



F

ood Processing & Food Security

Food Processing: The Canadian fruit & vegetable processing industry includes canned and preserved fruit and vegetables, and frozen fruit and vegetables. In 1997, fruit and vegetable processing was a \$4 billion industry that accounted for some 17,000 jobs nationwide.

Food Security: It is estimated that 2.4 million Canadians suffer from hunger, and that 40% of emergency food aid recipients are under the age of 18. Vulnerable populations include children, the Aboriginal community, single mothers and the elderly. To meet their needs, there has been an increase in the demand for food banks, collective kitchens, and school-based breakfast or community-based feeding programs.

Food processing models are being piloted in both rural and urban areas. In the rural context, the emphasis is upon food processing facilities and marketing strategies, including a community kitchen/business incubator and a micro-food processing training facility.

In the urban context, the emphasis is on making fresh, healthy foods available to low-income, urban residents through community farmers' markets and consumer food co-operatives.



Organizational structures include worker's cooperatives, for-profit community enterprises and economic development corporations.

The reach and scope of these projects goes beyond their local borders; they serve more than their own communities and serve as regional models.

The community kitchen at Niagara Food Innovations
© Niagara Presents

CEDTAP support ranges from :\$9,000 - \$20,000

CEDTAP offers a variety of technical services to organizations at different phases of development. The types of technical service accessed in this cluster include marketing and management skills development, organizational planning, and production related assistance.



Case Studies:

Niagara Food Innovations, Jordan Ontario

In 1991, a successful co-operative housing developer branched out into food processing. The group established a "Good Food Box" program, trained 50 people, served over 700 consumers, and created the "Best of Niagara" gourmet food basket.

From these endeavours, Niagara Food Innovations was born: a community-based network of women micro-entrepreneurs, each with her own product operating under the same label. The company provides government-inspected commercial incubator kitchen, technical support, a retail showroom, and marketing and distribution services.

Parkdale/Liberty Economic Development Corporation, Toronto, Ontario

Started in 1996, with no core funding, the Parkdale/Liberty Economic Development Corporation came together out of residents' concerns for improved economic vitality in these two working-class neighbourhoods in downtown Toronto. High unemployment, low-income families and a high immigrant population among more than 33,000 residents characterize the two neighbourhoods.

One of the major concerns for the area is how to deliver high-quality food to its low-income residents. One proposed solution is a community farmers' market that the development corporation approached CEDTAP to support.

Other Community Partners:

1997-2000:

Food Front Consumer Co-operative, *British Columbia*

2001-2003:

Small-Scale Food Processor Association, *British Columbia*

Wild Island Foods Co-operative, *British Columbia*

The CEDTAP Contribution

CEDTAP provided mentoring through Canadian Cooperative Association Ontario's technical provider, George Alkalay.

Problems in human resources, management, quality control, and account payables for not one, but seven micro-businesses were streamlined through the implementation of new management systems. In addition, the immediate crisis of critical cash flow problems was abated.

CEDTAP will support a feasibility study in making community markets long-term and sustainable and a template will be developed for assessing the feasibility of these markets in other communities.

The market model will incorporate a proposed vendor-fee structure and will service two communities through one project. The outlook looks promising with funding from the City of Toronto forthcoming in the spring of 2003.



The Parkdale/Liberty
Community Farmers' Market

"I've come to realize that to do CED well, you have to develop a business mentality, not a project mentality. You're learning the fundamentals of how to manage a business, one piece at a time."

Betty Ann Baker, Executive Director, Niagara Food Innovations, September 2001