

**Show Transcript**  
**Deconstructing Dinner**  
**Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY**  
**Nelson, B.C. Canada**

**November 9, 2006**

**Title: Growing Hope**

**Producer/Host: Jon Steinman**  
**Transcript: Pat Yama**

JON STEINMAN: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated weekly radio program and podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman. Today's broadcast represents the 39<sup>th</sup> show of the Deconstructing Dinner series. Since January of 2006 this program has among other topics explored how eggs are produced and how the hens that lay them are treated. The program has explored the debate over the fish farming industry along the coast of British Columbia. The Olympic games and their connection to food has been deconstructed. The future of seeds and genetically modified organisms have certainly become reoccurring topics and concern over the viability of farming in this country and around the world has been passionately shared by many guests on the program.

And while these topics only represent a handful of those tackled on Deconstructing Dinner they all have one thing in common and that is that these topics, have often only become contentious issues because of government set policies. And in particular it is the very set of policies that exist for agriculture and food here in this country that have many Canadians demanding change to a model that many argue has been destroying the ability for us to feed ourselves nutritious, easily accessible, environmentally friendly and socially just food.

And today's broadcast is an exciting one because this broadcast will share with you a project that seems to provide a level of hope for those sharing these concerns. And today's broadcast titled "Growing Hope" will look into a recently launched magazine titled just that. The Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework is up for renewal in 2008 and for the first time in Canadian history the community has a voice in its revision. And to ensure that this voice is one with a common goal and one that holds a significant level of power, a movement has already been formed with a process leading up to these revisions. Inspiration has been introduced in the form of this Growing Hope magazine, a publication that hopes to inspire an online dialogue.

And so on today's broadcast we will hear from five of the publication's authors who will share with us their reasons for becoming involved in this exciting process and who will also share their outlook on how the Growing Hope project will help create food systems in Canada that serve the needs of Canadians. You will hear from Frank Moreland and Sandra Mark of Edible Strategies; Colleen Ross, the Women's President of the National Farmers' Union; Michael Heasman of Food for Good and Herb Barbolet of Simon Fraser University's Centre for Sustainable Community Development. Today's broadcast could very well be exploring the beginning of a very different future for Canadian food.

*soundbite*

Before we hear from my first guests on today's broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner I will first remind listeners that the actual Growing Hope publication itself will be available from a link on the Deconstructing Dinner website where this broadcast will also be archived. And that website is [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner) and you can look under the November 9<sup>th</sup> broadcast titled "Growing Hope."

The Growing Hope magazine acts as a special food system issue that has been published by the Centre for Community Enterprises and that one is titled "Making Waves." Leading off the Growing Hope magazine is the following statement "That in the last 50 years Canada's food system has come to be all about efficiency, quantity, and economy, not health, employment, environment and self-reliance." Now two of the publication's authors are Frank Moreland and Sandra Mark of Edible Strategies located in Fanny Bay, British Columbia. Both Frank and Sandra appeared on the inaugural broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner back on January 5<sup>th</sup> 2006 when they helped answer the question "Why Deconstruct Dinner?" And I spoke with Sandra and Frank over the phone and didn't waste anytime to ask them.

FRANK MORELAND: Why Growing Hope? The short answer is – for inspiration. In the last few years we found an analysis of all the failures of the dominant centralized industrial food system, it's all around us in various reports. Deconstructing Dinner has shows also about how food is being drugged, about GMOs, about hunger and malnutrition in Canada, and about the crisis in farm income. Deconstructing Dinner also has inspirational shows with community responses to food system issues. So early on we decided while planning the Growing Hope initiative that we would have a minimal situational analysis and we wanted to focus on inspirational case studies, best practices and opportunities for us in the food system in Canada.

The title "Growing Hope" came from two sources of situational analysis that have combined with solutions the communities are coming up with. The first one is the Growing Green project – it's a set of policy recommendations for sustainable food systems in 2004. It was put together by the West Coast Environmental Law Association, the H.Y. Louis Institute for Global Issues and Farm Folk/City Folk. Their policy priorities were making the case for community-based food councils, showcasing model official community plans like agricultural area plans and bylaws, to contribute to provincial public health legislation, to address the sale of junk food in schools and finally to support small-scale local processing infrastructures so the consumer can buy local.

The second situational analysis that contributed to Growing Hope initiative is Frances Moore Lappé's "Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet." Again, the same kind of inspiration from southern countries and how they were dealing in the community with the food system issues with direct action and taking it right in their hands. So the Growing Green and the Hope's Edge were combined together for the "Growing Hope" title. And so that sort of indicates where the intents were coming from.

JON STEINMAN: Both Frank Moreland and Sandra Mark authored the first article in the publication and that article was titled "Why Food, Why Now." In that article they highlight some

of the many community efforts that take place across Canada that respond to food-related concerns. And as Sandra Marks indicates both rural and urban communities deal with both similar and different food issues.

SANDRA MARK: Well I think actually rural and urban both have pieces of the knowledge at the community level. At the community level you see when farmers go out of business and sell their farm to somebody who's going to build a big monster estate and you see in rural and urban, you see hungry people. You see that there isn't enough food being grown because you go – I went to the farmers market on Saturday, I really wanted to buy onions. And there was only one person who had onions and they were very small and not the sort I really would prefer. And I thought, this is bizarre, there're not very many onions here. So we all at the community level are seeing things go on that we become quite concerned about.

In the urban area of course the hunger and malnutrition issues are becoming very, very obvious. So I think that's why there's been such a ground swell of community responses - people trying to do something about the very direct and in your face problems that they see. And there's a tremendous amount of effort going on across the country to respond to hunger, malnutrition, food insecurity for people who are particularly of low income and also beginning to understand that there's something going on in the farming community that we need to get our mind around.

JON STEINMAN: As the term food security is one that is appearing more frequently throughout the media and certainly here on Deconstructing Dinner, it is one that is still widely viewed as exclusive to the issue of hunger and affordability of food, often the perception is that those that are food insecure and those that rely on food banks or soup kitchens for their food. And while this remains as true, Sandra Mark indicates that we are *all* food insecure.

SANDRA MARK: I think what's happened is there's become a confusion between the failure of the welfare system to provide support to people to maintain basic levels of food and nutrition and housing. And it's really quite a blot on our copy book in Canada that we allow this level of pain and anguish to be in for women and children and elders and so on that we don't seem to care about them. So nutritionists and social workers and community workers that have seen what's going on with the vulnerable people have really moved forward the concept of food security. But when you sit down and look at what's really going on, we're all food insecure. So we really need to set the problem with vulnerable populations into a broader framework so that we can understand why what's happening is going on and that we take the issue of the failure of the welfare system to the people who maybe can get their mind around doing something about that. And then the bigger failure in what's going on in our food system, we can start dealing with that in a different sort of a way.

JON STEINMAN: And if you're just tuning in, this is Deconstructing Dinner where we are learning more about the Growing Hope magazine and the dialogue it aims to inspire. I spoke with Frank Moreland and Sandra Mark of Edible Strategies about the importance of such a project and how it hopes to influence policy level change here in Canada. As Sandra indicates that all Canadians are food insecure, Frank Moreland further explains why.

FRANK MORELAND: In the magazine we're trying to let mainstream eaters in Canada know that there is a farm income crisis with the farmers. There're also the demographics that if we can't find agricultural labour then the alternative is mechanization, industrial economies of scale and life sciences. And the other thing that we need to be concerned with is the power of Walmart being able to lower USDA organic standards and how Canada can maintain organic standards that can have a social return and an environmental return that USD standards don't seem to anymore.

And then why are we all insecure? That's when we get to the big questions. Where is the water going to come from for growing our food when we have a Clean Air bill and the tar sands in Alberta will be claiming all the water that they need for that. There're the big questions about peak oil and running out of oil. It's just not going to be the marginalized people that will be food insecure, it will be everybody that will be eating. The big questions about GMOs and the precautionary principle and what will be the long-term outcomes of us consuming GMOs. And the Avian flu that can create a pandemic and isolate communities through quarantines for months at a time. You know these are all stressors in our industrialized food system, the one that's dominant right now that is making every eater in Canada food insecure.

JON STEINMAN: The farm income crisis that Frank refers to will be expanded upon shortly when we hear from Colleen Ross, the Women's President of the National Farmers' Union. But in first looking more closely at how communities have begun to respond to this level of food insecurity, the most obvious is the resurgence of the traditional farmers market - a place that allows farmers to cut out the middle man and sell directly to the customer. Farmers markets allow for the community to meet face-to-face with the people growing and producing food. And while other models such as community gardens and buying directly from the farmer, all ways in which communities can respond to food insecurity, Frank Moreland indicates that there are limits to such models.

FRANK MORELAND: They cannot feed mainstream Canadians. Can you imagine the size of the parking lot. Basically it will be hard for them to feed urban mainstream. They are a great community response to many food system issues. However if we all are food insecure then mainstream urbanites have to have convenient access to local food in the mainstream market channels.

You did a show about SPUDs – small potatoes, urban delivery and they're a great model that actually does that. The opportunity for farmers markets and CSAs and ethical businesses like SPUD across Canada is to be able to collaborate and grow each others business to meet an expanding conscious consumers market demands in as many market channels as possible. That's the more placements you have your product the more opportunity you have for selling it. And the conscious consumer just doesn't shop at one store – they're very fragmented in parts of our community. So finding the best way to get the high quality food to the people that are willing to pay for the real cost of production of quality food is a challenge. So there're not so many drawbacks with the farmers markets. We really want to encourage more and more use of it and how we can get together and organize more community-supported agriculture programs in all the communities.

JON STEINMAN: When the vast majority of Canadians are purchasing their food from the mainstream channels that Frank refers to such as large grocery stores it is in these places where the difficulties facing agriculture are not provided to customers. Here in Canada for one we face a demographic and labour problem that both Frank and Sandra write about in the Growing Hope magazine.

SANDRA MARK: There's two pieces to it. The first thing is that the people who are now farming – the median age of people now farming is somewhere in the early 60s, their children have watched their parents work their guts out and struggle so hard to try and make ends meet that they're saying to themselves, why would I want to do this? You know so there's a real issue in succession – real problems in succession in terms of passing over capital. And lots of people in the farm management, world are trying to work on that one because there are laws, regulations that are problematic there. The big problematic is that farming is not economic and has become less and less economic over the last while and is not looking like it's going to brighten up very much.

Our federal policies have really encouraged farmers to grow big or get out and the big guys are growing to export. So there's a huge pressure for people to export, to invest very heavily in all kinds of machinery and inputs to their farms. It's interesting to see that all the people providing machinery and inputs are making money like mad but the farmers just aren't. Every time there's a little benefit in the market, the supply side somehow or other seems to soak it up and the farmers still aren't able to make it. So the idea of actually growing food, when you look at what's included in agriculture statistics, you'd be really quite surprised to discover that tobacco's included and nursery products and all kinds of things that aren't ever going to feed us. And so to me one of the huge problems is we don't even really have an absolutely clear picture about what's going on with food because we have got it mixed up with agriculture.

However, nevertheless, young people are not taking on their parents' farms at any kind of rate. Plus a lot of farmers are cashing out because their land, particularly if it's close to urban areas has become enormously valuable. So when they get to retirement age they look around and realize that there's no way they can get the capital out if they pass it on to their family and you know they've got all these debts to contend with and can sell their land for a huge amount of money. So there's a huge problem there.

And then the second thing is because the labour in third world southern countries is very poorly paid, exceedingly poorly paid, terrifyingly poorly paid, our labourers got to compete with that. So people don't want to go and work on the farm if their idea is to make enough money for them to live. And so we have this bizarre situation now where the Government of Canada is importing people now from India because they speak English but they can't get enough because of course people in India now have invested in education in their own infrastructure and they don't want to do that kind of work anymore. And hauling people in from Mexico and all this sort of thing. So the nature of the labour problem is linked entirely to the nature of globalized agriculture and the fact that we have very little control of our food system because it's all lumped into agriculture.

JON STEINMAN: And that was Sandra Mark of Edible Strategies located in Fanny Bay, British Columbia. We'll hear more from both Sandra and Frank Moreland later on today's broadcast.

But first we will hear from another author who contributed to the Growing Hope magazine and that is Colleen Ross. Colleen is the Women's President of the National Farmers' Union or NFU. And while the union's headquarters are in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, members of the NFU believe that the problems facing farmers are common problems. And so the NFU works with members across the country toward the development of economic and social policies that look to maintain the family farm as the primary food-producing unit in Canada.

Colleen herself farms near Iroquois, Ontario and I spoke with her over the phone from her farm as she was in the middle of harvesting her certified organic soybeans. But our conversation began by speaking of corn as it's in her article titled "Fighting for the Farm" where she indicates this "that Canadian farmers are not only paying for every flake in a box of cornflakes, we are now paying for the box."

COLLEEN ROSS: We don't have any control over our margins. It costs approximately \$135 a ton to grow corn, to grow a ton of corn – it's about \$135 a ton. But when farmers are only getting \$120 a ton or it went down to \$90 a ton and it's costing us so much more to grow it, obviously we're subsidizing the food that's on the grocery store shelves here in Canada. It use to be that we would only make a small amount and then we would only, or else we would break even but now we are losing so much money that we're actually paying for all the food plus the processing and plus the packaging. And therefore, I mean it's not sustainable. You know farmers, what we're doing in order to keep on farming it's just we're going into more and more and more debt. The debt in Canada went up a billion dollars between 2004 - 2005. We're now at about, I think \$50.9 billion is the total farm debt now in Canada.

JON STEINMAN: As Colleen indicates in her article within the Growing Hope magazine the problem is not the ability of agriculture to generate wealth. Agriculture, as Colleen stresses, does that and does it well.

COLLEEN ROSS: Well most of the main input providers and the buyers on the other end are all making record or near record profits. And retail and grocery food chains are also making record or near record profits, but farmers - and so we know and we're exporting billions. I think the latest figure is, our agri-food exports are about \$28 billion; I think we peaked out over \$32 billion. So we know that there's a lot of money in the food industry. But we have a massive farm income crisis - like something just doesn't look right, doesn't look right in that picture. We know there's money out there but we need to find out how we're going to bring more of that money back to the farm. We need to keep some of that money back on the farm so we can keep doing what we're doing.

And see what's happening also in Canada is as farmers are forced to stop farming, because we can't keep going into further and further debt, what we're doing, and we have a highly regulated food industry – farming is highly regulated here as far as the standards that we have to grow, we have to grow at. But so what's happening with the Canadian consumer is now they are purchasing more and more foods that are coming in from countries that don't have the regulations that we have here in Canada. So to say that Canada also has some of the safest food in the world is no longer true.

JON STEINMAN: It is often on this program that we discuss the role of media when bringing issues pertaining to our food supply to the eyes and ears of the Canadian public. And while the media fills our televisions, radios and newspapers with information on the crises in Iraq, in Afghanistan and perhaps wherever so-called terror might strike next, here in Canada exists not only a crisis that is much more localized but here's a crisis that affects the very future of our country's food supply. And Colleen Ross comments on the role the media has played in covering this farm income crisis.

COLLEEN ROSS: I think the media in some cases has really tried. When there was all these protests and tractor rallies, for instance here in Ontario and I was a part of that, the media were pretty good in covering that. But they have a short attention span and they got sick of seeing tractors on the highway. And people are getting sick about hearing and this is an Alberta columnist, about whining farmers, because there is an illusion of wealth in the farming community. You drive up and down the concessions and there's are a lot of beautiful looking farms, farmers who are driving quite expensive pick-up trucks, driving quite large tractors, a lot of farmers I think have over-capitalized. But people need to realize that a lot of these farmers are so massively in debt – we need bigger equipment to farm the bigger acres. And so I don't think we're getting the sympathy from the general public that we would like. And Canadians in the end when they go grocery shopping, there's less food on the shelves. Now they may not realize where it comes from or what conditions it's grown on and I don't know how many Canadians are really label readers either. And labeling standards that we have in Canada are quite poor, they're inadequate. So, until more Canadians get behind Canadian farmers and start demanding Canadian grown products – and that's where the media can help.

JON STEINMAN: The National Farmers' Union of which Colleen Ross is the Women's President is one of the organizations that is often at the forefront of top level decision making processes taking place here in Canada. And when asking Colleen how the voice of the farmer can be better heard on the global planning and negotiating process, she first describes how farmers are not heard.

COLLEEN ROSS: It's a little discouraging because it seems that we take two steps forward and three steps back sometimes. I'm finding that it's becoming, for me I'm an elected official in a farm organization, we use to be able to consult more closely with government and with bureaucrats. But that seems to be becoming more and more difficult. There's no longer really any transparent or simple way for farmers or farm leaders or interested people out there to consult when a decision is being made. So for me this is my most discouraging thing right now. For instance the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has a public forum on seeds, the National Forum on Seed or when they're having a proposed change like an amendment to plant breeders' rights or there's different things going on all the time. You have to - in order to be a part of the consultation process, is an online consultation process. So a) you have to know that the consultation is actually going on, that there are proposed changes and then you have to be able to download the documents, get your head around very complicated documents and then understand them and then comment on them to the standard that the CFIA deems appropriate before they consider it critical or not. So it's getting much more difficult for us to be involved in the decision-making process.

And with this current government, it's become very quickly – shut the doors, we don't want to talk to you, we don't want to talk to the public, we don't want to talk to democratically elected farm leaders, we have a mandate and we're just going for it. And it used to be very disturbing, now it's just freakishly scary what's going on. And for the first time in my life I'm really terrified about what's going on here and it's not just the elected officials, it's not just the members of parliament, it's not the MPs, it's the bureaucrats. It's very difficult to deal with the bureaucrats. I mean the governments can come and go but it seems the bureaucrats who are very tightly aligned with industry, they have a mandate and come hell or high water, they're going to get there. And for us as farmers, when we're trying to impose ourselves on the systems and say wait, wait, wait, wait, this is not going to benefit farmers, it's going to further benefit industry which is already doing very well thank you very much, it's very difficult for us to do that. We have a very small voice and no resources and very little capacity to keep intervening. And these are decisions that are being made that are going to impact us as farmers and ultimately impact consumers in Canada that are being made on our behalf, in partnership with industry. And the only way we can really impose ourselves internationally is when we travel internationally is to tell other countries what's going on in Canada and how this is not a model you would want to emulate. Whereas the bureaucrats go overseas and they hold Canada up as this wonderful model for public consultation which isn't true.

JON STEINMAN: As Colleen Ross stresses the ways in which farmers are not heard when policy level decisions are being made the topic for today's broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner is one that is focusing on a project that hopes to bring this voice to the table. And again, that is the Growing Hope project that my guests on today's broadcast have all contributed to. The focus of this first show of a series that will follow the Growing Hope initiative is a magazine that has been published to inspire dialogue that will eventually make its way into a policy document that will be presented in 2008 when Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework legislation is up for renewal.

And in wrapping up my conversation with Colleen Ross, she shared with me her comments on the potential of the Growing Hope project to create more ecologically and socially just food systems here in Canada.

COLLEEN ROSS: I think it's something that we have to put in the face of bureaucrats and politicians. There've been a lot of good publications out there, projects that have been done and unless it is in line with the mandate of the government or the vision and the goals or the bureaucrats, they just mothball it immediately. So, we find that when any good publication such as Growing Hope which I think is absolutely brilliant, is done I think this is something that we have to keep sticking under the nose of our MPs, our MPPs and the bureaucrats whenever we can and reference it constantly. And what I thought was great about it was it was actually funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. So even more so you can say here was a project that was actually sponsored/funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and this is what your vision and the future of agriculture should look like. And the path that you're going down, which is mostly all around science and technology, is not what we want. It's not what the Canadian consumer wants. But added to that needs to be the voice of the Canadian consumer.



JON STEINMAN: And that was Colleen Ross, the Women's President of the National Farmers' Union. Colleen is also a farmer near Iroquois, Ontario and she spoke to me over the phone as she harvested her certified organic soybeans. And you can find out more about the NFU and donate to their organization by visiting [nfu.ca](http://nfu.ca).

*soundbite*

For any of you just tuning in this is Deconstructing Dinner, a weekly radio program produced at Kootenay Co-Op radio in Nelson, British Columbia. This program is listener-supported and we invite your support through the program's website at [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner). The website also acts as a resource to further your interest on the topics covered.

Yet another author that contributed to the Growing Hope magazine was Michael Heasman, the founder and editor of Food for Good, a newsletter that attracts and promotes a critical understanding of corporate citizenship and sustainable food business. Along with his colleague Tim Lang, Michael co-authored the well-known book "Food Wars" and they both collaborated on the article found in the Growing Hope magazine titled "Plotting the Future of Food." I spoke with Michael over the phone from his office in Winnipeg, Manitoba and he explains how the innovations that led to Canada's global agricultural prominence over the past 100 years are now the very factors serving to crumble this foundation and endanger its future success.

MICHAEL HEASMAN: I think first of all we must sort of emphasize the success of Canadian agriculture and its agri-business in terms of becoming a world leader in producing food commodities and this position in the world in terms of its food supply. But this food agricultural base is built upon assumptions that were really set down 50, 60 years ago in particular inputs of cheap energy based in oil, sort of a production method built around monoculture and high chemical inputs and also a reliance on large inputs of water as well has become a key issue. And all of these areas of environmental impact including energy, water, monoculture, chemical input is becoming sort of increasingly problematic in sustaining this type of agricultural practice. And so for many people around the world are now questioning whether this type of production method which has been so successful in the past will be able to continue for the future.

JON STEINMAN: In their article both Michael Heasman and Tim Lang suggest that food policy can be understood as the tension between three competing models, the dominant one being as they call it the productionist paradigm, a model based on transportation, chemicals and industrialization. And Michael helps unravel the consequences of such a model.

MICHAEL HEASMAN: I think the consequence of the productionist paradigm as I call it, with this input of cheap energy sort of monoculture is there's been some really sort of big downsize. And particularly if you look in terms of corporate concentration which has profound impacts for the competitiveness of the food sector and also in terms of it also impacts the ability of sectors to innovate. And we've seen increasing concentration around the corporate sector which has seen tens of thousands of Canadian farmers go out of business. And also, we have a position today where a small elite of farmers actually make the money while the majority of small farmers in rural communities in Canada have to rely on income outside of the farm to actually make a living

and be able to continue farming. And so it's not a good prospect for the future of the rural economy for Canadians.

JON STEINMAN: Yet another model that competes with this productionist one is what is referred to as an ecologically integrated model, one of which the Growing Hope project hopes to suggest when drafting their policy document to be presented in 2008.

MICHAEL HEASMAN: I think when I talk about the ecological modernization of society and apply that to food and agriculture, I'm trying to put in place a way of looking at the future of food that takes a long-term perspective rather than a short-term perspective. By long-term I'm thinking of a generation ahead, so 25 to 30 years. And I think what we're seeing we're seeing increasing pressures on our food system, in particular where there's been water used, soil erosion, the monoculture, lack of biodiversity, the fact that the inputs into agriculture and our reliance on oil in particular can get increasingly problematic and expensive. We can just see the whole system potentially unraveling and hitting a major crisis.

And so what I'm suggesting by an ecological modernization is that Canada should take a wider and broader view through this Agriculture Policy Framework review so that it can be proactive rather than reactive as crises hit the food system. And I think this will involve some very difficult decision making, some very creative policy and problem solving. And I don't think there is one answer. I think one of the problems of the current food system is its sameness, its assumption that one size fits all. And really the whole lessons from biology and biological systems is diversity, variety and a celebration of differences. And it will be interesting to see if we can work out creative and sustainable solutions to food supply that take into account the diversity of food and our food needs and our food culture, not just a concentration of narrow fiscal goals.

JON STEINMAN: As I neared the end of my conversation with Michael Heasman, I questioned the ecological modernization that is currently leading to great changes within our food supply and that is the wide-spread adoption of organic methods of farming. And while such a large scale shift is seen to be a positive one, Michael sees ecological modernization as being more than just organic inputs but a model that addresses food right from growing it through to consuming it.

MICHAEL HEASMAN: I think there're a number of key points to ecological modernization. There's an assumption that that just means everything turning organic and I just do not think that is necessarily a solution, I think it's a lot wider than that. By ecological modernization is not just the production methods, although organics is very welcome in terms of even as an industrial scale, that it actually reduces the chemical inputs, it treats its soil as a living matter rather than something to be chemically controlled. I mean there're a number of things, which I'm wholly supportive of but I view food as a lot more wider than just agriculture. I see food in terms of a food system from growing the food as inputs right through to our consumption experience. So I look at food in terms of its social, its cultural roots and the way in which that food in a sense is so essential to our survival. And so therefore I see it as a common good, that there is a human right to food and that we also have a relationship with nature and the environment through food which is different from other industrial sectors.

So I feel that we need to think creatively and innovatively in ways that we can embrace this wider understanding of food, And I think you see this in some of the dichotomies in over the future of food. You see particularly an important dynamic is the relationship between local food systems and global food systems, the local and the global and how to reconcile those. And I think one of the really important and overlooked policy area for Canada is to work more on developing a local food system, domestic food supply and getting back to celebrating our diversity of what Canada can grow. And also looking at things like seasonal and regional differences and celebrating those and developing those and growing those.

JON STEINMAN: And that was Michael Heasman, the founder and editor of Food for Good, a business newsletter based out of Winnipeg, Manitoba. And you can find out more about Michael at [foodforgood.com](http://foodforgood.com).

*soundbite*

My next guest is a figure very well-known within the community of food practitioners. He is one of the founders of the Vancouver-based Farm Folk/City Folk. And since 2003 he's been an associate at Simon Fraser University's Centre for Sustainable Community Development. The Centre uses the resources and talents of the university to teach and encourage accountable and sustainable community development. Along with Frank Moreland and Sandra Mark, Herb co-authored an article in the Growing Hope magazine, a publication that forms the basis for today's broadcast and their article was titled "Getting Real About Food." And although recently successful ideas such as the 100-Mile Diet have become one way to get real about food there is only one problem - the demand for local food is increasingly outstripping the supply.

HERB BARBOLET: Well basically what's happening is that there has been a growing awareness, especially in the last couple of years of the importance of having a local food supply for quality, for health, for environmental reasons, for economic reasons. The awareness has not been matched on the other side by an increase in supply of high quality local food because of the pressure on the agricultural land, because of the loss of people in farming, either those who are getting older and leaving farming or their children who are not following in their footsteps in going into it or immigrant groups that traditionally have come here and been farm labourers and then some of them moving up to owning farms. That's no longer happening and so we're in jeopardy in terms of our capacity to produce the food that people are more and more demanding.

JON STEINMAN: While Herb Barbolet stresses the importance of raising consciousness of the benefits of supporting local growers and producers, he further explains why this is not enough and in doing so indicates why the Growing Hope project is so important.

HERB BARBOLET: I think that a lot of the activity has been around urban agriculture. And this has been excellent in terms of raising awareness and consciousness, but there still has not been anywhere near enough done to raise the profile and the esteem in which farmers are held. We need to honour people who are producing our food and that means giving them some status but also giving them some reasonable income. The public perception is that our food is expensive which is contrary to reality. In North America we spend less than any other area in the world and that's true of British Columbia as well of our disposable income on food. And of course there are

populations who are poor and they spend a higher percentage of their income on food but on average we're paying less than 10% of our disposable income on food. And that's never been so low throughout history. So, yet people think that they're spending a lot on food. They need to reallocate their priorities and acknowledge that we have to pay the farmers and the food producers what it's worth. And that also means becoming disentangled from highly processed food.

JON STEINMAN: There has been a growing response to the concern raised over community food issues and the result has been the creation of individual community projects across the country. As Herb comments on these community projects, the next step he indicates is connecting these groups together to help change policy.

HERB BARBOLET: Well they are absolutely essential and the only way we're going to solve these problems is doing it locally. But they also really do need to connect to large-scale food systems and that means that they have to join together provincially and nationally and globally.

We had a conference in Vancouver, not too long ago, with a joint conference between the Community Food Security Coalition, which is basically U.S. but also Canada and the new organization Food Secure Canada. And the purpose of it is to try and change policy throughout North America so that instead of supporting this globalized food system and that governments at all levels start to support the local food system.

JON STEINMAN: And if you're just tuning in, this is Deconstructing Dinner where we are learning more about the Growing Hope magazine and the dialogue it hopes to inspire. And just to quickly recap what this magazine represents, in 2008, the Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework legislation is up for renewal and so for the first time in Canadian history the community has a voice in its revision. And to ensure that this voice is one with a common goal and one that holds a significant level of power, a movement has been formed that hopes to inspire these revisions. And this inspiration is being introduced with this Growing Hope magazine.

As I concluded my conversation with Herb Barbolet one of authors who contributed to the magazine, he describes this Growing Hope project and what it hopes to achieve.

HERB BARBOLET: Right now I characterize both the federal and the provincial government policies, globalization, corporate concentration, so-called free trade, magic bullets of high technologies which is biotechnology and nanotechnology. There's been some lip service paid at both federal and provincial levels towards local food systems and towards getting rid of junk food and that sort of thing, but really the money and the mainstream policy initiatives are still towards this large system and the subsidies are going to this the large system.

What we're talking about at the conference and what we're talking about through them making waves and some of the projects is to change the paradigm, to change the model that the governments are supporting. And to at least not hamstringing the small projects through debilitating legislation like harmonizing the regulations about slaughter houses for meat in local areas and making them requiring them to have larger and larger scale. We need local processing. And so we're trying to eliminate the contradictions that the government policy presently has built in,

saying that they approve of and support organic and local and yet not come in with regulations that make it impossible for a local meat producer to be able to survive at that level.

JON STEINMAN: And that was Herb Barbolet, co-founder of Farm Folk/City Folk and associate at Simon Fraser University's Centre for Sustainable Community Development located in Burnaby, British Columbia. And you can find out more about the Centre at [sfu.ca/cscd](http://sfu.ca/cscd).

*soundbite*

In closing out today's broadcast we will hear again from both Sandra Mark and Frank Moreland of Edible Strategies who we heard from at the beginning of the show. As the Growing Hope magazine is one that hopes to inspire dialogue in working towards policy level change on a federal level, they put forward within one of their articles a series of questions that are designed to stimulate this very dialogue. I chose to present these questions to both Sandra and Frank hoping to extract their own opinions and for sake of time only a few of their answers will be aired. But do be sure to check out the web page for this broadcast on the Deconstructing Dinner website where additional audio from this segment will be posted.

And so the first question that was presented in the Growing Hope magazine was this - "Can community-based food initiatives move beyond the shoestring to become part of a regional or national infrastructure, one that is resilient to low cost food imports and the domination of the big food companies?"

SANDRA MARK: Well we believe it's completely possible once people see what we need to be doing. Again, a lot of the people doing community-based initiatives are responding to specific problems that are in their face. What we've tried to do in the Growing Hope initiative is to get everybody thinking systemically to look at what's going on system-wide. Because we believe we can, at the community level take on more of a role and we can organize ourselves to do a lot better job of taking on the whole issue. It's not going to happen overnight. It's not going to happen immediately. There're structural barriers and training barriers that need to be overcome but they're all easy. None of them are rocket science. And so for us it's just if we can get ourselves organized then we can contend. And we're in the process right now working on a couple of projects – one on Vancouver Island and one on Lower Mainland where we're working with a whole group of partners with the goal to try and see if we can in fact organize a couple of demonstrations. We know that there're these sorts of things happening across the country where people are starting to realize that when they look at their local food system they need to understand all the processes before they intervene. So that's the clue, that we need to have a better systemic analysis and then we have to have a systemic plan, plan of action to take on to move forward.

JON STEINMAN: Yet another question that is raised in the Growing Hope magazine asks this – "Over which parts of the food system can communities assume some control?" And Frank Moreland responded to this one.

FRANK MORELAND: I think it's been shown that with our interviews with farmers, the ones that try to meet Canadian demands for products, is starting to be able to realize that they can set their

price according to the cost of producing the food. Whereas where we don't have control in what we grow is if we grow a lot of stuff for export. We're having larger farms asking what our strategies would be to them to help them lower the Canadian dollar exchange rate to make it more affordable to export. But farmers really don't have much control in the exchange of the Canadian dollar or the peak oil prices or challenges. So where community has the best opportunity to assume some control is through their municipal governments which have to be more responsive and balance their budgets to local people.

JON STEINMAN: And the last response we will hear to these key questions posed in the magazine is perhaps the most important. And it is one that asks "Who are the partners in such an endeavour and how can these partners work together across Canada to build a viable infrastructure that supports a more ecological model of agriculture and food?"

SANDRA MARK: What we really are seeing from all the work we've done to pull this project together and all the people we've talked to that our weakness is in the infrastructure side. We have all these little nodes of activity going on, almost in a whole range from the food banks right up to some social enterprises, little stores or CSAs and this sort of thing. So we have all these little nodes but we don't have the connecting infrastructure. We don't have access to finance that's specifically organized to assist this kind of renewal although we believe as our friendly financing people see that there is going to be an economic case to what we do, they'll be coming on board. But the biggest thing is people, particularly farmers have become very insulated and kind of scared in a way and they're, at the national level trying to fight these big policies and feeling overwhelmed by that. Lots of people are just giving up, so there's a real give-up factor here, there's a fear factor.

What we really see is that we need to get an attitude of hope. We need to get an attitude that we can do something and we need to look at how we can build an infrastructure. Certainly this is where information technology can really assist to, it's possible to know where a bag of carrots are and to get that bag of carrots to a particular store. So I think we need to be able to bring that kind of infrastructure to the farms and to the community organizations that are trying to do distribution in some fashion or another.

We see that the big problem is the lack of linkage and the lack of co-operation all the way along the chain. And we believe that once we can pull people together to do that, I think the best example in Canada from our point of view at this point is really at the Atlantic Co-op. They have the best example of food chain thing going there where they're actually helping farmers to develop products. They're helping them by getting - they're mobilizing their supplies that they need and not gouging them in the process. They're helping them with all the technical aspects of their products. They're meeting with farmers and helping them solve their problems. We meet with quite a lot of the farmers and find that they would love to switch to growing food but they've been growing corn for cows for a long time and they almost need to retool and reorganize themselves.

So, just really having a good analysis and figuring out where in the system we need to intervene and then building the partnerships all along to create a new, what we call "values chain" to make sure that everybody in the chain is committed to making sure the farmers are going to make it

and that everybody in the chain is committed to really celebrating and ensuring that we can in fact grow and distribute food and eat food locally.

JON STEINMAN: And that was Sandra Mark and Frank Moreland of Edible Strategies located in Fanny Bay, British Columbia. And you can find more about their services at [ediblestrategies.com](http://ediblestrategies.com). There will also be a wealth of information on this Growing Hope project located on the Deconstructing Dinner website under the show title "Growing Hope." There will additionally be a link to an online version of the magazine along with a link to the web board where guests can view or participate in the dialogue that is taking place leading up to the April 2007 Canadian Community Economic Development Network Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland. That's the conference where the policy draft will be presented and debated which after even further dialogue will eventually be presented in 2008 when Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework legislation is renewed. Deconstructing Dinner aims to follow the evolution of this process and a web page will soon be found on our website that will feature this progress in future broadcasts. Also to note there will additionally be some unheard interview segments from today's broadcast that will be posted on the website, in particular some inspiring stories that Frank Moreland and Sandra Mark shared with me during our conversation. And again the website for Deconstructing Dinner is [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner).

And in closing out today's broadcast I have here a montage that was created with the participation of Kootenay Co-op radio volunteers. And this piece highlights some of the quotes that were included within the Growing Hope magazine. And I want to thank Judy Wapp, Bob Olsen, Victoria Margan, K. Linda Kivi and John Alton for lending their voice.

### *Electric Birds music - Montage*

"Clean food is actually the cheapest food you can buy. All of the costs are figured into the price. Society is not bearing the cost of water pollution, of antibiotic resistance, of food borne illnesses, of crop subsidies, of subsidized oil and water. Of all the hidden costs to the environment and the tax payer that make cheap food seem cheap. The choice is simple. You can buy honestly priced food or you can buy irresponsibly priced food." ~ Michael Pollen

"We don't usually think of what we eat as a matter of ethics. Stealing, lying, hurting people – these acts are obviously relevant to our moral character. But eating, an activity that is even more essential than sex and in which everyone participates is generally seen quite differently. Try to think of a politician whose prospects have been damaged by revelations about what he or she eats." ~ Peter Singer and Jim Mason

"Real food is more than what you put in your mouth. It's about health at a fundamental level - health that stems from quality food, low in cholesterol and high in complex carbohydrates to be sure. But also health that comes from simpler lifestyles and nurtured relationships that let food keep body and soul together. It's an innovative approach to buying, cooking and savoring food, an approach that can be the basis for a new life ethic. Real food is the link between your food and four key elements – health, joy, justice and nature." ~ Wayne Roberts, Roderick John MacRae & Lori Stahlbrand

“Government policy is premised on the fact that food is a commodity, which is why there’s no such thing as a food policy in Anglo-American countries and no such thing as an overarching government ministry or department of food. Food is fragmented according to its money-making and job-producing role. So we see departments of Agriculture which designs subsidies so that less than 3% of farmers grow fruit and vegetables while their government colleagues in the next building ask us to eat more fruit and veggies. ~ Wayne Roberts

“Canada needs a food policy that supports the efforts of we, the people to feed ourselves that strives to bring about vibrant communities that are salad green to their very roof tops. Canadians want market squares in which prosperous enterprises offer fresh, local food plus good jobs and incomes to the people who grow it. Canadians want all people to be able to eat healthy tasty food suitable to their culture or ethnicity. Does any of that sound like you?”

*ending theme*

JON STEINMAN: And that was this week’s edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia’s Kootenay Co-op Radio. I’ve been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant Dianne Matenko.

The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident, Adham Shaikh.

This radio program is provided free of charge to campus/community radio stations across the country, and financial support for this program is received through donations and sponsorship from businesses, organizations and listeners.

Should you wish to contribute to the ongoing success of this program, I invite you to offer your support through our website at [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner) or by dialing 250-352-9600.

Till next week.