

## Food Systems Reflection Guide

### Definitions:

**Food Security** is defined by the Life Sciences Research Office (LSRO) as, "...access to enough food for an active, healthy life. It includes at a minimum (a) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods and (b) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies)" (*Food Insecurity and Hunger in the United States: An Assessment of the Measure*, 2006, p. 43).

**Food insecurity** is when "...the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain" (*Food Insecurity and the Hunger in the United States: An Assessment of the Measure*, 2006, p. 43).

### Statistics:

- In November 2011 there were 91,310 people in Kent County experiencing food insecurity; this is 15.2% of the total population. 1,828,060 (21%) in the state of Michigan, and 50 million (20%) in the United States.
- As of June 2011 there are 8 farmers markets in Grand Rapids and the surrounding community.

### Resources:

- Food Deserts
  - "Racism continues to impact access to healthy food options in many communities of color. It is hard to replace fat with fresh and processed with produce when you are limited to the convenience store on the corner" (Jacqueline Rhodes, *Eat Well: A food road map*)
    - What do you think about this quote? Have you seen or experienced this in your own life?
  - Take a look at this map of food deserts in Grand Rapids. Does this support the quote above?
    - [http://www.calvin.edu/academic/geology/faculty/vanhorn/studentwork/Project\\_Turn\\_In\\_oas2\\_GRFoodDesertsProject.pdf](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/geology/faculty/vanhorn/studentwork/Project_Turn_In_oas2_GRFoodDesertsProject.pdf)
  - What type of impact do you think this limited access to fresh food has on individuals and families living in these neighborhoods?
- Hunger in Grand Rapids

- <http://www.wzzm13.com/news/article/122393/2/Food-for-Families-The-state-of-hunger-in-West-Michigan>
  - If you were in this situation what would you do?
- <http://www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org/need/>
  - How do these statistics make you feel?
  - What types of stresses do you think food insecurity places on people?
- [http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2011/09/hunger\\_action\\_week\\_challenge\\_t.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2011/09/hunger_action_week_challenge_t.html)
  - Do you think you could do this? Could you live off of only \$4.37 a day?
  - **TRY IT!**
- Eating Local
  - These Farms by Henry Bakker

I

These farms have old barns,  
with dusty shafts of sunlight  
pushing in through cracks  
and around edges of big sliding doors.  
Patchworks of light in the shadows,  
dim memories the barn has of its people.

People who passed away suddenly.  
A heart attack in the field, perhaps,  
or while stacking hay.

People who passed away slowly  
of cancer, or crippled by arthritis,  
working a little less each day  
until finally they stopped.

Children dispersed to the cities  
as each year more rain came in the roof,  
the binder cords rotted away  
and the hay began to shift,  
losing its shape like a melting glacier.  
The edges of the stack softening,  
beginning to slide.

The floor of the mow slowly sagging,  
bowed like an old farmers back.

Beams and floorboards leaning together, grown tired  
of waiting for their load to lift.

## II

These farms have heavy stones,  
each one wrestled from the earth  
carefully placed by calloused hands  
into a wall on field's edge.

Built over many years  
the wall begins to crumble,  
one memory at a time  
rolling back to be swallowed  
again by the ground.

These farms have old trees.  
Oaks and Maples with thick skins,  
guarding the secrets of many seasons.  
Old trees who thirsted in dry summers,  
cracked and groaned on winter nights,  
and whispered on August breezes to women  
trimming Blue Lake beans in the shade.

These farms have buttercups and daisies  
in a field gone to seed.  
Other flowers I can't even name,  
never learned to name, now  
their fragile beauty is precious.

Up and down the road For Sale signs sprout,  
symptoms of the approaching tumor.  
A horse farm, pasture, a stand of birch trees,  
divided, sub-divided, priced, sectioned off  
and parceled out.

Wild flowers sway peacefully.  
A soft breeze rustling in the long grass,  
right before the end.

- What is the author saying?
  - Is it true?
  - What impact does this change in farms have on our food and how it is produced?
  - How do these impacts affect the world around us?
- <http://www.foodshed.net/foodguide/0809lfg.pdf> - West Michigan guide to local food
    - After viewing the many sources of local food in the Grand Rapids area, are you challenged to eat more locally?
    - How can you change your eating habits to eat more locally?

### What Now: Resources for Further Engagement

- <http://accessofwestmichigan.org/> -Access of West Michigan website
  - A local ministry providing food for those in need
  - Provides information about their mission as well as opportunities to get involved
- <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/slc/> - Calvin College Service-Learning Center
  - We can help you get connected and volunteer with local agencies working to bring justice to our food systems
- <http://roadmap.cultureisnotoptional.com/food/> - \*culture is not optional
  - Information on the \*cino publication all about food
  - Publication provides information and resources about eating locally, the roles food plays in our society, as well as a Christian perspective on food
- <http://www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org/> - Feeding America website
  - Testimonials from those who have been helped by places like Feeding America as well as information on ways you can get involved.
- <http://foodshed.net/> - Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council
  - Information about food systems in the Grand Rapids area and how to find local food

If you have any suggestions or comments on what we can improve, please contact us at [slc@calvin.edu](mailto:slc@calvin.edu) or 616-526-6455.



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