

Food Security

Assessing a localized food system response to the COVID-19 pandemic for resilience and food security

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Introduction: Global crisis phenomena, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, magnify the need for a reliable food source. Localized food system actors that produce and distribute food are integral to this crisis based on local and resilient food systems supporting food security during a disruption.

Objectives: The objectives of this study were to: describe adjustments made by food producers and distributors during the COVID-19 pandemic; understand the perspectives of producers and distributors regarding the government and institutional supports available during the COVID-19 pandemic; and use the data to generate recommendations relevant to local food system policy and practice.

Methods: Ten semi-structured interviews were completed that included four food producers, three food distributors, and three policy-focused actors. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed according to the phenomenological lens of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975). **Results:** The results of this research indicated that successful adaptation occurred with local food system actors during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain resilience and food security. However, challenges occurred with constantly adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic-related public health regulations.

Conclusions: While there were available provincial and government supports and structures, there were important pieces missing, including increased education, government promotion for consumers around the importance of the local food system, and government acknowledgement of the local food system.

Significance: The results of this research highlight recommendations related to policies, structures, and supports that benefit the resilience and food security outcomes of the local food system in the face of future disruptions. Resilient food systems increase food availability and stability during disruptions and are therefore important in supporting food security. As nutritionists and dieticians play an important role in food choices, these individuals are in a position to educate and translate about local food systems advantages, as well as advocate for resilient food systems that support food security.