



BREAKING BARRIERS

EQUITY & ACCESS IN FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are major areas of focus for government, industry and community organizations across Canada, including those working in the agriculture and food system. However, there are systemic barriers faced by equity-deserving individuals that can make it difficult for them to enter and advance in this sector.

Arrell Food Summit 2023 will be a forum for meaningful discussions about decolonizing and diversifying agriculture and food in Canada, with the goal of breaking down barriers and moving us toward equitable change.

What types of barriers do women and racialized communities face?

Ownership of agricultural land is far out of reach for many people in historically marginalized communities due to the high cost of entry, and racialized workers are often compensated for their labour at rates that make it impossible to acquire land within a few generations. This remains a fundamental barrier to economic success in agriculture, and one that reinforces systemic inequality.

Some women also face cultural pressures not to work, due to social stigma and patriarchal attitudes. And while urban farming, community kitchens and culinary schools have created opportunities for entrepreneurship, many of these start-up companies are small businesses with fewer than 10 employees and narrow profit margins.

Women continue to grapple with challenges related to childcare; the long and irregular hours required in many culinary and food service jobs make it difficult or impossible to grow a family alongside a career.

At the same time, newcomers to Canada are often under-employed in fast-food service roles, and are frequently overlooked for leadership positions. At the corporate level, women and racialized groups are under-represented in the boardroom and the C-suite, at rates below the DEI achievements of other major industries.

As a result, marginalized voices remain stifled and unheard.

How can we cultivate diversity in agriculture and food?

Governments can incentivize entrepreneurship that enables women and racialized groups to create thriving businesses on their own terms. They can also create subsidies that incentivize selling agricultural land to individual farmers rather than corporations that perpetuate generational barriers to land ownership.

Corporations must intensify and accelerate their commitment to diversity and inclusion by matching or improving upon targets that place women and racialized groups in decision-making roles and offering opportunities for training and mentorship.

Academic researchers can continue to engage the public in conversations around diversity and inclusion, helping to increase understanding of these barriers through meaningful dialogue. At the same time, consumers can choose to support small culinary businesses and independent farmers over corporations, engage with local producers and embrace diverse culinary experiences.

How can we move the conversation forward?

Arrell Food Summit 2023 features a panel discussion on [Breaking Barriers in Food and Agriculture](#) that will explore practical ways to elevate historically marginalized voices. Speakers will guide a discussion about how to assess an organization's DEI journey, prioritize mentorship for marginalized groups, recruit diverse talent, and create opportunities for new farmers.

Additionally, Chef Bashir Munye, a food advocate, entrepreneur and culinary instructor at George Brown College, will lead an interactive breakout session called [Decolonizing the Table](#), challenging participants to break out of age-old assumptions and challenge biases in the food and hospitality industries.



Visit the [Arrell Food Summit website](#) for a full schedule and list of speakers.

www.arrellfoodsummit.ca