Food Safety Regulations and Sustainable Local Food Systems: Scale, Culture and Marginalization

Introduction
Food safety regulations predominantly favor large-scale and industrial food systems and marginalize farmers, hunters, fishers and consumers who are promoting and building local, sustainable and indigenous food systems.

Methodology
This study is a part of an ongoing Participatory Action Research program between community and academic partners in Manitoba working to shape food policy to support a just and sustainable local food system. This research purposefully reflects a range of perspectives (farmer, chef, consumer, etc.) and draws from field-notes, semi-structured interviews, meeting transcripts, and media analysis.

One-Culture-Fits All Regulations
Food safety regulations have uneven impact on different cultural food systems, for example relating to First Nation, Metis and ethnic cultural diets.

One-Size-Fits-All Regulations
Compliance with one-size-fits-all regulation places a disproportional burden on smaller scale farms, processors and fishers.

Results & Discussion
Many argue that direct relations can replace third party government inspection systems by providing relational traceability and direct accountability between fully informed and consenting parties (Figure 1).

Moving Forward
Citizen-consumers are demanding food that is sustainable, culturally appropriate and that reflects their values and needs.

Conclusion
One-size-fits all and one-culture-fits all regulatory systems are systematically undermining local, sustainable and culturally appropriate food systems. In Manitoba, and beyond, citizens are mobilizing to challenge the dominant regulatory regime and to assert the rights of citizens in policy-making processes. Visit www.realmanitobafoodfight.ca for more information about this research and these citizen-led efforts.