

3d.

SHARED FOOD



The tools and approaches of the Sharing Economy are being employed by a wide range of food initiatives, which can be loosely placed in the following categories: land sharing, 'idle food redistribution', meal sharing, kitchen space and equipment sharing, community supported food production and food production in public spaces.¹

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This Chapter provides an initial scan and analysis of the Shared Food sector of the Sharing Economy. This is a lighter and less in-depth exploration than the previous Chapters focused on the following aspects of this area:

1. **Land sharing:** sharing of backyards, farms, and public spaces for food production.
2. **'Idle' food redistribution:** sharing unwanted or excess food between individuals, groups and businesses.
3. **Meal sharing:** individuals sharing food in community kitchens, inviting people into their homes to share meals, or 'meet-ups' of strangers sharing a meal.
4. **Kitchen space and equipment sharing:** typically employing a co-op or rental model.
5. **Community supported food production:** such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).
6. **Food production in public spaces:** community gardens and orchards.

3d.1 SHARED FOOD EXAMPLES

The following section provides examples of Shared Food initiatives in each of the six categories, with an emphasis on those with the greatest potential to contribute to sustainability.

LANDSHARE PLATFORM EXAMPLES

Shared Earth¹ has more than 3.8 million square meters of land for farming and gardening available for sharing across the globe.

Landshare,² which began in the UK, now has about 75,000 members, and has expanded to Canada and Australia.

Land linking examples:

Listings of land linking programs and opportunities are available at:

- http://www.cfra.org/resources/beginning_farmer/linking_programs (US)
- <https://www.farmlink.net/en/index.html> (Canada)
- <http://youngagrarians.org/tools/land/> (Canada)

Land Sharing

Land sharing brings people together who have land to share with those who need access to land for cultivating food.³ Numerous organizations around the world have created online platforms to facilitate land sharing, allowing landowners to offer their excess backyards, farmland, or other viable land to others for growing food. The sharing agreements do not usually involve money, but instead include an exchange of gardening services and/or produce.

Farm cooperatives and land linking are two additional forms of land sharing that provide access to farmland for those who would otherwise be excluded due to cost barriers. Although not a new model, Cooperative Farms are an increasingly popular Shared Farm opportunity.

Farm cooperatives can take different forms. In some cases individuals join together to establish a farm on a given

piece of land, or in others businesses join together to create a cooperative farm.⁴ There are more than 2,500 farm cooperatives in the US.⁵

Land linking is a relatively new model in which landowners, particularly retiring farm owners, are linked with new farmers. The retiring landowner typically serves as a mentor and ownership is transferred gradually through a mutually beneficial agreement. Land linking provides a number of benefits: it preserves farmland; it transfers agricultural knowledge to the next generation of farmers; and it provides access to land in an affordable way for new farmers who do not come from farming families.⁶

'Idle' Food Redistribution

These initiatives involve individuals or business sharing unwanted or excess food. Individuals offer leftovers or produce they've grown. Businesses such as retailers or restaurants donate or sell (at a reduced cost) their excess food with consumers or community groups such as food banks. A few illustrative examples:

- **RipeNearMe**⁷ is an app being used around the world by people to share produce they've grown.
- **CropMobster**⁸ is a California based initiative which provides "instant alerts" about excess local food and surplus from suppliers in the food chain. They also provide an avenue for crowdfunding (e.g. for seed library start-ups), food donations for foodbanks, and Landsharing.
- **FoodCloud**⁹ is a Dublin based non-profit which provides an app and website through which participating businesses can upload details of their surplus food for collection by food banks and charities.
- There are numerous **Fruit Tree programs** in communities around the world, many of which provide an online tool for finding and sharing fruit from backyards and public lands. Typically, volunteers collect these fruits and distribute them to a variety of community groups and food banks. The **Vancouver Fruit Tree Project**,¹⁰ for example, has harvested and distributed more than 24 tonnes of food in the past 14 years. One US-wide program is the **Neighborhood Fruit**¹¹ which has more than 10,000 registered trees in the US.
- **LeftoverSwap**¹² provides an app for individuals to upload photos of their leftover or unwanted food to donate or sell to other individuals.

Meal Sharing

CASSEROLE CLUB

Casserole Club, based in the UK was developed with the support of local authorities.

This program's app and website facilitates volunteers sharing extra portions of their home-cooked food with people in their neighbourhood unable to cook for themselves, or who prefer not to. According to their website, more than 7,000 people are now providing home-cooked meals to their neighbours through Casserole Club.⁸

Through meal sharing apps and websites, individuals are connecting with strangers to access or provide home-cooked meals, or to simply get together to share meals in their neighborhoods or while travelling. All of these activities provide the benefit of creating social connections around food, while some provide the added social benefit of supporting those that cannot cook for themselves.

A few illustrative examples of Meal Sharing:

- **Cookening**¹⁴ and **Meal Sharing**¹⁵ connect travellers with local hosts who share or provide home-cooked meals and an 'authentic' local food experience.
- **EatWith**¹⁶ is similar to Cookening but the host is a local chef.
- **Shareyourmeal**,¹⁷ provides the opportunity for neighbours to share meals with neighbours and is based in the Netherlands. More than 120,000 meals have now been shared and there are more than 55,000 members.
- **Eatwithme**¹⁸ through its app and website facilitates food "meet-ups" in any form.
- **Feastly**¹⁹ features chefs cooking in various locations such as home kitchens and pop-up spaces.
- **Restaurant Days**²⁰ is a food festival / carnival created by thousands of people in cities organizing and visiting one-day restaurants to have fun, share food experiences and enjoy common living environments together.

Kitchen Space and Equipment Sharing

VANCOUVER INCUBATOR KITCHEN

The Vancouver Incubator Kitchen was developed through a partnership between the City of Vancouver and other local organizations. The City supported this initiative as it would help achieve the goals of the Vancouver Food Strategy, the Greenest City Strategy and the Healthy City Strategy.²³

PRESSO, MILAN

Milan, Italy is finding unique ways to address health and safety issues that arise with Shared Food activities.

For Expo 2015, the city is opening up existing spaces and constructing new multi-use spaces where people can cook and eat together. Presso,²⁴ “a cross between a showroom for consumer products and a public living room”²⁵ allows people to walk in with food in hand to use the kitchen facilities (or even use what’s in the on-site pantry) and to sit down and eat. Being a public/commercial space, the building and facilities are up to code and meet health and safety standards, ensuring that legal problems are headed off.

Incubator Kitchens provide food entrepreneurs access to kitchens and in some cases restaurant space. CulinaryIncubator.com currently lists more than 500 kitchens that are available for rental in the US and Canada. Many of these incubators are also providing community services. The Toronto Incubator, for example, provides healthy cooking workshops and training on canning and preserving food.²⁶ Some communities also have Kitchen Libraries. The Toronto Kitchen Library operates under a cooperative model and signs out kitchen appliances on a weekly basis.²⁷

Community Food Production and Food Production in Public Spaces

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is an alternative economic model which enables farmers and consumers to share the risks and benefits of farming. Through CSAs, members pay upfront at the beginning of the year for their share in the harvest of local farmers. CSAs have been around for decades and this model has now been expanded to fisheries in a number of locations. Some CSAs have begun to use Sharing Economy web-based tools.²⁸

The following table summarizes the most significant environmental, social and economic outcomes that can be advanced by each of the Shared Food categories. The table demonstrates that some of the Shared Food categories have greater potential to advance community sustainability on a variety of levels.

Table 3d.1
SIGNIFICANT SUSTAINABILITY
OUTCOMES BY SHARED FOOD CATEGORY

SHARED FOOD CATEGORY	FOOD PRODUCTION IN PUBLIC SPACES	COMMUNITY SUPPORTED FOOD PRODUCTION	KITCHEN SPACE AND EQUIPMENT SHARING	MEALSHARING	'IDLE' FOOD REDISTRIBUTION	LANDSHARING / LAND LINKING
Living within ecological means: Reduce emissions/ ecological footprint	✓	✓			✓	✓
Reduced food waste	✓				✓	
Increase local food and resilience	✓	✓				✓
Natural Systems – Preserve farmland	✓	✓				✓
Equity – Access to healthy food	✓	✓		✓ ²⁹		
Enhance prosperous local economies		✓	✓	✓		✓
Quality of Life: Create social connections	✓		✓	✓		✓

INCREDIBLE EDIBLE

Incredible Edible Todmorden in West Yorkshire, UK is an initiative aimed at making the town self-sufficient in vegetables, orchard fruits and eggs by 2018. This program was initiated by ex-councillors and has received strong support from the local government. The council began by allocating land for a community orchard, and funding for 500 fruit trees, and it later created a land licence scheme in which anyone can approach the council about unused council land to apply for a growing licence.³⁰

Community gardens and shared orchards have also been around for decades and are an important component of the Shared Food landscape. A growing number of initiatives are underway to put underutilized public space into food production. One leading example is provided in the box 3d.5.

3d.2 HOW CAN SHARED FOOD ADVANCE URBAN SUSTAINABILITY?

Shared food initiatives can contribute to a range of sustainability goals to varying degrees. The provision of adequate and healthy food is both a global and a local challenge, and the way in which we provide food has a variety of environmental, social and economic implications. Food has always been an important social connector and the Sharing Economy is exploring ways in which to reclaim and expand these connections.

Some of the key environmental, social and economic outcomes associated with Shared Food initiatives include:

- Increased local (and sometimes organic) food production.
- Land linking and farming cooperatives in particular contribute to the preservation of farmland, passing down of farming knowledge (through mentorship) and making farming more affordable – particularly for younger farmers.³¹
- Reduction of carbon emissions and other air quality emissions (local food production reduces long-distance transportation emissions; reduction of organic waste reduces landfill greenhouse gas emissions).
- Redirection of idle food or food that would otherwise

become waste can reduce the overall food demand of a region, thereby reducing the ecological footprint of food production.

- Increased access to healthy food by those who have difficulty purchasing enough food.
- Enhanced resilience of the community as a result of reduced dependence on imported food.
- Building community through the creation of meaningful social connections around food.
- Contributing to a diverse and rich local economy through the provision of opportunities for aspiring chefs.

Table 3d.2 SHARED FOOD CATEGORY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLES

CATEGORY	POSSIBLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLES
Landsharing	Promote; fund non-profits providing the sharing platforms or offer landsharing as an in-house municipal service.
'Idle' food redistribution / Mealsharing	Regulate and enforce health and safety standards for companies and non-profits active in idle food redistribution and mealsharing. Grant seed funding for local initiatives that provide mealsharing opportunities to those that are having difficulty cooking for themselves and/or for those that are focused on organic and/or local food.
Kitchen space / equipment sharing	Promote; Fund non-profits providing the service (e.g., through seed funding for start-ups or on-going donations; provide access to government owned space). Regulate and enforce health and safety standards for shared kitchen spaces and equipment sharing. Support and facilitating mobile food vendors.
Community supported food production	Promote; Support, via government purchasing, community supported agriculture (CSA) produce for in-house needs; Promote, in the US, the use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) ³² for the purchase of CSA shares.
Food production in public spaces	Allocate public land for community gardens and orchards; Promote non-profits developing these programs. Grant seed funding for local community groups organizing these initiatives. Remove zoning barriers to urban food production. Provide financial incentives to encourage urban agriculture on vacant lots.

3d.3

RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW CAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ADVANCE SHARED FOOD INITIATIVES?

A number of Shared Food initiatives have benefited from the active involvement of local government.

In addition, food sharing and space / land sharing can present a unique set of challenges for local government regulators. The growth in meal sharing and idle food redistribution initiatives are in some cases being met with concern over health and safety issues. (See box 3d.1)

Table 3d.2 below highlights some of the ways in which local governments can become engaged in Shared Food initiatives.

SHARED FOOD AND ZONING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

For meal sharing initiatives the biggest challenge is with violations of zoning and health and safety regulations, as individuals transform their homes into commercial spaces requiring business licences, health inspections, and a host of other compliances.³³

The potential problems arising from the preparation and serving of food by a host who may have little or no health and safety training, and in an unlicensed kitchen in a home not correctly zoned for commercial use requires strategic action by local governments. Some meal sharing websites are extending insurance policies to cover their users in the event of fines or legal suits, but this is an imperfect solution that fails to move meal sharing from the informal to the formal economy, and thus within the taxation remit of local governments.³⁴

Meal sharing platform owners don't consider that existing regulations should necessarily apply for various reasons: they are platforms, not food establishments; some transactions are non-monetized; and regulations vary greatly from one jurisdiction to another.

Resources

- The Policies for Shareable Cities Report provides an overview of the ways in which municipalities can better support Shared Food initiatives through zoning, bylaws and incentives: <http://www.shareable.net/blog/9-urban-food-policies-for-strong-local-food-systems>.³⁵
- Initiating and sustaining community gardens and community kitchens: A preliminary study in Nova Scotia (December 2014). By Tim Cashion, Irena Forbes, and Dr.Irena Knezevic: <http://foodarc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Initiating-and-Sustaining-Community-Gardens-and-Community-Kitchens-in-NS-Dec2014-Final.pdf>.³⁶

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- 1 *Shared Earth: The Largest Community Garden on the Planet!*. <http://sharedearth.com/>.
 - 2 *Landshare - connecting growers to people with land to share*. <http://www.landshare.net/>.
 - 3 *Landshare - connecting growers to people with land to share*. <http://landsharecanada.com/>.
 - 4 Pearson, Emily. *Sharing the farm: How the sharing economy impacts land access for farmers and the implications for sustainability*. March 2015.
 - 5 *Cooperative Facts - National Council of Farmer Cooperatives*. <http://www.ncfc.org/information/cooperative-facts>.
 - 6 Corey Allen, *Borrowing the Farm*, UBC News, July 22, 2014. <http://news.ubc.ca/2014/07/22/borrowing-the-farm/>.
 - 7 *Ripe Near Me - local food, home grown vegies, neighborhood fruits*. <http://www.ripenear.me/>.
 - 8 *CROPMOBSTER - San Francisco Bay Area*. <http://sfbay.cropmobster.com/>.
 - 9 *FoodCloud - What We Do*. <http://foodcloud.net/what-we-do/>.
 - 10 *Who We Are & What We Do - Vancouver Fruit Tree Project Society*." <http://vancouverfruittree.com/>.
 - 11 *Welcome to Neighborhood Fruit*. <http://neighborhoodfruit.com/>.
 - 12 *LeftoverSwap*. <http://leftoverswap.com/>.
 - 13 *Casserole Club*. <https://www.casseroleclub.com/>.
 - 14 *Eat with a local - Cookening*. <https://www.cookening.com/>.
 - 15 *Meal Sharing: Eat with people from around the world*. <https://www.mealsharing.com>.
 - 16 *Eatwith.com - Dining Experience, Supper Clubs, Local Food and more*. <http://www.eatwith.com/>.
 - 17 *Shareyourmeal.net, what's your neighbour cooking?* <http://www.shareyourmeal.net/>.
 - 18 *Eat With Me*. <http://www.eatwithme.net/welcome>.
 - 19 *Feastly* <https://eatfeastly.com/>.
 - 20 *Restaurant Days* <http://www.restaurantday.org/en/>
 - 21 *Community Kitchens - FoodShare Toronto*. <http://www.foodshare.net/community-kitchens>
 - 22 Irena Knezevic, *Initiating and sustaining community gardens and community kitchens: A preliminary study in Nova Scotia*, Food ARC, December 2014. <http://foodarc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Initiating-and-Sustaining-Community-Gardens-and-Community-Kitchens-in-NS-Dec2014-Final.pdf>.
 - 23 Vancity Buzz Staff, *City Supports Vancouver Incubator Kitchen*, Vancity Buzz, July 15, 2014. <http://www.vancitybuzz.com/2014/07/city-supports-vancouver-incubator-kitchen/>.
 - 24 *PRESSO*. <http://www.presso.it/>.
 - 25 Simone d'Antonio, *As Expo 2015 nears, Milan embraces the sharing economy*, *citiscopes*, March 5, 2015. <http://citiscopes.org/story/2015/expo-2015-nears-milan-embraces-sharing-economy>.
 - 26 *Toronto Kitchen Incubator - FoodShare Toronto*. <http://www.foodshare.net/toronto-kitchen-incubator>.
 - 27 *How it works - The Kitchen Library*. <http://thekitchenlibrary.ca/how-it-works/>.
 - 28 For example, Bluebird CSA in Georgia (<http://www.farm2uonline.com/bluebird/>) provides an on-line hub where local producers gather their harvest.
 - 29 Only for programs designed like the Casserole Club (<http://www.casseroleclub.com/>), which focuses on neighbours helping neighbours that are sometimes unable to cook for themselves.
 - 30 *Incredible Edible Todmorden*, Landshare, March 4, 2011. <http://landsharecanada.com/case-studies/incredible-edible-todmorden/>.
 - 31 Affordability can be increased through the unique financial agreements in which transfer of ownership (and payment) occurs over a period of time.
 - 32 SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families, see: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>
 - 33 Jordan Ferguson, *Meal-Sharing Websites May Create Issues for Local Governments*, Best Best & Krieger LLP, November 11, 2014. <http://www.bbknowledge.com/public-safety/meal-sharing-websites-may-create-issues-for-local-governments/>.
 - 34 Caitlin McGarry, *Move fast and break bread: The strange new world of meal-sharing*, TechHive, August 11, 2014. <http://www.techhive.com/article/2462112/move-fast-and-break-bread-the-strange-new-world-of-meal-sharing.html>.
 - 35 SELC, *9 Urban Food Policies for Strong Local Food Systems*," Shareable, December 9, 2013. <http://www.shareable.net/blog/9-urban-food-policies-for-strong-local-food-systems>.
 - 36 Irena Knezevic, *Initiating and sustaining community gardens and community kitchens: A preliminary study in Nova Scotia*, Food ARC, December 2014. <http://foodarc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Initiating-and-Sustaining-Community-Gardens-and-Community-Kitchens-in-NS-Dec2014-Final.pdf>.
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