

Three strategic pillars for a National Food Security Strategy

Food security is a critical component of environmental sustainability, community resilience and national security. A National Food Security Strategy could set an audacious yet achievable vision for our country, such as: **Within the next 10 years, Canada should be the world's primary food producing nation while reducing food insecurity and greenhouse gas emissions domestically.**

This should be pursued through three strategic pillars: resilience, equity and productivity.



PILLAR 2: EQUITY

Addressing food insecurity through innovative social policies and human rights.

The problem

- Food *insecurity* is caused by financial and systemic barriers between people and affordable, nutritional food. It is addressed through social policy and income-based interventions. Food *security* is addressed through research and development, investment and other supports directed at producers, processors and primary agriculture / fisheries. Both are important components of a National Food Security Strategy and represent different but vital components of a **balanced portfolio** of food security policies. However, it is important to note that neither approach does it all and they should not be mistaken for each other.
- 1 in 4 Canadians is food insecure. Food bank use has never been higher. Meeting this basic need cannot default to food charities.
- Food prices are expected to rise by about \$1800 for a family of four in 2026 and are expected to keep rising with inflation. The one-time increase to the [Groceries and Essentials Benefit](#) means some families will keep up with food price inflation this year but risk falling behind again in 2027.
- The national food insecurity crisis comes at great social cost, including decreased human health and wellbeing, and is a drain on the economy, including through reduced productivity.

The opportunity

A National Food Security Strategy can provide a catalyst for addressing what are now unprecedented rates of food insecurity, impacting over 10 million Canadians and one in three children. Canadians are incredibly creative, and social innovations hold great promise to solve complex issues within food insecurity and food sovereignty. A National Food Security Strategy can support systemic investments and innovations that can improve affordability and support better access to local, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.





Recommended actions for equity

- 1. Increase the benefits at-risk Canadians receive, such as increasing the Canada Disability Benefit and/or further expanding the Groceries and Essentials Benefit.**
 - Expanding the Canada Disability Benefit as part of a National Food Security Strategy would recognize that 50 percent of people living with a disability are also food insecure.
 - The Groceries and Essentials Benefit expansion could be made permanent and indexed to remain in step with food price inflation.
- 2. Pilot and/or invest in measures that directly increase food access. This could include partnering with organizations that have established locally relevant and effective solutions.**
 - Support technology innovation, such as a pre-loaded grocery card redeemable at a range of grocery stores (including independently owned stores, etc.) to purchase nutritional food, that can increase food access and reduce food bank use.
 - Support, directly or through policy, traditional and community-based food gathering and production, such as hunting and fishing, wild foods harvesting and food gardens.
 - Launch a federal partnership with organizations already working in this space to test economic innovations at scale, and to evaluate their impacts on food insecurity.
- 3. Expand and target the Local Food Infrastructure Fund.**
 - An expansion of the Local Food Infrastructure Fund could support social innovations, such as community food hubs, mutual aid/solidarity markets, community kitchens, municipalities pursuing public market initiatives and public grocery stores.
 - This expansion could also better support Indigenous traditional food systems.
 - Create more opportunities to fund ongoing overhead costs associated with local food infrastructure. Government should consider focusing investments on infrastructure with strong business plans and determining ways (either through the Local Food Infrastructure Fund or otherwise) to provide ongoing support so that infrastructure is able to be staffed, used and maintained throughout its lifespan.



“We had major wildfires a couple of years ago that shut down the only roads into our capital city, and we had no food coming in. Our entire community, the capital city of the Northwest Territories, had to evacuate to Alberta because we couldn’t bring food in for our population. That should never happen in Canada. And if we had supported food systems and localized production, it wouldn’t have had to happen.”

Janet Dean, Territorial Agrifood Association

Further reading

- [The Hunger Count 2025 by Food Banks Canada](#)
- [Household Food Insecurity in Canada by PROOF](#)
- [Putting values on our plates: Reimagining food in public institutions by Chef Joshna Maharaj](#)

This project is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.