

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

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**Title: INDEPENDENT CANADIAN RADIO POTLUCK**

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

**JON STEINMAN:** And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. This program airs each week on radio stations across North America and is available around the world through our weekly podcast and archives. I'm Jon Steinman your host for the next hour.

Today's broadcast will provide a little different flavour than usual, as today's show will showcase some of the excellent programming being produced at other independent radio stations across Canada. Of course the topics will all tie in to the subject matter of Deconstructing Dinner and that is the exploration of how our food choices impact ourselves, our communities. and the planet.

A total of four different radio programs from four different Canadian radio stations will fill up the next hour of today's broadcast. From Vancouver, British Columbia's CFRO, Vancouver Co-op Radio, we will hear a segment from the weekly program REDEYE on the topic of "Sustainable Farming in Cuba." We will then move along to Winnipeg Manitoba, where, airing each week on the University of Manitoba's CJUM, is the public affairs program ALERT, and we will hear a segment of that show on the topic of Canada's new food guide and to what degree corporate influence determines its contents.

Skipping over to Montreal, Quebec, we will hear an interesting feature from CKUT - McGill University, and a segment that will deconstruct the dinner of our pets and the recent recall of pet food throughout North America. That is courtesy of the program titled FRIDAY MORNING AFTER.

And rounding off today's show will be a segment of a recent broadcast of the YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT – a weekly half-hour program airing in Kingston, Ontario at CFRC Queen's University. And that segment is on the topic of migrant agricultural workers here in Canada.

And if you miss any of today's broadcast, it will be archived on our website at [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner).

*increase music and fade out*

Again, today's broadcast will feature segments of programs produced at independent radio stations from across Canada. And what the next hour will showcase, is the importance of independent radio in this country. And it's a real pleasure to be able to bring the four programs you'll hear today to an even greater population through Deconstructing Dinner and our participating stations across Canada and the United States and to listeners around the world through our weekly podcast. If any of these programs spark any interest, each segment on today's broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner will be followed with some information on how you can learn more about these programs.

Onto the first segment of the broadcast. I think I can say with almost 100% certainty, that, the longest running independent radio program in Canada is known as REDEYE, a weekly 3-hour public affairs and arts show produced by a collective of individuals at Vancouver Co-op Radio, CFRO. The show has been on the air for over 30 years, taking a progressive look at current events locally, provincially, nationally and globally. The collective features food-related news on a periodic basis, and the one you're about to hear in just a moment is on the topic of agriculture in Cuba. The issues surrounding agriculture and food in Cuba provides a condensed version of what Canadians and the world will be facing in either the near or distant future. It wasn't long ago that Cuba made the transition to small-scale, local, organic production following the break-up of the Soviet Union, who was providing the country with a model of industrial agriculture that our food system here in Canada is still founded upon. REDEYE's Peter Royce interviewed Jason Mark, an organic farmer and author living in San Francisco, California. And here is that segment from CFRO in Vancouver.

#### CFRO

CFRO: You're listening to REDEYE on Vancouver Co-Operative Radio, CFRO 102.7 FM.

PETER ROYCE: "Why Cuba Still Inspires" was a recent article in Monthly Review. One of the ways in which Cuba is inspiring people around the world is through the agricultural policies and practices. Jason Mark recently led a sustainable agriculture trip to Cuba. Jason is a California-based writer and organic farmer and he's on the Board of Global Exchange. He joins me now by phone from Oakland. Hi Jason.

JASON MARK: Good morning.

PETER: Can you describe the agricultural operations that you actually visited in Cuba?

JASON: Sure, I mean we spent most of this trip in Cuban cities where I think Cubans have made some most impressive innovations in local, organic, sustainable agriculture. I'm not sure many folks know that when Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, 1990, the country virtually came to a standstill. Their foreign trade plummeted and most devastatingly they ran out of oil, the petroleum on which their society like so many others, really depend. And they started going hungry. Daily caloric intake dropped by a third and in response, they simply started growing their own food in the cities. And even now, 15 years after that and really having recovered to a large degree from the collapse of the Soviet Union, they're still growing their food in the cities. And so what you see are these local organic gardens that they call in Spanish organico poligonos. And the smallest one I saw was probably a 1/4 an acre and the biggest one I saw was 14 acres right in the middle of the city.

They all have this kind of signature look which are these raised planter beds. So sometimes they're actually farming in the ground in whatever the indigenous soil of that site happened to be. But many of the sites - you know I visited an urban farm that was a former parking lot for a bus station, or a former landfill, or just these kinds of brown fields. And so, typically what they've done is they've created these raised planter beds, 3' wide by about 2½' high and then as long as the space they have. I saw one that was, you know, about 300 yards long and they bring in soil from the countryside and they maintain their soil fertility with vermicomposting using worm castings and then they grow their own food there. It's pretty basic organic agriculture. It's not the organic agriculture that's so stunningly innovative so much is the fact that they've gotten all of these people engaged. I think they say something like 300,000 people across the country are

employed in urban agriculture. That's in a country of 10 million people so it's a sizeable chunk of folks.

PETER: That's certainly a lot more than you hear in Vancouver involved in the urban agriculture. How do the actual farms run?

JASON: They're run on sort of a co-op model so each farm – the farmers, they're, the land is owned by the government of course. It's a state run economy so the land is owned by the government but then the workers, the farmers manage the day-to-day operations. So they have these, you know work crews and everybody seems to know their own role. And so they're growing tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, cucumbers, beets, bok choy actually. You see a ton of bok choy in Cuba, I thought it was sort of strange, you sort of think you would associate with Asian cuisine but they chop it finely and serve it kind of like a cabbage salad. And so then they harvest a couple times a week and then each little organico poligonos has at the front of the farm a produce stand. So they're selling directly to their friends, neighbours, family, right there. And it's incredible like a harvest-on-demand system. Literally the line is stretching from the produce stand and somebody comes up and orders a head of lettuce and they shout out the back of the produce stand "a head of lettuce" and somebody cuts and harvests it and they wash it. It's really quite incredible.

PETER: That's fantastic to hear that. What support does the state provide?

JASON: The state provides a lot of key support. One is the free land and then since it is a state-run economy, you know these co-ops are buying a lot of their key input - their seed, their starts, in some cases their organic fertilizers from the state. But I think the most important that the state gives is that they have several dozen I think it is, centres around the country where they are developing and growing and cultivating biological control agents. So what do I mean by that – I mean for example like Ladybugs or Lacewings or other beneficial insects that are carnivorous and predatory and which then feed on bugs like aphids or different mites that you wouldn't want to have in your garden. So the state is providing biological control. They're also providing Neem Oil which is an organic certified insecticide made from the Neem tree so it's entirely biologically-based. And so that's one of the key benefits that the state is providing.

PETER: Now, how did these farms actually...how did the transition occur between the agriculture during the Soviet period and then following the collapse in the 1990s?

JASON: I mean it really was, you know, necessity really is the mother of invention. I mean nothing focuses the attention quite like hunger, right? I mean folks were hungry. People were getting skinny. Cats were disappearing from the streets of Havana and going into family soup pots. It was a tough time. People just started taking over urban spaces and growing their own food and I think that's an especially important fact given the kind of state-dominated culture that you have in Cuba. The government didn't have to come in and tell people to start growing your own food. It was this organic, natural response to hunger. And then the state came in and as I explained provided some key infrastructure supports and then created material to help share this knowledge and sort of network the thing. But it really was a very grassroots and very natural. Now in the countryside there was a whole lot of sort of turnover in the agriculture system in the '70s and '80s. The Cubans were running a very Soviet-style agriculture very dependent upon chemical inputs and fertilizers and tractors. And they broke up the big state on farms, returned the operations to the farmers, created a co-op system there and now most of the rural agriculture that's growing, a lot of the food – sugarcane or citrus is organic as well.

PETER: So how does the state get its payback from the farmers?

JASON: It's sort of tied. They get I think it's 10% of all the produce that's grown. I think it depends actually upon, at least on a number of different arrangements. It's not like there's a one size fits all system. Many of the organico poligonos that we visited then return back to state-run daycare centres, hospitals and homes for the elderly, some of their produce. So for example when the kids go to school then they get their school lunches, the produce in those school lunches, like those cabbage salads, that's coming from the garden that's right down the street from the school.

PETER: Now, how sustainable is the food supply now in Cuba for both people living rurally and urban?

JASON: The Cubans are definitely on the mend. There's no doubt about it. In fact one sign of their, I wouldn't call it affluence but I guess their restored stability is the fact that obesity is now a problem. Caloric intake is now back to it's pre-1990 levels and people on the streets look healthy and well-fed. There's certainly no acute food shortages so the country is definitely able between what it's growing itself and still importing things that do not grow well in the Caribbean. I mean they're still importing wheat flour, for example, and having to import their meat. They had a horrible collapse in their ranching sector because again, once again they had this unsustainable farming model during the Soviet period. They had cows and hogs they'd gotten from the Soviets and those all died because they were dependent upon special feeds and antibiotics. So, they are still importing some meat but trying to create more sustainable systems.

You know you really see the proof on how the whole thing works and just by talking with the folks who are lining up in front of the produce stands to get their salads and vegetables for their home use. They say the stuff that's grown at the urban gardens by their friends and neighbours, they say it's the best quality, it's the freshest, it tastes the best and it's the best price.

PETER: What do you think we can learn in Canada and the States, well what can we be learning from this model that they've developed in Cuba?

JASON: I think really what we learn, it's not rocket science. I mean again, their basic organic farming methods aren't really different from what organic farmers around the world are doing. It's more, I think a lesson in community development and knitting together healthy neighbourhood social networks. I think what we can learn is that food production because it's so vital to our basic lives and because it's something really that everybody can do. It's not like knitting a shirt you know, making a pair of shoes because it really is some basic core fundamental human skill that we've had for 10,000 years, that everybody can do it, everybody can get involved and you find a way to have just healthier, happier communities. We had a guy on a trip who's worked for 20 years as an academic advisor here in the States to farmers and he said those are the happiest, most optimistic farmers he's ever met.

PETER: Well thanks very much for talking to us this morning. Much appreciated.

JASON: Thank you.

PETER: I've been speaking with Jason Mark, California-based writer and organic farmer.

**JON STEINMAN:** And that feature was courtesy of Vancouver Co-op Radio, CFRO, and their weekly program REDEYE. That was Peter Royce interviewing Jason Mark, a farmer and author living in San Francisco, California. That segment first aired on April 14<sup>th</sup> 2007. REDEYE is a 3-

hour program produced by a collective of individuals, and for those outside the Vancouver area, you can take a listen to their public affairs programming by visiting their website at [coopradio.org/redeye](http://coopradio.org/redeye).

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And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner, produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. On today's broadcast we are highlighting the diversity of independent radio programs across Canada, and are doing so by featuring segments from four different radio programs that have all recently produced shows along the lines of the subject matter of Deconstructing Dinner.

In this next segment, we travel to Winnipeg Manitoba, where we arrive at CJUM, University of Manitoba, and *their* weekly half-hour public affairs program called ALERT. The show covers politics, economics, issues of social and environmental justice and features interviews, commentaries and profiles of people in the news. The show is sponsored by Canadian Dimension Magazine, and is hosted by Lesley Hughes and Andre Clement. In this segment from ALERT, we hear Andre Clement interviewing Mustafa Koc, the former Chair of Food Secure Canada and the Founding Coordinator of Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security, located in Toronto.

### CJUM

Hello and welcome to ALERT radio for people who want to change the world. I'm Leslie Hughes. And I'm Andre Clement.

ANDRE CLEMENT: The new Canada Food Guide has been out for a few weeks now and we are joined by Mustafa Koc who is the former Chair of Food Secure Canada. He's also an Associate Professor at Ryerson University in Toronto. Mustafa, thank you for very much for joining us today on ALERT.

MUSTAFA KOC: You're welcome.

ANDRE: Mustafa, can you share with our listeners how the new Canada Food Guide has changed since its last release in 1992?

MUSTAFA: There are new concerns and new understandings, new awareness about changes in Canadian population. The people are concerned about obesity, rising rates of obesity and there is also a new awareness that Canada is more diverse than before so they try to put all these into account. And it is really an effort to tell what should Canadians should be eating when they're eating but it's a problematic issue as well because I mean why is the government telling us what we should be eating. This is some concern for some people. Because I mean if the government is really concerned that people are not eating properly then instead of telling individuals what they should be eating maybe the government should be telling industry that they should not be putting those things into the food. If sugar is a concern or high fat or high trans fats are a concern, why are they informing people, informing industry that they should not be putting these but telling people that they should watch what they are consuming?

ANDRE: Further to that Mustafa, how much influence does the food industry and in particular multinational corporations such as Kellogg, Maple Leaf Foods and McCain food have in determining the outcome of the new guide.

MUSTAFA: Well they have a committee of twelve people, three people have a very clear connection but the industries influences are not just limited to those three people. I mean but there is a very strong relationship between government and industry and between academia and industry. Industry has a lot of influence in the kind of research and what is done as research in the university system and they also have a tremendous influence on the government and this influence is not just in determining the Food Guide but it is at all levels. So I think this is a concern because the government's approach is basically to say – well you know we are listening to industry, we are listening to civil society organizations or NGOs and we are trying to make a balanced opinion. But the power of these civil society organizations, the power of the academic institutions are not comparable to the power of these big corporations. So, at the end what they say or what they want or what they wish is far more sane in the public policy-making process than individual who have concerns.

ANDRE: Mustafa, do you have any suggestions that you can make to our federal Health Minister, Tony Clement as to how he might want to propose revising the next Food Guide?

MUSTAFA: Well, honestly to me, it is not an important issue. I have problems with the whole process. The government should consult Canadians what they are eating, what their concerns are and leave it there and make this information, a lot of information available and make the people decide what they like to eat, what they cannot. But what is really important is a national policy making - we need a national food policy for this country. And a national food policy should not only look at the nutritional issues but the whole health issue, the cultural concerns, health concerns and employment concerns. And we do not have a national health policy and I think if Tony Clement is really keen about making an impact, I think it's about time we should be talking about a national food policy rather than the nutritional advice.

ANDRE: Mustafa Koc, former Chairman of the Food Secure Canada organization as well Associate Professor at the University of Ryerson, thank you very much for joining us today on ALERT.

MUSTAFA: You're welcome.

ANDRE: We hope we can catch up with you sometime in the future.

*ALERT closing theme*

LESLIE: Well that's our show for this week. We hope that you'll be joining us one week from today for our celebration of International Woman's Day.

ANDRE: A big thanks to our Executive Producer, Cy Gonic and our Producer Technician, Pat Krawec. ALERT is a production of Canadian Dimension magazine. If you would like to access this episode or past shows, go to [www.canadiandimension.com](http://www.canadiandimension.com). The new March issue of Canadian Dimension magazine should be hitting newsstands as of next week. Until next time.

**JON STEINMAN:** And that was a segment from the weekly program ALERT, produced at the University of Manitoba's CJUM, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. That segment aired on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007. The show again is sponsored by Canadian Dimension Magazine, and for those outside of Winnipeg, you can learn more about how to listen to their weekly podcast by visiting their website at [canadiandimension.com/alert](http://canadiandimension.com/alert).

*soundbite*

You're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner and today's broadcast featuring segments of programs produced at independent radio stations across Canada. In this next segment, we travel to Montreal Quebec and McGill University's, CKUT. Airing weekly on the station is the show titled FRIDAY MORNING AFTER, hosted by Joe Broadhurst. On March 30<sup>th</sup> 2007, Joe interviewed Alka Chandna, a Senior Researcher with PETA, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. The topic was the recent Menu Foods pet food recall. This will be the first time here on Deconstructing Dinner where instead of deconstructing our own dinners, the dinner of our pets will instead take centre stage. But as is more and more becoming common knowledge, the ingredients in pet food are in most cases by-products of the *human* food system. When we discuss how *cheap* food has become here in North America, this is partially because of the ability of the food industry to find markets for all of the waste products coming out of the food system. So essentially, taking advantage of the conveniences provided by the industrial food system is also supporting the pet food industry and the issues you are about to hear in this next segment. And what may prove to be frightening to some listeners, is how similar the issues surrounding the recent pet food recall are to those that surround the *human* food supply.

And again, today's broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner is highlighting the diversity of public affairs programming on independent radio across Canada, and this segment further highlights what the mainstream media is *not* providing Canadians. And I will note that the following segments are only *excerpts* from the *entire* one-hour show on the topic. And here's Joe Broadhurst of CKUT, Montreal.

#### CKUT

JOE BROADHURST: And this morning we're discussing issues surrounding the Menu Foods pet foods recall. They initially pulled 60 million pouches and cans of cat food across North America off the shelves because of toxic substance which was in that and that toxic substance was giving pets renal failure, kidney failure, And they have since changed that and they have asked the stores to pull almost all of their products from the stores. And the reason we're spending so much time on this this morning is because most of the major media, the mass media is continuing to report associated press reports of simply sixteen deaths related to that recall. However there are reports coming out now all over North America that there are thousands of pets that have suffered because of this recall. And later on we will be hearing from Ann Martin who has written a couple of books regarding what is actually in pet food. Again I ask you if you are serving commercial pet food to your pets that you probably want to pick up that dish until after this program is over.

We are going to be speaking with a Senior Researcher from PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and her name is Alka Chandna. Good morning.

ALKA CHANDNA: Good morning Joe, how are you?

JOE: I am doing well. First of all if people want to visit PETA on the internet they can go to [www.peta.org](http://www.peta.org). Again that's the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, if you haven't heard of them I'm sure you have.

ALKA: One investigation that we had that relates to Menu Foods in fact was done in 2003 and the investigation was inside a contract lab called Saint Clair here in the United States in Missouri. And we found that they were using dogs and cats in laboratory settings to test dog and cat food. We learned that one of the manufacturers was Menu Foods and another brand was Iams. And we found that the tests that were being done were very invasive in nature. They were actually cutting muscle tissue out of the sides of dogs and then the animals were kept in these cages of steel and

concrete. They were not socialized. The dogs were actually – they had their vocal chords severed because the people working the lab didn't want to hear the dogs cry. They weren't exercised properly and really all of their needs were just absolutely deprived of them.

So I just want to say that the tests being done in that setting were palatability tests – taste tests to see whether or not the animals liked the food and also metabolic tests to see whether the animals gained weight or lost weight or maintained weight on the food. And our point is that those tests can be done in homes of people who have companion animals at home can volunteer for such tests. But we really want to make the point that those tests are done for marketing purposes so that the manufacturers of the food – Iams, Menu Foods – can slap labels on their products saying “better tasting” or “maintains weight” or “for inactive dogs” or whatever it might be. And that helps sell products so that the companies make more money. So there's a lot of testing of that sort that goes on on animals in laboratories with the commercial pet food industry. But what's not happening in Canada or in the United States is sufficient safety testing of the foods to make sure that the food is not toxic to our family members, our companion animals at home.

JOE: Well Ann, I recently did an interview with Ann Martin that, we'll hear that interview later but some of the stuff that's going into this pet food is – my listeners will hear it later, it's very disturbing what they're putting in these commercial pet foods. And why isn't there a body that is looking after what is going into this pet food.

ALKA: I can tell you about what's happens here in the United States and I know that in Canada, it's an absolutely parallel situation. In the United States there are two bodies that basically oversee the pet food industry. One is the FDA, the Food and Drug Administration and within the FDA there's a body called CVM, the Centre for Veterinary Medicine. And those are the bodies, that body looks at pet food. And then the other is AAFCO, which is basically Association of American Feed Control Operators. And AAFCO is a private organization and it's largely controlled by the pet food industry.

Now the FDA takes a very hands-off role in looking at pet food. If there are additives, meaning drug additives in the pet food they will regulate that but they won't regulate the food itself. Meanwhile, AAFCO is governed by the commercial pet food. Their interested in making a cheap product that will fly off the shelves. So they will take for example, the rendered remains of the euthanized animals so that the animals that are euthanized, the dogs and cats that are euthanized every year in shelters and pounds. And they will take the contents of what they call the 4-D bin of slaughterhouses. Every year at slaughterhouses, there are animals who arrive that are dead, who are dying, who are diseased or who are disabled, they just collapsed while they are walking to slaughter. And all of those animals are not permitted to enter the human food supply. So they have a problem because they have all this animal flesh that they don't have any place to put it. And so basically what ends up happening is that the pet food industry takes that, renders that waste basically, this diseased waste and that goes into commercial pet food.

It's absolutely horrific and you know you're absolutely right. People at home view animals, companion animals as family members. They are family members. They express unconditional love. They are there for us when no one else is there for us. And we expect that the food that we're buying, that we pay a lot of money for. In the United States the commercial pet food industry is a \$12 billion industry every year and they export \$1 billion worth of pet food every year as well. So it's a very lucrative industry and it really is about the bottom line. Nobody is looking at the animals, the companion animals and worrying about their health. Nobody is worrying about the guardians, the human guardians who keep these animals and worry about veterinarian bills or this sort of loss that we're seeing. And you know there are various websites



where people are self-reporting what's going on and the numbers are almost 3,000 at this point – yesterday. But it is hideous. It's like the pet food industry views our companion animals, our dogs and cats at home as being really the receptacles of this recycled waste of our food industry and it's absolutely wrong.

**JON STEINMAN:** And this is Deconstructing Dinner. And before continuing on with this segment produced at CKUT in Montreal, Quebec, I'll remind listeners that today's broadcast is featuring segments from independent radio programs produced across Canada. If you miss any of today's broadcast, it will be archived on our website at [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner). There will also be a link to the entire one-hour show produced by Joe Broadhurst on this topic of the recent pet food recall.

Continuing on with this topic, we learn more from Alka Chandna, a Senior Researcher at PETA, and how deconstructing our pet's dinners is not so different from deconstructing our own.

**JOE:** Without these checks and balances then we see what happens and we're seeing these food recalls every year.

**ALKA:** You're absolutely right. I mean you know it's really hideous because if anybody who's been paying attention, anybody who's been paying attention to the human food supply or just reading the papers and seeing the headlines, it's very clear that we have a broken system. Industrial agriculture has made things very difficult. People have been surprised that one corporation – Menu Foods is manufacturing the foods, of as you said, over 95 brands. And people have also pointed out that we have brands like Iams and Eukanuba that are considered high-end foods that you can even buy at a veterinarian's office. And then also the generic brands, you know, the grocery store brands and so on. And of course this is capitalism in action. This is when you have large industries that have essentially streamlined the process so that you have mega, mega corporations making the food for so many different brands. You are talking about a streamlined and efficient manufacturing process but it also means that you are going to be doing things like importing wheat from China, rather than getting it from Alberta or here in the United States. There are many states that produce wheat because you want to get the cheapest commodity. And so when everything done for efficiency on such a massive scale you are going to see massive problems.

We see that frequently in the United States with the meat recalls. We find that you don't even know that in one pound of ground-up cow, that could actually represent cows from twelve different slaughterhouses just because it's the way the system works. And it really means that if there are problems and there're going to be problems given what factory farming looks like, given intensive confinement of animals, there're naturally going to be problems, those problems are just going to increase exponentially and spin out of control jeopardizing public health of humans as well as now we're seeing companion animals as well. It's such a problem and there is no accountability. We're looking at Menu Foods right now and they knew, according to an article in the New York Times and it's appeared numerous places since, they knew on February 20<sup>th</sup>. They were getting complaints from consumers saying there was a problem and their animals were getting sick with kidney failure, as early as February 20<sup>th</sup>. February 27<sup>th</sup> they were testing the food on animals in laboratories and animals were dying. And so as early as February 27<sup>th</sup> they knew definitively that there was a problem with the food but they did not issue the recall until March 16<sup>th</sup>.

**JOE:** I want to talk about that just for second because one of the things that I spoke with with Ann Martin that you'll hear a little bit later is that, one of the things that Menu Foods – they'll be

asking customers where's the pouch, where's the can. Prove to me that it was us that gave you renal failure. Again I want to say, just like you stated before Alka, that one blog alone in New York – petconnection.com - is reporting, as of yesterday, 2300 deaths. And Oregon reported over 80 yesterday as well. I mean the deaths are mounting and mounting and mounting. And one of the reasons – I'm just wondering, do you think that the reason they held back is because they're going to ask people to show them proof? And you know, who's going to hold onto a can?

ALKA: Exactly and it's absolutely absurd. The shoe is absolutely on the wrong foot where this is concerned. You know Menu Foods has not been taking responsibility since day one. You know since February 20<sup>th</sup> when they suspected there was a problem, they should have recalled the food right then or done a really quick investigation. Why did they wait until February 27<sup>th</sup>? Of course we also find it obscene that they used live animals in laboratory settings to test the food. There are alternatives that they can use to test for toxicity that are on the market already.

JOE: So they killed more animals on top of everything.

ALKA: Exactly. And now they're asking for consumers who are already suffering with high veterinary bills and even worse, sick and dying and diseased animals, they're asking them to prove, you know these poor consumers to prove to the corporations. It's absolutely obscene. They have to start taking responsibility. And the fact that they continued in the media to say that the deaths are no less than 30 is again, absolutely obscene. All they're trying to do is spin the truth to just salvage what they have of a business at this point. But they really need to come clean. It's such a betrayal of public trust. It's such a betrayal and the corporations all of this time have been betraying the consumers. You know that really it's not just Menu Foods. It's all of the large commercial pet food outfits have blood on their hands where this is concerned.

JOE: Okay, I've been speaking with Alka Chandna and she's from PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, [peta.org](http://peta.org). And like we stated before, you did an investigation in 2002, 2003 into Iams and Menu Foods. What I just really quickly want to say is that there is food out there that you can buy. Don't go to your grocery store and buy commercial food because as you'll see coming up, it's really disgusting what they put inside this food. But there's a link on [peta.org](http://peta.org) for a website [Iamscrueity.com](http://Iamscrueity.com) and if you go to [Iamscrueity.com/buyfood](http://Iamscrueity.com/buyfood), there's a huge list of companies that actually take care to create food that your animal can consume. So is there anything else you want to say really quickly Alka before we go?

ALKA: I think you covered it all but we need to know that we individually can make a difference by always buying food that, as you put it out Joe, is safe for our animals and has not caused harm to other animals. We can make those consumer choices and we also need to keep industries feet to the fire on this one. This is such a betrayal of consumer trust, of public trust and we can work together and really make a difference.

JOE: I really thank you for joining me this morning.

ALKA: Thank you very much. Thanks for all the great work you do.

JOE: All right. Well have a nice day.

ALKA: Take care. You too. Bye, bye.

JOE: You're listening to CKUT and we'll be right back.

**JON STEINMAN:** And that was a segment courtesy of the weekly program FRIDAY MORNING AFTER, hosted by Joe Broadhurst at CKUT McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. Joe interviewed Alka Chandna, a Senior Researcher with PETA, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, an organization based in Norfolk, Virginia, and that show aired on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2007. A link to the entire broadcast on this topic including more shows produced by Joe Broadhurst will be listed on the Deconstructing Dinner website at [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner).

#### *soundbite*

And this is Deconstructing Dinner, produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman. Today's broadcast has featured segments of radio programs produced at independent stations across the country. And while the last three shows have all been public affairs programs that cover a wide-range of topics, this next segment is from a program that is only focused on food, and it's called, YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT, and is produced at CFRC, Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. The half-hour program is produced and hosted by Sayyida Jaffer.

On March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007, Sayyida produced a half-hour segment featuring recordings from an event on March 22<sup>nd</sup> where an expert panel on the topic of Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program was put together by Queen's University's Studies in National and International Development Program, also known as SNID. And here's YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT from CFRC Kingston, Ontario.

#### CFRC

SAYYIDA JAFFER: It's almost 4:30 and you're listening to CFRC 101.9 FM, 90.9 on cable and streaming on the web at [cfrc.ca](http://cfrc.ca). You're listening to YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT. I'm Sayyida and today I sort of pieced together a bit of a .... well, I wouldn't want to call it a mini-documentary but there was SNID talk last week that I thought I'd cover. And for the next hour and half you should be hearing some content that deals with migrant labour, immigration issues and more. So, stay tuned.

Last Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Studies in National and International Development presented a panel discussion entitled "The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program in Canada: Root To Mutual Development Or Recipe for Migrant Exploitation." The panelists included Ken Forth, Chairman of the Foreign, Agricultural Resource Management Service which operates the programming in Canada; Stan Raper from the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, which is attempting to unionize the migrant workers; and finally, Dr. Leigh Binford, author of "Rumble of Canada: A Study of Mexican Migrants in the Program."

The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, also known as SAWP, is a managed migration program that brings foreign workers from Mexico and the Caribbean to work in agricultural occupations across Canada. According to its proponents, the program offers mutual benefits for all participants. It helps bolster the competitiveness of Canadian agriculture while providing migrants with hard currency that can contribute to local development in the home countries. For its critics, the program creates a vicarious and exploitive migrant workforce and offers only limited and temporary development potential in the partner countries.

So we're going to start things off with Ken's history of the program.

KEN FORTH: In 1966, a group of farmers from Georgian Bay and the government of Jamaica and the government of Canada brought in 234 workers, in 1966 to harvest apples in Georgian Bay.

Why did we need to do that? Well, on our particular farm in the mid 1920s my grandfather brought two families from Czechoslovakia to work on our farms. And they did so for the lady for 45 years, seasonally and the man for about 5 years seasonally until he got at either Stelco or Dofasco in Hamilton. After the second World War, the Hamilton area had a lot of immigrants, especially from Holland, and from Italy. And the Dutch folks worked on our farms and within about 10 years they owned their own farms. The Italian folks, the man usually worked in construction and owned construction companies, or worked at the steel companies and the women worked on our farms seasonally. And those days seasonally was only like three months.

By 1966 though, the so-called Hamilton Mount was being developed and brand new houses were being built there and these people that came here in the 1940s with nothing, owned and had paid for a brand new house on Hamilton Mountain. And that's when the labour supply of first immigrants dried up. And that's why the Seasonal Agriculture Workers Program came into being. It's pretty controversial because we weren't hiring Canadians. But it seemed to work out. By 1970 our farm came onto the program and I've been on the program now and this will be our 38<sup>th</sup> year. We have 16 men from Jamaica that work for us.

1974 the country of Mexico joined. So that put together the whole package of the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program commonly called the Caribbean-Mexican Program. That program was put together with Barbados, Trinidad-Tobago, eastern Caribbean, the organization of the eastern Caribbean states which includes St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Grenada and all those and Jamaica.

In 1984, the government of Canada was administering the program. You had to put advertisements up that there was no Canadians available to work on your farm, then you could get people from this program. In 1984 though the Mulroney government came out with a white paper by Neilson on Cost Recovery in Government. And Cost Recovery mandated a whole list of things and there was thousands of them, and one of them was, the administration of the Foreign Worker Program. Had we not acted at that time the program would be dead. Well it might not be dead now but it would have been dead between '84 and about 2000. But we went together and we went to the government and said – okay if you don't want to administer it, we will and we formed FARMS, the Foreign Agriculture Resource Management Service. Its members are all farmers. And we put together a plan to administer the program and all it is is the logistical, administering of from what the government use to do.

SAYYIDA: Stan presented some of his analysis of the purpose for the program.

STAN RAPER: Farming is tough work. It's very difficult work. And all of a sudden farmers can't get farm workers and the farmers lobbied the federal government to find ways to get them access to labour. And the SAWP program is borne. So as we go through the steps and first it's Jamaica and then it's the eastern Caribbean countries and then Mexican workers and the numbers continue to grow and continue to grow. I think Canada's right for the most part, the SAWP program was seen as the best practice. A way in difference to the United States, the guest program workers were where workers have some mode of government intervention in terms of who is selected, how they get here, what happens once they do get here. And I think for the most part what happened was that this program grew very quickly. A lot of farmers started to expand their operations and I think the model is out there right now in the agricultural sector – go big or stay home. Because the small farms, family farmers can't compete in economic scales the way that large corporate factory farm operations can today. So the big factory farm operations are getting more and more workers and they have access to these employers 24 hours a day because they live on the farm.

SAYYIDA: Ken painted a pleasant picture for what it's like to be a seasonal worker on his farm.

KEN: In lots of cases they're made part of our family. For example I got married one summer and all my men were at my wedding.

SAYYIDA: However all farms aren't necessarily like this. Stan contests.

STAN: No matter what industry you go in there's bad employers. And some of these bad employers were absolutely horrific.

**JON STEINMAN:** And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner where we are listening to segments from a recent program produced at CFRC Kingston. Ontario. Featured speakers on this broadcast included Ken Forth of the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Service, Stan Raper of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, and in this next segment, host Sayyida Jaffer introduces Leigh Binford of the Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, Mexico. Leigh has studied Mexican migrant workers employed in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

SAYYIDA: Leigh conducted research on this program for interviews of participants in Mexico. He had several critiques of the program.

LEIGH BINFORD: I agree with much of what Ken says about the program. I think that compared to other contract labour programs that exist and I'm specifically thinking of the USH2a program, this is an exemplary program. I think that there are some areas in this program that are still problematic and I'd like to bring up a couple of those. One is that the people who get admitted to the program and who work in Canada are evaluated at the end of the year by the employers and this evaluation really is a unilateral evaluation. In the case of Mexicans, the employer fills out an evaluation form, sends it back with the employee to Mexico. And that evaluation form can name the worker requesting he or she return the following year, can be a positive evaluation but without a request or it can be a negative evaluation. And the worker, if named is pretty much assured of future work, continuity in the program. If it's positive but the worker's not named, usually the worker is transferred to another farm. If the worker gets a negative evaluation the worker is either suspended or often given a permanent black list from the program.

One problem here is that the workers have no similar ability to determine whether or not a farmer continues to receive their services in the program. Which is to say that most farmers I think treat their workers well. Seventy percent of the workers I talked to in Mexico where there's a certain degree of inflation from the pressures that they might be under, had I interviewed them in Ontario, said that they would like to continue with the same employer the following year. But a lot of workers would like to transfer to a different employer and there is some degree of discontent. And the problem is, is there's not a secure structural means within the program to address that. It becomes somewhat more problematic too given the fact that the Mexican Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare which in Mexico is the Ministry charged with control of the recruiting for the program and ultimate authority, requires new workers, new recruits into the program to work for three years before they will even be allowed to request a transfer to another farm. No request for a transfer will be taken into consideration until the worker has completed three years with a single owner. And after that one can request. So, this in a sense, ties the worker to that farm. It does secure for the grower a relatively stable labour force but at some cause to the worker if that farm is a farm with a large series of rules and if the grower is extremely

demanding. So there are these problems that I see as still of a structural nature that have serious impact on the workers situation.

Obviously this is a program that does not provide a secure route to Canadian citizenship. Workers do not acquire points. Whereas it's true that occasionally growers sponsor programs for citizenship, that is at the grower's initiative. A worker can work in Canada for 20 or 30 years. In fact there are workers who have spent 30 years and up working in Canada that require no right to stay. It's also correct to say, most workers do not want to stay. I would absolutely agree with Ken on that. But there are occasionally workers who would like to obtain Canadian citizenship and move their families to Canada. They have no possibility under this program unless there is an extraordinary form of sponsorship on the part of a Canadian to do so.

Another problem I believe is the problem of the fact that the workers reside on the farms of the employers. In one sense this is good and in another sense we can see that it's not good. In a sense it's good because the employers don't loan the workers out, they're not required. They cannot send the worker to work on another farm without having consulted with the Consulate and having consulted with I think with FARMS although I am not certain about that with HRSDC. This is a certain security against some forms of abuse. But it can also be problematic in the sense that in so far as a worker dwells on the farm, the farmers have the right to set rules regarding the workers personal comportment. For instance, imagine two farms adjacent to one another. One farm is a dry farm - the owner prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages, does not allow visitors, and in fact requires that the workers ask permission to leave. And on another farm a few hundred metres away, the farmer occasionally takes the workers out for a beer, allows them to use the truck when they wish to go into town and allows them to have visitors. It's not that one is bad and one is good. The issue is you've got these massive discrepancies that exist and they exist legally because the property is the property of the owner. And both owners are adhering to the law.

SAYYIDA: Ken made some comments about the Canada Pension Plan that Leigh disputes.

KEN: If they work here long enough they qualify for Canada Pension Plan. And we have people on our farm now, while they are retired now but they do receive Canada Pension Plan back in Jamaica and that's a pretty big item.

LEIGH: The workers have rights to the Canadian Pension Plan but if one calculates, given the wages they make and in the number of months that they accrue, working 20 years in Canada for 8 months a year, you make come out with \$100 to \$150 monthly pension. And in Mexico, that will not place you above the standard of extreme poverty. The standard of extreme poverty in Mexico is around \$110 or \$120 a month U.S. And anything below that you are in according to the Mexican government's own estimation which I think is extremely conservative, in extreme poverty. The Mexican government calculates two minimum salaries place you at the poverty level and above two minimum salaries, you're out of poverty, okay.

SAYYID: Moving along to Stan's point of view he approaches this issue from a labour perspective.

STAN: Any worker whether they come from a different country or not who land on Canadian soil and who are working in Canada for any extended period of time, should they be extended the basic, same rights as Canadian workers. We from the labour movement across Canada I think, for the most part, agree that yes they should. These are Canadian jobs. It's Canadian industries and therefore it's basic human rights, labour rights, employment standards rights, workers' compensation rights, hospitalization rights should be extended to these as some people call

“visitors” to Canada. I argue with the term “visitors” because as Leigh indicated, a number of these workers have been coming from the mid 1960s working up to 8 months of the year and actually spending more time in Canada than they do their ascending countries, at great expense to the workers and workers’ families. The social impacts – there’s been some studies but very few I think in terms of what the real impact is of individuals being separated from their families for 8 months of the year for up to 30 years. You can only imagine if you put yourself in their shoes and were being transported to another country for 8 months of the year, what impact that would have on you personally.

**JON STEINMAN:** And this is Deconstructing Dinner, and that concludes the segments from the March 29<sup>th</sup> broadcast of YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT, a weekly program produced at CFRC Queen’s University in Kingston Ontario. The broadcast featured recordings from the March 22<sup>nd</sup> panel hosted by the University’s Studies in National and International Development program. You can learn more about the program on their website at [queensu.ca/snid](http://queensu.ca/snid). And links to more information on Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers’ Program will be made available on the Deconstructing Dinner website under today’s April 26<sup>th</sup> broadcast.

Today’s show showcased weekly programs produced across the country at independent radio stations, and the common thread tying all of them together, is that independent media in this country provides a resource of information not found within the mainstream media, and not often covered by the CBC. And as I encourage all listeners to explore the many programs available on radio stations across the country, also located on the webpage for today’s show will be a detailed list with links to many of these stations.

#### *ending theme*

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 John Ryan.

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 relies on the financial support from you the listener. Support for the program can be donated through our website at [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner) or by dialling 250-352-9600.

Till next week.