

PEI Organic Farmer-Citizen Co-operative

Small-scale agriculture is disappearing because our current economic system with its low commodity prices cannot provide a sustainable income for small farms. Yet many people on PEI want to support small-scale farming, want to have regular access to locally-grown, organic, fair-trade food, and they don't want to see the Island's unique pastoral landscape converted into massive industrialized farms. The research question is: how can a farmer-citizen co-operative be developed in ways that address the problems of: small-scale (family) farm attrition, the centralization of farming, the global corporatization of food supply, and consequent environmental degradation and energy waste.

This program hopes to develop an alliance between the Island's small-scale growers and the consumers here who want a more adequate organic and local food supply. Goals of this project are premised upon 1) providing food for local needs first, and exporting whatever is surplus 2) ensuring that farmers get a fair price for the food they grow. And they include co-operation and mutual support between farmers and citizens to meet the needs of both groups, including collaborative planning of crops, processing and marketing 3) a store in Charlottetown open to the public 5 or 6 days a week that would contain space for fresh locally produced organic vegetables and fruit, and it would have processing facilities to turn bumper crops into canned and frozen produce. This store would also serve important social and educational functions: it would be a site for people to learn how to preserve food or cook from farm-fresh produce; a place where farmers and consumers come together to discuss problems and projects in agriculture; a place where people come to meet and talk and enjoy the talents of local musicians and artists.