



# Growing Forward

Canada/Northwest Territories  
Growing Forward Agreement

## Small Scale Foods Program

Community Garden Initiative

2010 Annual Report

Revised May 2011



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# Introduction

In 2006, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) introduced a local, community-based food production program in a limited number of communities through the Northwest Territories (NWT). Resources were largely provided from the Canada/NWT Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement.

The program was expanded through the Canada/NWT Growing Forward Initiative, signed by the Government of Canada through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI). Growing Forward, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative, supports a profitable and innovative agricultural industry that seizes opportunities in responding to market demands and contributes to the health and well-being of Canadians.

The Small Scale Foods Program (SSFP) was designed to focus on small community-based garden production of vegetables and fruits as well as identifying local wild edibles. Over the past five years the program has grown from six communities to the current participation of 30 communities throughout the NWT.

The primary mandate of the SSFP is to create an environment within communities which encourages residents to work together, and to gain and share knowledge in growing food for community consumption. The program not only provides for seed, and small tools, but also assists in selecting and developing sites for community gardens in conjunction with community groups of residents or in some communities with Band Councils or local community governments.

Projects are developed entirely within the communities with assistance provided when needed. Most projects are small in nature in the beginning; however, as interest and success grows, the size and expectations for projects generally increases. Schools are encouraged to incorporate production of bedding plants into their curriculum, which allows students to gain interest and participate in projects. As well, in conjunction with community workshops, school groups are also encouraged to grow greens in the classroom for student consumption.

As communities gain confidence and additional small greenhouses are placed, the types of plants grown has been expanded to include flowers, herbs, and fruit trees where deemed practical. Ultimately, it is the goal of the program to include provision for storage and further processing (preserves) as well as to see small self-sufficient units in all communities as well as individual gardens. Plans are also being made to allow for placement of small poultry and egg production.





# Background

## Historical perspective

Local food production of vegetables, poultry, meat and milk has occurred since early settlement of communities in the NWT. Early European settlers grew gardens and kept livestock operations to feed their families and supplement local foods. The Hudson Bay Company and early Catholic and Anglican missions produced a wide variety of food for their own use and for distribution and sale.

As transportation systems evolved and became more reliable and widespread, local production of food gradually declined as imported foods became more available. The emergence of a cash economy moved many communities away from local food production and traditional harvesting as principal sources of sustenance, putting a greater reliance on the wage economies and imported food. Since the late 1960s, very few families in communities have grown or produced their own food other than traditional wildlife harvesting. Instead there has been an increasing reliance on store bought food products and high calorie, low nutrition junk foods. Many elders continue to speak of earlier years when mission gardens were common, however much of this knowledge has been lost.

## Program need

The Small Scale Foods Program was designed to address the trend toward ever decreasing dietary habits. Also, it is intended to reestablish lost knowledge involving local food production and improve perception of these locally grown foods. The program provides support, training and basic infrastructure for local

food production in communities and works with residents of these communities to design, establish and expand local food production systems for their benefit.

## Partners and stakeholders

The largest proponents of the program in many NWT communities have been local community governments and a strong core of community volunteers. These tireless individuals have championed community gardens as agents of community development, an economic alternative that utilizes available resources, a way to 'grow local', and even as a way of offsetting carbon production and encouraging the use of alternative energies. Several community garden projects, most notably in Lutselk'e, have examined using solar power to run gardening infrastructure such as water pumps.

ITI has also found that targeting youth through the school system increases participation from the entire community. By bringing workshops into the schools, and having classes come out in the spring to help with planting or in the fall to help with harvest, a community garden provides ample opportunity to integrate biology, physical fitness, and local economics to students in a practical setting. For example, the 2009 harvest from Deline's community garden was given to the local schools. The carrots from the harvest became healthy snacks at snack time, and other vegetables were given to the home economics class to cook with. This is great promotion for the program, as it allows parents and teachers to become involved in the community garden along with their children and students.





# Background

Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) is in a position to be a strong proponent of the program. Its promotion of community wellness is directly aligned with the physical and nutritional components of gardening and harvesting. Program staff have worked with HSS, most notably in Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, and Tsiigehtchic. It is hoped that this departmental cooperation will continue and expand in the future. Experience has shown that community gardens located centrally, and those within a compound (like a health centre), tend to garner more community participation and are better looked after.

## Projects to date

ITI is implementing the SSFP in all regions of the NWT. The program is administered from Hay River and is under the direction of ITI's Agriculture and Agri-foods Consultant, along with a small team of summer students. Technical support is provided to identify sites and to clear and develop land. Program support provides seeds and small tools for planting and garden maintenance. Assistance is also provided to community organizers and volunteers through workshops and hands on training on a regular basis throughout the growing season.

The program began slowly in 2006 by establishing sites in communities primarily along the south Mackenzie road system. By 2009, the program had contacted 27 communities of which 15 had active community garden sites supported

by the program. The summer of 2011 will see all but three communities in the NWT involved in some form of local food production system with some moving on to larger established sites and incorporating greenhouses. Plans are underway to discuss program possibilities with the three northernmost communities in the NWT. The three major centers, Yellowknife, Hay River, and Fort Smith operate independently and the SSFP participates on a limited basis.

All the sites that have been planted to date have achieved fair to excellent yields. The produce grown at all sites is commonly beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, peas, potatoes, tomatoes, lettuce and turnips. Community organizers decide how to distribute the produce that is grown. Typically the produce is distributed among community garden members and volunteers that helped with the harvest. In some cases the produce is also used for a community feast.





# Regional Involvement

The following table summarizes communities currently involved in the program by region. Regions are identified based on the GNWT regional divisions.

Community	Type of Project	Project involvement to date	Future plans
<b>Inuvik Region</b>			
Aklavik	Community garden, container system	SSFP aided in identifying site in 2009 however site was re-allocated. New site identified in 2010 and gave direction on proceeding with development.	Instruction sessions planned prior to spring, site to be planted spring of 2011.
Fort McPherson	Community garden	Identified during a tour with elders. Site developed 2010.	Site to be planted 2011.
Inuvik	Community greenhouse	Established independently in 1999. Two components consisting of 74 individual plots and a 4,000 sq. ft. commercial greenhouse.	Increased involvement with the Inuvik project. Considerable infrastructure associated with project and most people involved are new.
Tsiigehtchic	Multiple site development	SSFP aided in identifying two sites and gave assistance on proceeding with development.	Site identified and developed. Planting in 2011.
Tuktoyuktuk	Raised beds greenhouse site development	Site identified 2010. Sponsor group identified.	Development 2011.
<b>Sahtu Region</b>			
Colville Lake	Site development	Contact made and potential sites identified by community.	Site to be developed and planted spring of 2011. School involvement.
Deline	Community garden greenhouse	Garden site expanded and a 24'x32' greenhouse placed.	Work with group on increased technical requirements of a greenhouse. Community is also interested in incorporating a small poultry operation.
Fort Good Hope	Private gardens	Garden site from previous years no longer used, but several private gardens established with SSFP. A new community garden site has been identified for development.	Increased involvement with private gardens and reestablishment of central garden.
Norman Wells	Community garden	Garden site developed and planted spring of 2009. Small greenhouse placed in 2010.	Community interested in expanding to other sites.
Tulita	Community garden	Community garden since 2006. Community has requested an additional site for spring of 2011.	Continued instruction sessions planned prior to spring.



## Regional Involvement

Community	Type of Project	Project involvement to date	Future plans
<b>Dehcho Region</b>			
Fort Liard	Community garden	Contact made and potential sites identified. Site developed and planted 2010.	Provide ongoing support.
Fort Simpson	Community garden	Established 2008. Two expansions of garden have taken place since that time, with further expansion planned.	Work with group to increase participation. Provide additional site assistance in conjunction with friendship centre.
Jean Marie River	Site development	Initially established 2006, with a suspension of gardening activities in 2009 due to the garden site being used for housing.	New site to be developed and planted spring of 2011.
Nahanni Butte	Community garden	Established 2006, new site established in 2008. Site expanded 2009.	Electric fencing to be installed 2011.
Trout Lake	Community garden	SSFP assisted in expanding existing site and increasing production. A small greenhouse was placed 2010.	Continued support requested by community.
Wrigley	Community garden	Established 2008. Expansion of site occurred in 2009, with additional expansion planned.	Increased involvement by school and students is generating additional interest.
<b>North Slave Region</b>			
Behchokò	Site development	Two sites planted using containers at elders facility and friendship centre.	Site to be expanded 2011.
Dettah	School based program	Supplied a small hydroponic unit to be used in conjunction with school curriculum.	Follow-up on future interest.
N'dilo	Container-based community garden	Six 4'x16' containers established in centre of community. All planted and produce disbursed throughout community.	Expansion of site with additional planters in 2011.
Gameti	Community garden	Established 2007. Active interest by school and students.	Individual community members have expressed interest in developing their own gardens.
Lutselk'e	Community garden	Established 2008. 24'x32' hoop greenhouse placed summer 2010 and immediately placed in production.	Continued support with increased workshops with schools.



# Regional Involvement

Community	Type of Project	Project involvement to date	Future plans
<b>North Slave Region</b>			
Whati	Community garden, allotments	Established 2006 as one of first participants of project. Expanded and fenced.	Instruction sessions planned prior to spring.
Yellowknife	Community garden (multiple sites), allotments	Community is highly independent with three garden sites developed with minimal support from SSFP.	
Wekweeti	Community garden	New site to be established in summer 2011.	Materials to be transported spring 2011 on winter road. Workshops in conjunction.
<b>South Slave Region</b>			
Enterprise	Community garden, allotments	Established 2007. Very active participation. Greenhouse provided 2010.	Continued support. Interest in small poultry flock.
Fort Providence	Community garden	Established 2009 in conjunction with community nursing station.	Additional interest to be followed up on.
Fort Resolution	Community garden	Established 2006 in initial program phase. Continued interest.	Provide continued support and assistance.
Fort Smith	Community garden, allotments	Community is highly independent with two garden sites developed within heritage compound. Interest expressed in acquiring SSFP support for development of third site.	
Hay River	Site development	Identified site cleared and broken, Community group secured regional financial support to place container growing systems, additional soils, shed. Solar pumping system placed by SSFP.	Continued support and site development.
Hay River Reserve	Site development	Site developed in fall of 2009 and spring of 2011.	Interest is sporadic however planting is planned for 2011.
Kakisa	Community garden	Established 2006.	Community requires close support.





# Future Directions

## For Small Scale Foods Program

The summer of 2011 will see the fifth active year of Small Scale Food programming. To date the program has concentrated on the establishment of community gardens and has evolved to assisting with backyard gardens. While most communities have sufficient arable land to allow for land based systems, some such as N'dilo and Behchokò have utilized container-based systems using rough lumber and supplied soil. Other communities have used available materials from the local dump as containers for growing. These have included old boats, bathtubs and tires.

The program continues to provide seeds and inputs as well as equipment such as tillers, small tools, seeders, water pumps, hoses and fittings, and fencing materials to communities according to their current infrastructure, interest level, and knowledge base. Communities with a more advanced gardening infrastructure and knowledge base will have greenhouses provided by the program for extending the gardening season and to grow less hardy crops such as tomatoes and cucumbers.

The program will also continue to offer workshops on topics such as basic gardening and the storage and preparation of produce by program staff. There have also been requests from communities to have workshops on subjects such as family nutritional needs and composting. Program staff continue to plan winter workshops based on the requests and interest level of individual communities.

As a community progresses in its gardening knowledge, it often asks for more advanced gardening infrastructure. These requests are honoured by program staff if appropriate. More advanced communities are more likely to take the lead in using program equipment for individual garden cultivation and greenhouse production. This is encouraged as individual production in association with community garden production is co-beneficial, especially in the smaller communities. Ultimately one degree of success of the program would be the establishment of a commercial or semi-commercial component of food production in a community.

Interest in the SSFP has grown exponentially since its origins. During the early years of the program, staff actively sought out community and third party interest. In recent years, there has been a deluge of requests from media, independent persons, and Non-Governmental Organizations for information. The intent of the program has always been to work *with* communities to establish independent local food production systems. Support offered was and continues to be aimed at imparting knowledge and confidence. While there are any number of growth enhancement technologies and materials available the program has always been careful to provide these technologies on a step basis. Many communities have gained sufficient levels of knowledge and confidence and moved to methods such as crop covers, mulching, and using green houses to enhance production and growth.

Over the next few years it is envisioned that many communities will operate on an increasingly independent basis and in fact act as an information source for other communities. Social networking sites such as Facebook have already provided forums for discussion between communities and input from outside sources. Non-Governmental Organizations are also becoming more involved in projects at varying levels, through provision of school sessions. As this involvement increases the SSFP will continue to offer assistance as requested and will focus more on communities which have less resources or higher challenges.

The SSF program teams operates by the mantra: **“The highest level of success to be achieved in community development, is to be told you are no longer needed”** (OEH)





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For information on Growing Forward,  
please contact your regional office of  
Industry, Tourism and Investment at:

Inuvik ..... 1-867-777-7286  
Sahtu ..... 1-867-587-7170  
North Slave ..... 1-867-920-3230  
South Slave ..... 1-867-872-6430  
Dehcho ..... 1-867-695-7510  
or contact the Agricultural Hotline .... 1-877-821-8256