



Editorial: Food Policy Environments: Discursive Effects, Material Consequences

Johanna Wilkes¹, Myriam Durocher^{2,3}, Caitlin M. Scott² and Irena Knezevic^{4*}

¹ Balsillie School of International Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, Canada, ² Communication and Media Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada, ³ Gender and Cultural Studies, The University of Sydney, Darlington, NSW, Australia, ⁴ Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts, George Brown College, Toronto, ON, Canada

Keywords: food policy, food system, food policy analysis, framing, discourse

Editorial on the Research Topic

Food Policy Environments: Discursive Effects, Material Consequences

When the call for this Research Topic came out in 2021, our editorial team was hopeful that this collection of articles would inform *post-crisis* food system policy. A year later, we find ourselves still mired in crises. The world continues to struggle with COVID-19. Workplaces in the food industry remain high-risk sites (Fabreau et al., 2022; Marks, 2022), and access to vaccines and treatments remains limited in many parts of the world (Pilkington et al., 2022). The pandemic has enhanced existing inequalities, and marginalized populations have been disproportionately affected by the crisis (Tai et al., 2021; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022). Concurrently, the war in Ukraine is threatening the supply of wheat and seed-oils (Weersink and von Massow, 2022; Wood, 2022), exposing the cracks in global supply chains. Food prices and inflation are rising (UNFAO, 2022) and consumers are noting a decrease in the quality of products on store shelves (Charlebois and Music, 2022).

This collection comprises ten articles that analyse food policy in various contexts and the effects those policies have, or have failed to have, on contributing to a more just and sustainable food system. Although our call was open to authors from anywhere, readers will observe that all the contributors to this topic work in Canada, which we recognize as a limitation of this collection.

Coulas uses the discursive institutionalism (DI) framework to examine the 2019 Food Policy for Canada: Everyone at the Table!, Canada's first attempt at a comprehensive national food policy. Coulas argues that DI analysis can reveal areas of policy collaboration that lead to more socially and environmentally just food systems.

Robin et al. offer an insightful reflection on how rigid and culturally specific understandings of food use and food safety—as implemented through settler governments' policies—have restricted access to traditional Indigenous food, limited the communities' ability to engage with food and land, and systematically undermined Indigenous knowledge.

Phillipps et al. offer an insightful reflection on how rigid and culturally specific understandings of food use and food safety—as implemented through settler governments' policies—have restricted access to traditional Indigenous food, limited the communities' ability to engage with food and land, and systematically undermined Indigenous knowledge. Phillipps et al. offer an insightful reflection on how rigid and culturally specific understandings of food use and food safety—as implemented through settler governments' policies—have restricted access to traditional Indigenous food, limited the communities' ability to engage with food and land, and systematically undermined Indigenous knowledge. Phillipps et al. offer an insightful reflection on how rigid and culturally specific understandings of food use and food safety—as implemented through settler governments' policies—have restricted access to traditional Indigenous food, limited the communities' ability to engage with food and land, and systematically undermined Indigenous knowledge.

OPEN ACCESS

Edited and reviewed by:

Tarla Rai Peterson,
The University of Texas at El Paso,
United States

*Correspondence:

Irena Knezevic
irena.knezevic@carleton.ca

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Science and Environmental
Communication,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Communication

Received: 23 May 2022

Accepted: 06 June 2022

Published: 28 June 2022

Citation:

Wilkes J, Durocher M, Scott CM and
Knezevic I (2022) Editorial: Food
Policy Environments: Discursive
Effects, Material Consequences.
Front. Commun. 7:951203.
doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2022.951203

Access to traditional foods for Indigenous Peoples in urban environments is also the focus of Judge et al.'s work. They take a close look at fish and wildlife acts, hunting regulations, food premises legislation, and meat inspection regulations in three jurisdictions in Canada (one province and two territories). Their research reveals that access to wild foods in urban settings is constrained because policies are designed to fit within the colonial market-based system, which runs counter to the traditional values of sharing and reciprocity.

Vansteenkiste turns the reader's attention to Haiti, and specifically to women peasant farmers. In Haiti, the past half century has been marked by the policy push to integrate the country into the global economy. While the promise of these policies was improved food security, the result, Vansteenkiste details, has been to "actually force women to abandon agricultural production and intensify their labor in less lucrative distribution and consumption roles of imported goods" (p. 1) and reinforce the "patriarchal structure of the world food economy" (p. 2).

Hinton examines the role of corporate interests in the policy development process for Front-of-Pack Labeling in the Caribbean, arguing that "[The] resulting narrative is both a product and a function of the discursive power food companies wield in the standard-setting process and provide empirical detail about how food companies act to prevent policy attempts facilitating food systems transformation" (p. 1).

Soma and Nuckchady offer an exploratory examination of digital agriculture and related policies in the province of British Columbia (Canada). They identify a gap in policy making where equity and food sovereignty considerations seem absent in digital agricultural training and education, noting that agricultural technology development has failed to engage with the social aspects of digital agriculture. Their contribution invites for greater engagement with critical social scientists and critical data studies in the development of training and education.

Robert and Mullinix deliver a mini-review of the continued use of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measurement as an indicator of wellbeing. They identify the presence of GDP measurement in Canadian food system policy and note the established limitations of GDP as an indicator particularly with respect to food systems policy. They highlight key observations

from "Beyond GDP" research and advocacy and suggest that these observations can aid the efforts to reform food system policy.

Coulas et al. consider school re-openings following the initial waves of COVID-19 infections. They analyse the provincial and territorial school reopening plans in Canada and note that the plans emphasized measures to limit infectious disease transmission, overlooking the benefits of school food programs and failing to use the reopening process as an opportunity to improve them. Their work points to the need for decision-makers to build capacity for effective school food programs that do not have to be compromised by other social worries, guidelines, and interventions, such as those related to public health.

Wilkes and Perttula provide a comparative analysis of flagship federal mandate documents in Canada. They find that the federal government's overarching policy narratives increasingly promote equity and inclusion, but these narratives are poorly reflected in the mandate letters to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. They conclude by identifying "leverage points" that allow for better aligning these policy frameworks.

Together, these papers offer a starting point for food policy development that considers social and environmental justice and sustainability. They are critical of the policy environments that fail to adequately address these concerns, noting the cultural specificity of the values that underpin official policy and reflecting on the precarity of the specialized, industrial food production that was ushered in during the second half of the twentieth century and focused on economic measures as a sign of success. The authors collectively offer alternative conceptualizations of progress and wellbeing, recognizing that framing—or the way we talk about issues—is critical for creating policy environments that can enable inclusive, equitable, and ecologically-sound food systems. The collection will be of interest to researchers in the areas of food systems, policy discourse, framing and communication, and social and environmental justice.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

REFERENCES

- Charlebois, S. and Music, J. (2022). *Canadians May Have Thrown Away Close to \$550 Million Worth of Food at Home in the Last Six Months, Due to "shelfflation"*. Halifax: Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University. Available online at: <https://www.dal.ca/sites/agri-food/research/shelfflation.html> (accessed May 18, 2022).
- Fabreau, G. E., Holdbrook, L., Peters, C. E., Ronskley, P. E., Attaran, A., McBrien, K., Pottie, K. (2022). Vaccines alone will not prevent COVID-19 outbreaks among migrant workers—the example of meat processing plants. *Clin. Microbiol. Infect.* (in press) 28, 773–778. doi: 10.1016/j.cmi.2022.02.004
- Marks, A. B. (2022). Essential but ignored: COVID-19 litigation and the meatpacking industry. *Northeastern Univ. Law Rev.* 14. University of Colorado Law Legal Studies Research Paper No. 22-11. Available online at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4078910> (accessed May 18, 2022).
- Pilkington, V. Keestra, S.M., and Hill, A. (2022). Global COVID-19 vaccine inequity: failures in the first year of distribution and potential solutions for the future. *Front. Public Health.* 10, 821117. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.821117
- Public Health Agency of Canada (2022). *CPHO Sunday Edition: The Impact of COVID-19 on Racialized Communities*. Available online at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/02/cpho-sunday-edition-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-racialized-communities.html> (accessed May 19, 2022).
- Tai, D., Shah, A., Doubeni, C. A., Sia, I. G., and Wieland, M. L. (2021). The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on racial and ethnic minorities in the United States. *Clin. Infect. Dis.* 72, 703–706. doi: 10.1093/cid/ci-aa815
- UNFAO (2022). *FAO Food Price Index Rises to Record High in February*. Rome: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. Available online at: <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/fao-food-price-index-rises-to-record-high-in-february/en> (accessed May 18, 2022).

- Weersink, A. and von Massow, M. (2022). How the war in Ukraine will affect food prices. *Conversation*. Available online at: <https://theconversation.com/how-the-war-in-ukraine-will-affect-food-prices-178693> (accessed May 12, 2022).
- Wood, Z. (2022). Sunflower shortage: why cooking oil has become so expensive. *The Guardian*. Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/apr/05/food-price-rises-ukraine-war-cooking-oil> (accessed May 16, 2022).

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2022 Wilkes, Durocher, Scott and Knezevic. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.