

Essay proposal

On

*Food Insecurity in Canada: addressing unsustainable, structural inequity,
through sustainable approach in making policies on food system*

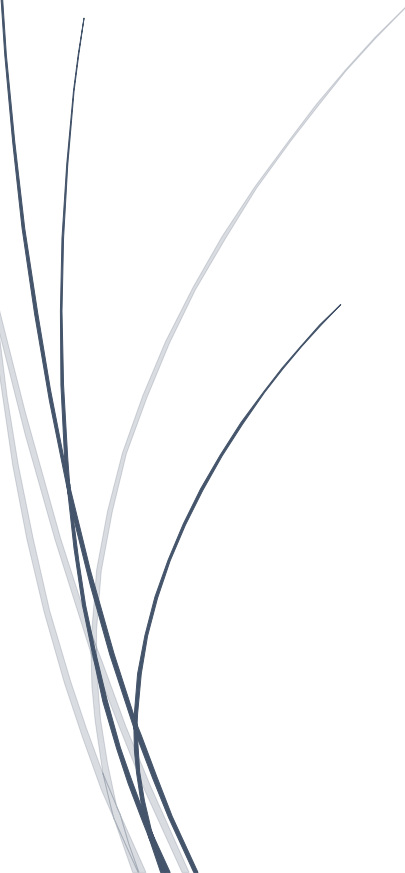
Tania Ferdous

Risk, Place, and Social Justice in a Turbulent World

HRSJ 5250_01

TRU ID: T00759715

October 7, 2025



Thesis statement: Food insecurity in Canada is an outcome of unsustainable food system influenced by economic, social, political factors, structural inequity, structural racism, and climate change. To address these challenges, we need a multi-disciplinary approach in making policies on sustainable agriculture, production process and consumption that will ensure access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for all.

Key Elements:

Structural inequity, racism:

Food insecurity is an outcome of economic inequity and systemic racism in society (Morio & Onyango, 2023, page 3). Statistics shows that 69 percent of low earners became clients of food bank in 2022. The rate of Indigenous community food bank clients increased from 8 percent to 15.3 percent in 2022 (Hunger Count, 2022). Even employed people suffer food insecurity because of high cost of living (Hunger Count, 2022). This reflects market failure, which is a structural factor, rather than individual's income issue (Hunger Count, 2022). The cause of food insecurity is deeper because, even if we stop wasting foods, and produce more, it will not end the problem. The capitalist economy limits the ability to buy nutritious foods for low earners. This reflects structural inequity that embedded within our food system (Reynolds, 2015).

Structural racism creates food apartheid, which creates barriers against access to nutritious foods for people of color (Reynolds, 2015). The privileged and underprivileged system of inequalities in society is outcome of unfair system of power, politics which create challenges (Weiler et al., 2015, page 1087). Therefore, charity such as food banks can give immediate redress, but for long term solution, food insecurity should be considered as a failure of basic human rights where this crisis is structural (Longo, 2016).

Unsustainable food system and effect of climate change

The process of agriculture in Canada is a cycle of environmental crisis and inequality as it contributes largely to climate change through greenhouse gas emission and simultaneously suffers from the impacts of it. Canada's agriculture system is responsible for about 17% to 32% of greenhouse gas emissions throughout the world, which is a large proportion (Smith &Gregory, 2013, page 21-22). Moreover, expansion into forest for more food production has caused significant damage to the ecosystem (Smith &Gregory, 2013). The impact of climate change on agriculture is negative because food production is mainly dependent on correct temperature, rainfall (Smith &Gregory, 2013, page 24). In 2021, in the area of Okanagan and Fraser Valley of British Columbia, around 75% of fruit crops were damaged due to extreme heat and temperature (CBC News, 2021). This is how the food production system is falling apart within it's own contradiction (Fanzo at.al, 2022). Moreover, wastes of foods due to overproduction are causing waste of environmental resources, including land, water and soil. (Reynolds, 2015). All these factors are causing impacts on climate change and making the food system unsustainable.

A sustainable, equitable food system for better future

Sustainable ways of food production and consumption should be merged with equitable food justice system for better future (Longlo, 2016). Individuals should be concerned about food consumption to limit environmental harm, however, individual choice has limited outcome. It requires collective efforts and policy development to make effective impacts (Deksne et al., 2025). Actual food security cannot be achieved in a system where foods are produced for profit, based on exploitation. The food system should adopt policies which reflects foods not as products, but as basic human rights (Weiler et al, 2015).

Growing foods locally through community development, as has been done in Lafayette, California, is an example of local sustainable food system. It saved transport, packaging costs as well as pesticide free foods, that were distributed to the larger community (Longlo, 2016). Food sovereignty is also an effective concept that can be achieved by ensuring Community participation, and decolonization (Weiler, et al, 2015). Programs, such as Canada's school food reform, participatory initiative of Malawi on soil fertility, urban agriculture are some food sovereignty-based approaches (Weiler et al, 2015). Redistribution of control through urban community gardens should be practiced to democratizing land access and to ensure food justice over profit (Guitart, Pickering and Byrne, 2012).

My statement

The profit market, inequity in food system, extortionist tendency of using mother earth are main causes of food insecurity in Canada. I believe this systemic problem can be corrected through adopting proper policies. This aligns with my academic commitment to work in a significant area of policy making, and therefore, I want to know more about this topic so that I can be prepared more for my future work life.

Reference

1. CBC News (2021, July 5), B.C heat wave cooks fruit crops on the branch in sweltering Okanagan and Fraser Valley. CBC, Retrieved at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/heat-fruit-crops-okanagan-fraser-valley-1.6092155>
2. Deksne, J., Lonska, J., Litavniece, L., & Tambovceva, T., (2025), 'Shaping sustainability through food consumption: A conceptual perspective', Sustainability, 17, 7138, Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17157138>
3. Fanzo, J., Rudie, C., Sigman, I., Grinspoon, S., Benton, T. G., Brown, M.E., Covic, N., Fitch, K., Golden, C. D., Grace, D., Hivert, M. F., Huybers, P., Willett, W. C., & others, (2022), 'Sustainable food system and nutrition in the 21st century: A report from the 22nd annual Harvard Nutrition Obesity Symposium', The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 115(1), 18-33. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/nqab315>
4. Food Banks Canada, (2022), Hunger Count 2022- 'From a storm to a Hurricane', Toronto: Food Banks Canada .
5. Guitart, D., Pickering, C., & Byrne, J. (2012), 'Past results and future directions in urban community gardens research', Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, 11(4), 364-373. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2012.06.007>
6. Longo, P (2016), 'Food justice and sustainability: A new revolution, Agriculture and Agricultural Science Procedia 8, 31-36
7. Moria, K., & Onyango, E. (2023), 'Scoping review on race, Covid 19, and food insecurity in Canada', Canadian Food Studies, 10(3). 3-34.

8. Reynolds, K., (2015), 'Disparity despite diversity: Social injustice in New York City's urban agriculture system', *Antipode*, 47(1), 240-259. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12098>
9. Smith, P., & Gregory, P. J. (2013), Climate change and sustainable food production, 'Proceedings of the Nutrition Society', 72(1), 21-28
10. Weiler, A., Hergesheimer, C., Brisbois, B., Wittman, H., Yassi, A., & Spiegel, J. (2015), 'Food sovereignty, food security and health equity: A meta-narrative mapping exercise', *Health Policy and Planning*, 30(8), 1078-1092