vegetable shares are usually picked up by the shareholders at a central location, either the farm itself or at a pre-determined location, such as a parking lot in a town or city.
The adoption of CSA as a marketing method is tied to the financial benefits associated with running such an operation. A budgetary analysis of a Canadian CSA operation was completed to compare the model to that of an organic wholesale marketing scheme and a line of credit mode of financing. Sabih and Baker (1998) found that the CSA marketing method increased farmer revenue by 34.0% while at the same time avoiding financing interest charges equal to 1.1% to 3.4% of the total revenue. A survey of Midwestern United States CSA operations took place in 2002 with the following financial results: the average net return per acre was $2,467, which is comparatively high next to the return from corn at $172.11 per acre; on average CSA operations provided half of a farmer's annual income, despite representing just 37% of their entire farmed land (Tegtmeier and Duffy, 2005). Cash croppers are heavily reliant on mechanization and uniformity of crops to complete the task quickly over hundreds of acres, whereas the market gardener could spend over 40 hours per week working on one acre alone. Despite the comparatively high returns per acre, there are some limitations to the CSA model, as discussed next.

2.3.1 Shortcomings of the CSA Model

Despite the financial appeal to farmers on small acreages, there are a number of hurdles to overcome in developing a successful CSA. First, CSAs only appeal to small farmers, as the average income from a CSA operation is between $20,000 and $30,000 (Stevenson and Hendrickson, 2004). Second, the CSA model requires significant marketing, and relative to conventional mechanized agriculture, more labour per acre, and while the net return per acre
is significantly higher, the amount of acres a farmer can cultivate is significantly lower since the model does not lend itself to mechanization. Third, the model presents some difficulty when it comes to consumer access and satisfaction. For instance, up-front costs of CSA is a barrier to some members of the population, especially those who already have difficulty purchasing local organic foods one item at a time (Eaton 2013; Roff 2007; Pechlaner and Otero 2010, Friedman 2005). Fourth, CSAs are typified by fruits and vegetables, with the occasional compliment of meat, cheese, and dairy products. Yet there are crops that are significant components of Canadians’ diets such as wheat, soy, canola, and corn, items that are typically processed prior to consumption that do not find their way into a typical CSA share. Fifth, when CSA farmers were asked if they feel they make a fair wage for their work, 57% of respondents said no, though 97% remain happy with their work most of the time, suggesting that they receive satisfaction from the intangible aspects of CSA (Tegtmeier and Duffy, 2005). The dissatisfaction that they do express, stems from long work hours and feelings of being underpaid (Tegtmeier and Duffy, 2005). These findings are reflective of those from CSA projects in Ontario, as financial capital and cash flow have been cited as the greatest inhibitors to succeeding in the industry, while access to training and information to better the operation was not listed as a concern at all (Lewis 2009). Finally, several other factors lead to customer dissatisfaction with the model, including receiving too much or too little produce (Lang 2005), unrecognizable or culturally inappropriate foods, seasonality of availability, and inflexible pickup times.
2.3.2 The CSA’s Contributions to Overcoming Marginalization

Given its lack of widespread adoption by EFs, labour and marketing requirements, and its lack of broad appeal to consumers at large, the CSA model is unlikely to positively affect the number of EFs in Canadian agriculture. Despite the fact that the CSA model is growing in popularity as each year passes, the number of acres in development under this model remains insignificant in comparison to other forms of agriculture. Additionally, Brown and Miller's (2008) review of the literature on the impacts of CSAs and farmers’ markets on farmer income revealed that CSA share prices were set too low, covering only the costs of operating and ownership, without factoring in costs of family labour. With respect to small farms, the CSA serves a niche market of consumers seeking direct sales from farmers, and nets the farmer a reasonable income in exchange. Although this model has the potential to overcome the labour-versus-machinery-cost-ratio problem, it simply does not provide the convenience and access that consumers require. Consumer voters thus vote elsewhere with their food dollars.

2.4 Marketing Option 3: Farmers’ Market

Farmers’ markets are a place where farmers congregate to individually sell their products directly to consumers. Historically, they have undergone the same pattern of growth and recession in Canada as they have in the U.S., with declining interest leading up to the 1970’s and a resurgence occurring thereafter (Basil 2012; Brown 2002). As cities were established, so too were farmers’ markets, which held great importance between 1800-1915 as one of the primary suppliers of food products, followed by a period of industrialization that steered
consumers towards supermarkets instead (Basil 2012). Following the environmental movements that were engaging citizens beginning in the 1970s, farmers’ markets saw a resurgence in numbers (Basil 2012), and in 2009 it was estimated that they had a total economic impact of $3.09 billion across communities in Canada (Farmers’ Market Canada 2008).

2.4.1 Shortcomings of the Farmers’ Market Model

From the consumer perspective, there are at least two significant shortcomings to the farmers’ market model. First, farmers’ markets have been criticized for their elitism, because only a small segment of the population can afford to shop there (Colasanti et al. 2010). To counter this, some farmers’ markets have integrated technology to accept food stamps from low-income consumers, yet food stamp users cited the complicated shopping experience, a lack of discounts, and a need for vehicular access as persistent barriers to their attendance (Grace et al. 2007; Markowitz 2010). Second, the theme of convenience is important (Wolf et al. 2005) since inconvenient hours and locations can act as barriers to some consumers regardless of income (Jilcott et al. 2010; Webber and Dollahite 2008). Specifically, customers reported desiring more vendors and more variety of produce and products, more convenient operating hours including more days per week, hours per day, and year-round operation (Farmers’ Market Canada 2008).

2.4.2 Farmers’ Markets’ Contributions to Overcoming Marginalization

Given the list of shortcomings that consumers themselves have cited, farmers’ markets are unlikely to be the vehicle by which EFs overcome the
effects of neoliberalization. Farmers’ markets may be a path for some farmers to maintain a livelihood, but they lack broad appeal and have the same access issues mentioned earlier that will prevent consumer voters from flocking there en masse.

2.5 Summary of the Three Models’ Shortcomings

One possible interpretation of the above is that the three major marketing avenues used by small and mid-sized farms over the recent past has done little to curb the progression towards a smaller number of larger farms in Canadian agriculture. Each of the three methods described lack the combined elements that contribute to the mainstream appeal of supermarkets (ease of access for consumers of most income levels, convenience of hours, one-stop-shopping, etc.) and so are unlikely to contribute largely to a widespread conversion to ecological practices and smaller-scale, intensive, not extensive agriculture.

Furthermore, the statistics show that the number of small farms is still decreasing, but of those remaining, incomes are increasing. In 2007, there were 30,770 farms in Ontario, and in 2011 this number had decreased to 27,160. Yet the average incomes increased from $9,375 to $21,062 during that time period (Statistics Canada 2014a). This could be the result of unsuccessful farms leaving the industry while successful farms continue to increase their incomes resulting in a higher average income. Additionally, it should be noted that the average off-farm income for these same farms over the same time period also rose from $77,634 to $86,648 (Statistics Canada 2014a). This suggests that off-farm wages may have supported some farms to remain in the marketplace, while
those lacking similar support were forced to exit the market. Also of concern is the amount of debt that farmers are accruing. In 2009, Canadian farmers owed $62.9 billion, which increased to $78 billion by 2013 (Statistics Canada 2014b), demonstrating that many farmers are perhaps being propped up by loans. The majority of farmers have tried and failed to remain viable over the last 70 years, but some of the remainder have managed to maintain profitability by scaling up and taking advantage of technology and economies of scale, while others have remained in the market due to off-farm incomes.

It could be viewed that those who adopted one or more of the above marketing strategies have delayed the progression towards the ubiquity of large-scale industrial agriculture, even if modestly. Holt Giménez and Shattuck (2011) recognize that there is some value to delaying the onset of a completely neoliberal regime, as it gives both the displaced and concerned citizens time to form coalitions and movements that are meant to reverse these trends. A new food distribution model has been created that could contribute to the slowing of expanding farm size, or reverse the trend entirely; the community food centre.

2.6 A New Marketing Option: The Emergence of Community Food Centres

To build on the description of CFCs provided in the introductory section, each CFC has their own distinctive approach to food distribution. For instance, one of the CFCs that is the focus of this research operates a food bank, kitchen-based activities, and a small market garden; a second operates a small
warehouse where food is collected and distributed, kitchen programs, and a small garden area; a third CFC runs a farmers’ market, kitchen programs, a food bank, and a large urban garden. Regardless of the specific approach, an important philosophy of all the CFCs investigated in this thesis is their support of purchasing food according to its actual cost, and developing the capacity of all citizens to afford it, rather than looking to decrease the cost of food overall (Levkoe 2011). This philosophy is anti-neoliberal in nature, and represents an effort towards working with the state to overcome a market problem, in line with the writings of Eaton (2007) and Guthman (2003). This effort has the effect of decreasing reliance on donations of food for CFCs’ programs, which, in addition to avoiding the risk of receiving low quality foodstuffs, also empowers the organization to support farmers of their choosing.

Whether the CFC model is an effective model to overcome marginalization cannot be answered by the literature at this time, yet it is the purpose of this thesis to begin identifying the contributions that CFCs can make to farming communities. It is important to note that a CFC’s primary goal is to create access to local healthy food among low-income consumers, with a secondary goal of supporting EFs; therefore this is taken into consideration within the discussion section. Despite this, the CFC model may present similar opportunities for farmers to access new markets in a way that farmers’ markets, CSAs, and cooperatives have not been able to in the past. Should there be a reversal of trends towards consolidation because EFs are well-supported by CFCs, then the
case against neoliberalism as the main contributor to the demise of EFs will be weakened.

To set the stage for the discussion on the impact of alternative food initiatives, as CFCs could be categorized, it is important to establish the context surrounding their relation to neoliberalism. To start I will describe the food-related initiatives that have been created in response to neoliberalism. The criticisms that these initiatives have faced will be explored, followed by a reflection on the responses to the criticisms, and a discussion regarding CFCC’s placement within these spectra.

2.6.1 Food-Related Initiatives and their Relation to Neoliberalism

In this way, discussions around CFCs build on broader discussions in the literature where authors argue that there is a need for a substantive change to food policies as they affect production and distribution (Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011; Wakefield et al. 2013), and that food activists and organizations (collectively termed alternative food initiatives) can be the means to this end (Sage 2014; Levkoe 2011; Blay Palmer et al. 2014). The argument for change is most recently based on the failures of the current regime in providing adequate and equitable social welfare (Wakefield et al. 2013; Levkoe 2011), and on the negative environmental consequences of industrial farming as described by some authors, such as Horrigan et al. (2002) and Ruhl (2000). Food systems literature commonly suggests three steps to create such change. First, the issue of organizations conflating superficial reform with structural change needs to be addressed; next, alternative food initiatives must form partnerships with similar
and complementary actors; and finally, they must advocate for systemic change. These will be described in depth below.

2.6.2 Conflating Superficial Reform with Structural Change

In her landmark paper, *Neoliberalism and the making of food politics in California*, Julie Guthman cautions that one should not view all actions that occur in response to the neoliberalization of the food system as equal, nor should one blindly embrace local solutions and romanticize all resistance (2008). Guthman’s take is that alternative food initiatives have been uncritical when developing their responses to the effects of neoliberalizations. Her argument addresses four common concerns around which other authors have also written: (1) consumer choice; (2) localism; (3) entrepreneurialism; and (4) self-improvement (2008).

With respect to consumer choice, or consumerism, it is argued that it becomes the mechanism by which citizens are expected to voice their opinions rather than through political action, effectively absolving governments of social and ecological responsibilities. (Guthman 2008; Roff 2007). Localism, Guthman (2004) contends, has resulted from the inability of organics to tackle social justice issues, where consumers often conflate “local” as a perfect substitute for organics and small-scale agriculture (Guthman 2008), and it reinforces neoliberal principles (Blue 2009). The two issues with this conflation is that local does not inherently equate to ecological production practices, nor does it inherently address social justice concerns (Allen 2008; Levkoe 2011; Kilmer 2012). Entrepreneurialism’s relation to neoliberalization responses is well-represented by private organizations who develop certification mechanisms, a market-based
solution meant to extend knowledge to consumers (Guthman 2008; Brown and Getz 2008; Eden et al. 2008). Finally, Guthman (2008) perceives participation of low-income populations in garden-based and food-related projects as a means of producing neoliberal subjects, that, despite project goals, have an inability to empower participants through the experience. This view is echoed elsewhere (e.g. see: Pudup 2008; Rosol 2012; McClintock 2014).

Guthman’s four concerns suggest that some proponents and operators of alternative food initiatives have lost faith in the ability of the state to provide services, regulations, and subsidies, or they feel their efforts are more successful when operating without the state (Guthman 2008). They also indicate that alternative food initiatives simply reinforce neoliberal principles and contribute to the status quo (Roff 2007). While alternative food initiatives are respected for their important work, Allen (2004) argues that until those involved recognize the above elements within their organizations and thereafter act more critically, alternative food initiatives will remain alternative rather than collectively influencing structural change.

2.6.3 Response to the Critiques

Other authors have since looked at alternative food initiatives with the same critical lens, but question some of Guthman’s conclusions. In particular, Andrée et al. (2014) categorically respond to each of Guthman’s four themes, suggesting that her arguments are both revealing and concealing the potential of
alternative food initiatives. Regarding consumer choice and knowledge, Andrée et al. (2014) cite food policy councils, outreach, the inclusion of social justice goals in alternative food initiatives, and local food maps as examples of progress towards emphasizing support for local farms and a move away from market-based decisions based on price and utility alone. This distinction, Andrée et al. (2014) contend, demonstrates a strategic use of market-based systems, rather than a blind adherence to neoliberal principles. While the authors recognize that many alternative food initiatives contribute to a citizen-as-consumer society, they see such market-oriented actions as engaging with neoliberalism’s strengths (Andrée et al. 2014). For instance, where Guthman describes entrepreneurialism as individualistic and promoting neoliberal ideals, Andrée et al. (2014) cite a number of organizations that have more in common with community enterprises than with capitalistic entrepreneurs. They also state, “to understand entrepreneurialism or market-based approaches only as furthering neoliberalisation risks overlooking the way these initiatives seek to create markets embedded in social and ecological values that are a far cry from those normalised through dominant neoliberal processes” (Andrée et al. 2014, pg 15).

2.6.4 CFCs - Inherently Neoliberal, or Operating in the Between Space?

CFCs appear to be promoting the neoliberal ideals of self-improvement (through their kitchen-based programs and community gardens), and state retrenchment (through the operation and support of food banks, regardless of their removal of the associated stigmas). Despite the fact that CFCC is
attempting to transform food banks to generate a more dignified experience, fundamentally they still allow the state to roll back its social safety net. On the other hand, CFCs promote community rather than individualism through the same programs listed above, and CFCC facilitates political advocacy and social movements, two points that run counter to neoliberalism. Also, CFCC does not advocate for cheaper food; they work to increase incomes so that everyone can afford healthy food without putting the onus on the producer to bear that cost (Levkoe 2011). Guthman’s argument as written is too broad to apply neatly to CFCs, and increasing evidence proves that some organizations can successfully operate within a neoliberal environment, all the while attempting to alter its oft-criticized characteristics and outcomes. Poignantly, Goodman et al. (2012) state that ideology should not stand in the way of incremental change that comes from market-based solutions, when local and entrepreneurial initiatives are proving to be somewhat effective.

2.7 Conclusion

Farm sizes are increasing and becoming fewer in number, leading to negative externalities related to the environment and the socioeconomic conditions of surrounding areas. The literature has shown that although large farms have the capacity to operate with few negative externalities, a greater likelihood exists that a small to mid-size farm will on average have fewer negative effects. Because of these issues, it is important to establish a means by which small to mid-sized farms can prevent their own conversion into larger farms. Historically, farmers of a varying range of land holdings have combatted the
prospect of obsolescence by engaging in new marketing strategies such as forming producer cooperatives, creating CSAs, and attending farmers’ markets, all of which were met with varying successes, especially for the mid-sized farm. Since CFCs act as an intermediary between farmers and consumers, it is worth evaluating their impact. The effectiveness of the CFC distribution models, their associated partnerships, and the benefits to involved parties have not been established empirically. Doing so would encourage further growth of these models, should the findings demonstrate strong economic incentives for all parties, and could potentially curb the consolidation of farm ownership in Canada. Due to their apparent hybrid nature, CFCs may have the ability to navigate the neoliberal environment by building strong economic models while simultaneously engaging with the state. This model of food distribution may offer some hope for the survival of small to mid-sized farms within a neoliberal regime where the onus is on entrepreneurialism to solve complex issues.
3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Given the novelty of the in-tandem approach to food access and farmer support, there is little evidence within the literature through which to assess the impact of the CFC model. As such, representatives of CFCC approached Dr. Evan Fraser with the desire to academically and empirically evaluate the impacts and effectiveness of their food-related programs. CFCs have the potential to offer small and mid-sized farms a new outlet to reach previously untapped markets, all while connecting marginalized citizens with healthy food in a dignified manner. This two-pronged approach offers society tremendous value, and serves as the primary impetus behind studying CFCC’s impacts on creating new markets for farmers. Building on the review of key literature in Chapter Two, I, along with my committee members and CFCC representatives, have developed a research aim, question, and three objectives to guide my research. While this relationship was not strictly designed as community-engaged scholarship, the invitation to do research, the emergent outcomes and how they benefit both the community partner and the researcher, and the process of negotiating the research questions do have many parallels (see Jordan, 2007; Ehrlich, 2000; Onyx, 2008).

3.2 Study Areas

The study areas were defined by the location of each selected CFC. They were in Lanark County (The Table CFC), the Stratford area (The Local CFC),
and the City of Toronto (The Stop CFC). These three sites were chosen for two reasons: first, they are the longest operating CFCs, and so have had some time to develop; second, they each represent distinct regions, Toronto being a dense urban area surrounded by very productive farmland, Stratford being a smaller city, also with productive farmland, and Perth being a small town with relatively unproductive land surrounding it. These distinctions may reveal that a CFC’s influence on markets is contextually-based. The following sections provide further regional and organizational contexts for each CFC. The information provided will be useful in determining what limitations or what structural, environmental, and/or social strengths exist that would aid a CFC in creating new markets for farmers.

3.3 CASE STUDY 1: The Regional and Organizational Context of Lanark County and The Table CFC

In 2011, the Town of Perth, Ontario had a population of 5,840 (Statistics Canada 2012). Perth is 12.25 square kilometres and has a population density of 476.6 people per square kilometre (Statistics Canada 2012). Perth is part of Lanark County, which itself is 3,003.82 square kilometres (Statistics Canada 2012), 13.8% of which is composed of Class 1 to 3 soils (Lightfoot 2000), where Class 1 has no limitations to agriculture and Class 5 has severe limitations. This suggests that there is a significant portion of the county where the land is unsuitable for agriculture. Within Lanark County, 153 acres (0.62 km²) were dedicated to vegetable production in 2011, and a further 57 (0.23 km²) acres
were dedicated to livestock (Statistics Canada 2011). These production types respectively represent a mere 0.02% and 0.007% of the total land base in the county.

Comparing it to other counties and municipalities in which CFCs are established provides further context for Lanark County. Table 1 contains data about Lanark and Perth Counties and the York Regional Municipality (YRM) to provide some context about the population and agricultural production that surrounds each CFC. YRM was chosen in place of the City of Toronto (where The Stop CFC resides) since Toronto is listed as having a 100% urban population (Statistics Canada 2006), which would not provide useful data for this comparison. YRM was chosen due to its proximity to the City of Toronto, and the fact that it represents the shortest straight-line distance to The Greenbelt, a strip of protected farmland surrounding the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Table 1. Production and Population Statistics for the Counties and Municipalities where CFCs reside

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lanark County</th>
<th>Perth County (Stratford Area)</th>
<th>YRM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total square kilometres of vegetables (excluding commodities)</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total square kilometres of animal production</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total land in county/municipality (square kilometres)</td>
<td>3,033.82</td>
<td>2,218.46</td>
<td>1,762.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>65,667</td>
<td>75,112</td>
<td>1,032,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent urban</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of rural</td>
<td>35,001</td>
<td>25,538</td>
<td>58,854</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear from the data in Table 1 that despite Lanark County occupying a greater landmass than both Perth County and YRM, they have considerably less land dedicated to farming, yet maintain a comparatively high rural population. The reason for the lack of farm density is likely related to the scarcity of Class 1 land mentioned earlier, since there is little variation among climate zones between the three regions (OMAFRA 2010). Nearly half of Lanark County’s farmers reported gross earnings of less than $10,000 in the 2011 Census of Agriculture and a further 20% reported gross earnings between $10,000 and $25,000, with total farm receipts for the county reaching $47.9 million (Statistics Canada 2011). This suggests that there are many farmers in Lanark County who are operating on small acreages, earning small incomes.

Overview of local food markets/outlets in Lanark County

Lanark County, and the town of Perth specifically, has an active local food scene. Lanark Local Flavour is a local food guide created to help residents and tourists find local food via farm-gate sales, farmers’ markets, retail outlets, and restaurants, among others. Drawing from Lanark Local Flavour’s guide alone, Perth has numerous venues where people can purchase local food (http://lanarklocalflavour.ca/). Perhaps most significant, Perth is home to what is proclaimed to be the largest local food retail outlet in Eastern Canada, Foodsmiths, who have a local-first philosophy and define ‘local’ as originating within 100 miles of their operation (http://lanarklocalflavour.ca/). Other retail
outlets listed in the food guide support local farms by purchasing meats, cheeses, jams, and other processed foods, in addition to in-season produce (http://lanarklocalflavour.ca/). It appears that there are outlets for farmers to sell locally in Perth, Ontario, but the size of the market leaves something to be desired. Whether The Table CFC fills a need for larger market access, or more closely resembles a small retail outlet, will be addressed next.

3.3.1 Organizational Context – The Table CFC

The Table is located at the southeast edge of downtown Perth, and is within walking distance from other notable downtown locations. The address is 190 Gore Street East, Perth, Ontario K7H 1K3.

It is important to distinguish the origins of each CFC to ascertain whether this has an impact on a particular CFC’s ability to create new markets for farmers. In some cases it may be seen that transitioning from a traditional food bank to a CFC simply required a change in philosophy and approach to service provision, and in others it may have contributed to an increase in diversity of services provided. The potential impact of how a CFC originated will be analyzed in a subsequent section.

The Table began as the Perth and District Food Bank and Friendship Centre, which operated simply as a food bank in a different location (Manager, The Table). The Friendship Centre's board of directors purchased a church around the same time that they became aware of The Stop CFC. The Friendship
Centre answered CFCC’s call for organizations that would be interested in potentially becoming CFCs, and was approved as a pilot project. After receiving grants, renovations at the church began, and The Table CFC was opened there in the fall of 2011 (Manager, The Table).

In 2013, The Table served nearly 11,000 meals, produced over 1,200 homemade snacks, and reached approximately 2,100 different individuals with their services (Table Annual Report 2013). Given the premise of a CFC’s existence, these individuals represent a population that would be unlikely to access this fresh, local food without a CFC present.

The Table differs from other CFCs in that they have very little storage space, and so must rapidly make use of fresh food items they purchase. The chef and the food bank manager are the primary purchasers of local food at The Table (Manager, The Table), with combined purchases of over $15,000 worth of local food in 2013 (Table Annual Report 2013). The majority of the products are purchased from Farm #1, and this farmer’s estimated 2013 sales to The Table are roughly $2,500 (Manager, The Table). The vast majority of the purchased food is delivered to The Table by the farmer (Manager, The Table), so the farmers themselves incur the time and expense associated with delivery. Once delivered, the food reaches the consumers (in this case program participants) through the various programs that The Table offers the public.

For philosophical reasons, The Table insists on paying at least market rate for the products they purchase from local farms. Each of the farms interviewed
(n=3) noted that they would ask for a certain price for their product only to be told that they were not asking for enough, and that The Table would pay more.

The Table has one “family sized” fridge that is used to store the meat, fruit, and vegetables that they purchase, which The Table manager identified as a significant challenge (Manager, The Table). The lack of storage requires those responsible for cooking, meal planning, and purchasing to know what they have in their small inventory to ensure that it is used completely before more is purchased.

The Table has established several garden sites both on and off their property, with the primary intent of connecting people with food in a meaningful way. Their secondary intent is to produce more food for their various programs (Manager, The Table). They have a relatively small greenhouse and a “kitchen garden” (where they grow herbs, salad greens, and smaller items) onsite, and a 65 square metre garden that is a 10-minute walk from The Table in Last Duel Park (Manager, The Table). In 2013, they doubled the size of the park garden, and gardeners and volunteers grew 887.6 kg of produce (Table Annual Report 2013). The purpose of including this information is to establish to what degree the CFC is producing food on their own, which in turn decreases their need to purchase locally grown products, with all other merits of this program aside.

3.4 CASE STUDY 2: Regional and Organizational Context of the Stratford Area and The Local CFC
In 2011, the City of Stratford, Ontario had a population of 30,886 (Statistics Canada 2012b). Stratford is 26.95 square kilometres and has a population density of 1,146.0 people per square kilometre (Statistics Canada 2012b). Stratford is part of Perth County (not to be confused with the Town of Perth where The Table resides), the majority of which is composed of Class 1 Soils (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2013), suggesting there are nearly no limitations to growing certain crops or raising livestock. Referring to Table 1, Perth County had 645 total acres in vegetables (excluding commodities), and 1,169 acres in meat. The acres dedicated to meat in the Stratford area (used synonymously with Perth County to avoid confusion) are considerably higher than both Lanark County and YRM. In 2011, the Stratford area’s total farm receipts totaled $747.9 million (Statistics Canada 2011b), significantly higher than Lanark County’s $47.9 million mentioned earlier. Also in contrast to Lanark County, more farms in the Stratford area were earning incomes in the brackets of $100,000 to $249,000 (438), and $250,000 to $499,000 (362) (Statistics Canada 2011b), where the majority of farmers in Lanark County were earning less than $25,000. This demonstrates a contextual difference between the two counties that may be of significance to later discussions.

3.4.1 Overview of local food markets/outlets in the Stratford area

Stratford has a thriving local food scene. Its main Saturday farmers’ market
was established in 1885, with 45 retailers who attend (Smithers et al. 2008). Like Lanark County, the counties of Huron and Perth have a “Buy Local, Buy Fresh” campaign, and they produced a map of where to purchase local food categorized by farm gate sales, farmers’ market locations, restaurants supporting local farmers, and retail outlets that stock local food (Huron Perth Farm to Table 2014).

Stratford is seen as a cultural and culinary destination by tourists (Banyai 2012), and is host to events and organizations celebrating local food. Savour Stratford Perth County Culinary Festival occurs annually, and features renowned chefs, artisans, and local farmers in a celebration of local food (https://www.visitstratford.ca/culinaryfestival/index.php). Stratford is home to the Slow Food Perth County Convivium that arranges a year-round market on Sundays in downtown Stratford (Slow Food Perth County 2014). Slow Food International “is a global, grassroots organization with supporters in 150 countries around the world who are linking the pleasure of good food with a commitment to their community and the environment” (Slow Food 2014).

3.4.2 Organizational Context - The Local CFC

The Local CFC is located at the southwest edge of Stratford, Ontario, and is a 20-minute walk from the downtown core. The address is 612 Erie St, Stratford, Ontario N5A 2P1.

The Local CFC was borne out of the need for an organization with the infrastructure that could handle large-scale donations meant for distribution to food banks within Perth County (CFCC 2014). The United Way of Perth-Huron
assembled a group of interested individuals to tackle this issue, with the decision ultimately being to develop a CFC in partnership with Community Food Centres Canada. A former farm supply store was converted to a food centre that now houses a large common area for programming, a commercial kitchen with equipment donated by General Electric, office space, and a 3,700 square foot warehouse dedicated to distributing purchased and donated food to area food banks (CFCC 2014). The Local CFC opened its doors to the public in November of 2012 and has been providing food-related services ever since (CFCC 2014).

The Local CFC has numerous food-related programs and initiatives meant to connect low-income and unemployed consumers with healthy food. They make the connection through community meals, seniors’ lunches, wellness breakfasts, community kitchen and garden programs, and are also involved in community action through their advocacy office and social justice club (The Local 2013 Annual Program Survey). Their 2013 survey had 62 participants drawn from the population who have accessed their programs, with the majority stating that they had made significant changes to their lifestyle as a result of participating in one or more of The Local’s programs (The Local 2013 Annual Program Survey).

The Local CFC has two main pathways that the food travels through to reach the end consumer. The first is through the kitchen-based programs, but since the chef purchases predominately through distributors and not farmers (Manager, The Local), this pathway will receive little focus in this paper. The next pathway is The Local’s Storehouse. The Storehouse is a 3,700 square foot
warehouse used to store food meant for immediate distribution. The food arrives as a result of large donations from farmers or distributors, or from purchase orders made by the warehouse manager (Manager, The Local). Food is purchased from six to 10 local farms, with some transactions occurring just once per season, depending on the product offered (Manager, The Local). As food is delivered to and received by The Storehouse, it is entered into their database along with pricing information. This database is accessible via The Local's website, and through this site area food banks and foodservice related institutions can make orders. The Storehouse does not put a markup on the products that they distribute: if they pay $1 for an item it will cost the purchasing organization $1 for that same item, if the item was donated to the Storehouse then the purchasing organization will receive that item for free (Manager, The Table). With this system, The Storehouse is able to service approximately 60 regional organizations that work to alleviate food insecurity through initiatives like after-school nutrition programs, community meal provision, or food banking (Manager, The Table). Each organization that places an order is responsible for picking it up once it has been boxed, bagged, packaged, etc., and they have received a confirmation email. The Storehouse does not deliver, and any product that requires payment is cash on delivery (Manager, The Table). The food then reaches the end consumer through the various organizations that have purchased food from The Storehouse.

In contrast to The Table, The Local does not have a food bank program that deals with individuals themselves; they simply serve the existing regional
food banks in the Stratford area. Also in contrast, The Table insists on paying market rate for the products that they purchase from farmers, where The Local does request discounted pricing upfront, but will still pay the price the farmer sets (Manager, The Local).

The Local purchases the majority of their food products from resellers rather than directly from farmers and/or processors themselves, the reasons for which are the ease of one stop shopping, and having a timed delivery three times a week.

It is unclear whether the wholesalers that The Local purchases from buy exclusively from local farmers, but is worth further investigation. The Local buys approximately $40-$50,000 worth of food per year, with an average of $700-$1,000 per week in "sales" to Perth County’s food providers (Manager, The Local). This is the amount spent on food, but this does include purchases from resellers. The Local has also made use of their charitable status, issuing tax receipts to the farmers for the value of their donations, or offering tax receipts for the partial value of the product and paying for the balance in cash (Manager, The Local).

Given The Local’s mandate to provide fresh, local products to area food service providers, they have a fairly large space dedicated to doing so. Their warehouse is 3,700 square feet, and includes a walk-in fridge and a walk-in freezer, both of which are approximately 100 square feet in size (Turnbull et al. 2013). The Local clearly has considerably more room for food storage and processing than The Table.
The Local has a garden-based program onsite, that uses elevated boxes filled with potting mediums to avoid the contaminated soil the property sits on (Manager The Local). The total planting space is comparatively much less than The Table’s 7,000 square feet, and contains a number of tomato plants, cucumbers, kale, and other vegetables. The produce grown in this garden is used in the various kitchen-based programs, and its total monetary value is unlikely to exceed $1,000. Due to its small scale, the garden is unlikely to significantly reduce the amount of money spent on local food.

3.5 CASE STUDY 3 - Regional and Organizational Context of York Regional Municipality and The Stop CFC

Despite a number of urban agricultural initiatives in the City of Toronto, the population is listed as 100% urban. For this reason, YRM was chosen to represent the agricultural context of this area of Ontario since many farmers in YRM rely on sales within Toronto markets. According to the Toronto Census Division, in 2012 the City of Toronto had a population of 2.5 million people (Statistics Canada 2012c), 100% of who are considered urban. This is contrasted with the population of YRM being 1.03 million, with 58,854 rural residents (see data in Table 1). These rural residents, and those of other surrounding counties and municipalities, supply the urban areas with their local food needs. The vast majority of YRM is Class 1 to 3 soils, suggesting there are no significant limitations to agriculture in the area (Natural Resources Canada 2013). Referring to Table 1, YRM had 44.0 square kilometres in vegetables
(excluding commodities) and 1.41 square kilometres in meat production. The area dedicated to vegetables in YRM is significantly higher than Lanark County and the Stratford area. In 2011, YRM’s total farm receipts totaled over $260 million (Statistics Canada 2011c), which is considerably higher than Lanark County ($47.9 million) but still lower than the Stratford area ($747.9 million). Perhaps not surprisingly then, the Stratford area has more farmers earning incomes in the brackets of $100,000 to $249,000 (n = 438) and $250,00 to $499,000 (n = 362) compared to YRM with 120 and 87 respectively (Statistics Canada 2011c).

3.5.1 Overview of local food markets/outlets in the City of Toronto

The City of Toronto is home to 39 farmers’ markets that occur throughout the week, with some being seasonal and others taking place year-round (Toronto Farmers Market Network 2014). Given Toronto’s size and population density it is no surprise that the city could support significantly more farmers’ markets than Stratford and Lanark County. Dine.TO lists 75 Toronto restaurants that support local food (2014), and the Ontario Culinary Alliance lists the 7,000 restaurants, numerous farmers’ markets, food stores featuring local food, and food festivals as excellent reasons to visit Toronto (2014). Toronto features a prominent local food culture that undoubtedly rivals that of Stratford and Lanark County.

3.5.2 Organizational Context - The Stop CFC
The Stop Community Food Centre’s main office is located at 1884 Davenport Road, Toronto Ontario. The Stop’s Green Barn, where a number of their activities occur, is located at 601 Christie St, Studio 181.

The Stop CFC began as one of Canada’s first food banks, and was incorporated as a not-for-profit in 1982 (thestop.org). Recognizing that handouts of food do little to address the underlying causes of poverty, while also leaving patrons feeling stigmatized, the Executive Director of The Stop Food Bank, Nick Saul, began the process of developing the CFC model (Saul and Curtis 2013). The Stop became The Stop Community Food Centre in 2001, and while they still operate the food bank as an emergency relief program, they now offer many other programs: an after-school programs related to food skills and knowledge for children, alongside a sustainable food systems education program; a farmers’ market; community advocacy that helps people access social services; community cooking programs that teach people how to prepare healthy meals in their certified inspected kitchen; and an urban agriculture program on their 8,000 square foot garden that is open to people of all ages to learn how to grow organic produce (thestop.org). The success of this model led Nick Saul to form CFCC, an organization dedicated to replicating the Stop CFC’s model throughout Canada (Saul and Curtis 2013).

The final point relevant to The Stop deals with how food travels from the farmer to the end consumer. The Stop CFC has a number of pathways that food travels through to reach the end consumer. The first is through the kitchen-based programs listed above where youth and adults are exposed to foods that
are perhaps unfamiliar and learn how they can prepare them. Second, is the emergency food bank service that offers three days worth of food once a month for those in need. Next, is the urban agriculture initiative that grows 4,000lbs of produce each year on an 8,000 square foot plot (thestop.org). This amount is more than twice as much as that of The Table (1,952lbs), though the percentage of food that this represents of the total used by The Stop is less significant than that of The Table given the money spent on local food by The Stop (over $120,000 in 2013). Lastly, The Stop CFC coordinates a Saturday morning farmers’ market at their Christie Street location, also known as The Green Barn Farmers’ Market.

3.6 Interviews, Surveys, Secondary Data, and Recruitment

To explore the impact of these three CFCs (The Stop, The Table, and The Local) on producers and consumers, this research collected data from the three CFCs in southern Ontario (at the time this research was begun there were only three CFCs in southwestern Ontario). More specifically, the following four data collection methods were used:

1) I conducted semi-structured interviews with farmers and CFC managers.
   In total nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with farmers and four semi-structured interviews were conducted with food center managers;

2) I surveyed 39 consumers at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market;

3) I conducted a mail survey to acquire data from farmers who had not sold products to a CFC; and
4) I acquired secondary data that had been collected by CFCC in the fall of 2012 pertaining to farmers’ perception of the market and containing income-related information. Each of these approaches will be described categorically in the following paragraphs.

3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews with Farmers and CFC Managers

My primary contact person at CFCC was the Research and Evaluation Manager, Trace MacKay. Trace was involved in the farmer recruitment process. The recruitment process proceeded in the following manner: first, Trace contacted the staff at each of the three CFCs that were to be studied who are responsible for food procurement, and asked that staff person to contact their list of farmers. This initial contact was meant to determine whether a particular farmer was willing to be interviewed; second, the CFC staff person then sent a list of contact information for each farmer that responded positively; third, Trace then populated a Google Spreadsheet with the contact information that she shared with me; Finally, I contacted farmers via email to explain my research question and to arrange dates for interviews. With farmers who responded positively, I conducted semi-structured interviews. The data collected in these interviews and surveys were primarily qualitative, but quantitative information such as incomes, sales data, distances travelled, etc. were also asked. The farmer interviews served to help understand the reasons they sell at particular markets, and what attributes they value over others. The total population of farmers that I could draw from for this study was about 18. The Stop purchases
directly from two particular farms, with the rest of their local food purchases coming from a local food distribution company. The Local and Table CFCs each regularly purchase directly from approximately eight farms of varying sizes.

In the case of each CFC, farmers were asked the same questions with the only variation being the CFC they were associated with. When it was revealed that some CFCs deal predominately with distributors, the questions that were asked of the farmers were modified to be more suited to a distribution business, but were still meant to reveal information regarding whether a CFC creates new markets for farmers. Of the nine farmers listed above, two are classified more appropriately as distributors within the Results Section.

CFC managers were recruited in a similar fashion. Trace first contacted them and asked if they would be interested in taking part in this study; those who responded positively were added to the same spreadsheet described above. From this point I contacted each of them by e-mail, explaining the research and setting up dates for interviews. Using semi-structured interviews with CFC managers I asked questions about their methods of food procurement, farmer retention strategies, and overall vision for their market/point of sale.

The number of participants from each CFC varied. For The Table, I interviewed three farmers listed of a possible five (from the spreadsheet), and the sole manager listed was also interviewed. From The Local, I interviewed four out of a possible five farmers, and the two managers listed. From The Stop, I interviewed two of the three farmers listed, and one market manager (a different contact was listed, but was less appropriate for the study). This combines for a
total of nine farmers, out of a possible 13, and four out of four available managers.

3.6.2 Consumer Surveys at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market

On August 9th, 2014, my research assistant and I attended the Green Barn Farmers’ Market to conduct consumer surveys. My assistant and I worked independently at different ends of the market. We recruited market patrons as they passed by, approaching people indiscriminately. We explained the research in brief, explained the consent form, had them sign, and then asked them a series of questions (see Appendix B for the list of questions).

Given the busy nature of a farmers’ market, and the general reluctance of market patrons to participate in surveys, the surveys were designed to be completed within five minutes. These surveys were meant to profile consumers who frequent the Green Barn Farmers’ Market, and their responses and profiles were not meant to draw any conclusions about market patrons at large. I profiled consumers using household income, distance travelled to the market, education, and the frequency of their visits to the market, among other data. In total, 39 market patrons were interviewed. I would estimate that four out of every five patrons declined to participate when approached.

3.6.3 Mail Survey with Farmers not Associated with a CFC
The final data collection component involved mailing surveys to farmers that were not associated with a CFC in any way to determine if there are any barriers to their participation. 15 farmers from each area were chosen (45 total) based on their proximity to a CFC using local food maps. The 15 farmers in closest proximity to each CFC were chosen. Also, these maps were also used as a means to distinguish between farmers selling commodity crops for export, and local farms selling items that a CFC would purchase. A survey, consent form, and pre-stamped and addressed return envelope was mailed to the selected farmers. I received three packages back incomplete (untouched), one indicating they were no longer farming, and three complete, leading to a 6.7% response rate. Given this low response rate, these data are only briefly described in the results section.

3.6.4 Secondary Data from CFCC

CFCC supplied me with survey data that they had collected in a survey sent out to each of their vendors. This survey was completed in late 2012. Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors were asked to answer a number of questions pertaining to their experience at the market, their income generated from vending, how long they have been selling, what types of products they sell, etc. The data contained information from non-farmers as well, so I excluded them from this study. Vendors were included based on whether they sold any combination of the following categories of food items: fruit, meat, vegetables, herbs, honey, syrup, canned goods, fish, baked goods, and eggs. Farmers who sold baked goods exclusively were not included as it is unclear from where their
ingredients were acquired. The fish vendor was included due to their focus on supporting small scale Canadian fisheries that use practices that minimize their environmental impact. There were a total of 29 farmers who completed this survey. Table 2 consolidates the data collection methods and number of interviews for each case study.
Table 2. Data Collection Methods and Number of Interviews for Each Case Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Table</th>
<th>The Local</th>
<th>The Stop</th>
<th>Non-CFC Farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection method</strong></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with farmers and CFC staff;</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with farmers and CFC staff;</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with farmers and CFC staff; Surveys of farmers’ market patrons Secondary data – farmers’ market vendor survey data</td>
<td>Mail survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of interviews</strong></td>
<td>Three farmer interviews; One CFC staff</td>
<td>Four farmer interviews; Two CFC staff</td>
<td>Two farmers/food providers; One staff; 39 market patrons survey; 29 vendors completed the vendor survey</td>
<td>45 surveys mailed; 3 completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7 Data Analysis

All farmer and CFC manager interviews were recorded and transcribed. When my research assistant, Marion Davies, was present for the interviews, she took extensive handwritten notes to complement the transcripts. Marion was present for all interviews with The Table, three for The Local, and one for The Stop. I directed Marion to capture as much as possible of the interviews within her notes, which could then be used for reference should something happen to the recordings. I also explained the research ethics guidelines I was following.
based on the approval I received from the Research Ethics Board. She did not require training in note-taking, as she had experience assisting two other graduate students the previous summer. When she was absent I took handwritten notes. Handwritten notes were relied on exclusively in the case of one interview where the recording was lost due to a hard drive failure. Consumer survey responses were handwritten as the participant responded, and then later entered into an Excel Spreadsheet for easy reference and calculation purposes.

Transcriptions of farmer interviews were imported into NVivo, a qualitative research analysis program. Transcriptions were grouped into separate files according to which CFC the farmer sold to. Farmer and manager responses were grouped according to the questions asked of them. This allowed me to see if there were any commonalities or themes amongst the responses. Doing this also facilitated the grouping of data into the four major themes listed in the results section. I began by grouping responses according to the guiding questions of this thesis: (1) do farmers perceive CFCs to create new markets for farmers; (2) does the quantitative data collected demonstrate that CFCs create new markets; and (3) what, if anything, could CFCs do differently to improve what they offer farmers? Once grouped, I reviewed the collected data for repeating ideas, phrases, and responses, which I then tagged with codes. For instance, one question posed to farmer participants asked what CFCs could do to improve what they offer. The response from several farmers was related in some way to communication. Other questions posed provoked a response from farmers related to communication. In both instances, these responses were coded under
“communication”. In some cases I was able to group codes together to create categories. For instance, the category “improvement” contained the nodes “communication” and “satisfaction”. This approach allowed me to gradually develop a hypothesis as more data were acquired, as described by Hay (2010).
4 Results Section

This section of the thesis presents the results using the following structure:

- The first results chapter (Chapter 5) begins with an exploration of the data resulting from interviews and surveys as they relate to Objective 1, which is how farmers perceive the benefits of the CFC.

- In the second results chapter (Chapter 6), I present results for the amount of CFC-related sales each participant recorded. In this chapter I present the CFC-related sales theme and then break these figures down according to the impact of each CFC on farmer income, and consumer access to markets.

- The third results chapter (Chapter 7) provides an evaluation of what producers and consumers would do in the absence of a CFC.

- Finally, the Results Section concludes with a summary that appears in Chapter 8, which is the fourth results chapter.
5 Results Chapter One: The Farmer Perceptions

This chapter deals with farmers' perceptions of whether CFCs create new markets for them. The data reveal three core themes related to CFC impacts: 1) farmer sales are increasing; 2) concerns are raised about the price of food; and 3) communication issues may be creating barriers.

5.1 Theme #1: Farmers’ Local Food Sales are Increasing

Each of the farmers and distributors interviewed for this study noted that their local sales have increased since they began selling to a CFC. Whether this is attributable to their relationship with a CFC or some other factor is explored here. Eight farmers and two distributors that sell or donate directly to a CFC were interviewed, and two of them were willing to attribute some of their growth to their relationship with a CFC: Farmer 1 noted that they may have acquired some new clientele from a CFC-organized networking event, the other, a local food distribution company (Local Food Distribution Company) described their unique relationship with a CFC as driving sales within the CFC but not necessarily influencing their access to markets in general. These two opinions show little measurable confidence that CFCs offer new markets to farmers that would not exist in their absence. The Local Food Distribution Company’s sales have increased since they started selling to The Stop, but the manager had a hard time attributing this increase to their relationship with the CFC, stating:

“Outside of The Stop, I think it would be hard to say. I would err on the side of “not very much” mostly at the fault of our own, we don’t do a good job of communicating our extra-curricular activities. I think there is a story there of our relationship with The Stop and what we do with them, we
don’t leverage that to our customer base. Outside of The Stop I don’t think our relationship has influenced our sales, obviously our internal relationship with them has driven our sales to them but I don’t think necessarily outside” (Manager, Local Food Distribution Company).

This suggests that there is room for the Local Food Distribution Company to leverage their association with The Stop to increase their profile in the local community, but it would seem that this would not create significant enough value for the effort to be worthwhile to them. This is not to say that there would not be any value for an individual farm to create some interest based on their relationship with a CFC; perhaps this is worth further investigation.

The remaining seven farmers generally do not believe that their relationship with a CFC has significantly impacted their level of non-CFC related sales. Farmer 1 was the only one to respond somewhat positively, but described the outcome as simply being a new relationship with a local restaurant. Perhaps this would be more significant to a farmer who earns ~$25,000, but Farmer 1 earns roughly $450,000 per year. The following quotations add depth to the perceptions farmers have of the development of new avenues of sale resulting from a CFC’s presence:

“I don’t think [my increase in sales] has anything to do with The Table. My local sales have increased because local is becoming popular. Like, the farmers’ market is where I’m selling more stuff, and it’s becoming extremely popular. So, yes [my sales have increased], but I don’t think it has anything to do with The Table per se” (Farmer, The Table)

The farmer who attributed a modest increase in sales to their respective CFC stated the following:
“[Our customer base has expanded slightly because of] personal contacts that [Table Manager] referred us to a restaurant in Perth. So I [think] it is more of just a networking thing” (Farmer, The Table)

This quotation suggests that the farmer thinks it is likely that this sales avenue could have opened up to them simply through their willingness to network, rather than the CFC influencing their level of sales more directly. In fact, three of four farmers interviewed from the Stratford area attributed their increase in sales to their own marketing and increases in production, with one of these farmers willing to give nominal credit to The Local. This farmer felt that networking and word of mouth marketing from The Local’s managers resulted in modest sales that would not have occurred otherwise (Farmer 7). The following quotation is typical of the responses of the other farmers:

“I don’t know that anyone who they have come into contact with us has come through them, I don’t see them as being a major agent in my marketing effort. I only sold them $50 worth of stuff, but I don’t need them to do that for me, and I don’t necessarily want them to either. Do I think they are encouraging people to eat fresher foods? Yes. Are those people going to purchase my food? Maybe, maybe not.” (Farmer, The Local).

This suggests that farmers view The Local CFC simply as another point of sale, and have little to no expectations for the CFC to promote them further or create other markets for them.

From the information presented above, it could be interpreted that the farmers do not perceive their respective CFCs to have significantly influenced their income or created a new market that would not exist in their absence. Part of this perception may be related to elements of the other identified themes, of which the price of food will be explored next.
5.2 Theme #2: The Price of Food

For philosophical reasons, The Table insists on paying at least market rate for the products they purchase from local farms. Each of the farms interviewed (n=3) noted that they would ask for a certain price for their product only to be told that they were not asking for enough, and that The Table would pay more. The Local requests discounted pricing upfront, but will still pay the price the farmer sets (Manager, The Local). Similar to the Table, the farmer interviewed that sells directly to The Stop felt that they were paid a fair price for their products and did not have to negotiate their price. The Stop also purchases from local farms indirectly. The majority of food that The Stop uses in its food-based programming is purchased through the Local Food Distribution Company.

The Local Food Distribution Company has been in business since 2008 and is in its seventh year of operation. Their aim is to distribute and market small and medium-sized family farms’ products to GTA markets. The Local Food Distribution Company’s main customer base is restaurants, though they also sell to hotels, hospitals, small retailers, and a number of other institutions. With respect to the price of food, their policy is to purchase the products at the price point the farmer sets, after which they apply their markup. However, they will flag any issues, should the price be too low or too high based on the Local Food Distribution Company’s knowledge and experience, and will approach the farmer to let them know they could move more product if they lower their price, or increase their income if they increase their price (Manager, Local Food
Distribution Company). The Local Food Distribution Company’s motive here is to move products and earn income from their markup, yet by encouraging the farmer to increase their cost, they would be less able to increase their own markup. This strategy would ostensibly cut into the Local Food Distribution Company’s profit margin; a curious strategy given that they are a for-profit enterprise. The Local Food Distribution Company uses an online ordering platform that farmers populate twice weekly with the products they have available. They deal with roughly 55 farmers during the main growing season and employ eight people plus the two principle owners.

Given that each CFC buys the food at the prices farmers set, and the Local Food Distribution Company follows the same philosophy, farmers did not view this as a point of contention or a point that needs improving. The next theme explores what participants had to say about communication between the CFCs and the farmers they support.

5.3 Theme #3: Communication

The farmers interviewed for this study were given a chance towards the end of the interview to state some thoughts and opinions on whether CFCs create new markets for farmers. Using this space, a number of farmers associated with The Table and The Local spoke about the importance of communication. I speculate that since the Farmer I interviewed for The Stop deals directly with the Local Food Distribution Company and not the CFC, tensions around communication would not be on their mind.
Farmers that sell to The Table expressed some concern about the way transactions are initiated. To place orders, The Table Manager emails the farmers on an individual basis to ask if they have a particular crop and amount available in a given week (Manager, The Table), though in some cases it is the farmer who is proactive in indicating via email what is available in a given week (Farmer, The Table). Farmer 3’s suggestion for an ordering system may alleviate some of the concerns surrounding communication as illustrated in the following quotation:

“Right now I e-mail [The Table Manager] every week and tell her what I think I’ll have available that week and she sort of picks and chooses, but possibly some sort of [computerized] system, for them I think it would be easier.”

While such a system might be useful with multiple buyers viewing the same information, in a single buyer scenario it is unlikely to increase the efficiency of the transactions for the seller. The seller would still need to upload information about the products they have available, and confirm the transactions. The buyer would benefit in this case, since all the information is available to them in one location without having to prompt the farmers, so one step is skipped for the buyer in this instance while no steps are skipped for the farmer. Even with an online ordering system, some other communication issues may arise.

The Local uses an online ordering system for its Storehouse operation. Organizations that purchase or receive food through The Storehouse do so by placing an order on The Local's website that is populated with information about what The Storehouse has available. The use of this model has not alleviated the
concern some farmers expressed regarding communication with The Local. Two farmers in particular had been donating produce, and were unaware that The Local has the ability to purchase products. Farmers were also unsure about what products and in what quantities The Local wanted from them. Farmers, therefore, stated an interest in having a regular communications piece for The Local's farmers and suppliers, with one farmer stating:

“They have brochures for the public, for their programs, but do they actually have a communications piece for their suppliers... I don’t believe they do. Because that’s what I would have been looking for. We would have donated to them far more often if that link was there, that communication, if we knew the how, the what, the why, and all those simple things.” (Farmer, The Local)

This quotation suggests that farmers believe that more consistent and detailed communication between themselves and a CFC could lead to greater efficiency and perhaps a greater number of transactions.

6 Results Chapter Two: Impact of Community Food Centres

In this Chapter I present results for the amount of CFC-related sales each participant had. The amount of CFC-related sales theme is further broken down according to the impact of each CFC on farmer income, and consumer access to markets. Following this, I explore what barriers may exist that would restrict a farmer from selling to a CFC.
6.1 Theme #4: Amount of CFC-related sales

The information gathered via interviews with farmers and distributors as it relates to sales is consolidated in Table 3. Each farmer has their associated CFC listed in the column to their right, and each CFC’s contribution to farmer income will be addressed categorically, beginning with The Table, followed by The Local, and concluded with The Stop. Organized in this way, separate conclusions can be drawn for each CFC that may reflect their context and differing program delivery, since each CFC differs from the others.
## Table 3. Farmer Interviews – Quantifiable Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmer</th>
<th>CFC</th>
<th>Distance to CFC</th>
<th>Distance to Primary Market</th>
<th>Total Income</th>
<th>Percent Income from CFC</th>
<th>Length of Time as a Farmer</th>
<th>Time on Current Farm</th>
<th>Size of Farm</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Frequency of CFC Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Table</td>
<td>12.3 km</td>
<td>0 km (laneway)</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>4th Generation</td>
<td>55 acres</td>
<td>10 full time, 10 part time</td>
<td>10/20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Table</td>
<td>31.6 km</td>
<td>29.3 km to their primary farmers’ market</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>50 acres</td>
<td>2 (owners)</td>
<td>10/20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Table</td>
<td>28.5 km</td>
<td>25.7 km (farmers’ market), and laneway</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>25 acres</td>
<td>3 (owners)</td>
<td>Infrequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (pig)</td>
<td>The Local</td>
<td>10.8 km</td>
<td>156 km (Toronto), 55.6 km (Kitchener)</td>
<td>$400,000 - $500,000</td>
<td>No income, donations only</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>100 acres</td>
<td>3 full time, 1 part time</td>
<td>Donates frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (distributor)</td>
<td>The Local</td>
<td>123 km</td>
<td>Throughout Huron County</td>
<td>Not for profit</td>
<td>No Income, donations only</td>
<td>In operation since 2002</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Once total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (market garden)</td>
<td>The Local</td>
<td>4.3 km</td>
<td>57.4 km (farmers’ markets)</td>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>6 acres</td>
<td>3 (owners)</td>
<td>Infrequent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (asparagus)</td>
<td>The Local</td>
<td>8.1 km</td>
<td>13.3 km (farmers’ markets), and laneway</td>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>Stated that it is insignificant</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>80 acres (8 acres for main crops)</td>
<td>2 full time, 2 or 3 part time seasonal</td>
<td>Once or twice per season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Stop</td>
<td>137 km</td>
<td>All products sold through distributors</td>
<td>~$300,000</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>100 acres</td>
<td>8 full time</td>
<td>Twice a week in summer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


6.1.1 Impact of The Table on Farmer Income

Using the data contained in Table 3, there are some conclusions that can be drawn about the impact of The Table on farmer income. First, in no case does The Table offer a market that is closer than the farmers' primary market. Farmer 1 sells almost exclusively from their farm gate, and both Farmer 2 and 3 travel slightly less distance to arrive at their respective farmers' markets. The second derivable conclusion is that in no case does The Table create a market that increases the farmers' income by more than 4%. While the association with The Table generated a new avenue of sale for Farmer 1, it is unknown how lucrative this new market is for them, yet it is still likely to be a relatively insignificant contribution to their income of $450,000 given their unwillingness to credit The Table exclusively for the new relationship, relating it more to their openness to networking. Next, each of the farmers interviewed have been established for at least 10 years at their current location, which demonstrates their longevity, experience, and that they’ve had a reasonable amount of time to develop a market for themselves. Finally, perhaps one of the more telling aspects is that each of the farmers sell vegetables to The Table, and two sell meat as well, yet out of the roughly 20 weeks that their fresh produce is available, each farm sells to The Table on only 10 occasions or less.

6.1.2 Impact of The Local on Farmer Income
There are several conclusions that can be derived from the information contained in Table 3. The first, with the exception of the distributor and Farmer 7’s laneway sales, The Local offers a market that is closer than the farmers’ primary market. Farmer 4 sells the majority of their products in Toronto and Kitchener, the Distributor interviewed operates out of Huron County and sources all their products there, Farmer 6’s main market is in a city other than Stratford, and Farmer 7 attends a market that is 5 km further than The Local. The second derivable conclusion is that in no case does The Local create a market that increases the farmers’ income substantially. Farmer 4 and the distributor had only ever donated to The Local, and neither one was aware that The Local was in a position to purchase products. Farmer 6 and 7 had relatively small sales to The Local; Farmer 6 stated that it represented <1% of their total sales and Farmer 7 stating that their sales were insignificant and that there were numerous individuals who purchased three times the amount The Local had purchased for individual use (Farmer, The Local). While the association with The Local may have led to a new point of sale for Farmer 6, they were unable to identify a specific relationship or point of sale that was generated. Next, each of the farmers interviewed have been established at their current location for at least 10 years, with the exception of Farmer 6 who has only been farming for four years. This suggests that the farmers interviewed demonstrated their longevity, experience, and that they’ve had a reasonable amount of time to develop a market for themselves. On this point, Farmer 6 is no exception as they have demonstrated marketing savvy by establishing an online ordering system that
has allowed them to sell all of their products produced on their 5 acres before it is even harvested (Farmer, The Local). Finally, perhaps one of the more telling aspects is that each farm has sold to The Local infrequently, or in two cases farmers were not aware they could sell products.

6.1.3 Impact of The Stop on Farmer Income

The Stop differs from the other CFCs described in that they offer multiple outlets for farmers to make sales. These will be categorized as direct sales, and indirect sales. Direct sales include any transaction where The Stop buys directly from a farmer, and indirect sales include any instance where The Stop purchases through a distributor, or farmers make income from their presence at a CFC-organized market. The Stop also differs in that their farmers’ market offers an outlet for consumers to purchase local food. These consumers will be profiled, and their spending habits detailed.

6.1.4 Direct Sales

Using data from Table 3 there is one observation and an assertion that can be derived. Although the distance to the CFC is listed as 137 km, Farmer 8 does not actually make this trip. The food is picked up by a distributor (described later) and delivered and donated directly to The Stop free of charge. Therefore the observation is that not having to pay for transportation or spend time marketing leads to greater revenue from each product sold to The Stop. In fact, all of Farmer 8’s products are handled through a number of distribution
companies (Farmer 8). Next, Farmer 8 is a certified organic farm in its eighth year and has an income of approximately $300,000, demonstrating their longevity, experience, and marketing savvy. As seen in Table 3, 6.6% of their income is due to sales to The Stop that occur twice per week during the growing season. The fact that Farmer 8 sells twice a week during the growing season (roughly 40+ occasions) is in stark contrast to The Table CFC, where the farmers sold to The Table on only 10 occasions or less in the same time period. Therefore, the assertion is that The Stop is providing one capable farmer with consistent income throughout the growing season.

6.1.5 Indirect Sales

The Stop purchases local food through a local food distribution company. To quantify the impact of The Stop’s purchases through the Local Food Distribution Company, it is important to provide some context for this organization that will then be followed by information regarding local food sales to The Stop.

In peak season, on behalf of their customers, the Local Food Distribution Company purchases up to $50,000 a week, and in the slow season it buys roughly $25,000-$30,000 per week from local farms, markup is applied thereafter. Generally speaking, if peak season is 22 weeks out of the year, and slow season is 30, then the Local Food Distribution Company is responsible for the distribution of almost $2,000,000 worth of local food. While they are some farms’ exclusive distributor, no one farm sells 100% of their products through them. When asked if there are any restrictions on farmers that sell products that they do not produce themselves, the response was:
“As long as it is transparent we will source products through an existing farm that they’re not producing. A good example is that we buy cranberries from [farmer name] in Niagara, and no one grows cranberries in Niagara, they grow them north or out in Ottawa. So he goes to an Ottawa market every Saturday and sources from Iroquois cranberry growers and then we buy from him, so he’s basically a vehicle through which we can get that product. Some other farmers will buy and repack things like [farmer] has a contract with a producer for his dried bean program, so he doesn’t grow all his dried beans but we still purchase them through him.” (Manager, Local Food Distribution Company).

Although this indicates that some products may be sourced from outside of the 100km radius of the Local Food Distribution Company’s location, the overwhelming majority of the products purchased by The Stop through 100km Foods is sourced from farms within a 100km radius of their operation (Manager, Local Food Distribution Company). This is an important distinction when making claims of The Stop’s impact on local farmers.

The Stop CFC has been purchasing food from the Local Food Distribution Company for five years. This relationship began when a former client of the Local Food Distribution Company took on a position as a chef with The Stop. Since then, the relationship has grown and now The Stop purchases twice a week and year-round from the Local Food Distribution Company. In 2013, the total purchased from the Local Food Distribution Company was over $111,000. This represents 60% of the total amount The Stop CFC spent on local food in the 2013-14 program year (Manager, The Stop).

It appears that The Stop’s purchasing power is much greater than that of The Table and The Local, and so their impact on the income of local farmers is
more substantial. In addition to this, they also manage one of Toronto’s largest and most-attended farmers’ markets, the Green Barn Farmers’ Market.

**Impact of The Stop’s Green Barn Farmers’ Market on Farmer Income**

In determining the effect that a farmers’ market operated by The Stop CFC has on farmer income, there are several questions, comparisons, and calculations that are necessary to yield suitable data. This next section will start with a profile of Green Barn farmer vendors (which will not include data from non-farmer vendors), and will be followed by questions related to income, how Green Barn vendors’ incomes compare to other farmers in the region and other counties, whether or not farmers use either the Green Barn specifically or other farmers’ markets in general as their exclusive point(s) of sale, and what their preferred marketing methods are.

### 6.1.6 Farmer Profiles and Green Barn Farmers’ Market Attendance

In 2012, there were 29 farmers selling products such as fruit, meat, vegetables, herbs, honey, syrup, canned goods, fish, baked goods, eggs, etc. Of these 29 farmers, 10 sold some products from other local farms, ranging from 1% to 90% of their total sales depending on the season. 21 farmers attend the farmers’ market year round, and on average farmers attend the market for 42 weeks out of the year. On average, farmers had been attending the market for four years as of 2012, and all but three of them still vend in 2014. Three farmers attend only the Green Barn Farmers’ Market, eight attend only one other, and the
rest attend two or more other markets, there are also a couple outliers that attend 10 or more markets.

6.1.7 Green Barn Farmers’ Market Vendor Income

Using data supplied by CFCC, I estimated the total revenue for each Green Barn farmer vendor that supplied the following information: number of weeks they attend the market, their average income from Green Barn’s market sales, and their average total costs associated with attending the market. The full calculations can be found in Appendix A – Green Barn Farmers’ Market Income Calculations. Based on the 25 farmers who gave adequate information to make an estimate of their income based on survey data, the average income was $28,530 and the median was $18,540. Farmers also gave enough information in the 2012 vendor survey that allowed me to calculate their gross incomes. The average estimated income of Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors is $122,677.66 and the median estimated income $101,200.00. These incomes are considerably higher on average than those obtained by farmers interviewed and census information collected about farmers in Lanark County. The average estimated incomes from Green Barn farmers aligns with the income brackets common on the Stratford area, and would put them among the 120 farms earning $100,000 to $249,000 in the YRM, or the 60th percentile of income earners in YRM.

Some of the farmers who sell at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market appear to be particularly savvy when it comes to marketing. For instance, 10/26 farmers use farmers’ markets exclusively for their sales, and of these 10, three sell only
at Green Barn Farmers’ Market and one other Farmers’ Market, and seven sell at three or more farmers’ markets (including Green Barn Farmers’ Market). The average income of these 10 farmers is $141,346 (higher than the total vendor average), and their median income is $140,050 (higher than the total vendor median). What truly sets them apart is that their average revenue from the Green Barn Farmers’ Market is $44,840 (higher than the average income of all farmers at Green Barn Farmers’ Market). The results of these calculations are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Comparing incomes of farmers practicing differing marketing strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Green Barn Farmers’ Market Vendors (n=26)</th>
<th>Green Barn Farmers’ Market Vendors that Sell Only at Farmers’ Markets (n=10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Income</td>
<td>$126,186.45</td>
<td>$141,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>$101,200.00</td>
<td>$140,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Revenue</td>
<td>$28,530</td>
<td>$44,840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result does not appear to be related to either group having sold at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market longer than the other and thus having had more time to develop loyal clientele, since both groups on average have sold at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market for four years. Contrasting this result is that half of all Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors made at least 87.5% of their total revenue from farmers’ markets as the only marketing outlet used. These farmers had an average total revenue of $129,882 and their median revenue was $107,725. The other half of the farmers made less than 87.5% of their revenue from farmers’ markets, and these farmers had an average total revenue of $138,842 and median revenue of $126,000. This information is presented in Table 5.
The results presented in Table 5 contradict the conclusions drawn above that those farmers who depend on farmers’ markets tend to have greater incomes. These results, however, are from one particular farmers’ market in one particular growing season, and so are not a representative sample.

The above information will be revisited in the discussion section on the value of farmers’ markets to farmer income. Comparing the incomes and relative success of the Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors to farmers’ markets at large will provide perspective on whether CFC-developed markets create new marketing opportunities for farmers. Also, on average, the Green Barn Farmers’ Market accounts for 33% of a farmer’s total income, with the median percent of derived income being 25%. With the average and median incomes being $126,186.45 and $101,200.00 respectively, if the Green Barn Farmers’ Market were to not exist farmers would lose on average between $25,300 (median) and $41,641.53 (average). These are significant numbers to have to recoup should the market no longer exist.

### 6.1.8 Consumers who Attend The Green Barn Farmers’ Market

On August 9th, 2014, I interviewed consumers as they browsed the Green Barn Farmers’ Market. I interviewed 39 people in total: 15 were male, and 24

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Farmers earning more than 87.5% of their income from farmers’ markets (n=13)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Income</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>$107,725</td>
<td>$126,000</td>
</tr>
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</table>
female. The patrons interviewed were highly educated: 25 interviewees had a post-graduate degree, eight had a university degree, two had some university, and four had a college diploma. Of these patrons 31 were employed, four were retired, three were unemployed, and one was a student. 21 had a household income over $100,000, four had between $75-100,000, three had between $50-75,000, four made $25-50,000, one had an income of $0-25,000.

The average distance the consumer travelled (based on their postal code) was 1.97km, and they arrived by walking and biking (28), public transit (3), and driving (8). Over half (21) go to Green Barn Farmers’ Market weekly, with the majority stating that proximity is a determining factor in their decision to attend this market. Consumers who do not come weekly are either unable to because of holidays or a work schedule, or because they do not have a need to purchase groceries each week. Over half of the consumers have a farm or farmers that they like to support based on the following farmer attributes: Personality and interaction (8); Quality (8); Values (7); Exclusivity (5); Price (3); Organic (2); Location (1); Supporting Young Farmers (1). On average the consumers spend $44.27 (and a median of $35), with the low being $5 on a pastry and coffee, and a high of $200 on veggies, fruit, meat, fish, coffee, chocolate, and baked goods. 30 interviewees knew about The Stop’s community-oriented programs and all were able to name at least one, and this knowledge influenced 22 of them to shop at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market. When asked to give three words to describe the market, the most common consumer responses were: Community
(8), Busy (6), Friendly (6), Fun (6), Variety (5), Diverse (4), Local (4), and Quality (4).

6.2 Barriers to Non-CFC Farmers?

As mentioned in the Methods Section, I mailed 45 surveys to local food farmers, 15 for each CFC region studied. I received three back incomplete (untouched), one respondent indicating he/she was no longer farming, and three complete, leading to a 6.7% response rate. Despite the low numbers, some insights were revealed. For instance, two of the farmers would consider supplying their respective CFC with produce, and the same two did not foresee any reason why they would not or could not market their products through the CFC. These two farms listed volume and price as being factors that could deter them from, or encourage them to sell their products to the CFC. In terms of revenue required, they requested a fair market price and a minimum order to make it worth their while. For the farmer who did not consider selling to the CFC, they stated that time commitment and their availability are reasons why they could not consider supplying to the CFC. It is probable that when recruiting farmers to be consistent suppliers, one would receive varying responses, but it seems that if the CFC can purchase at the right volume and offer a fair price, then farmers with available produce would be amenable to selling to the CFC.

7 Results Chapter Three: Evaluating What Farmers Would Do in the Absence of a CFC
The purpose of this chapter is to report on data collected by asking farmers to reflect on what they would do if they did not have access to CFCC-generated markets. I proceed by first exploring perceptions of farmers who sell through the (1) The Table, (2) The Local, and (3) The Stop. This is followed by a short exploration into where consumers would purchase fresh food products if a particular CFC did not exist.

### 7.1 The Table

Since both qualitatively and quantitatively it appears as though The Table CFC’s presence in Perth has not significantly impacted the participating farmers’ ability to access new markets, the question remains: what would farmers do with their products if the CFC did not exist? In each case, the interviewed farmers had alternative uses for their products, such as eating it or composting it, attempting to sell it at the farmers’ market, or feeding it to livestock (Farmers, The Table). In one instance, Farmer 2 indicated a desire to alter the business strategy, stating:

“I’m looking at, specifically at a business selling dried stored food products so theoretically that’s going to be a whole different market. And that’s because with the lack of people, right, you have to figure out a way to not waste all the stuff you grow” (Farmer, The Table).

In two cases the farmers would thus have their income reduced by the amount they sell to the CFC, and in the third case they may recoup some of the loss through sales at the farmers’ market.
No consumers were interviewed from The Table since those who consume the food that the The Table provides do not exchange money for it, rendering The Table the end user. To answer the question, “what would consumers do without access to the CFC?”, it is likely that since the programs the CFC administers are meant to offer marginalized people access to healthy local foods, without the CFC it is likely they would simply go without or consume less.

7.2 The Local

Similar to Lanark County, in each case the interviewed farmers had alternative uses for their products, such as eating it or composting it, attempting to sell it at the farmers’ market, freezing it, or feeding it to livestock (Farmers, The Local). Since The Local services area food banks and organizations with meal programs, several farmers mentioned donating their products to other organizations that would likely still exist in The Local’s absence. Two farmers expressed no concern with their ability to sell the excess products, noting how nominal their sales to The Local were. Farmer 4 and the Distributor would not have their incomes directly impacted by losing access to The Local; they merely would not have received the tax breaks associated with receiving charitable receipts.

Like in Lanark County, no consumers were interviewed from The Local since those who consume the food that The Local provides do not exchange money for it, rendering The Local as both an end user through their meal programs, and a distributor to other organizations who have their own
participants. To answer the question, “what would consumers do without access to the CFC?”, it is probable that since the programs the CFC administers are meant to offer marginalized people access to healthy local foods, without the CFC’s meal programs it is likely they would simply go without. In the case of The Storehouse’s modus operandi, 60+ organizations in the Stratford area would no longer be able to take advantage of the efficiency that The Storehouse offers, requiring them to source their own foods as they did prior to The Local’s establishment.

The Local’s management team noted a number of instances where they feel they are contributing to some farmers’ ability to access previously untapped markets. For instance, The Local is host to the Sunday Slow Food Market during the winter months, offering their indoor space to 12-15 vendors each week (Manager 2, The Local). The market is admittedly not very well attended due to The Local being fairly inaccessible in the winter without a car, leading to vendors dropping out because of low sales, and consumers not coming because their favourite vendors no longer attend (Manager 2, The Local). It is the manager’s hope that an upcoming Slow Food public relations campaign will raise awareness about slow food in general, and the winter market specifically. The Local has also hosted several events that act as consultations and discussions, meant to “facilitate enhancements in the local food economy” (Manager 2, The Local). The following quotation illustrates what one such consultation was centred around:

“So our local MPP wanted, there was a consultation going on about The Local Food Act and he wanted the local stakeholders to have a say in that
legislation, he’s a PC so he had some criticisms about the draft and wanted to get a few changes in there... They needed a space to have that, so we hosted that here, and we had farmers in the room saying “this is what would work for me, this is what wouldn’t work for me” and I think that is one way we tried to do something around that” (Manager 2, The Local).

The Local has also opened up their certified kitchen space to local farmers, allowing them to sign up to use the space in the evenings and weekends to make value-added products (Manager 2, The Local). This opportunity is no longer advertised since the funding they had to cover the overhead ran out, but the manager states that it could be sustained, just not as a full program (Manager 2, The Local). To date, there have been approximately four farmers making use of this space to create value-added products such as preserves (Manager 2, The Local).

7.3 The Stop

The Stop’s contributions to farmer income are again broken down categorically to reflect on each sales avenue individually.

7.3.1 Farmers who Sell Directly to The Stop

It is likely that given the substantial contribution the Grow for The Stop campaign has had on Farm 8’s income, and the novelty of the initiative, if The Stop were to no longer operate, this farm would lose out on this income. The Grow for The Stop campaign is perhaps duplicable in other affluent neighbourhoods (where the people shopping at these stores are able to afford The Stop’s additional 10% markup on foods) and with similar non-profit organizations. There is then the possibility that Farmer 8 could generate a
similar income as a result. One variable in this that is perhaps worth noting is that the Grow for The Stop campaign may be successful due to The Stop’s notoriety in the community, and so may not see as much success if the same initiative were started by a different organization. When asked “what would you do with the products you sold to The Stop if The Stop didn’t exist?”, the response was that they would look for a replacement (Farmer, The Stop). This farmer noted that they would have a difficult time replacing The Stop as a customer as they have been consistent from year to year and represent a significant amount of their income (Farmer, The Stop).

7.3.2 Distributor

When asked where they would sell the products they currently sell to The Stop if The Stop did not exist, the Local Food Distribution Company stated, matter-of-factly, that they would look for a similar organization (Manager, Local Food Distribution Company). Within the last six months, the Local Food Distribution Company has been the recipient of a grant and have roughly quadrupled their warehousing capacity by moving locations, which indicates they are confident they can sell more local food to more institutions. The information presented suggests that even though The Stop accounts for 6% of their sales, they have the confidence that this could be replaced by an organization of a similar size.
7.3.3 Green Barn Farmers’ Market Vendors

Farmers who sell at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market have managed to generate an average income of $28,530 from their sales there, with half the farmers making more than $18,540. Using these amounts I calculated an estimate of total income these farmers generate. On average, Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors make $122,677.66, with half of the farmers making above $101,200. These incomes put the Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors in the 60th percentile of income earners in YRM. Of these total incomes, sales from the Green Barn Farmers’ Market account for 33% on average, with half of the farmers earning 25% or more of their income from this market. Perhaps because of this, many Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors feel that farmers’ markets are the best marketing method available to them, and a greater number still value the Green Barn Farmers’ Market highly for its high patron attendance, great atmosphere, and commitment to standards. If farmers were to lose access to the Green Barn Farmers’ Market, they would likely have difficulty recouping the significant amount of their total incomes that would be lost, along with the facilitated direct access to consumers who attend the market. While the alternative markets are well-attended, one market does not limit reselling, and attendance at either market would increase the direct competition each farm would face.

7.3.4 Green Barn Farmers’ Market Consumers

Of the 39 consumers interviewed, 18 of them attend other farmers’ markets, namely: North York Centre, Liberty Village, the Brickworks, Nathan
Phillips Square, Dufferin Grove, St Lawrence, Sorauren, Borden Market, and Parkdale Co-op. That being said, the majority of consumers buy the majority of their groceries at various grocery stores: 18 people buy their groceries at Loblaws, five at Fiesta Farms, five at a unnamed grocery store, four at No Frills, two at fruit stands, two at a co-op grocery store. When asked where they would buy the items that they were buying at the market that day if the Green Barn Farmers’ Market did not exist, consumers responded: find another farmers’ market (12); go to a grocery store (18); consume less or none at all (4); and the remainder would buy from a fruit stand or co-op (5). For those who would attend another market, the closest option for them is the St. Lawrence Market, which on average is 7.05 km away from where they live (based on their postal code), more than three times the distance of the Green Barn Farmers’ Market.

8 Results Chapter Four: Summary of Results for Objectives 1 and 2

8.1 The Table

Lanark County has a thriving local food market and a number of small farmers seeking new markets. The limited options are encouraging some farmers to develop a county-based food hub to access larger retail and institutional contracts (Farmer, The Table). The data presented in this study suggest that this particular CFC, The Table, has not created a point of sale that significantly impacts any one farmer’s income. The Table spends roughly $15,000 annually on local food, divided amongst roughly eight key farmers, with others partaking more sporadically. The Table is limited both by the number of
people they serve and the definite lack of storage space for fresh produce and meats. Also, The Table has a 65 square metre garden where they produce food for their programs, and while this certainly serves a significant purpose for their social programs, it reduces The Table’s potential investment in local food. The Table’s presence has resulted in at least one farm finding new clients by way of association, but this farm attributes the new relationship to their own networking activities. In no case has The Table created a market that is closer to any of the farms interviewed, or increased their income by more than 4%. Despite The Table being a rather insignificant market for the farmers interviewed, there is a desire for a better means of buying and selling products. If the market did not exist, the farmers would either try to sell elsewhere, compost the extra, or attempt to consume it. All of these factors combined lead to the conclusion that The Table CFC does not create a significant market for farmers that would not exist in its absence. That said, when asked if The Table could be a farmer’s primary outlet for their products, the Table manager replied:

“No. I view it from the other end… saying “should it be a CFC’s goal to use as much locally produced product as possible?” “Yes!”, and “does that help the local farmer and local economy?” “Yes”. So that’s a good goal for us, to use as much as we can afford to use and as much as is available to us, within the challenges of storage and, and also the people that we serve” (Manager, The Table).

Arguably, The Table is doing the best it can to support local farms given the limitations outlined above, and were it to not exist, the amount of money spent on local food in Perth would likely decrease by $15,000 per year.
8.2 The Local

Stratford has an enviable local food scene, with many farmers filling the demand from consumers through direct sales at farmers’ markets, and through restaurants and local food events. Despite the fact that farmers are fulfilling the demand, some inefficiencies in the process exist, where retailers are buying from other retailers or directly from multiple farmers. To fix this, the feasibility of a food hub was assessed, and it was suggested that The Storehouse at The Local CFC would be a suitable location. The Storehouse utilizes about 50% of its capacity (Manager, The Local) so there is definitely room to move more local food products. Some philosophical changes may be required in order to truly benefit the Stratford area farmers, for instance: The Local could follow The Table’s philosophy and pay full retail prices for their products rather than requesting wholesale pricing; they could allocate more of the ~$45,000, which was spent on food in 2013, on local food specifically rather than buying through resellers that likely buy through the Ontario Food Terminal (a distributor in Toronto that purchases food products that can often be from great distances); and they could improve their communications with farmers and include them in the decision-making process should they attempt to operate The Storehouse as a food hub. The Local has not significantly impacted any one farmer’s earning potential, but they also have not created an expectation among farmers that they would. Collectively, farmers do not feel that The Local has increased their ability to access new markets, and they would not be significantly impacted should The Local cease its operations. If The Local is to have an economic impact on
Stratford-area farmers, pursuing the food hub model while taking the above three points into account may be one path, the logic for which is explained in Chapter 5, Discussion. The Local’s managers have made efforts to improve conditions for farmers through the winter Slow Food Market and creating a space for them to add value to their products in the certified kitchen. These efforts do not appear to have had an economic impact on farmers due to self-professed poor attendance at the market and low and inconsistent use of the kitchen space. Perhaps the most significant offer The Local has made has been to offer their space as a place to congregate and meet with other parties who are interested in agricultural economic development, allowing farmers to have a voice in issues that affect them. This meeting space could represent a concrete way of improving communication between farmers and Local CFC management.

8.3 The Stop

The Stop CFC has created several marketing opportunities for farmers that have contributed significantly to their incomes. Through the Grow for The Stop program, The Stop has been able to contribute approximately $20,000 annually to Farmer 8, for several years. Owing to information provided by CFCC, Farmer 9’s income (not interviewed) has also been positively impacted, with approximately $7,000 in sales to The Stop in 2013. Although it is unclear what impact The Stop’s purchases through the Local Food Distribution Company have had on any individual farmer, they have injected $120,000 into the GTA’s local food economy and helped support a thriving, yet still relatively new, food
distribution business. Farmers who sell at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market generate, on average, 33% of their total income through their sales at this market. This market is ideally placed in a location close to highly educated and somewhat affluent consumers who frequent the market. Should The Stop no longer exist, it is likely that the Local Food Distribution Company would not have any difficulty replacing the lost income since it is a business that is expanding and appeals to many types of institutions. Of the farmers who sell directly to The Stop, Farmer 9 would likely be the most impacted should The Stop no longer exist. Farmer 9 has a unique partnership with The Stop that may not be easily duplicable, though it is certainly possible. The vendors at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market would likely be the most affected by an absence of The Stop since they rely heavily on this market for their income. That being said, since the market is so successful and popular with both farmers and consumers, should the space remain available, it is almost certain that it could become city-organized or organized by a coalition of farmers. Alternatively, the farmer vendors would either attend a different farmers’ market and attempt to compete against resellers who undercut them, or find a different marketing method entirely. The Green Barn Farmers’ Market consumers have more options available to them in terms of alternatives, since they could easily buy their goods at grocery stores, or attend another market that, on average, is about 6km further from them compared to the Green Barn Farmers’ Market and is accessible by public transit.
9 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this discussion is to explore this thesis’ third objective, which is to: “identify alternative opportunities for CFCC to create new markets for small to mid-sized farmers, or identify what could be done differently within current CFCC programming to improve market access”. To do this, there are four critical topics that emerged during the research process.

• First, there are connections and learning opportunities to be had between CFCs, where elements of one CFC’s operation could be successfully integrated into another.

• Second, the success of Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors requires a more in-depth analysis of the value of farmers’ markets.

• Next, given the implications of the neoliberalization of the food system outlined in the literature review, and the perceived motivations of CFCC, I will suggest that CFCC could be a political vehicle to reverse neoliberal policy.

• Finally, I discuss the potential to develop and/or support a food hub approach.

9.1 Connections and Learning Opportunities Between CFCs

CFCs can offer farmers several points of sale: a farmers’ market and purchases made through the various food programs through The Stop CFC; The Storehouse distribution centre and meal programs through The Local CFC; and the food bank and meal programs through The Table CFC. Each of these points
of sale could be categorized as direct marketing. None of these marketing avenues are particularly unique, in that farmers’ markets, food banks, and meal programs exist elsewhere, and in some cases, have for decades. The Storehouse is perhaps the most unique point of sale offered by a CFC, yet the greatest amount purchased from any one farm was $2,325.30 (Manager, The Local). This aspect will be expanded upon in Section 9.4 and the opportunities it presents to other CFCs will be explored. Since only one of the approaches to creating markets for farmers are particularly novel, studies of the impacts of each individual marketing avenue have already taken place. These studies will be used to add depth to the conclusions that were drawn about each CFC in Sections 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3. Given the relatively high incomes of Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors, in the following section I will review literature pertaining to the value of farmers’ markets to farmer income, comparing farmers who choose this outlet as their main points of sale to those who diversify. The value will be based on contributions to farmer income and the effect of farmer management strategies. In each case the value will be related back to farmer vendors at the Green Barn Farmers’ Market and comparisons will be made. Based on the comparisons made between the Green Barn Farmers’ Market and farmers’ markets in the literature, a conclusion will be drawn that states whether the other two CFCs should organize a farmers’ market to improve market access for farmers.
9.2 The Value of Farmers’ Markets

9.2.1 Economic Impact of Farmers’ Markets on Farmer Income

Given the value of the Green Barn Farmers’ Market that vendors reported, it is worth investigating how their experience compares to the literature. This result should be seen alongside the literature on farmers’ markets that notes farmers’ markets have been a main contributor to farmer income since the 1940s (Brown and Miller 2008), yet the collective impact of farmers’ markets has been difficult to calculate over time (Brown 2002). Many of the sales calculations and totals that are widely cited have been the result of educated guessing (Brown 2002). While the information that follows is the result of studies that took place after Brown made this assessment, economic impacts remain inconclusive.

Nevertheless, one study builds on the next, and collectively some judgments can be made. Income data for vendors at farmers’ markets in Canada does not appear to exist, so the comparison is made to participants in American studies.

In the early 2000’s, 28% of market vendors in the U.S. used farmers’ markets as their only marketing outlet with an average income of $11,773 (Brown and Miller 2008). In 2006, these numbers decreased, as average sales were $7,108 and 25% of vendors used the market as their only source of agricultural income (Brown and Miller 2008). In a study consisting of markets in multiple states, Feenstra et al. (2003) found that small-scale farmers made up roughly 56% of all vendors, of which over half of them work part time, which is consistent
with Brown and Miller (2008) who surmised that farming has also been used as a part time activity; in Iowa only 30% of farmers’ market vendors made over $5,000 a year. Further to this point, 49% of farmers’ market vendors in Oklahoma had annual household incomes of less than $40,000, and over half of these farmers stated that farming was their full time seasonal income (Brown et al. 2007). Of these farmers, only 5% relied on this income with no supplemental off-farm income. Off-farm labour in Canadian agriculture has been used as a means to reduce the variability of household income from year to year (Freshwater et al. 2011).

The data presented in this thesis, and the Green Barn Farmers’ Market survey data in particular, contribute to these discussions by showing that the market vendors do not fit into these categories since their average incomes and estimated revenues are much higher, and they are unlikely to be farming part-time (data not available but the inference is made based on their income and number of weeks attending the market). A comparison to the literature cannot be made for whether Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors have supplemental off-farm income because the question was not posed. Because of this contrast, it could be said that either Toronto offers a unique market for farmers, allowing them to market to relatively affluent neighbourhoods, or The Stop CFC has created a stand-out market that is not easily replicated.

The literature notes that the level of income a farmer achieves is dependent on the number of weeks spent at the market, the variety of items for sale, the distance traveled to the market (Brown et al. 2007), and whether the
business is operated on a part-time or full-time basis (Brown and Miller 2008). Similarly, Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors who spend more weeks at the market do in fact generate more revenue: those who sold at the market for 52 weeks had an average revenue of $35,302, whereas those who sold for 30 or fewer weeks had an average revenue of $23,420. In the case of having a greater variety of products for sale, this appeared to only positively impact Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendor income when moving from sales within one category of items to two. Farmers who sold within one category (one of cheese, vegetables, honey, fruit, baked goods, etc.) made on average $34,320 in revenue, whereas farmers who sold within two categories had an average revenue of $43,806. Increasing between three to five categories results in revenues of $24,121 (excluding two farmers who reported figures resulting in negative incomes), $13,428, and $19,556 respectively. Data for the last two observations (distance travelled and whether a farmer is part time) is unavailable for Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors, though given their estimated incomes it is unlikely that the majority of vendors have secondary jobs or farm part-time.

One of the key conclusions from this research is that farmers enjoy participating in farmers’ markets, which are seen as a beneficial activity for most farmers. In this way, the research presented here is consistent with already-published work that demonstrated in a social survey that 61% of farmers who sell at farmers’ markets are satisfied with the revenues they earn from this practice (Govindasamy et al. 2003). Older farmers, organic farmers, and farmers who sell their products for at least 70% of the retail value are much more likely to be
satisfied with their level of sales at farmers’ markets (Govindasamy et al. 2003).

This satisfaction may be related to the following calculation: comparing several marketing scenarios, Hardesty and Leff (2010) accounted for revenue, marketing expenses, and production costs in determining total profit from the sale of 100 pounds of tomatoes. Their calculations showed that total profit from wholesale would be $9.00, and the highest returns would be from the farmers’ market with $42.00 of profit (Hardesty and Leff 2010). Detre et al. (2011) support this argument, since they found that farmers who participate in a direct marketing strategy like a farmers’ market receive more of every dollar spent on their products by consumers (Detre et al. 2011). Also, farmers who grew organically and direct-marketed their products were able to increase their revenue by 3.39% compared to organic farmers who did not market directly (Detre et al. 2011).

This particular study does not indicate what marketing method was used, so I cannot determine the specific effect of farmers’ markets on farmer income in this case. Results presented in this paper confirm the conclusions of Hardesty and Leff (2010) and Detre et al. (2011) who conclude that farmers’ markets are a way for small farmers to sell enough to support their business, while having the opportunity to expand with minimal risk. This is an important point since small farms are often operated by farmers who have less experience with business and marketing and consider the farmers’ market to be the most important point of sale to their business, despite having acquired fewer skills, business contacts, and engaging in fewer entrepreneurial activities than mid-to-large sized farms (Feenstra et al. 2003). Additionally, farmers’ markets may be one of the only
options available to some farmers for marketing their products (Feenstra et al. 2003). The opinions expressed by Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors corroborate some of these findings. The majority of Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors stated that farmers’ markets in general are the best marketing avenue available to them, are essential to their business, and are thus their preferred marketing method. While the survey did not ask the farmers to compare their financial gains from different avenues of sale, it could be inferred that they prefer farmers’ markets to other channels because it gives them a higher income, but a number of farmers mentioned the unpredictability of sales as a downside.

9.2.2 The effects of farmer management strategies

Despite the potential benefits listed above, there are some caveats. For instance, farmers who have better marketing skills benefit from direct to consumer-marketing strategies, but these skills also tend to cause the farmer to choose different outlets for their products (Park et al. 2014). It is unclear whether the results described in this thesis regarding the experience of Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors is consistent with information found in the literature. For instance, farmers who make use of multiple marketing strategies, such as direct to consumer outlets like farmers’ markets combined with an intermediated retail outlet like a regional distributor, earn significantly greater incomes than those who stick to one strategy (Park et al. 2014). Only three vendors noted that they rely solely on farmers’ markets for their income, and whether they have different incomes from those who rely on multiple sales strategies is inconclusive due to the wide variation between the three incomes ($244,000, $24,000, and -
$37,000). The farmers who use multiple strategies tend to be younger and more educated than those who rely on one marketing strategy alone (Park et al. 2014). This suggests that a direct to consumer marketing channel, like a farmers’ market, will not inherently improve a farmer’s sales. They must have the capacity to develop the market on their own and manage the business effectively, which, given the fact that Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors earn in the 60th percentile of Ontario farmers, suggests they are capable of doing so. Taking all of the above into account is still no guarantee of profitability. According to calculations done by Uematsu and Mishra (2011), selling at a farmers’ market has a significant negative impact on gross cash farm income. In only one instance did I find information that would back their findings, which I do suspect is anomalous.

When considering how farmers’ markets could be developed as part of The Local and The Table CFC’s strategies, the following information is of particular concern given the smaller population of these two locations: first, as farmers’ markets become more popular, there are more farmer vendors, which increases competition and forces vendors to lower their prices (this is consistent with basic economic principles); second, the number of farmers’ markets fluctuate from year to year, with unsuccessful markets being a result of their small size, poor vendor and patron attendance, and inexperienced management; third, the actual costs of attending a farmers’ market may not be outweighed by the potential profit, creating slim profit margins, further eroded by the need to sell their perishable products at the end of the day for below market value (Uematsu
and Mishra 2011). Information presented earlier corroborates this concern, as a manager at The Local stated that they had low attendance from both farmers and consumers at their indoor farmers’ market during the winter of 2013-14.

The Green Barn Farmers’ Market avoids the above caveats in several ways. First, the Green Barn Farmers’ Market manager has stated that they will not increase the number of vendors because they have reached a size where participating farms are profitable and the market is not saturated. Second, given the location of the market, it is unlikely to face any competition on a similar scale, as the majority of the patrons live within a walking or biking distance, and 56% of those surveyed stated that The Stop’s programs have influenced their decision to shop there. Third, it would appear as though only two farmers of the 29 surveyed had any difficulty generating revenue, with one so anomalous (-$37,300) that I suspect there was a reporting mistake, though it could be a singular case.

It would appear that doing business at a farmers’ market requires a farmer to be cognizant and reflective of all associated costs and whether the net revenue justifies the presence. When comparing the cost of operating multiple marketing channels, selling via wholesale outlets had the lowest expense, while farmers’ markets had the highest (Hardesty and Leff 2010). Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors did report having high costs to attend farmers’ markets, but their incomes offset this cost allowing them to have positive revenue. Even though some farmer vendors may simply break-even at a farmers’ market once all factors are considered, there are other benefits to attendance that may make up for this loss. It can provide a space for additional marketing opportunities to
occur that do not result in immediate sales. Farmers can use the space to market their CSA shares, network with other farmers, and develop their business management skills in a low risk environment (Uematsu and Mishra 2011)).

Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendors’ statements support the authors’ claims, as they listed a number of these benefits as rationales for continuing to market at farmers’ markets.

Farmers’ markets still ostensibly sit within, and are reliant on, a neoliberal framework. Whether this positively or negatively affects a farmer’s ability to produce ecologically will be addressed next.

9.3 CFCC’s Potential to Act as a Political Vehicle to Reverse Neoliberal Policy

Within this section, I will demonstrate that CFCC is ideally suited to champion a movement that confronts the environmental and social ills that have resulted from neoliberalizations of the food system. It is becoming apparent that this model might be able to influence government policy to restore environmental regulations, ultimately providing a friendlier market for ecological farms. The following discussion will set up the context for this claim. I will begin by describing how CFCC is a hybrid model and where it fits in the Ontario context. Next I will describe how CFCC could help to improve market conditions for farmers. Before concluding, I will look at the policy and advocacy work that CFCC does, and/or could do.
9.3.1 CFCs, Ontario Farmers, and Neoliberalism

This thesis has focused on whether CFCs have created new markets for farmers, and has demonstrated that the financial impact on farmers is commensurate with the population they serve. The financial impact could be framed in two ways. The first builds on the neoliberal lens (e.g. see: Guthman 2008; Eaton 2008; Winson 2010): farmers have a new market-based solution to acquiring more income through sales both to and through an entrepreneurial organization that perpetuates the state's ability to forego offering agricultural safety nets. The second perspective is that CFCC’s work is embedded in social and ecological values, and has opened up a market to farmers by connecting them to citizens who would not have access to their products otherwise. It is in this way that CFCC could be considered a hybrid model (see: Mount (2012), borrowing market-based mechanisms to develop community and social infrastructure through food. In some ways, their work could be seen as similar to the Fair Trade movement, which uses market mechanisms and social entrepreneurship (Nicholls 2010) to create change while advocating for political change (Lyon 2006). Lyon (2006) also cautions that the effects of Fair Trade should not be overstated, otherwise its true transformative potential may be diminished. With this perspective in mind, I will now investigate how CFCs could further improve market access for ecological farms while maintaining their hybridity.

9.3.2 CFCC Improving Conditions for Ecological Farms
To start I would like to make a distinction between improving access to markets and improving conditions for ecological farms. In the first case, the premise is that increasing the number of people purchasing local ecological food will increase the number of farmers who produce that food. While perhaps valid, this has been the approach that farmers have used for decades since the introduction of neoliberalizations (selling at farmers’ markets, CSAs, and as cooperatives), and I demonstrated its ineffectiveness at reversing the trends towards farm consolidation. In the second case, I suggest a whole new premise wherein the number of farms producing ecologically is increased not through market demand, but through policy. Following this premise I will now contend that CFCC, by leveraging its hybridity, can influence policy that will result in more ecological farms. The literature suggests that alternative food initiatives can achieve these outcomes through partnerships and advocacy.

There are two pathways that CFCC could follow towards improving conditions for ecological farms. The first is to attempt to directly influence policy decisions as they affect the intersection between ecology and agriculture through partnerships and advocacy. The second is through the incorporation of more food hub-like distribution strategies where appropriate, or through allying themselves with organizations that are attempting to form food hubs that they could then purchase through.

9.4 Policy, Advocacy, and CFCC

Before suggesting that CFCC could act as a policy champion and advocate for ecological farms, it is important to establish that the organization already
extends its will in a political direction. CFCC’s modus operandi, publications and lists of resources all suggest that this is the case. For instance, the following quotation taken from CFCC’s website encapsulates their philosophy:

“We urgently need to build a fairer, more resilient and sustainable food system, and we can only do that by involving everyone in that process. By connecting the dots between low-income communities and local farmers, consumer choices and our environment, CFCC is fighting for a living democracy where equitable access to good food is a reality” (cfcccanada.org).

This quotation once again demonstrates CFCC’s hybrid nature. CFCC’s monthly newsletter also contains a section for “stories of innovative projects that use food as a platform for change,” which are a series of links to sites and articles pertaining to the food system, health, and poverty that are updated each month and are collected by CFCC staff. CFCC’s website contains a resource section, within which there are links to articles by well-known authors such as Janet Poppendieck (author of seminal, critical book on food banking, *Sweet Charity*), and documents written by policy-oriented organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). CFCC hosts and distributes the CCPA’s recently written document, “Food Sovereignty,” which is an alternative federal budget chapter, for which the following is the introduction:

“Canada urgently needs a national food policy. More than two million Canadians are food insecure and over 882,000 turned to food banks each month in 2012, a 31% increase since 2008, when the recession began. Farmers and fishers are going out of business, our natural environment is being pushed to the limit, a quarter of Canadians are overweight or obese, and we are one of very few industrialized countries without either a national food policy or student nutrition program.”

CFCC’s philosophy, resources, political affiliations, and writings suggest that they
may be amenable to developing a policy-oriented committee of sorts.

A cursory glance at CFCC’s publicly available documents indicates that the organization is politically active with a range of media and messages, it remains unclear what this impact on the food system may be. The writings cited above are far ranging in scope, making an impact assessment difficult. To facilitate assessment, and perhaps success from efforts, a concerted and focused effort on a small number of issues may be required. If CFCC is indeed interested in creating more opportunities for ecological farms to exist via policy, then the following recommendations regarding partnerships and advocacy taken from the literature may be of use.

For tangible results to occur, partnerships between alternative food initiatives and other food movement actors must be based on intent, with strong alliances, and a concerted effort to distinguish goals related to superficial reform from structural change (e.g. see: Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011). Organizations need to challenge themselves to reach beyond the easily accessible and define what directions they want to take, and work strategically with others to achieve their shared goals (Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011). The setting of these goals must be strategic, and the targeted policies chosen carefully, since each organization is likely to have limits in terms of personnel and funding that could impede the reaching of these goals (Wakefield et al. 2013). Having meaningful dialogue with the state is an opportunity that could emerge from purposeful collaboration between alternative food initiatives, which could lead to tangible change (Wakefield et al. 2013). Finally, the results presented in
this thesis point in a similar direction as Wakefield et al. (2013)’s work that states: “finding time and space in which to reflect on existing practices and to prioritize advocacy could facilitate organizations’ ability to resist and reshape the neoliberal imperatives that constrain their work.” In the case of CFCC, strong collaborations with other alternative food initiatives would prioritize the intersection of ecological farming and food access.

To this point I have avoided stating specific organizations that CFCC could work with, or pointing to specific policies that could be modified or implemented because I cannot claim expertise in CFCC’s internal resources and constraints. However, owing to my interviews with farmers in Lanark County, the Stratford area, and Toronto, combined with my review of the literature, there is one obvious starting point for CFCC to investigate when it comes to partnerships and advocacy: the food hub.

9.5 Developing and/or Supporting a Food Hub Approach

One way of developing the ideas presented in this thesis is through promoting food hubs. As already alluded to, food hubs are rather novel and as such the majority of the existing literature that examines them have a non-peer reviewed origin, yet there exists an abundance of descriptions for the various models. For instance, food hubs are described as a method of aggregating, distributing, and marketing local food while providing philanthropic services to the communities they serve (Barham et al. 2012). These innovative systems have been posited as a means of bridging the gap between ecological farms and
urban consumers, a market that has been dominated by direct-to-consumer sales and wholesale/retail distribution (Barham et al. 2012). In their initial definition of a food hub, Morley et al. (2008) forego the social aspects and simply state that a food hub acts as an intermediary between food producers and the various public and private organizations who have an interest in acquiring food. Arguably, CFCs and socially-oriented food distribution organizations like Intervale (described later in this thesis) act as intermediaries in much the same way as their definition of food hubs, while also working towards social justice goals.

Food hubs differ from the other models listed earlier in that they are not an extension of a producer’s activities. Rather, they exist as standalone enterprises much in the same way that a grocer stands apart from their suppliers. Morley et al. (2008) note more specifically that a food hub’s responsibilities can vary, where some hubs may perform more than one role within the food system (production/processing/distribution/retailing, etc.), others may purchase and retail food where still others may simply be an intermediary for contractual services and knowledge exchange. Through my research, I have found that CFCs, although their capacities and goals vary, perform many of these functions (providing retail space through farmers’ markets, distributing food through the storehouse, etc.). Although the functions performed by food hubs taken separately may have been practiced by organizations for some time, the impetus for further development and establishment stems from the increasing demand for local food produced alongside environmental services, where it is recognized that the food hub structure will result in greater farmer access to markets and greater
ease of local food procurement for consumers (Whitelegg 2005). The importance of the small and ecological farms to rural communities is often a focus of food hubs, as many of them incorporate social change philosophies into their business models in place of economic profits (Matson and Thayer, 2013). Despite this shift in philosophy, many food hubs are independently capable of achieving profits, yet since they operate as social enterprises they measure their successes via completion of social or ethical endeavors and often grow their scale to increase their impact on the communities they serve (Matson and Thayer, 2013). In this way, the research presented in this thesis on a CFC’s ability to create markets for ecological farms fits into the broader discussion on food hubs, at least tangentially. Some food hubs have social and environmental values, as CFCs do. Food hubs prioritize the purchasing and distribution of local food, as CFCs do. Where they diverge, at least in terms of the literature’s view on food hubs, is that they do not sell the products they are purchasing for a profit or with the intent of sustaining their programs through the sale of local food.

With respect to the study of re-establishing the links between ecological farms and urban consumers and markets, the article by Schmidt et al. (2011) takes a case study approach and examines a non-profit food hub established in Vermont by the Intervale Center. In analyzing the Intervale Food Center, the authors used a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) through participation with staff at Intervale and participating farmers (Schmidt et al. 2011). The food hub’s benefits to the farmers systematically became better over time as they refined their programs according to the
feedback they received (Schmidt et al. 2011). Farmers benefited by having set produce pricing that offered a greater return than wholesale pricing. They received between 5% and 30% greater returns comparatively, depending on the type of crop, all of which was based on costs of production and consumer willingness to pay (Schmidt et al. 2011). These findings are similar to the philosophy of each CFC, where they were willing to pay market price, or often encourage the farmers to charge extra, for their products. Farmers also benefited from reduced marketing and administrative costs, since these were services offered by Intervale, and from the minimized risks associated with collaborating with other farmers (Schmidt et al. 2011). Diamond and Barham (2011) listed identity preservation as one benefit accrued by farmers associated with particular food hubs, as their farm name and description were clearly labeled on the products sold through the hub, allowing the consumer to approach farms directly should they want to buy their products specifically. This strategy was more apparent via the not-for-profit model, where the retail and co-op driven food hubs relied more on their own branding as a seal of quality (Diamond and Barham, 2011). The food hubs studied also allowed greater freedoms than the cooperative model. That is, in cooperatives, farmers are usually required to use the cooperative structure to facilitate the sale of all of their harvest. By contrast, farmers in relationships with food hubs were often encouraged not to rely completely on the food hub as their main marketing avenue, as a hedge against the collapse of the hub (Diamond and Barham, 2011). This is similar to the opinions expressed by the Local Food Distribution Company, who stated that
they do not have any farms that rely exclusively on their services, nor would they want to be in that position. Resulting from the aggregation of products, food hubs also allow participating farmers to access wholesale and direct markets that they would not have the means to otherwise (Diamond and Barham, 2011). As a non-profit organization, CFCC relies on grants and donations to fund aspects of their operations, often investing in infrastructure or paying portions of employee salaries. This aspect makes non-profit food hub models attractive to farmers who would not have to invest any of their own equity in the business, thus avoiding the associated risks (Diamond and Barham 2011).

Given that the food hub model has the ability to address the concerns associated with the CSA, farmers’ markets, and the producer cooperative models, and the positive findings within the limited literature that exists on this organizational structure, there is a likelihood that food hubs will become more commonplace and affect some change in the food system as is. It is difficult to predict with any certainty the degree to which food hubs will be able to stabilize or increase the number of ecological farms, largely because the evaluations necessary to generate data to make such predictions have yet to be performed.

In at least two of the cases studied in this thesis, CFCs have an opportunity to potentially improve how their particular model affects surrounding ecological farms and rural economies. In the first case, The Local CFC’s Storehouse has an opportunity and the necessary capacity to increase the amount of local food that flows through its space. Secondly, farmers interviewed for this monograph have stated an interest in the food hub that is in development within Lanark
County. This, combined with the potential for improvement of the procurement and communication process between The Table and the farmers it buys from, and the precedents set between The Stop and the Local Food Distribution Company, will be used to demonstrate that supporting the development of the food hub should be a top priority. To connect this argument back to the goal of increasing opportunities for ecological farms, I will review the available literature on food hub impacts on ecological farms and suggest how CFCC can put this information to use. Finally, when entering into new business developments, the philosophical alignment of the venture requires an assessment. To that end, the literature on non-profit food hubs will be reviewed.

9.5.1 Opportunities for Implementation in Stratford

Despite the numerous outlets and support of local food, members of the Stratford area undertook a feasibility study to assess the need for, and viability of, a regional food hub to aggregate, store, and distribute local food (Turnbull et al. 2013). The main findings from the feasibility study are that there is a considerable market for local food in Perth County, but retailers and food service businesses are either buying from other retailers or buying directly from local farmers (Turnbull et al. 2013), leading to inefficiencies surrounding both sales and purchasing. The authors concluded that the area could support a food hub, and the results of surveys and interviews showed that there is considerable interest from both producers and buyers to supply and purchase from a food hub (Turnbull et al. 2013). The following are points of interest from the Food Hub Feasibility Study, wherein the potential involvement of The Local CFC was
described (adapted from Turnbull et al. 2013):

- The proposed food hub would take advantage of unused space within The Storehouse that The Local CFC owns and operates. A manager at The Local CFC estimated that The Storehouse currently operates at less than 50% of its capacity (Manager, The Local)
- Along with the underutilized space, there is an additional 2,048 square feet attached to The Local CFC that could be leased
- Since the proposed food hub would be located on the Local CFC’s site using the existing infrastructure, the CFC would be undertaking full ownership and operation of the food hub
- The potential food hub could be modeled after the Windham Farm and Food Network of Vermont, which has a similar population, demographic, and operating model to The Local CFC

These points suggest that The Local CFC managers recognize that there is room for improvement within their model to further facilitate the transfer of products between farmers and end users. There is a similar opportunity in Lanark County, yet in this case it is the farmers who are initiating the development of a food hub.

9.5.2 Opportunities to Support a Food Hub in Lanark County

Despite the numerous outlets for local food, a coalition of farmers in Lanark County appears to be unsatisfied with their market penetration. A feasibility study for a food hub in Lanark County is underway
(http://www.lanarklocalflavour.ca/content/local-food-hub-assessment), citing a lack of long-term storage facilities, collective marketing strategies, and capacity for food aggregation and distribution as the impetus for the study. One of the CFC farmers interviewed, Farmer 2, spoke at length about the need for establishing a food hub to access larger retail contracts such as “larger institutions, municipalities, restaurants, caterers, and then possibly individuals” (Farmer, The Table) to grow their business. As established in the Results Section, The Table CFC does not provide this service to the farmers from whom they purchase. One of the farmers that sells to The Table is involved in the above-cited feasibility study. The farmer could continue selling to The Table, if the CFC were to become a purchaser of products from the food hub. The following is their rationale:

“...because they could be clients of the food hub. So, I could sell my thousand dollars worth of stuff to them, but it could be listed through the food hub. And it could all be washed and ready to go, there, and just be sent to them there. As opposed to, like I said, this is kind of what I was getting at before is that, [describes the process through which s/he sells vegetables to The Table] ... like, you know, it’s just a little too time consuming for what I’m doing,” [Farmer, The Table].

The above two cases present opportunities for CFCs and CFCC to support local farmers in novel ways. In Stratford, The Storehouse could adopt a local food distribution strategy similar to the Local Food Distribution Company in Stratford, because they have a similar square footage of space available, a reputation in the community, and Stratford’s strongly supported local food scene that could equate to a loyal clientele, all of which could directly impact Stratford area ecological farms’ ability to access local markets. The Local would, however,
have to overcome their apparent communication issues that were expressed by participants interviewed for this thesis, or recruit new farmers entirely. The Local Food Distribution Company, a for-profit social enterprise, is capable of employing six people plus the two principle owners, and is in a growth stage, suggesting that the business is profitable. Within the CFC context, these profits could be used to partially support their social programming. In Lanark County, the opportunity to support local farmers is slightly more indirect. The idea proposed is that The Table CFC could support farmers by purchasing through the food hub once it is operational, and remove some of the inefficiencies farmers described. These two strategies are reflective of incremental change through market-based solutions that would build community and potentially strengthen rural economies.

9.5.3 Farmer Benefits of the Non-Profit Food Hub Model and the Philosophical Alignment with CFCC

CFCC is a non-profit organization, so characteristics of non-profit food hubs are the focus in this section, since if a CFC is to adopt a food hub model it would likely be non-profit. A study of food hubs in Vermont described the characteristics and services that non-profit food hubs offered. The results showed that many food hubs had high farmer involvement in the establishment and ongoing structuring of the organization, and therefore were reflective of their respective communities (Leblanc et al. 2014). Farmers were involved in discussions on crop planning, pricing, logistics, and “were offered new markets, fair prices, guaranteed capital, guaranteed markets, networking, a collaborative environment, marketing support, technical support, and on-farm meetings at various members’ farms to discuss marketing strategies” (Leblanc et al. 2014, p.
6). Also, the authors found that non-profit food hubs increase the size of local markets resulting from their outreach programs, where the community is educated about the importance of local food and farmers are given the knowledge they need to be able to access these new markets (Leblanc et al. 2014). Food hubs appear to be particularly integral to developing new markets in areas where producer and consumer interactions have become saturated (Leblanc et al. 2014).

Leblanc et al. (2014) provided evidence that food hubs with similar philosophies to CFCC exist. They found that the non-profit food hubs in Vermont sought to ensure that local food was accessible to people of all income levels, and in some cases the food hub was formed with that specific intent in mind (2014). Delineating between a food hub and a CFC is difficult for this reason, and may come down to what is prioritized first; a food hub prioritizing the distribution of food for the benefit of local farmers, and a CFC prioritizing the access to local food by people living in low-income situations.

10 CONCLUSION

This monograph was framed around the idea that perhaps CFCs offered ecological farmers a marketplace that differed from the previous direct marketing strategies (farmers’ markets, CSAs, cooperative models) and around a sense of optimism that the continued expansion of CFCs across Canada would increase the number of small to mid-sized farms. Given that CFCs simply offer another direct market point of sale that is not particularly unique to their organizational
framework, they could be lumped in with other direct market sales data. While CFCs may have an impact on the livelihood or viability of a few select small and mid-sized farms, the statistics show that the increased interest in local food has done little to curb the continued decrease in the number of small and mid-sized farms over the last 10 years.

In order to address my first two research objectives, I quantified the contribution CFCs have had in creating new markets for farmers. By examining three cases in three different contextual environments, and drawing on information from the summary of results in Chapter 4, I conclude that CFCs appear to have an impact in their community commensurate with the size of the county or region’s population, and the production capacity of the farming community therein. It is clear that low-income consumers are the true benefactors of CFCC’s efforts, since CFCs have created a means by which they can access local food. Farmers appear to benefit from a CFC’s presence inasmuch as they would benefit from any other direct marketing channel; the difference being that the money they receive is spent on behalf of low-income communities that ostensibly would not otherwise spend their money on local food. In each case, The Town of Perth, Stratford area, and Toronto area farmers have received approximately $15,000, $45,000, and $125,000 respectively for at least the past two growing seasons.

Despite this boon, and given the income and debt statistics reported above, and the continued trend towards consolidation despite the popularity of local food over the past decade, it would appear as though a broader-reaching
and more impactful strategy is needed than what each CFC currently provides. I explored three potential strategies that could increase the impact that each CFC has on their surrounding farming communities: the farmers’ market, the food hub, and engaging with policy. The conclusions that I have drawn surrounding these topics follow.

10.1.1 Farmers’ Market

The value of farmers’ markets does not appear to be consistent from one market to the next, or between farmers at the same market, and given the variation in incomes at Green Barn Farmers’ Market, these vendors’ experiences appear to be consistent with this. Given the high variability for success of farmers’ markets, the smaller populations of Stratford and Lanark County, and the fact that they already have established farmers’ markets serving this need, it is unlikely that the Green Barn Farmers’ Market’s vendors’ success could be duplicated.

It is unlikely that a second farmers’ market in the Town of Perth organized by The Table would have a significant effect on their income since the established market already appears to have a low impact. Were The Table to establish a second market in the Town of Perth, or The Local establish a third market in Stratford, attending farmers may operate at a loss should there be low patronage.

10.1.2 Food Hubs
The food hub model has emerged as a potential solution to the difficulties faced by some ecological farms in relation to being too small to capture large retail and export contracts, and too large to make efficient use of direct-to-consumer sales. Food hubs have the potential to connect ecological farmers to a larger network of consumers by tackling the responsibilities of aggregating, processing, and distributing local farm products, essentially acting as a liaison between the farmer and end-consumer. There appears to be a fit for the development or support of a food hub in Stratford and Lanark County respectively. In Stratford there are inefficiencies surrounding the procurement and sale of local food, and The Local has the square footage available, and already aggregates and distributes food. If they were to focus on developing relationships with an institution wherein they supply them with local food, they could charge a markup that could be put towards the salary of another employee if needed, and used as funds to support their other programs. In Lanark County, should the proposed food hub come to fruition, then The Table could alleviate some of the concerns farmers have with the inefficient procurement process by purchasing local food through the hub. Broadly speaking, the philosophies of non-profit food hubs are aligned with those of CFCC. Non-profit food hubs have been shown to improve market access to farmers while also being inclusive of people of all income levels.

10.1.3 CFCC and Policy Engagement

In Section 9.3 I explored CFCC’s relation to the neoliberal spectra, concluding that it is a hybrid model that operates within the neoliberal economic
framework to develop community development, political advocacy, and social movement infrastructure. I noted that there are two pathways that CFCC could follow towards improving conditions for ecological farms. The first is to support mechanisms like the two mentioned above: farmers’ markets and food hubs. The second is to attempt to directly influence policy decisions as they affect the intersection between ecology and agriculture through partnerships and advocacy. To address this latter point I lack the necessary data to draw conclusions, but this leads into the topic of the final section of this thesis: potential research directions.

10.2 Potential Research Directions

This thesis has provided a foundation for which a natural extension of the work would be to investigate the political aspects more directly. There is a fair bit of evidence suggesting that neoliberalizations of the food system have occurred over the past 30 years, and this is, at least in part, why CFCs exist in the first place. From a consumer perspective, it is clear what role CFCs attempt to play in filling the gaps created by government retrenchment; however, it remains unclear, at least politically, to what degree the potential is for CFCs to fill the gaps with respect to socioeconomics and ecological practices that state retrenchment has caused in Canadian agriculture. Future research could be directed towards answering this question. Some particular questions that could be asked are: what interest does CFCC have in food systems politics, or in engaging with various levels of government on policy development that would benefit ecological farms? Does CFCC, or do CFCs have the capacity to engage in policy development?
Based on information that emerged through discussions with CFC farmers, and publicly available documents, I concluded that there is potential for The Local to adopt food hub-like practices that could generate income for their other endeavors. There is also a strong interest within the farming community in the Stratford area and Lanark County to develop food hubs. With this in mind, a study could be done on the potential impacts that an intentional shift towards a food hub model might have on various CFCs. The idea here is that this thesis represents CFCC’s first legitimate foray into uncovering their impact on farmers, as to date their predominant focus has been on the consumer side. Rather than have farmers be a focus secondary to consumers, the choice could be made by individual CFCs to have farmers and consumers have an equivalent focus within their mandates. Precedents have been set for this dual-focused model as described earlier in this thesis in the case study of the Invervale food hub in Vermont.

10.3 Final Remarks

To close, this thesis sought to address two issues within the Canadian food system. First, I described how local, ecologically produced food is out of reach for some members of our society. The results have made it clear that CFCs, as a result of this being their primary focus, have been a strong champion to this cause and have injected hundreds of thousands of dollars into the local food economy over the past several years on behalf of those who could not otherwise afford it. Second, I described the unsustainability associated with growing farm sizes and the challenges faced by small farmers to stay in
business. My results showed that the impact that CFCs have on local farms is dependent on their regional contexts, with Toronto farmers benefitting the most from their relationship with a CFC, likely due to the significantly greater population, and the length of time that The Stop has been established compared to The Local and The Table. CFCs are unlikely to stop, or even significantly slow the migration of small farms into large ones. To be fair, this was never a stated goal of CFCs, and their support of local farmers is to be respected among local food proponents.

My study and evaluation of CFCC’s work has served as a case study of the argument that significant changes to the corporate food system, and the neoliberal policies under which they serve, will likely not occur through market-based strategies. If we are to see substantial changes to the ecology of farming practices, and a shift in focus from large, export-oriented farming towards a more locally-based food culture, it will likely need to be a result of policy changes. If CFCC is intent on supporting local farms to the point where the organization would like to see this shift occur, then I have argued that they could leverage their hybridity and become a local food champion campaigning on behalf of policies that support local, ecological farmers. Featured on CFCC’s website, Raj Patel states:

"How do we get to a world where everyone eats well? The food movement has spawned thousands of local experiments to come up with the answer, and now’s the time to start dreaming bigger. Now’s the time for local initiatives to feed, and be fed by, a larger national vision for change. Nick Saul and the team at Community Food Centres Canada are growing an incredible platform for food justice, one that will become a model not just in Canada, but for the planet."
CFCC has their sites set nationally, with 15 CFCs slated to be open by 2017. The vision and support for local food policies, however, could happen on the regional level since there are a number of organizations throughout Canada that are advocating for, or have successfully implemented, regional food strategies. These food strategies are often endorsed by municipal and county governments, and though the bulk of the work is often done by non-government workers, re-involving governments at any level and any capacity would appear to be at least a small win against neoliberalizations of the food system.
11 References:


Hardesty, S. D., & Leff, P. (2010). Determining marketing costs and returns in alternative marketing channels. Renewable agriculture and food systems, 25(01), 24-34.


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12 Appendix A

12.1 Green Barn Farmers’ Market vendor income calculations

Using data supplied by CFCC, I estimated the total revenue for each Green Barn farmer vendor that supplied the following information: number of weeks they attend the market, their average income from Green Barn Farmers’ Market sales, and their average total costs associated with attending the market. Using this information I multiplied the income per week by the number of weeks they attend, then subtracted the average costs per week multiplied by the number of weeks they attend to create a rough estimate of their revenue from the Green Barn Farmers’ Market. In the cases where farmers attend the winter market and provided average sales from winter and summer weeks, I multiplied their average summer income by 22 and their average winter income by 30 (the number of weeks indoors versus outdoors respectively). When generating an average revenue for the 29 farmers I removed farmers who did not give adequate information (n3) to make an estimate, and another farmer whose estimated income would have been -$37,300 based on the information given. Out of the 25 remaining farmers the average income was $28,530. The median income was $18,540.

21 farmers estimated the percentage of their income the Green Barn Farmers’ Market income represented, so using this information I calculated an
estimate of their total income using the revenue divided by the percentage
(Green Barn Farmers’ Market/P = X). The average estimated income of these 21
farmers was $126,186.45, and the median estimated income was $101,200.00.
By removing the two outliers (<$9000 and >$300,000 estimated revenue), the
average estimated income becomes $122,677.66 and the median estimated
income remains the same. These incomes are considerably higher on average
than those obtained by farmers interviewed and census information collected
about farmers in Lanark County. The average estimated incomes from Green
Barn Farmers’ Market aligns with the income brackets common on the Stratford
area, and would put them among the 120 farms earning $100,000 to $249,000 in
the YRM, or the top 60th percentile of income earners in YRM.
Appendix B: A Summary of Thesis Results, Discussion Topics, and Conclusions: Do Community Food Centres Create New Markets for Farmers?

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The Table Community Food Centre in Perth, Ontario. Photo Credit: Marion Davies
# Table of Contents

## Introduction

**Objective 1 Results:** To explore the ways in which farmers and consumers perceive a CFC to have impacted farmers’ and consumers’ access to markets.

**Objective 2 Results:** An evaluation of what producers and consumers would do without access to a CFC.

**Objective 3 Results:** Identify alternative opportunities for CFCC to create new markets for small to mid-sized farmers/producers, or what could be done differently within current CFCC programming to improve market access.

## Closing Statement
Introduction

My thesis work sought to answer the question, **to what extent do community food centres create new markets for small to mid-sized farmers and provide a mechanism by which consumers can access locally grown food?** To answer this, I followed three specific objectives:

1. To explore the ways in which farmers and consumers perceive a CFC to have impacted farmers’ and consumers’ access to markets.
2. An evaluation of what producers and consumers would do without access to a CFC.
3. Identify alternative opportunities for CFCC to create new markets for small to mid-sized farmers/producers, or what could be done differently within current CFCC programming to improve market access.

The Table CFC’s community garden in Perth, Ontario. Photo Credit: Marion Davies
**Objective 1 Results:**
To explore the ways in which farmers and consumers perceive a CFC to have impacted farmers’ and consumers’ access to markets.

1. **Most farmers do not believe that the Table or Local CFCs have created a new impactful market**
   - In no case does The Table offer a market that is closer than the farmers’ primary market. The Local is a closer market than several of the farmers’ other clients.
   - The Table does not increase any one farmer’s income by more than 4%, and farmers selling to The Local were either donors only or stated their sales were an insignificant source of revenue.
   - No farmers sell to The Table on more than 10 occasions throughout the season, and sales to The Local were very infrequent (once or twice per season, once total, or they simply donate).
   - Each interviewed farmer noted their local sales have increased since selling to a CFC, two of which attribute some of their growth to a CFC.
     - These two noted new connections to clients by way of a CFC.
     - Farmers are more likely to attribute their growth to the increased interest in local food and their own marketing savvy.

2. **Farmers are pleased with the philosophy CFCs have of paying market rates**
   - Two of the three CFCs evaluated did not attempt to negotiate for a lower price from farmers. Instead, they often indicated to farmers that they were not asking enough (i.e. market rate) for their produce from a CFC.
     - In the case of The Local, they asked for a discounted rate, but would still pay whatever rate the farmer requested without further negotiation.
   - In all instances, farmers felt they were paid a fair price for their products.
   - The Stop CFC purchases the majority of its food from a local food distribution company (LFDC). The LFDC has the same philosophy as The Stop and The Table wherein they do not negotiate for a lower price, and encourage farmers who are selling below market value to ask for more. On the other hand, if the farmer is charging well above marking rate, they will make them aware of this too.

3. **The Stop CFC had a significant direct financial impact on two farms, and injected over $110,000 into GTA farms that may not have been channeled there in the CFC’s absence**
   - The Stop purchases directly from 16 farms, for a total of $44,986.83
From this total, two of the farms benefited greatly: $19,150.50 went to one farm and $7,868.60 were spent at another. The remainder was spread relatively evenly among the remaining 14 farms.

- The farmer that sold $19,150.50 stated that this represents 6.6% of their income, and The Stop CFC would be a difficult client to replace given their loyalty and the uniqueness of their arrangement. In contrast to The Local and The Table, The Stop purchases from this farm twice per week throughout the season.

- The Stop also makes indirect local food purchases through a local food distribution company (LFDC).
  - In 2013, the total purchased from the LFDC was $111,673.34. This represents 60% of the total amount The Stop CFC spent on local food in the 2013-14 program year.
  - The LFDC buys from approximately 35-50 farms within a 100km radius of their operation in North York, so the above figure spent on food by The Stop would be spread out accordingly.

4. **The Green Barn Farmers’ Market is a significant contributor to participating farmers’ incomes**

- There were 29 farmers selling at the GBFM in 2012.
- On average, the GBFM accounts for 33% of a farmer’s income, approximately $41,000 per farmer.
- The Stop’s programs influenced 22 out of 39 patrons to attend the GBFM.

5. **Communication and transactions between farmers and CFCs can be inefficient.**

- Farmers that sell to The Table expressed some concern about the way transactions are initiated. Email is the mode of communication, and can be cumbersome for farmers to deal with clients this way, especially with the low dollar amounts involved.
- Farmers who have donated to The Local expressed surprise that the CFC purchases products from other farms, noting that they thought The Local only received donations.

![The Local CFC's Greenhouse. Photo Credit: Thomas Armitage](image)
Special Note: There are a few underlying contextual factors that are likely to have lead to polarizing results under objective one. It is clear that The Stop’s efforts have been influential in the local food scene within Toronto, while The Table and The Local CFCs appear to have struggled to create new markets. There are three potential reasons for this: (1) The Stop CFC has been in operation for considerably longer than other CFCs and so have had more time to develop relationships with farmers and the structures necessary to create an efficient market for them; (2) Toronto has a significantly larger population than both Stratford and Perth, which allows The Stop to manage a successful farmers’ market, to have greater attendance for their programs, and thus greater purchasing power; (3) The local food infrastructure The Stop has access to is more established and efficient, (e.g. direct purchases through the LFDC), whereas such things are being developed by CFCs (The Local) or are in development (Perth) in the other locations.

Objective 2 Results:
An evaluation of what producers and consumers would do without access to a CFC.

1. Should the CFCs no longer exist, farmers listed a number of alternative uses for their products, with two participants expressing they would have a difficult time recovering the revenue that would be lost.

- The Table farmers described alternative uses for their products should The CFC not exist:
  - Composting, consuming, selling at an alternative venue, feeding to livestock, altering the business strategy
  - In two cases the farmers would thus have their income reduced by the amount they sell to the CFC, and in the third case they may recoup some of the loss through sales at the farmers’ market

- The Local farmers also had alternative uses for their products should the CFC no longer exist that were very similar to the responses regarding The Table
  - Since The Local services area food banks and organizations with meal programs, several farmers mentioned donating their products to other organizations that would likely still exist in The Local’s absence
  - Two farmers expressed no concern with their ability to sell the excess products, noting how nominal their sales to The Local were
  - Two farmers who donated only, would not have their incomes directly impacted by losing access to The Local, they merely would not have received the tax breaks associated with receiving charitable receipts

- As presented in the previous section, The Stop’s contributions to farmer income are organized according to direct and indirect sales.
  - Direct Sales
    - Direct sales had a significant impact on one farmer’s income, and should The Stop no longer operate this farmer would have a difficult time replacing this income
Direct sales are also responsible for approximately 6% of the LFDC’s total sales. If The Stop no longer existed the LFDC would look for a client of a similar size, an objective they did not see trouble achieving.

- Indirect Sales:
  - If farmers were to lose access to the GBFM they would likely have difficulty recouping the significant amount of their total incomes that would be lost, along with the facilitated direct access to consumers who attend the market. While the alternative markets within Toronto are well-attended, one market does not limit reselling, and attendance at either market would increase the direct competition each farm would face.

2. **Consumers listed alternative venues for purchasing local food.**

- GBFM Consumers: When asked where they would buy the items that they were buying at the market that day if the GBFM did not exist, consumers responded: Find another farmers’ market (12); go to a grocery store (18); Consume less or none at all (4); and the remainder would buy from a fruit stand or co-op (5). For those who would attend another market, the closest option for them is the St. Lawrence Market, which on average is 7.05kms away from where they live (based on their postal code), more than three times the distance of the GBFM.
- Only consumers who purchased food were interviewed for this study. The rationale for this was that CFCC could supply the data on money spent on local food, and the assumption could be made that persons visiting CFCs for their meal programs were unlikely to be purchasing local food elsewhere. With that being said, **CFCs spent almost $200,000 on local food on behalf of their participants.** This money may not have been spent on local food in the absence of CFCs.
Objective 3 Results:
Identify alternative opportunities for CFCC to create new markets for small to mid-sized farmers/producers, or what could be done differently within current CFCC programming to improve market access.

1. The Stop CFC’s Green Barn Farmers’ Market has provided great value to participating farmers. Could this success be replicated by other CFCs?

There are several caveats that could potentially impede the ability of farmers to achieve some of the positive outcomes GBFM vendors have experienced:

1) A market may grow beyond its capacity where farmers are forced to be more and more competitive with each other on pricing.
2) The location of the market may alienate some would-be consumers. For instance, it may not be on a public transit line, within walking distance, or there may be inadequate parking.
3) There is also the chicken and egg scenario, wherein many farmers are vending but few customers attend, so farmers abandon the market, and new consumers do not come because there are too few farmers.

The GBFM avoids the above caveats in the following ways:

1) The GBFM manager has stated that they will not increase the number of vendors because they have reached a size where participating farms are profitable and the market is not saturated.
2) The location of the market removes it from facing any similar competition. The majority of the patrons live within walking distance, and 22 of 39 surveyed stated that The Stop’s programs have influenced their decision to shop there.
3) It would appear as though only two farmers of the 29 surveyed had any difficulty generating revenue, with one so anomalous (-$37,300) I suspect there was a reporting mistake.

When considering how farmers’ markets could be developed as part of The Local and Table CFC’s strategies, the following information is of particular concern given the smaller population of these two locations:

- As farmers’ markets become more popular, there are more farmer vendors, which increases competition and forces vendors to lower their prices.
- The number of farmers’ markets fluctuate yearly, with unsuccessful markets a result of their small size, poor vendor and patron attendance, and inexperienced management.
- The actual costs of attending a farmers’ market may not be outweighed by the potential profit, creating slim profit margins, further eroded by the need to sell their perishable products at the end of the day for below market value.
This concern is corroborated by a statement made by a manager at The Local that they had low attendance from both farmers and consumers at their indoor farmers’ market during the winter of 2013-14.

Importantly, both the Town of Perth and Stratford have established farmers’ markets, and it is unclear whether they could feasibly support an additional one organized by the CFC. With that being said, CFCC could encourage new CFCs to investigate the viability of a CFC-managed market as they are being established in new locations throughout Canada.

2. CFCC could partner with organizations that are advocating on behalf of ecological farming practices for the purposes of changing or developing supportive policies.

To start I would like to make a distinction between improving access to markets and improving conditions for ecological farms. In the first case, the premise is that increasing the number of people purchasing local ecological food will increase the number of farmers who produce that food. While perhaps valid, this has been the approach that organizations have used for decades which have been shown to be ineffective at reversing the trends towards farm consolidation. In the second case, I suggest a whole new premise wherein the number of farms producing ecologically is increased not through market demand, but through policy. Following this premise I will now contend that CFCC can influence policy that could result in more ecological farms. The literature suggests that this outcome can be achieved through partnerships and advocacy.

Reviewing peer-reviewed literature on the topic of community-based initiatives like CFCC revealed a number of advantages that partnerships can have, in particular:

- Partnerships allow organizations to better achieve shared goals through the sharing of resources and strength in numbers
- Strength in numbers can lead to more meaningful dialogue with the state, which could lead to tangible policy change
- Strategic partnerships can help organizations prioritize and facilitate their ability to look outside of market-based models for solutions

How could this be applied?

- CFCC could partner with organizations that are advocating on behalf of ecological farming practices. Through such a partnership they could leverage their respective positions and combined strength to initiate discussions with governments.
  - These discussions could be centred around the need for greater environmental regulations and greater support for local processing facilities that would benefit rural economies.
  - The first example represents a way of looking outside market-based solutions to increase the number of farmers producing ecologically.
  - The second looks to support current small to mid-sized farms by offering them greater economic incentives to maintain their presence in the market, and offer others an incentive and mechanism by which to enter the market.
Owing to my interviews with farmers in Lanark County, the Stratford area, and Toronto, combined with my review of the literature, there is one obvious starting point for CFCC to investigate when it comes to partnerships and advocacy: the food hub.

3. Some of The Table and The Local CFC Farmers are interested in the food hub model, believing it would increase their sales and efficiency.

Value of Food Hubs

- The food hub model has emerged as a potential solution to the difficulties faced by some ecological farms in relation to being too small to capture large retail and export contracts, and too large to make efficient use of direct-to-consumer sales.
- Food hubs have the potential to connect ecological farmers to a larger network of consumers by tackling the responsibilities of aggregating, processing, and distributing local farm products, essentially acting as a liaison between the farmer and end-consumer.

Is there a logical fit with CFCs?

- There appears to be a fit for the development or support of a food hub in Stratford and Lanark County respectively.
- In Stratford there are inefficiencies surrounding the procurement and sale of local food, and The Local has available square footage and already aggregates and distributes food.
  - If they were to focus on developing relationships with institutions wherein they supply them with local food, they could charge a markup that could be put towards the salary of another employee if needed, and used as funds to support their other programs.
  - In Lanark County, should the proposed food hub come to fruition, then The Table could alleviate some of the concerns farmers have with the inefficient procurement process by purchasing local food through the hub rather than directly from farmers. This would follow the approach The Stop has taken with their relationship with the LFDC.

Broadly speaking, the philosophies of non-profit food hubs are aligned with those of CFCC. Non-profit food hubs have been shown to improve market access to farmers while also being inclusive of people of all income levels.

Closing Statement

Community Food Centres Canada is a relatively new national organization still in the early stages of developing new community food centres across Canada. Given that CFCC has prioritized increasing access to healthy food to all citizens, it should not be expected that their impact on farmer incomes would be significant. This thesis project represents one of the first steps towards identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the CFC model with respect to farmer impacts. With the key takeaways and the supporting information, CFCC now has access to information that can be used to improve on both the strengths and weaknesses of each CFC studied.