

# Food Security and Insecurity in New Brunswick

## Highlights

- The 170 initiatives to improve food security are scattered throughout the province.
- The organizations in rural areas are farther away from major centres and clearly farther from each other. This greater distance suggests more travel and less access in rural areas.
- The rural nature of Francophone communities may cause special difficulties, but more research would be needed to verify that.
- Initiatives and activities were mainly to help low-income people living in poverty (34%), provide access to fresh local foods (23%), or meet a specific demand in the local community (23%).
- Around fifteen services were offered, divided into two typical approaches: food aid and food security.
- Few organizations were supplied by local agricultural producers (18%) or community gardens (12%), even though they considered their products to be of excellent nutritional quality.
- The nutritional value of food received from the National Food Sharing System of Food Banks Canada was considered somewhat poor or very poor by half (53%) of the food aid organizations using this source of supply.
- Half (53%) of the responding food aid organizations said they were concerned about the freshness or safety of the foods offered to clients.
- Four out of ten (41%) organizations could not meet the needs of their population – they estimated that on average they met about half the demand (52%).
- The value of funding and monetary, food, or service donations did not meet the needs of over half (58%) of the organizations.
- Unequal capacities in different places cause local disparities in service.
- Nine out of ten (90%) organizations would agree to share their strong points with other organizations elsewhere in the province in order to improve community food security.
- The development priorities were community or collective gardens (31%), information and education about nutrition (31%), collective kitchens (26%) and food buying clubs (23%).
- Our analyses suggest that food banks can provide only half the recommended daily number of servings of “vegetables and fruits” and “milk and alternatives”
- The average sodium content in food aid boxes was five times the recommended daily intake of sodium.
- Of the fifty or so foods received by a major food bank in the province from the National Food Sharing System of Food Banks Canada, two thirds were foods of poor nutritional quality.

Three measures are priorities when it comes to reducing food insecurity and increasing food security in New Brunswick:

- a) Develop a provincial strategy to increase cooperation, collaboration, and the impact of actions taken by stakeholders;
- b) Identify, strengthen, and increase the number of best practices in the field and effective government measures to act on the root causes of food insecurity;
- c) Improve the quantity and quality of food aid in order to better deal with regional disparities and the economic, nutritional, and health vulnerability of people experiencing food insecurity.