

PLANNING FOR FOOD SECURITY IN THE COMMONWEALTH

Lessons and Strategic Directions for Planners

Building resilient food systems through planning, farmland protection, and agricultural development.

Food security is a growing concern across the Commonwealth. Climate change, population growth, urbanization, farmland loss, land degradation, and changing agricultural systems present challenges for planners, governments, and communities. This project explored practical planning approaches that can strengthen food security while supporting sustainable development.

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Food security is not simply an agricultural issue. It is also a planning issue. Planners play a key role in shaping policies, protecting resources and supporting communities to produce, access and benefit from food.



WHY IT MATTERS

Commonwealth countries face many interconnected challenges:



Climate change

Extreme weather, droughts, floods and rising temperatures threaten agricultural productivity.



Population growth & urbanization

More people and expanding cities increase demand for food and pressure agricultural land.



Farmland loss

Conversion to other uses and fragmentation reduce the amount of productive farmland.



Land degradation & resource stress

Soil erosion, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss undermine long-term food production.



Land tenure & access

Secure and equitable access to land is essential for investment and sustainable productivity.



Fisheries & food systems

Healthy oceans and fisheries are critical for nutrition, livelihoods and food security for many nations.



TOOLS FOR PLANNERS

This project identifies a set of practical tools and approaches that planners can use to support food security.



Agricultural Plans

Comprehensive plans that guide agricultural protection, development and investment.



Conservation Easements

Voluntary legal agreements that protect farmland and open space in perpetuity.



Urban Growth Boundaries

Boundaries that direct growth to appropriate areas and protect agricultural land.



National Food Documents

National food policies, strategies or plans that set goals and coordinate action.



Supportive Agricultural Policies

Policies and programs that strengthen food systems, markets, infrastructure, and farm viability.



10 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR COMMONWEALTH PLANNERS

- 1 Evaluate agricultural resources and understand local food systems.
- 2 Understand the economic role of agriculture in communities and regions.
- 3 Assess land tenure systems and promote secure access to land.
- 4 Monitor and respond to farmland loss and land use change.
- 5 Engage farmers, communities and all levels of government.
- 6 Select and apply appropriate planning tools and strategies.
- 7 Support access to resources that enhance food security.
- 8 Integrate food security considerations into planning policies and decisions.
- 9 Develop an agricultural and food security strategy or action plan.
- 10 Implement, monitor and adapt actions over time.



THE COMMONWEALTH IN ACTION



Commonwealth planners face diverse challenges, yet share a common goal: supporting sustainable agriculture, healthy communities, and secure food systems.



KEY LESSONS

- ✓ Food security is also a planning issue.
- ✓ Local conditions require locally appropriate solutions.
- ✓ Farmland protection remains fundamental for long-term food security.
- ✓ Strong agricultural policies and investment support resilient food systems.
- ✓ Collaboration between planners, governments and agricultural communities is essential.



RESEARCH CREDITS

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Research Team
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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Commonwealth Association of Planners



PROJECT OUTPUTS

- 10 Strategic Directions for Planners
- Five planning tools (info-sheets)
- Eight international case studies
- Literature review and policy guidance
- Practical resources for planners across the Commonwealth



Full reports and data profiles are available at: waynecaldwell.ca/projects/food-security-commonwealth