

STUDENTS AND FOOD SERVICE PROVIDERS SEEK BC ORGANIC PRODUCERS! Delisa Lewis

Many readers of this newsletter may already be aware that the number of certified organic producers in this province more than doubled over the ten-year period from 1995 to 2005. From Statistics Canada 2005 data, we see a steady upward trend in the number of B.C. organic producers for a total production value of over \$29 million. Did you also know, that during the same time period, college campuses across North America began actively participating in the farm-to-college movement? For students, these efforts help them gain access to local, and often organic foods; for farmers, campus food service clients can provide reliable markets at a much higher volume; and for college campuses, the relationships with local suppliers have the potential to promote broader sustainability initiatives, and contribute to stronger campus-community linkages and economies.

At the University of British Columbia, the UBC Food System Project (UBCFSP) has a seven-year history, and campus-wide collaborative partnerships which include the Sustainability Office's Social Ecological Economic Development Studies Program (SEEDS), UBC Food Services (UBCFS), The Alma Mater Society (AMS) and its Food and Beverage Department (AMSFBD), UBC Waste Management (UBCWM), Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm, UBC Campus and Community Planning (C&CP), Sauder School of Business classes, UBC Plant Operations, and the Faculty of Land and Food Systems students and teaching team. Several of you may be nodding your heads now, remembering a phone call or impromptu interview you generously responded to at the request of one of the twelve hundred fourth-year Agricultural Science (AGSCI450) students who have left their mark on the UBCFSP.

An active partner in the UBFSP, UBC Food Services responded to a "FarmtoCollege.org" online survey with a reported a total annual budget for food of over \$17 million. These food service outlets serve 9,000 daily meals to students, staff, and the wider campus community. In the same survey, UBC Food Services lists the total of their annual purchase of local farm products at \$4,000. That leaves plenty room for double-digit, BC organic purchasing growth in coming years!

Top three barriers to increasing the volume of farm-to-college purchasing for UBC food services in the survey:

- Finding growers/local product supply
- Coordinating purchase and delivery of products
- Product quantity

Another recent student-driven initiative sparked by the comprehensive UBCFSP, is the AMS “Lighter Footprint Strategy”. Targets articulated in March of 2008 include:

- Set informed targets for increasing the purchase of local food ingredients as a percentage of total food purchases.
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- Significantly increase the number of certified organic, fair trade and GMO-free options and ingredients sold at AMS food outlets.
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- Increase proportion of items procured from UBC Farm and form relationships with other local producers.

To further the relationships between would-be UBC institutional food buyers and the *growing community of organic producers, COABC conference organizers and UBCFSP partners are planning a session for this February’s schedule entitled, “Opportunities in the Marketplace: Connecting with Institutions”. The session will outline some key lessons learned from the UBCFSP. We look forward to seeing you there!

COABC Statistics

<http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/infonews/statistics.htm>

Farm to College profiles

<http://www.farmtocollege.org/list.php>

AMS Lighter footprint Strategy

http://www.amsubc.ca/index.php/student_government/subpage/category/ams_lighter_footprint_strategy/

UBC Food Services-Sustainability

<http://www.food.ubc.ca/about/sustainability.html>