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## **FOOD SELF- RELIANCE**

Rising energy prices, shortages in the developing world, loss of farm land and farmers themselves have brought the food supply issue to public attention in recent months. Activists contend agricultural policy must change its emphasis from production and trade to local sustainability. This Current Issue includes documents on agricultural policy, the food supply, and food self-reliance in British Columbia, Canada and the world.

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## FOOD SELF-RELIANCE

Witnesses at hearings conducted by the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food have maintained that “consumers have, to a large degree, lost sight of the notion of agriculture, that is to say, of the primary origin of the foods they eat.”<sup>1</sup> What does this lack of awareness mean for agriculture and the sustainability of our food supply? During the meetings, committee members became interested in the concept of food sovereignty, which the committee’s June 2007 report defined as “recognition of the need to maintain a certain level of production capacity”.<sup>2</sup> A food self-reliance study conducted for the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands in 2006 estimates that “B.C. farmers produce 48% of all foods consumed in B.C.”<sup>3</sup> The recently stalled Doha round and the food crisis in the developing world has highlighted the mechanism of world food production, domestic supply and international trade. British Columbia’s ability to provide domestic agricultural products to a growing population depends on consumer demand, production technology, available farm land and water, and the impact of global markets.<sup>4</sup> As local and world conditions change, will British Columbia one day be struggling to maintain our plentiful food supply and healthy diet? Moura Quayle, former dean of the University of British Columbia Faculty of Land and Food Systems, has said it’s unlikely we’ll ever get all our food from local sources, but more small-scale agriculture would provide a balance to the current agricultural model, and a mixed food supply system may give us more choices in the future.<sup>5</sup>

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