The Kingston Prison Farms at Frontenac and Pittsburgh Correctional Institutions

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Adapted from

Farmland and buildings of the former Frontenac prison farm

(images courtesy of googlemaps)
CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

* Before the six federally funded prison farms were shut down between 2009 and 2011, the Canadian prison farms employed over 300 inmates across the country.

* The farms at Frontenac and Pittsburgh Correctional Institutions in Kingston, Ontario were embedded in the community through their location, their business and community relationships, and the general support for progressive correctional programs in that area.

* The Pittsburgh Correctional Institution has an operating abattoir that once employed 10 inmates and 5 off-site workers, processing animals for 300 small farms in the Kingston area.

* The Frontenac farm was the largest urban farm in Canada at 900 acres, housing a dairy operation, egg production operation, fruit and vegetable production, and a prize-winning breed of heritage cattle.

* Prison farms provide beneficial employability and training opportunities, time management and responsibility skills, animal therapy, productive labour and physical exercise, access to nature, individual and team building work, and training in farm management and operation.

* Prison farms have been proven to reduce recidivism and increase the likelihood for employment upon release for the inmates involved.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prison farms have been around since the establishment of correctional institutions in Canada. Many of the federally funded prisons had some kind of farm annex in their development plan or acquired substantial lands on which farming would be possible. This farmland was managed by prison staff, worked by the inmates, and produced food for the prison itself. The farms started as a way to ensure inmates worked hard during their time at the institution, and that they produced food for their own needs, but evolved over the years into a skills training and rehabilitation program using labour and employability as justification to produce food to meet institutional needs.

Pittsburgh and Frontenac Correctional Institutions are part of a localized hub of correctional facilities in Kingston, Ontario, that for several decades had fully operating farms complete with programming and employment opportunities for inmates. They had large operations that were able to offset the cost of food contracts with outside vendors for institutions across the province for milk, eggs, beef, poultry, and produce.

The scale at which these farms were operating is no longer viable in the Canadian corrections system. Not only is the government unwilling to prioritize these farms as a viable part of the institutional operations but when faced with budget cuts these institutions often lack funds to staff such operations and supervise the inmates. Now that the farm operations are closed there is limited infrastructure available for the continuation or reestablishment of these programs. What limited facilities or land are still available would have to be specifically designated for horticultural therapy programs to make proper use of the space. This requires political will and a political climate that will support the continuation of rehabilitation programs through access to nature and skill building programs.

In Canada, horticultural therapy programs are likely the only salvageable program link after the closure of the federal prison farms (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013). These involve programming such as greenhouse programs, small plot gardening, or therapeutic garden design. Examples of these programs can be seen at the Kingston Penitentiary (Spiritual Gardens, 2006) or at the Women’s Correctional Facility in Matsqui, British Columbia (Penner, 2013). These focus on teaching inmates plant identification, landscape design methods, how to use garden tools, how to care for plants and recognize the signs of a healthy garden, responsibility, appropriate behaviour for interacting with others, and problem solving (Growing Season, 1997).

Alternatively, or in combination, opportunities for building social enterprises and entrepreneurial pursuits among inmates utilizing remaining prison farm infrastructure could be a viable option for the future. This would likely involve partnerships with civil society organizations and networks of community connections to be able to thrive, something which the Kingston community certainly does not lack.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Institutional farms and garden projects are a great way to empower vulnerable populations with food growing knowledge and the tools necessary to create localized food hubs and sustainable communities. These types of projects help to decrease the food miles for institutional procurement contracts, can offset the cost of outside procurement contracts, and can provide valuable skills, access to healthy food, and access to nature to people who would otherwise have limited exposure to those resources and assets.

Correctional facilities provide a unique context for institutional farms and gardens because they have an excess of under-utilized labour power and people in need of programming and rehabilitation. This case study highlights the benefits of prison agriculture and horticulture programs by focusing on the unique context of two institutions in Kingston, Ontario. Pittsburgh and Frontenac Correctional Institutions are part of a localized hub of correctional facilities in the Kingston area that for several decades had fully operating farms complete with programming and employment opportunities for inmates. They had large operations that were able to offset the cost of food contracts with outside vendors for institutions across the province for milk, eggs, beef, poultry, and produce.

These institutions operated as part of a federal prison farm program that evolved over the course of the history of correctional facilities in Canada and emphasized rehabilitation and food production because it made sense for the inmates. Starting in a time when transportation was more difficult and inmate labour was readily utilized, these prison farms became integrated with the surrounding communities and worked with the communities to do business, to provide food, and to rehabilitate the inmates who would soon be rejoining society after their incarceration.

When the decision was made to shut down the national prison farm programs in 2009 the most vocal opposition came from the community in Kingston because of their strong connections with the prison farms.
History

One of the reasons why Kingston provides such a unique context for prison farm programming is because it was able to straddle the line between urban and rural. The farm at Frontenac Institution was a very large urban farm within the city of Kingston. The farm at the Pittsburgh Institution was located just outside of the city and had strong ties with the surrounding farm community. Both of these institutions operate under the mandate of Correctional Services Canada and the farms operated on large tracts of prime agricultural land owned by the federal government.

These prison farm programs were unique because of the large scale that they were operating at in order to meet the food needs of these large correctional facilities, as well as others across the province. Other public institutions simply do not have farms and gardens that are operating on hundreds of acres of land and that utilize a literally captive labour to produce the food that feeds the institution and the surrounding community. These unique food communities created conditions under which the institution could be close to self-sufficient if managed correctly. In addition to this, Kingston provides a unique context for these farms because of the close integration that the community has with these correctional institutions and because of the willingness of the community to rally together to stop the closure of these farms and exercise political will in the face of a changing correctional mandate and an exclusive political decision making process.

Prison farms have been around since the establishment of correctional institutions in Canada. When first mapped out, many of the federally funded prisons had some kind of farm annex as part of their development plan or, at minimum, acquired a substantial amount of land on which farming would be possible. This farmland was managed by prison staff, worked by the inmates, and produced food for the prison itself. They started as a way to ensure inmates worked hard during their time at the institution, and that they produced food for their own needs, but evolved over the years into a skills training and rehabilitation program using labour and employability skills as a justification to produce food to meet institutional needs.

The formal “farm annex” structure at six of the federal penitentiaries was not created until the late 1950s and early 1960s, following the Archambault Commission, when the prison system in Canada underwent significant changes (Randall, 1992). These reforms included categorization of different correctional facilities as maximum-, medium-, or minimum-security with programs designed to accommodate those different categorizations based on the nature of the prison population. Recognizing that many of these inmates would be rejoining society at some point and would need the social and employability skills to be effective and productive members of society, these reform programs emphasized correction and rehabilitation, rather than just punishment (Randall, 1992, p.86).
The farm annexes were created on land already owned by the institutions but were largely located outside the prison walls. Their creation was part of a formalized program that utilized inmate labour outside the prison walls in farming activities as part of this rehabilitative approach. These farm annexes were staffed by penitentiary officers and farm managers and provided space for inmates to live, cook, clean, and work. It was this programming redesign that changed the nature of the prison farms and focused more on employability training and rehabilitation instead of hard labour enforced by extensive security measures—in the form of officers with guns following work teams (Randall, 1992). In the case of both the Dorchester Penitentiary in New Brunswick and the Frontenac Institution in Kingston, their farm annexes became autonomous institutions. The Dorchester Farm Annex, in 1974, became the Westmorland Institution and the Collins Bay Farm Annex became the Frontenac Institution in 1976 (Randall, 1992; CSC, 2012b).

James Jiler (2006) described how inmates in both Canada and the United States took part in building the penitentiaries that would eventually house them. Early jobs at penitentiaries were mostly construction-based but then shifted, once the prisons were built, towards maintenance, sanitation, tailoring, quarrying stone, food preparation, and farming (Jiler, 2006; Randall, 1992). As prisons expanded to meet increasing demand, more construction jobs were generated but daily tasks and work details were the
highest priority to meet the daily needs and quotas of the inmates and staff. Despite the hard work, and often harsh weather conditions, even from the early days, farm labour at penitentiaries was viewed as beneficial to the inmates since they were much less likely to cause problems in jail when their days were full of hard work. Craig Jones, former Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Canada, described the prison farms—from their debut—as a win-win situation, where enough food was being grown to feed the inmates, and inmates were learning skills that would be marketable later on (interview, Craig Jones, 2013).

CORCAN, a special operating agency within Correctional Services Canada that was later responsible for operating the prison farms, worked with the institutions in Canada to provide food for the correctional facilities at below market cost, offsetting the food that would otherwise need to be procured elsewhere (Steinman, 2009).

The majority of the inmates are serving time for non-violent crimes and will eventually be released back into society. This explains why rehabilitation programs in penitentiaries are so important.

At their height of operation prison farms in Canada were able to produce massive amounts of food to offset food that would otherwise have to be shipped in and procured from around the world. These farms not only sought to rehabilitate but also to create self-sufficient institutions. There was a brief period of time when this was specifically outlined by Correctional Services Canada but this became less of a priority to mandate as a nation-wide policy, likely because of the complexities of each of the different farming operations taking place at each institution.

Kingston, Ontario is a hub for correctional facilities. With 6 institutions in the Kingston area, the community has many individuals and families connected to them, be it professionally as an officer or staff person, a in form of a business relationship, or a connection to an inmate (interview, Ted Hsu, 2013; interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). Craig Jones states that it is because of this that the Kingston community is knowledgeable about prison operations and provides a uniquely supportive community context for rehabilitative prison programming (interview, Craig Jones, 2013).

Prison farms offer a unique environment where a variety of technical skills and trades can be learned. Inmates working on prison farms not only learn horticultural skills like caring for plants, plant identification, pest management, planting and harvesting techniques, watering, and weeding, but many also have the opportunity to learn book keeping and accounting, managing (working with the farm managers), how to drive and operate a tractor, carpentry, how to repair farm machinery, animal husbandry, and milking (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013; interview, Wayne Easter, 2013). Inmates sometimes also have opportunities to do apprenticeships with other farms, to slaughter and butcher animals (like at the Pittsburgh Institution in Kingston), to do inventory and

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clerical tasks, and to take part in building projects around the farm (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013). Beyond these technical skills, inmates are able to learn basic life skills vital to gaining employment, such as time management, responsibility and accountability, working as part of a team, conflict resolution, and seeing the benefits of hard work (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013). All of the skills acquired on the farms contribute to inmates being better prepared for the job market once they leave. They have been exposed to a functioning workplace. Many argue that while a number of inmates may not be employed in agricultural work once they leave prison, they have learned skills that will not only help them gain employment but will be transferable to other vocations (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013; interview, Wayne Easter, 2013; interview, Jason Godin, 2013; National Post, 2010; CTV.ca News Staff, 2010).

Inmates also benefit from developing relationships with employers (the farm staff), differentiating this from contact with correctional officers. Feeling like they are accountable to an employer, instead of being monitored by correctional officers, instills a sense of responsibility and the ability to recognize management traits and reporting structures (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013). The farm staff in Canada was further differentiated from correctional officers as they were employed by the Solicitor General and not by Correctional Services Canada (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013).

The abattoir at the Pittsburgh Institution represents a very tangible example of the interconnected nature of the prison farm operations and community involvement or investment. The Pittsburgh Institution abattoir is an important resource for 300 small farms in the area and processes 60 cattle per week (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013; Easter, 2009). The meat butchered there is then sent to 150 local butcher shops, restaurants, and to Corrections Canada to serve the six prisons in the area and beyond (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). This operation was conducted by an outside operator, Bruce Wallace for the last 14 plus years, but had contracts with CORCAN to provide staffing and procurement contracts.

**PROJECT RESOURCES**

**Human Resources**

In recent years Canada employed 300 inmates across the country on prison farms (Tripp, 2009). This number is a small fraction of the 38,000 inmates incarcerated on any given day across Canada (Dauvergne, 2012). These inmates were often supervised by a combination of correctional staff and farm managers depending on the size, scale, and operating style of each institution.
As is made clear in the 1934 Official Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of Officers and Employees of Reformatories and Industrial Farms for Male Prisoners, the farmer held a general supervision role for the farm, horse stables, and other farm buildings (Province of Ontario, 1934). These included any greenhouses, the grounds, gardens, and any farm related materials. The farmer or farm manager was also responsible for the inmates while they were on the farm.

Before the prison farm operations closed across the country, the abattoir at the Pittsburgh Institution employed 10 inmates and 5 non-inmates from the community. At the time of the prison farm operation, the abattoir also had a superintendent who was a correctional officer and provided accountability for the inmates and was a representation of the involvement of the CSC in the operation of the abattoir (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). This superintendent was responsible for supervising and training the inmates while working with the operator.
Most inmates in Canada are serving time for non-violent crimes and will eventually be released back into society. When they leave prison, they often end up returning to the same circumstances that led to the criminal act in the first place, such as poverty, abuse, and substance addiction. Jiler (2006) states that if ex-offenders are provided with options upon leaving prison, they are more likely to contribute to their communities and neighbourhoods in a positive way and are less likely to return to prison. This rehabilitative approach in creating better people in prison, instead of encouraging networks of violence and isolation, is part of a restorative justice framework that aptly contributes to prison systems being called Correctional Services.

The argument in favour of prison farm programs is that learning hard work and responsibility tending a garden for a full season provides skills that are directly applicable to a variety of jobs outside of prison walls and allow prisoners who may have never had a job to gain employment (Drawbaugh, 1968; Jiler, 2009; Leech, 2012). One of the main points of discussion around prison farms, and institutional gardens in general, is their rehabilitative nature (Sorenson, 2010). Research has been conducted on the healing qualities and psychological benefits of prisoner interaction with the environment (Che, 2005; Sneed, 2008) and with animals (Furst, 2006).

Inmates involved in prison farm programs learn a variety of farm skills that can be applied on different agricultural scales. Prison farms often offer a balance between small-scale labour intensive horticultural skills, like hand weeding and planting, with some exposure to more industrial farming equipment, like tractors and milkers (Randall, 1992; interview, Cathy Fontenot, 2013; Steinman, 2009). With work crews of inmates, it is important to keep them occupied so farm tasks that are more labour intensive are instrumental in ensuring that the inmates are occupied.

Jiler (2006) states that prison horticulture programs offer a supportive rehabilitative environment to help address mental health issues. He states that the garden provides the perfect context for addressing a person’s struggle for growth, change, and self-realization. Because gardening involves skills, planning, and an understanding of certain plants and animals the garden provides opportunities to work on a variety of life skills. Jiler states that, “Plants respond to care, and a garden rewards the caretaker with food, beauty, flowers, and a positive response from the community (or from the professional staff or fellow inmates) that is not readily found in other settings or work sites” (2006, p.35). He goes on to state that for people who are often marginalized in society and who often experience failure in job settings, horticulture allows for control over their environment and shared responsibilities in a way that fosters a relationship between plants and humans, with a duty of care and promise of reward (Jiler, 2006). In addition to this important relationship, most horticultural therapy or prison farm programs are structured around terms of employment and accountability that
encourage inmates to continue to participate or they risk losing their place in the program.

Wayne Easter, a Member of Parliament for PEI and former Solicitor General and Liberal Agriculture Critic, visited many of the prison farms in Canada before their closure. He recalls hearing stories from inmates about how the prison farm program has changed their lives. He recalls one story from a man who had worked with the dairy cows at the Frontenac Institution in Kingston. He was serving a life sentence and stated that he was always a bad person who got into trouble wherever he went. He said that working with the “girls”, referring to the cows, changed his life and that they taught him how to love. By working with the dairy herd he “learned how to be a human being” (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013).

Animal therapy programs are commonly used in prisons with a variety of domestic animals (Furst, 2006). Furst (2006) says that because of isolation from society inmate populations are often more appreciative of contact with animals than people who have more normalized societal participation. She cites studies that have shown the psychosocial benefits of animal interactions including the mutual affection and non-judgmental relationship that can be fostered and the relaxing and reassuring effect that animals can have on a person. Contact with animals can also lead to improvements in social interaction including accountability, communication, and responsiveness (Furst, 2006).

Infrastructure Resources

The Frontenac Institution is a minimum-security correctional facility located right within Kingston and was operating the largest urban farm in Canada on 900 acres until March 2011 (Steinman, 2009). The Frontenac Institution first opened in 1962 as the Collins Bay Farm Annex and was renamed in 1976 (CSC, 2012b). The Frontenac Institution is part of a complex that now also includes the Collins Bay Institution, a medium-security facility. Frontenac houses 132 inmates and is currently constructing a 50-bed living unit that is slated for completion by 2014. Frontenac originally operated on land that was about 6 kilometres outside of Kingston proper and the city expanded to meet it (interview, Craig Jones, 2013). In the early days of the Frontenac Institution, there was incentive to grow their own food because it was expensive to truck it from other areas and they were able to take advantage of the Class 1 farmland that the institution was built on (Ibid.).

The Pittsburgh Institution is a minimum-security correctional facility that opened in 1963 as the Joyceville Farm Annex (CSC, 2012d; Tripp, 2009). The Pittsburgh Institution shares a property with the Joyceville Institution, which is a medium-security facility that opened in 1959 (CSC, 2012c). The property is located approximately 23 kilometres outside of Kingston and houses 250 inmates (CSC, 2012d). The Pittsburgh

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Institution is also in the process of constructing a 50-bed living unit to be completed this year. Being outside of the city, Pittsburgh is closer to the farming community and maintains many connections to local farmers and their operations. The Pittsburgh facility operates a provincially inspected abattoir (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). Both facilities had access to a range of farm equipment that included tractors, dairy equipment, irrigation systems, and tools.

**Organizational Resources**

The prison farms at Frontenac Institution and Pittsburgh Institution were managed under Correctional Services Canada, a government agency within the portfolio of the Department of Public Safety, and governed by the Minister of Public Safety.

In 1980, the CORCAN trademark was created to manage the rehabilitation and training program operation of the federal prison system under the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) (Thomas, 2010). By 1992, CORCAN was established as a Special Operating Agency (SOA) within CSC “which allows it to operate in a business-like manner while respecting government policies and regulations” (CSC, 2013b; Brittain, 1996, 10.43). According to the CSC, the benefits of establishing CORCAN as a SOA are: “more transparent cost accounting, more businesslike financial management, an easier means of embarking on joint ventures with private sector firms, a better ability to respond to market needs and demands, and developing offender skills closer to private-sector standards” (CSC, 2013c). CORCAN operates the rehabilitation portion of the CSC’s correctional programs but is mandated with meeting the vocational and employability training portion of these programs. They also do a small amount of employability training with inmates for a “brief period of time after they are released into the community” (CSC, 2013b).

CORCAN is mandated under the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* through the Correctional Service of Canada, as well as through the mission of the CSC (CORCAN, 2008).

CORCAN is run by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who oversees the operations across the country, and by an advisory board that helps to manage and promote the value of CORCAN in the community (CSC, 2013b). Jason Godin, the Ontario Regional President for the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, says that CORCAN has a close relationship with the CSC and that the CSC focuses on a wider management role (interview, Jason Godin, 2013).
Financial Resources

Funding

CORCAN receives funding from the CSC, in addition to the revenue earned from a diverse array of contracts, to offset the costs of training offenders and for operating in a prison setting (Brittain, 1996, 10.44). Because of this arrangement CORCAN is fiscally accountable to the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada is able to reserve the right, however, to mandate the different types of programming that CORCAN undertakes and is often a primary recipient of the services or products produced by these programs. All of the revenue generated through CORCAN programs is used to fund the program, purchase supplies, and pay for inmate training (CSC, 2013b).

Prison farm operations have had varying levels of impact on the prison food supply. Today many prisons across the United States, and one or two in Canada, still operate large commercial greenhouses where vegetables, herbs, and flowers are grown for institutional use or for sale in the nearby communities. CORCAN worked with the institutions in Canada to provide food for the institutions at below market cost offsetting the expenditures for food that would otherwise need to be procured elsewhere (Steinman, 2009). Over the years, because these programs were never part of the primary organizational structure of correctional facilities, increasingly less emphasis was placed on prison farms as a vital food production operation and the farm operations were delegated under CORCAN, which has a small budget for supporting rehabilitative programs. Rehabilitative programming is often relegated to non-essential service status leaving them more susceptible to budget cuts.

Financial Return on the Project

In Canada, prison farms contributed to institutional food contracts through the production of produce, beef, dairy, or eggs, often with enough to supply neighbouring institutions or food banks (Thomas, 2010). Ted Hsu, the Liberal MP for Kingston and the Islands, argues that—despite claims by the Conservative government that the prison farm operations were losing money—Frontenac was the sole profitable prison farm of the six closed across the country (interview, Ted Hsu, 2013; Hendra, 2012). Dianne Dowling speculates that this operation was perhaps more profitable because of the eggs and milk, which are high value items (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). This is perhaps also why the operations at Frontenac continued even after the ones at Pittsburgh were phased out slowly (Ibid.).
Community Resources

The Frontenac Institution prison farm was known for its heritage breed of cattle. Because they had been in production for so long, they had preserved their excellent stock of cattle and had won many agricultural awards as a result (interview, Craig Jones, 2013). In 2009 the Frontenac Institution had 160 dairy cows, 10,000 chickens producing eggs, and hundreds of acres of pasture and mixed crops (Steinman, 2009).

There are many prison programs that can easily be connected to the prison farm operations. Dianne Dowling, a Kingston area farmer, says that inmates were sometimes employed to do landscaping and lawn mowing at the Regional Commissioner’s office (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013).

Prison farms also have economic benefits for the communities that surround them. In Kingston, Canada, the prison farm operations were supported by many connections to the surrounding agricultural community. The prison farms purchased tools, farm equipment, and machinery from manufacturers and businesses in the Kingston area (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). The prison farms were also major clients for
agricultural businesses like feed distributors and farm supply stores. The Frontenac Institution purchased animal feed and supplies for the dairy herd and chickens (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). In addition to supplier relationships, the prison farms often employed local residents, like the five non-inmates employed at the Pittsburgh Institution abattoir. They also brought in local professionals to either teach skills, like carpentry or plumbing, or to work with inmates and staff on farm building projects (interview, Jason Godin, 2013). Many prison farms and gardens across Canada and the United States also contribute to the broader community by donating much of their harvest, or all of it, to local food banks or community organizations (Gilbert, 2012).

The prison farms at both Pittsburgh and Frontenac were valuable to the community. Not only were they integrated into the local economy through their supply chains, but also excess production from the farms was regularly donated to local food banks. The prison farm at Frontenac spent an estimated $900,000 in the Kingston region ever year (KTW Staff, 2010). Craig Jones, former Executive Director of The John Howard Society of Canada, stated that at its most successful point of production, the local food bank in Kingston was receiving around 12,000 eggs per year (interview, Craig Jones, 2013). The community was so supportive and integrated with the farms that when they were closed several businesses experienced large financial losses, and it was a contributing factor in the closure of a couple of businesses, including a feed mill and an equipment supply company (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013; interview, Jason Godin, 2013).

In the national Save Our Prison Farms campaign, most of the organizing took place within Kingston because of the supportive community there. At the cattle auction where the cattle from the Frontenac Institution were being sold, members from the Save Our Prison Farms campaign were able to purchase about 10% of the herd. The money was raised as part of a co-operative that would purchase the cows and calves and take care of them until the prison farms could be reinstated later (Save Our Prison Farms, 2012; interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). The co-operative raised $30,000 with people donating $300 each. They were able to purchase 30 cows and calves. The bulk of the Frontenac herd was sold at an auction held in Waterloo, ON. Dianne Dowling speculates that this was done in order to prevent protests or organizing around the sale of the cattle (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). The cattle purchased by the co-operative went with farmers who were already running dairy operations in a no-money exchanged arrangement. The farmers did not have to pay for the cattle and could supply milk under their quota and the co-operative did not have to pay for housing and feeding the cattle (ibid.). At the time of the auction, it was expected that there would be a change in government within a few months and so keeping the cattle, in the hopes that the Liberal or NDP government would be elected and reinstate the farms as they had pledged, seemed a viable option (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013, interview, Ted Hsu, 2013). As it stands today the cows are still with the farmers as part of the co-operative.
Policy and Program Resources

Provincial

The production of food on the farms at Pittsburgh and Frontenac was made more viable because provincial policies around food production were applied differently in this unique institutional setting. Because of the long history of these farms the same rules that would have applied to regular farms and farmers were not always applicable because of the self-sufficient orientation for the use of the food produced.

The dairy and chicken operations that were the cornerstone of the farming operations at Pittsburgh and Frontenac were unique in that because they had such a long history they were exempt from supply management. Dianne Dowling referred to this as a grandfathered system that would allow the prison farms to operate without quota in producing eggs, poultry, and milk as long as these products were used within the institutions (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013).

This kind of exemption meant that the prison farms were not operating within regular markets and were not in direct competition or cooperation with other area farmers. It allowed for more versatility and control over the farm operations and food sourcing contracts and allowed the institutions to produce food below market rates and without incurring great costs for labour.

Federal

Beyond the limited employment training programs that are part of the Correctional Service of Canada’s mandate, there is little national standardization for the implementation, maintenance, and governance of rehabilitative programming in correctional facilities, including prison farm programming. Over the years, because these programs were never part of the primary organizational structure of correctional facilities, increasingly less emphasis was placed on prison farms as a vital food production operation and the farm operations were delegated under CORCAN, which has a small budget for supporting rehabilitative programs.

Future Community Connections

Civil society organizations will continue to play a larger role in the provision of horticultural therapy programs, garden projects, and landscaping operations at correctional facilities. These civil society organizations, like the John Howard Society of Canada or the Salvation Army, that already have resources for programming at their disposal, are in a good position to leverage projects that connect to communities and at-risk populations.
These outside organizations and mandates are crucial to horticultural therapy programs being run in prisons. They provide incentives to correctional facilities in that inmate time is being occupied and inmates are getting access to programming not otherwise provided. CSOs, in return receive food, garden construction projects, and invested labour time that goes back into programs outside of the institution.

**Resources Needed to Sustain the Project**

*Municipal*

In the case of many successful prison farm operations or horticultural therapy programs there has to be significant institutional support, usually from the warden or correctional staff to ensure that these projects are able to get off the ground and become part of the prison programming and culture.

Municipal and institutional support can also be present in the form of contracts. In successful examples from Kingston and from New York City inmates were given contracts to do municipal landscaping projects, allowing them to utilize skills learned as part of horticultural therapy programs and take part in formal employment opportunities that would prevent them from either returning to prison or—if still incarcerated—would provide work structure and skills training.

Creating these connections to communities on the municipal level and securing municipal support, in particular, embeds correctional institutions further into the community and establishes closer ties to on the ground resources and social supports outside of these federal institutions.

**Dedication of Core Group**

After the closure of the prison farms at both Frontenac and Pittsburgh, the land was rented out to local farmers. These farmers are now the stewards of the land responsible for maintaining the connection that these federal operations have to the local community, and maintaining the land as prime agricultural land, instead of for development purposes. Local farmers will continue to be important resources for prison farm or garden programs as they can support skills development and provide employment opportunities for inmates and connections to surrounding food communities.

The Save Our Prison Farms campaign, while disbanded now, represents a core group of activists, local food advocates, politicians, and social justice oriented citizens that will continue to be supportive of this kind of programming and who would readily foster relationships between civil society organizations and institutions should there be a willingness to do reintroduce such programming.
Secure Funding

It is clear that the federal government in Canada is unwilling to provide funding for rehabilitative prison farm and horticultural therapy programming as their increased reliance on CORCAN to provide these programs based on their returns shows. Grant writing and fundraising would be a crucial aspect to creating program partnerships with civil society organizations for horticultural therapy programs at the Frontenac and Pittsburgh Institutions going forward.

If this type of programming took a different form and was geared from an entrepreneurial standpoint and provided entrepreneurial training for inmates, as is described by Catherine Latimer from the John Howard Society of Canada below, securing funding would be a primary occupation for the inmates and their business partners themselves.

CONSTRAINTS

Cost is the most prohibitive and also the most encouraging aspect of these prison farm operations. If run as self-sustaining, these operations could provide for the majority of the food needs of the institution because of their scale, labour power, and government connections. These factors would have to be supported by policy, however, to ensure that the institutions were able to maintain autonomous control over their operations and were not subject to outside competition. These programs would be paid for through government funds for rehabilitation programming, and with money that would otherwise be dedicated to food procurement contracts.

The prison farm at Pittsburgh was reduced in size over the last several years and the operations were phased out over a much longer period of time than some of the other prison farms (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). Pittsburgh used to have a cattle operation but it was downsized, most likely in an effort to reduce costs (Ibid.). The farmland at Pittsburgh was also rented out to local farmers to grow vegetables in small plots and for pasture even before the decision to close the farms was made (Ibid.). The Pittsburgh Institution has greenhouses that were formerly used in the farming operations but now house a small horticultural therapy program (interview, Jason Godin, 2013).
The scale at which these farms were operating is no longer viable in the Canadian corrections system. Not only is the government unwilling to prioritize these farms as a viable part of the institutional operations but when faced with budget cuts these institutions often lack funds to staff such operations and supervise the inmates. Now that the farm operations are closed there is limited infrastructure available for the continuation or reestablishment of these programs. What limited facilities or land are still available would have to be specifically designated or horticultural therapy programs to make proper use of the space. This requires political will and a political climate that will support the continuation of rehabilitation programs through access to nature and skill building programs. This requires coordination across government departments to integrate agriculture, public health, public safety, and corrections departments that would all have common goals that align around these issues. Beyond this would be opportunities for civil society organizations to get involved in these program delivery models and providing government incentives for the operation and outsourcing of these rehabilitation programs to ensure that they meet the needs of communities.

MacRae, Abergel, and Koc state that, “Cabinet participation in policy making has been eroded, so that agriculture or health ministers are not likely to bring forward significant food and agriculture legislation without PMO approval. This has effectively removed many potential levers of action for CSOs [Civil Society Organizations] directly involved in the issues” (2012, p.7). It is these CSOs, defined in the food and agriculture system as “community-based and environmental groups, farming organizations, and commodity trade associations that might constitute a policy network” (MacRae, Abergel, and Koc, 2012, p.4), which represent the opposition in the prison farms debate in Canada and who are left out of the conversation. MacRae, Abergel and Koc go on to state that, “it is not currently obvious that governments or CSOs have the knowledge, structures, will, or capacity to work in either formal or loose networks of collaboration. Equally, the imbalance in resources and authority between the state and CSOs suggests such collaborations will be difficult to manage” (2012, p.7-8). Based on this assessment it is clear that there was a slim chance that the government would compromise or collaborate with CSOs and the public, to find an alternative or to have a dialogue that might allow the decision to be reversed.

**SUCCESES**

A more recent trend within the prison system has been that of horticultural therapy programs ranging from small-scale landscape architecture design projects to greenhouse production to small plot food gardening projects. These projects are often run in conjunction with counseling and vocational training programs and primarily take place in minimum-security facilities and can be seen as a reward for good behavior (Gilbert, 2012).
Horticultural therapy programs are more transferable in terms of the skills offered and the program infrastructure needed for their operation, whereas agricultural or prison farm programs often require more resources, in terms of land, greenhouses, equipment, and consistent inmate labour, and food contracts. In many examples from the United States, horticultural therapy programs operate on a much smaller scale than their agricultural counterparts because of the nature of the programming. These programs are most effective when done in smaller groups where the needs of the inmates can be considered on more of an instructional basis and where considerations can be made for their mental or physical health. Because agricultural programming is most often seen at a federal or state level, the horticultural therapy programming at those facilities is often done on a smaller scale because more resources are directed to the farming operations; however, the potential for the increase in horticultural therapy programs is a clear possibility because of the popularity and usefulness of these programs in treating inmates and reducing recidivism.

In Canada, horticultural therapy programs are likely the only salvageable program link after the closure of the federal prison farms (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013). Horticultural therapy programs have flown under the radar at federal penitentiaries in Canada and some still exist on a small scale despite the closure of the prison farms (interview, Jason Godin, 2013). These involve programming such as greenhouse programs, small plot gardening, or therapeutic garden design. Examples of these programs can be seen at the Kingston Penitentiary (Spiritual Gardens, 2006) or at the Women’s Correctional Facility in Matsqui, British Columbia (Penner, 2013). These focus on teaching inmates plant identification, landscape design methods, how to use garden tools, how to care for plants and recognize the signs of a healthy garden, responsibility, appropriate behaviour for interacting with others, and problem solving (Growing Season, 1997). Horticultural therapy programs can also be seen as more accessible and versatile for all ages of inmates incorporating a wider variety of skill sets into tasks inmates can do. For example, having older inmates at a long-term facility growing seedlings inside a greenhouse versus having younger inmates outside digging and building gardens.

For such programs to flourish, it is crucial to raise awareness among civil society organizations that would have easily discernable links to prisons, at-risk populations, and food security mandates to build partnerships to create horticultural therapy, small garden, or landscape design programs.

**CHALLENGES OVERCOME**

On February 23, 2009 the Government of Canada announced that it had decided to close the six federally funded prison farms in Canada: Pittsburgh Institution (Kingston), Frontenac Institution (Kingston), Westmorland Institution (New Brunswick), Rockwood...
Institution (near Winnipeg), Riverbend Institution (near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan), and Bowden Institution (Alberta) (Tripp, 2009). This decision was announced to the media by the Commissioner of Correctional Services Canada (Tripp, 2009). This decision called for the phasing out of the prison farm operations over two years starting from the time of the announcement.

Dianne Dowling, a farmer outside of Kingston and one of the leaders of the Save Our Prison Farms campaign, says that the decision to close the prison farms most likely came from civil service employees from within the Correctional Service of Canada but that publicly the decision was an executive decision made by the Cabinet (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013).

Wayne Easter, an MP who was the Liberal Agriculture Critic at the time, states that while prison officials and former solicitor generals were publically supportive of this decision, in private they did not agree and thought it a bad decision (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013).

By March 2011 Canada’s six federal prison farms had all been shut down.

One of the key justifications given by the Conservative government was that the Canada-wide program was losing 4 million dollars a year (Tripp, 2009). This meant that the farms cost around $11 million to run and generated around $7 million dollars from sales (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). That $4 million was a net loss for CORCAN, who is accountable to the Canadian government and the Correctional Service of Canada. However, Wayne Easter states that there was no cost-benefit analysis done. Ted Hsu, the Liberal MP for Kingston and the Islands, says that the decisions about what to do with the land were made after the farm closures were announced and so the CSC could not have conducted a cost-benefit analysis on the profitability of the prison farms and what it would cost to close them. Wayne Easter suggests that the government made an ideological decision without considering the rehabilitative qualities of the program (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013; interview, Ted Hsu, 2013).

There is one small parcel of land on the Frontenac property, about 1,554 square metres, that is being considered for development without any public tender (interview, Ted Hsu, 2013). Ted Hsu has asked the government for details but has not received any information about the sale, the potential use of the land, or who the buyer is (an account of this request is available on Mr. Hsu’s blog dated February 22, 2013). Mr. Hsu worries that the sale of this land could set an unfortunate precedent for the rest of the land the prison farms once operated on. It also means the prison farm could never return (interview, Ted Hsu, 2013). Dianne Dowling says that the neighbouring curling club is looking to expand onto that land (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013).
Currently, there is also a small piece of land at the Frontenac Institution on which two small garden projects are operating. One is a garden project for at-risk youth set up by a former Conservative candidate and now a judge, Brian Abrams, and a local businessperson, Bernie Robinson (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). The other part is a community garden. While these are being maintained for community use, it does set a precedent for alternative uses for the land without widespread public consultation.

In response to questions about what will replace the 300 prison farm work positions that inmates held, the Correctional Service of Canada issued the following statement:

Offenders will have the opportunity to seek other employment elsewhere in the institution textiles, manufacturing, a wide variety of wood and metal products, construction and services such as printing and laundry. Although farming activities will cease, training in heavy equipment is one example of the type of employment training that could be offered to offenders currently working on the farms. Small engine repair and small manufacturing facilities may also be considered. (Steinman, 2009)

Since the closure of the prison farms, no alternative program has been created or expanded to take its place (interview, Jason Godin, 2013; Block, 2010).

The 2007-2008 CORCAN annual report states that the agribusiness side of their operations is more costly than some of their other programs, namely the manufacturing business which brings in more net revenue (CORCAN, 2008; Block 2010). By the end of the 2008 fiscal year, CORCAN had already been downsizing its agribusiness programs at the recommendation of an “agribusiness study” conducted in 2006 (CORCAN, 2008). This suggests that the decision made by the federal government to close the prison farms happened long before the announcement, leaving no room for public engagement or independent studies.

Craig Jones, a former Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Canada, suggests that the Conservatives shut down the prison farms to increase the capacity of the prisons to hold more inmates (interview, Craig Jones, 2013). This is a point that the Conservative government has denied publically. Jones states that building temporary housing accommodations on the Frontenac land has already begun and while they have not started building on the prime agricultural land, he sees this as not far off (Ibid.). At each of the former prison farm sites, 50 to 96 bed temporary housing units are now being constructed with completion dates between 2013 and 2014 (CSC, 2012b-e). Jason Godin states that the temporary units being constructed are about 30 years out of date and insufficient to adequately address the needs of the prison population (interview, Jason Godin, 2013). A Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety estimates that the government would earn 2 million dollars from the sale of the farmland (CSC Review Panel, 2007). This seems like an insignificant amount of revenue.
compared to $20 million in expansion costs spent at Frontenac and Pittsburgh since the farm closures” (Lea, 2011).

In addition to decreased access to fresh food, lost economic contributions to communities, and decreased rehabilitation programs there are also more instances of double or triple bunking in prisons (interview, Jason Godin, 2013; interview, Wayne Easter, 2013). As institutions get pushed to their maximum capacity, inmates are forced into closer confinement with one another. When these inmates are not occupied with regular employment, this confinement increases the chances of conflict and creates a dangerous situation for inmates and for correctional officers (interview, Jason Godin, 2013). Jason Godin says that incidences between inmates—a rare occurrence at minimum-security facilities prior to the prison farm closures—are now on the rise (interview, 2013). In a facility like Frontenac with a capacity of 132 inmates (CSC, 2012b), when 60 of those inmates are no longer in a work program they are bound to get into trouble. Jason Godin describes a correctional facility like a city. He says that when the population increases you need to provide more services, more programs, more hospital beds, and more community spaces for inmates to visit with their families (interview, Jason Godin, 2013). If these are not built up along with increases in the population the city will suffer. Despite this, the government wants to increase the prison population by 20% and the temporary bed units are part of achieving this target (Easter, 2009).

In terms of the results of the decision to close the prison farms, the food grown on the farms now has had to be replaced with food contracts. In 2010, the CSC issued a tender to replace the milk at the Kingston penitentiaries for almost 1 million dollars (KTW Staff, 2010). This tender was sent out before the prison farm operation at Frontenac, which had supplied the milk for all of the institutions, had closed. This tender does not account for the milk that had been provided by the Frontenac Institution to institutions in Quebec as well. That would have to be tendered separately (KTW Staff, 2010). The 12,000 eggs that had been supplied to the Kingston food bank per year were also a casualty of the closure (KTW Staff, 2010). Tenders went out for both milk and eggs but there was never any public information given about who secured those contracts and for how much (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013).

While details of the secured food contracts have not been released, the food contracts that had to be arranged as a result of the farm closures were no doubt costly. They also would have had to conform to NAFTA standards, meaning that products could come from as far away as the United States or Mexico or from across Canada depending on who is awarded the contract bid (KTW Staff, 2010). It is very unlikely that this food would be procured from local farmers (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). Wayne Easter says that the primary goal in setting up these procurement contracts would be to secure the cheapest food possible, and not necessarily from Canada,
unlike the American context that includes guidelines for procuring food for public institutions that is produced in the United States (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013).

Kingston was a hub for protest about the closure of the prison farms. In no other place across Canada was the prison system as embedded in the community and therefore most of the response to the closure decision was driven from there (interview, Craig Jones, 2013). Jones suggests that if the other communities had advocated with the Kingston community against the prison farm closure then perhaps they would have had more political traction (Ibid.). There were instances of organization from members
of parliament in Manitoba and in New Brunswick at different points but the sustained effort of public response was generated from Kingston starting in 2009 and continuing until July 2013, when the Save Our Prison Farms campaign shut down their website. Dianne Dowling states that the Save Our Prison Farms campaign had difficulty organizing with communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. She says that they had support from the National Farmers Union but had difficulty connecting with the communities (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). Mr. Easter states that most of the emotion was felt in Dorchester and in Kingston, however, because of the integration the community had with these farms (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013). Ted Hsu echoes this in stating how he saw many different groups get behind the farms, especially in Kingston, including religious, environmental, prison welfare, and food groups, and members of the general public (interview, Ted Hsu, 2013).

**Institutional Food Policy**

It is worthwhile speculating on what decision might have been taken if Canada had a national food policy strategy. Rod MacRae (2011) argues that Canada needs a joined-up food policy approach that includes agriculture, health, social and economic development. If a food policy for Canada incorporated a variety of sectors and took a holistic approach in addressing food needs, the actors within the food system and in the food movement would also act in a more cohesive and coordinated fashion. Because a national food policy does not exist in Canada, there are no directives to dictate how something such as institutional food provisioning is carried out. This kind of holistic approach would go beyond rehabilitative programming and employment initiatives. With a common discourse at the federal level on national food policy and associated implementation instruments, a more effective engagement between different levels of government, across government departments, and with the public would be required. Food policy is also a way to engage with both social and environmental discourses.

As it stands, there is no comprehensive food policy for prisons in either the United States or Canada. Food policy directives for prisons could include acceptable menu options, methods for procurement, specifications for locally produced food, and standards for food budgets to ensure that cuts are not regularly made.

These prison farm programs, if implemented effectively, like the ones at Angola, Louisiana or Rikers, New York, or the former prison farms in Kingston or Dorchester, would help to strengthen sustainable regional food systems that create connections between correctional facilities and the community and between farmers and public institutions. Andrew McCann supported these sentiments in a statement he made on the Deconstructing Dinner radio series entitled The Future of Prison Farms. In reference
to the contributions that the prison farms make to “sustainable regional food systems.” He stated that,

One of the important parts and one the reasons so many of us have put so much time and energy into this campaign to revitalize the prison farms is because we see it as a multi-issue cause that brings together social justice, farm, food, organizations, rehabilitation prison justice, and all sorts of members of the communities where the farms are located and Canadians across the country. But it also acts as lightening rod. Or: it shines a light on the general short-sightedness of the Canadian government’s policies on agriculture and food. That’s good because we need as many opportunities as possible to say: ‘Look, we need a re-think—across the board---on farm and food policy in Canada and this is just another example of how we’re moving in exactly the opposite direction. (cited in Steinman, 2009)

Catherine Latimer, Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Canada, is currently working on a pilot project to determine whether former prison farm infrastructure can be utilized to rebuild prison farm programs using civil society organizations and correctional service workers, and inmates and former inmates (interview, Catherine Latimer, 2013). The Pittsburgh Institution in Kingston, Ontario still has several greenhouses on-site that would provide ample space for training programs and that could be utilized for community gardens and community-run social enterprises. This idea is promising because it builds on the work of the Save Our Prison Farms campaign that started a co-operative with the cows obtained from the Kingston penitentiary in the hope that they would be returned once the prison farms were restored (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). What Latimer is proposing is similar to the greenhouse program already present at Rikers Island, making connections between community groups, employment opportunities for former inmates, recidivism rates, social enterprises, and farming communities.

Latimer believes that if a social enterprise could be developed that involves members of the community and inmates together to rent that greenhouse space or land, those facilities would still be utilized for food or environmentally related projects (interview, Catherine Latimer, 2013). She is trying to convince correctional authorities to test the effectiveness of this social enterprise model (Ibid.). The federal government is keen to promote social enterprises and relationships with the private sector (Ibid.). Latimer is part of an interdepartmental working group at the Department of Public Safety currently working to put the parameters in place for the pilot (Ibid.). She believes it can be modeled on a program from the United Kingdom called Through the Prison Gate that has established co-operatives with community members and inmates. These collaborations between corrections and inmates ensure that all parties have a stake in

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the outcome of the business. Latimer states that this program is also a way to provide reintegration support for inmates who have difficulty finding employment while on parole and technically still under sentence (Ibid.). This program is designed to provide economic support for inmates to help them gain employment because when inmates are employed after they are released from prison they are 12 or 13 times less likely to reoffend (Ibid.). Latimer envisions this co-operative as “a social enterprise that uses social finance to achieve measurable outcomes in terms of reduced breaches, reduced recidivism, and increased job prospects” (Latimer, 2013).

Latimer states that while there is no precedent set for this kind of operation in Canada that, “The Correctional Service of Canada allows for inmates to run businesses from penitentiaries through Commissioner Directive 737, titled “Inmate-operated Business Enterprises” ... “Essentially, the head of the institution must agree to the enterprise being established, having taken into account the effect the proposed business would have on security and consistency with the correctional plan for the prisoner” (Latimer, 2013, p.23). Beyond working out the institutional kinks and getting the CSC to agree to this new operational structure, CORCAN has demonstrated that it is possible to run businesses within federal penitentiaries (Latimer, 2013).

Latimer suggests that these co-operatives could involve a potential biofuel production operation. She paints a picture of the Pittsburgh (minimum-security) facility as utilizing its greenhouses and farmland to aid in crop production for canola. The Joyceville (medium-security) facility on the same site would take care of the manufacturing side of the operation, as they are already involved in operations to construct lockers and would be involved in the processing of the canola and the construction of machinery that would run on biofuels. This would result in a product that could be sold and utilized within the community. Based on the response seen through the Save Our Prison Farms campaign Latimer views this project as one that would be supported by the community (interview, Catherine Latimer, 2013).

In fact, one of the proposals made to the regional commissioner by Dianne Dowling and other organizers from the Save Our Prison Farms campaign was to promote green energy technology through the use of the prison farmland. Dowling stated that an alternative use for the prison farmland would be to link it to other green technology programs, such as the one recently launched at St. Lawrence College in Brockville, not far from Kingston (cited in Steinman, 2010d). She stated that, “there are such possibilities as biomass energy generators that generate energy using manure” (cited in Steinman, 2010d). Dowling also cited the recent trend of farmers putting solar panels on their property and selling their energy to the provincial government (cited in Steinman, 2010d). Recognizing that these are growing industries, she suggested that these would all be opportunities for inmate training that would be beneficial upon their release (cited in Steinman, 2010d).
Dowling also talked about the possibility of utilizing the prison farmland for more intensive types of farming with an emphasis on small-scale horticultural techniques and a more biodynamic farm plan. This plan would involve the production of a massive amount of food and would involve keeping small animals. This way the farmland could continue to be kept in the hands of farmers (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). The future of the farmland now is uncertain as the farmers who are currently leasing the land are doing so on contracts that last 3 to 5 years with annual renewal. She states that with an uncertain future because of climate change that the prison farmland could be a huge asset for the local food system and that it would be great if a land trust could be established to keep that farmland in public hands (Ibid.).

Wayne Easter does not think that the prison farms will be reinstated at this point because of the capital required, however, he recognizes that such events are actually happening in places across the United States, where the potential for these programs to offset food budgets is more apparent and the rehabilitative qualities appealing. Mr. Easter sees the potential for horticultural therapy programs at Canadian prisons in the future because they do not have the same capital costs as farm operations (interview, Wayne Easter, 2013).

After the prison farm at the Frontenac Institution was closed, a few inmates gained permission from CSC staff to start their own garden of a substantial size and food was donated to local food banks. In the second year, they were going to double the size of the garden and number of inmates (interview, Dianne Dowling, 2013). The farm manager at Frontenac was talking about the potential to create community gardens on the land and supporting some kind of training collaboration (cited in Steinman, 2009). These projects almost always need outside support to survive, depending on funding, program leaders, and volunteer support to be managed (Burningham, 2010). The long-term viability of these programs would depend on the willingness of the community to support this smaller scale model of prison farm programming.

RELEVANCE TO OTHER PROJECTS

In the debate around the closure of the prison farms in Canada, is it important to consider the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and whether they became an effective voice of opposition. It was the executive power exercised by the government that trumped social movement opposition. MacRae and Abergel suggest that there are spaces for advocacy on the part of CSOs as long as they are able to define and fill those spaces, however, many CSOs are unable to “transcend the structural forces that reinforce state power, and some, unfortunately, appear to be unwilling to develop the skills needed to effectively engage the state. In addition, larger cultural trends cannot readily be transcended by a small number of CSOs” (2012, p.272). They go on to discuss how “innovative thinking related to food system change is unlikely to be

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demonstrated by the Canadian state, and that CSOs will have to push, prod, poke, and contribute in order to effect government action” (2012, p.273).

In Mission, British Columbia, a federal prison farm exists that seems to fly under the radar. This prison farm is operated as a farm camp at the minimum-security Ferndale Institution and provides food directly to The Salvation Army Vancouver Harbour Light food distribution program. The Ferndale Farm was established in 2004 and is run by the CSC but has created this partnership with The Salvation Army in order to source the food grown. This program meets the mandate of the Salvation Army by recognizing the importance of reintegration and skill building programs for offenders while incarcerated and has become crucial to their ability to provide programs to people in need (The Salvation Army Vancouver Harbour Light, 2012). The Ferndale Farm operates on 5 acres of cultivated land and produces around 30 tonnes of food per year (Vancouver Sun, 2006). This partnership between a public institution and a non-profit organization allows this program to operate on a small scale and provide employment training programs for inmates as they reintegrate back into society (Abbotsford News, 2006). Because of its size and because the food is not sourced to the institution this program has been able to continue after the other Canadian prison farms have been closed. This type of small-scale program has the potential to be transferable to other Canadian correctional institutions, like the ones at Frontenac and Pittsburgh, if these civil society partnerships can be generated and willingness on the part of the institution is shown.

What can be learned from this study is that support for prison farm programs still exists and that there are still many people interested in the value they contribute to society and their connection to the broader food system. Despite often confusing and convoluted political structures, there are opportunities for civil society collaborations with governments to strengthen our food system.

**Online Resources**

Til the Cows Come Home: [http://www.prisonfarmfilm.org](http://www.prisonfarmfilm.org)

Facebook site: [https://www.facebook.com/prisonfarmfilm](https://www.facebook.com/prisonfarmfilm)

The Future of Prison Farms:


**Case Study adapted from**

REFERENCES


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