

## LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS BENEFIT US ALL

What's a local food system - you ask? A local food system is the path food travels from when it is grown to when we eat it. It includes everything from growing, processing and transporting food. It also helps connect food to health, community, the environment, and the economy.

Local food systems benefit our health. Eating fruits and vegetables help protect us from chronic disease; yet, 63 per cent of British Columbians are not eating enough fruits and vegetables. When fruits and vegetables are locally grown access is improved in our communities, making it easier to get enough of these nutritious and delicious foods.

A local food system also includes Indigenous foods, and protecting food lands and waters. By doing this, we not only support healthy eating, we also support core parts of culture and identity for Indigenous populations and communities.

Agriculture can be hard on the environment, but many local food systems support sustainable farming methods by reducing pollution. Research is being done in B.C. to look at how to grow food in ways that use agricultural land to its full potential while reducing the impact on the environment.

Local food systems also help increase economic wellbeing through job creation. In 2014, 23,000 people worked in B.C.'s food system. Income earning jobs support a healthier lifestyle, give people a sense of purpose and a social network. This, in turn, has a positive influence on our social, mental and physical health.

Community residents, businesses, local governments, and health care professionals all have an important role to play in supporting our local food system. We all reap the benefits from a well-supported system. Local food systems support the health and well-being of our communities now and in the future.

AUTHOR : JOELLE JACOBSEN IS A DIETETIC INTERN WITH INTERIOR HEALTH