

B.C.- Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)
Project Proposal – Projects B5 and B7 – 2009-2010

A. Title of project: Farmers' Markets as Social Economy Drivers of Local Food Systems: Phases I and II

B. With which BALTA SERC Is this project associated? Or is it a cross cutting project? SERC II

C. Co-Lead researchers:

AB: Mary Beckie (University of Alberta)
Paul Cabaj (Canadian Centre for Community Renewal)

BC: Hannah Wittman (Simon Fraser University)
Will Low (Royal Roads University)
Herb Barbolet (Simon Fraser University)

D. Names of other researchers and organizations involved:

The following individuals and agencies have been or will be approached to act as advisors to this research:

AB FM Association
BC FM Association
FM Canada
AB Agriculture Ministry
BC Agriculture Ministry
Agriculture Canada – PFRA Division

E. Description of project, including objectives, outputs and intended outcomes:

This BALTA SERC II research on farmers' markets (FMs) provides an opportunity to drill down into one of the key themes – local and organic food systems – identified in the SERC II B1 scoping project. The objective of this research is to examine the current and potential role of FMs in the development of local food systems. This research is informed by the following theories: clustering, actor network, and social embeddedness.

This work was originally to be carried out in two separate and successive phases: B5 (Sept 2008 – Aug 2009), and B7 (Sept 2009 – Jan 2010). However, in the spring of 2009, a decision was made by the lead researchers to merge the field work initially outlined for the two phases, as well as accompanying documentary/background research, in order to make more efficient use of time and resources.

This research on FMs was initiated in Sept 2008 with a review of the literature on FMs and local food systems, using a social economy lens, followed by the preparation for and implementation of a Delphi inquiry with FM and food system experts (government representatives, FM managers and vendors, producers, academics) in BC and AB.

The merging of B5 and B7 will involve conducting field and documentary research for the development of case profiles of FMs in two geographically situated clusters of FMs in BC and AB, in order to examine the following:

- internal market as well as inter-market linkages; exploring the movement, exchange and consolidation of knowledge, products, and people in a geographic regional cluster of FMs.
- external linkages between FMs in these clusters and the broader regional food system (comprised of both conventional/globalized and alternative/local actors and entities). What linkages currently exist between FMs and other aspects of the supply chain? What are the opportunities and challenges? How are FMs, as social economy enterprises, influencing and being influenced by the food system within which they are situated and also a part of? How are other factors (physical infrastructure, production base, leadership, FM policies and regulations (e.g. limits on reselling), government policy and regulations (e.g., health and safety, zoning, trade agreements) influencing the social and economic embeddedness of FMs within this geographically-situated network? What other strategies and initiatives can be developed for scaling up and consolidating local food supply? What related marketing and processing options could evolve out of FMs?

F. Research activities, plan of work and timetable:

This research will rely predominantly on case study analysis. The case study approach is fundamentally a qualitative method, but one that draws upon a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative data to gather in-depth information about the subject, within a specific context. The qualitative data (including interviews, document analysis, and site visits by students and project leads) will be synthesized and analyzed within the context of significant spatial and temporal trends and relationships. This will require looking at the findings of the Delphi Inquiry and the case study work, whilst also continuing to gather and analyze information in relevant academic literature, other reports and statistics. The case study guide developed by BALTA will be utilized in this research.

Activity	Student Researchers Involved	Collaboration and Supervision	Timeline
Documentary Review	1 BC grad student → 1 AB grad student →	BC co-leads AB co-leads	July – Dec 2009 (on-going)
Case studies - interviews	As above	As above	July – August 2009
Data analysis and report writing	Students and Project Leads	Data analysis and report writing will be collaborative amongst all researchers involved, but each co-lead (Beckie and Wittman) will take responsibility for the final production of one journal article and one conference presentation each (to be co-authored with all participants). Non-academic researchers will take responsibility for presenting results at FM Assoc conferences.	Oct 2009 - Jan 2010

Outputs:

- 2 refereed journal articles (Project Leads)
- 2 conference presentations (Project Supervisors in conjunction with students where possible)
- Presentation of results at annual farmer market association conferences in each province

G. Purpose and significance of the research, including congruence with the strategic research objectives identified for the SERC and BALTA. Why should this project be approved, given BALTA's limited resources? [Refer to the project criteria in the BALTA Workplans and Project Proposals Policy.]

This work will build upon previous work completed and in the process of being completed for SERC II, including the literature review, scoping project, profiles on 2 FMs in AB and BC, and the current B5 Phase 1.

Farmers' markets are arguably one of the most successful examples of social and economic enterprise in Canada. In part driven by increased public concern for the environment and demand for local food alternatives, individual farmer's markets are expanding rapidly and the number of markets is also increasing in BC and AB.

Despite the growing phenomena of FMs throughout North America, little is understood about the role that they play in local and regional food systems, or the broader impacts of these enterprises on the communities (both urban and rural) and regions which they are a part of. Whilst Phase 1 of this research is focusing on the internal and inter-market relations connecting and mobilizing people, knowledge and goods, Phase 2 provides an opportunity to look at the linkages between FM and the broader regional food system.

This research will complement other research on the current economic impact of FMs in Canada that was recently conducted by Farmers' Market Canada, provincial data on alternative agriculture, and a soon to be completed study on agricultural profiling in the Edmonton Capital Region by PFRA (Agriculture Canada). Input from these sources will be used in developing these case studies, all of which will contribute to better understanding of local and regional food systems and the role of FMs as both social and economic actors in this process.

H. Will the project involve student researchers in a paid or unpaid capacity? If yes, will they need to be recruited or have they already been identified? Briefly describe the roles and responsibilities of students involved in the research project, the skills/experience they will acquire, and how this will complement their academic training. Explain as well how adequate supervision and support of the student will be ensured.

This project is requesting funding for two graduate student research assistants working part-time (10 hrs/wk on average). These positions could be filled by MA students. An MA student at the University of Alberta has been identified as a possible candidate to carry out the work in AB. Recruitment for the BC student will occur once funding is secure; several suitable candidates have expressed interest. Experience with qualitative research methods, particularly qualitative interviews and data analysis, is critical. The students selected will be capable researchers and are interested in the study of the social economy and local food systems. This research will complement the research they are involved with for their graduate degrees and will give them an opportunity to expand their research skills in qualitative research methods, as well as their knowledge concerning the social economy and local food systems.

I. Describe plans for communicating research results within the academic community. Indicate audience and specific output(s) i.e., refereed journal articles, conference presentations or other appropriate channels.

- At least 2 refereed journal articles (*e.g Food and Society, Agriculture and Human Values, Rural Sociology*)
- Presentations for at least two Academic conferences including *Canadian Association of Food Studies*

J. Describe plans for communicating research results outside the academic community to practitioners, policy makers, and other people for whom the

research results could be significant. Indicate audience and specific output(s).

- Presentations to local, regional, provincial and federal policy makers current in key departments tied to Farmers Markets
- Presentations to practitioner groups and community stakeholders involved in local food
- Presentation to Farmers Market Canada Annual conference
- Posting of results on websites for Alberta Farmers Market Association, BC Farmers Market Association, Farmer Markets Canada, CCEDNet, and the BALTA website

Report on findings will be made available to organizations and individual advisors to this research, as well as other interested practitioners, provincial or other government departments and agencies, other BALTA partners, and members of the wider social economy network.

K. Describe your plans for monitoring and evaluating your research project. Feel free to consult with BALTA's Coordinator on designing possible approaches. (Note that monitoring and evaluation are extremely important both for ensuring the success of the project as well as satisfying reporting to SSHRC.)

- Quarterly report to SERC 2 and BALTA regarding project progress compared to agreed timeline and objectives
- Project final report to SERC 2 and BALTA confirming completion of proposed outputs
- Student evaluations by both the student and supervisor using BALTA approved formats
- An end of project evaluation involving project partners and participants to assess extent to which project objectives, outputs and outcomes have been realized
- Medium term follow-up report, 6 - 12 months after project completion, involving farmers market associations in each province to obtain their assessment of project results including impact of outcomes and potential for further project impact

L. What are the research tools you propose to use in your project?

NOTE: If your research involves human subjects, you MUST provide copies of your proposed research tools (as well as your research plan) prior to commencing research. Please see the document "*BALTA Ethical Review Process – Simplified*" for information about ethical review requirements.

This project will involve research with human subjects and an ethical review will be developed for the collection of data during interviews.

M. Budget and Contributions

Category	Requested of BALTA	Other Contributions
1. 2 Student salaries \$23/hr @10hr/wk for 5 months	(\$4,600.00 per student) \$9,200.00	 \$6,000.00
1 (a) Student benefits/overhead costs (if the student will be a CCCR hire, add 10.5% of the student salaries amount; if the student will be employed by another institution, add the relevant amount)	\$ 966.00	\$ 630.00
2. Researcher Release Time (Mary Beckie)	\$7,500.00	\$3,500.00*
3. Research Support Costs (e.g. supplies, communication costs)		\$ 500.00
4. Knowledge Dissemination		\$2,000.00
5. Travel	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00
TOTALS	\$19,466.00	\$14,430.00

*this figure would fund additional release time, and does not include the in-kind contributions of research time for Hannah Wittman, Will Low, Paul Cabaj, or Herb Barbolet.

Budget Explanation:

1. Student Salaries/Benefits. We have requested BALTA funding for student work on one FM cluster analysis in each province. Additional funding sought from interested partners (see below) will fund an additional cluster analysis in each province in order to increase the scope of the data analysis and improve generalizability.

2. Researcher Release Time. While the students will primarily be involved in data collection and collation of documents, the primary responsibility for analysis and final write-up and publication/dissemination of results will fall on the Project Leads. We are requesting a one-course release stipend for Mary Beckie to coordinate the analysis, write-up, and publication/dissemination of research results.

3. Research Support Costs. While in-kind support from SFU and UA will fund materials and supplies for the primary cluster analysis in each province, requested

funds from external partners will provide for additional materials needed for a second cluster (long-distance telephone, survey materials, regional transportation costs).

4. Knowledge Dissemination. We anticipate that potential external funders will provide support for the creation of materials disseminating research results in a format accessible to the general public: policy briefs, brochures, website development, etc.

5. Travel. We are requesting travel funds from BALTA for the 2 academic conferences. Support requested from external funders will cover travel expenses associated with regional presentations and farmers market association meetings.

Plan for acquisition of Support from External Partners

Following the completion of Phase 1 research, this proposal will be firmed up and used to approach subsequent funders to enhance the scope of the research with a priority placed on:

- Deepening the reach of analysis with a particular focus on interviewing vendors in FM who have expanded their markets through other local food market mechanisms
- Examining an additional FM cluster in each province to increase generalizability.
- Expanding the planned public presentations into a full day strategic analysis workshop with key policy makers in each province to examine the project findings and develop potential action plans

Identified funders who have indicated interest include:

- Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Rural Adaptation Fund
- Rural Secretariat
- Alberta Agriculture Council