

THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF COUNTRY FOOD AND FOOD SECURITY: THE CASE OF GREENLAND AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR NUNAVUT IN MOVING FORWARD

Joanna Petrsek MacDonald¹, Catherine Huet¹, James Ford¹, Sara Statham², Allison MacRury²

¹ Department of Geography, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

² Department of Health, Government of Nunavut, Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada

INTRODUCTION

Access to adequate food has been identified as a major challenge in the Canadian Arctic, particularly for Inuit communities. Since 2001 food insecurity prevalence in Nunavut has ranged from 25% to 70%. In addressing this serious issue, one objective of the Nunavut Food Security Coalition's *Nunavut Food Security Strategy* is to explore sustainable commercialization of country food. A recent report by the Expert Panel on the State of Knowledge of Food Security in Northern Canada argues that commercialization of country foods could increase accessibility of available foods. This project examines the feasibility of developing and promoting country food markets in Nunavut based on the model of common open air traditional food markets held in Greenland (known as *kalaalliaaraq* in Greenlandic or *braettet* in Danish).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do the commercial country food markets in Greenland operate?
2. Do country food markets affect food security?
3. How can Greenland's experience with markets inform food security initiatives in Nunavut?

METHODOLOGY

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Searched PubMed, Ovid/Medline, Google Scholar, and Google to identify all relevant publically available peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed literature in English, French, and Danish. Conducted backwards citation tracking. Reviewed 119 documents.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

40 semi-structured interviews conducted with 48 key informants including decision makers, civil society organizations, researchers, and representatives of Inuit organizations in Denmark (Copenhagen, Roskilde, Aarhus), Greenland (Nuuk, Qeqertarsuaq), Nunavut (Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, Rankin Inlet), and Quebec (Montreal). Data analysed using constant comparative method.

LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

- **A nutrition transition** from country foods to a 'western' diet is on-going in both Greenland and Nunavut but country foods remain closely linked to cultural identity, community, collective identity, cultural stability and solidarity.
- **A mixed economy** for both food consumption and employment is evident across both Greenland and Nunavut.
- **Traditional food sharing** still has its importance in social networks and relationships for Inuit communities and increases country food access and availability.
- **Markets in Greenland** have existed for more than 150 years. The sale of Greenlandic foods is more widely reported than in other northern regions and is encouraged by the Greenlandic Home Rule government.
- **Markets in Nunavut** have been sporadic (e.g. Project Nunavut). Country foods are mainly sold by the retail sector, and the success of commercial country food ventures undertaken differs between regions.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

GREENLAND

- Requires a hunting license (professional, leisure, or sport) for all hunting and fishing activities. All hunters are required to report their catch annually.
- Quotas and regulations are determined for individual species by the Ministry of Hunting, Fishing, and Agriculture and distributed by the municipality.
- Hunters have many choices about what to do with their harvests (e.g. sell to Royal Greenland, the open air market, private institutions, etc.) and most participants felt that these options are enough to serve the population.
- Key Stakeholders: Ministry of Hunting, Fishing and Agriculture, municipalities, KNAPK, hunters, commercial operations (e.g. Royal Greenland)

NUNAVUT

- Licenses are not required for Inuit to hunt or fish in Nunavut. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement gives all beneficiaries the right to free disposition which goes beyond subsistence to allow any beneficiary to harvest and sell their catch to support themselves and their families.
- The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board is the regulatory and responsible body for wildlife management.
- Various options for sales of country food exist in Nunavut (e.g. Facebook sales, food packs sold by processing plants, local retailers, etc.) but there is lack of consensus in Iqaluit as to whether or not these options provide enough access points and if a market would contribute a different option.
- Key Stakeholders: Department of Environment, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Regional Wildlife Offices, Hunters and Trappers Organization, hunters, Northern Development Company, retailers.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF A COUNTRY FOOD MARKET

- Increased access to country food
- Economic opportunity for hunters
- Physical infrastructure to support harvesting activities
- Encouraged diversification of products and promote non-traditional species
- Additional socio-cultural benefits

PERCEIVED CHALLENGES OF A COUNTRY FOOD MARKET

- Deteriorating sharing networks
- Pressure on wildlife sustainability
- Barriers to harvesting (e.g. high cost, too few skilled hunters)
- Limited food preferences
- Lack of consensus on what to do

CONSIDERATIONS MOVING FORWARD

DETERMINING MARKET READINESS

Differing socioeconomic and historical contexts in Greenland and Nunavut are such that what works for one may not be well-suited to the other. The diversity between communities across Nunavut requires local country food commercialization to be a community-driven process aligned with relevant priorities and existing efforts, programs, and infrastructure.

RECONCILING MISMATCH BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Availability of country food in Greenland is generally consistent. The large discrepancy between supply and demand in Nunavut challenges the potential for a sustainable and financially viable market system.

RECONCILING CONFLICTING PERCEPTIONS

While there are examples that set a positive precedent for country food markets (e.g. Project Nunavut), there remain mixed opinions and perceptions of country food markets in Nunavut communities.

DETERMINING LOGISTICAL OPERATIONS

Issues such as taxation, hours and income, capacity, and training & food safety are important.

IDENTIFYING THE TARGET AUDIENCE

The markets in Greenland typically serve middle to high income households whereas the target audience for a potential market system in Nunavut is the low income bracket presently excluded from country food sales and most in need.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With sincerest thanks to all of the key informants who participated in this research. Thanks also to Sif Juhl Jacobsen for assistance with the Danish literature review.

REFERENCES

Furgal C, Hamilton S, Meakin S, Rajdev V. Government of Nunavut, June 2012:106.

Nunavut Food Security Coalition. Nunavut Food Security Strategy and Action Plan 2014-16.

Council of Canadian Academies, Expert Panel on the State of Knowledge of Food Security in Northern Canada. Aboriginal Food Security in Northern Canada: an assessment of the state of knowledge.

Larsen JN, Fondahl G, Nordic Council of Ministers, Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat. Arctic Human Development Report: Regional Processes and Global Linkages (AHDR-II).

Poppel B, Kruse J. In: Moller V, Huschka D, eds. Quality of life and the millenium challenge. Netherlands: Springer, 2009:27-42.

Marquardt O, Caulfield RA. Development of West Greenlandic markets for country foods since the 18th century. *Arctic* June 1996; 49(2):107-19.

Duhaime G, Morin A, Myers H, Caulfield RA, Fréchette P, St-Pierre D. In: Duhaime G, ed. Sustainable food security in the Arctic: state of knowledge. Edmonton, University of Alberta: CCI Press & GÉTIC, 2002:63-74.