



Laurier  
Centre for  
Sustainable  
Food Systems

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems



# Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems

## WHAT WE DO

The Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems addresses the complex environmental, social, and economic challenges facing our food systems by creating:

- **Collaborative research opportunities** among food systems researchers and community partners
- **Robust knowledge sharing networks** that connect food systems actors at the local and international level
- **Sustainable food systems change** through community-driven research, knowledge mobilization, capacity building, and advocacy
- **Experiential learning opportunities** for students, research associates, practitioners, community members, and partners
- **Resources and tools** for community partners and food systems actors to support on-the-ground work in sustainable food systems



## OUR VISION

Our vision is a world where food systems are key to a more equitable, ecologically regenerative, and economically sustainable future in which all actors have the capacity to advance positive food systems transformation.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to conduct and share community-driven research through local, national, and global networks to foster more sustainable food systems.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

In our community-engaged research we work with diverse food systems actors to:

- **Co-create knowledge** about sustainable food system practices and solutions to community and place-based challenges
- Bring together food systems actors in dynamic global **knowledge sharing networks** to learn from each other and build community capacity to affect meaningful change at multiple scales



# SNAPSHOTS

## 2020-21



Continued building our connections with **50+** partner institutions

Coordinated **8** major multi-year projects and networks, including **4** in the NWT



Produced and released **7** episodes of **Handpicked: Stories from the Field**

Created **20+** academic publications and reports and hosted **6** online events



Trained and supported **13** HQP through studentships and research assistantships

Created the **UNESCO Chair on Food, Biodiversity & Sustainability Studies** with partners in **10+** countries



# FOCUS AREAS

## 2020-21

In 2020-2021 the LCSFS focused on five key areas:

1

increasing UNESCO Chair on Food, Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies activities;

2

securing new external funding through grant writing;

3

supporting ongoing research;

4

cultivating new research partnerships; and

5

raising the LCSFS profile through strategic knowledge mobilization.



# UNESCO CHAIR

## ON FOOD, BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES

Jointly hosted by Wilfrid Laurier University and the Balsillie School of International Affairs, the **UNESCO Chair on Food, Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies** promotes research, communication, and education about the relationships among biodiversity, food, and sustainability. Dr. Blay-Palmer serves as the inaugural Chairholder.



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair on Food,  
Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies,  
Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada

## KEY CHAIR ACTIVITIES

- Developed the UNESCO Chair FBSS Strategic Plan, **Sustainable Food for a Resilient Future** and set research and partnership priorities from 2020–2024;
- **Building Back Better Post COVID-19 Task Force**, led by Dr. Blay-Palmer, published a position paper and policy briefs on Biodiversity and Ecosystems, Sustainable Food Systems, and Green Infrastructure;
- **UNESCO Chair webinar series** focused on key chair themes including Biodiversity and Food Justice, and its first Spanish-language webinar focused on Biodiversity and Food Systems in Brazil and Mexico;
- Began development of a **graduate certificate in Food, Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies** at Laurier

# VOICING CHANGE

## CO-CREATING KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

**Voicing Change**, led by Dr. Andrew Spring, is a new three-year SSHRC Insight grant announced in 2021.

The Project's **goal** is to build a healthier, more equitable, and socio-ecologically resilient future that is grounded in sustainable local food systems and centres Indigenous and traditional knowledge.

Voicing Change will connect community partners, researchers, and students in the **Northwest Territories, Canada** (led by Laurier); **Migori County, Kenya** (led by Rongo University); and **Southern Brazil** (led by CEDERVA and Embrapa Forestry).



## VOICING CHANGE

Co-creating Knowledge & Capacity for  
Sustainable Food Systems

# NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**Dr. Andrew Spring**, LCSFS Associate Director and lead researcher of the **Northern Food Systems Research Group** (NFSRG), works closely with community partners on food systems projects in several Indigenous communities in the NWT. Key community partners include: **Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation**, **Sambaa K'e First Nation**, **Ecology North**, and the **Tsá Tué Biosphere Reserve**, where he is an advisor. Key Laurier partners include faculty from the **Cold Regions Research Centre** (CRRC).



## KEY PROJECTS

- Voicing Change: Co-creating Knowledge and Capacity for Sustainable Food Systems **New!** 2021-2024
- Identifying Opportunities and Barriers for Local Food Infrastructure in Yellowknife, NWT **New!** 2021
- Northern Agriculture Futures: Climate Change Preparedness in the North Program 2019-2023
- Learning from and Enhancing Community Capacity for Climate Change and Food Security (C4FS) Action in the NWT 2019-2024
- Climate Change Adaptation Planning in Ka'a'gee Tu and Sambaa K'e 2019-2021

# PROJECT UPDATES

## **Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged (FLEdGE)**

FLEdGE focuses on community-driven research on sustainable food systems across seven national research nodes and three thematic international working groups. Led by Dr. Blay-Palmer (PI) and now in its final phase, FLEdGE is focused on strategic KMb efforts to increase overall engagement with the project findings and create audience-specific research outputs.

[fledgeresearch.ca](http://fledgeresearch.ca)

## **Urbal: Urban-Driven Innovations for Sustainable Food Systems**

Urbal is an international partnership between CIRAD, ESTà, and the LCSFS that is co-led by Dr. Blay-Palmer. The Urbal methodology was created for practitioners, funders, and policymakers to help improve decision-making capacity and was tested in 8 Urban Food Innovation Labs. In 2020-21, Urbal moved into its final phase, with researchers creating a modular publicly accessible toolkit and writing an edited academic volume.

[urbalfood.org](http://urbalfood.org)

## **City Region Food Systems (CRFS) Project**

This partnership between the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), RUAFA, and the LCSFS offers resources for practitioners assessing and building sustainable city region food systems. In 2020-21, Dr. Blay-Palmer co-led phase 2 of the project, which engaged directly with cities to increase climate resilience using food. CRFS also created a special series of papers from participant cities responding to COVID-19.

[fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/toolkit](http://fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/toolkit)

