



AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY

Context in a Changing Climate

Climate change is impacting access, availability and distribution of country foods, transportation of food and agriculture activities.

In a changing climate it is important to think about:

- What does food security mean to you and your community?
- What is your community doing to support food security?
- What challenges does your community face with regards to having food security?
- What are the opportunities you see that would best support food security?

To support agriculture and food security the Government of the Northwest Territories:

- Implemented the Northwest Territories Agriculture Strategy in 2017. This Strategy will help Northwest Territories (NWT) residents build a relevant and viable agriculture industry and support the safe, sustainable development of food production systems. In addition, the Strategy will help increase the availability of local food and reduce the cost of food.
- Is working with Indigenous governments and organizations on baseline country foods research.
- Will be engaging with partners on potential action planning related to country foods and traditional economies.

NWT Bureau of Statistics indicates:

- 19.3% (2014) of people in the NWT experienced moderate to severe food insecurity. This is higher in remote communities.
- 65% (2013) of NWT households indicated they ate meat or fish obtained from hunting and fishing.
- 13.8% (2014) of NWT households obtained 75% or more of all meat or fish eaten through hunting and fishing.

Food and culture are inextricably linked. Food is connected to almost every aspect of culture. Many sources of food can support food security in the Northwest Territories, from store bought to agriculture to country foods.

Climate Change and Food

Communities have concerns about impacts associated with wildlife and plant species

- Changes in animal migration patterns and ranges.
- Changes in animal health and populations.
- Concerns about whether the animals, fish and plants are still safe to eat.

Communities are seeing ecosystems and landscapes change

- Changes to the land, water, and climate can increase the risk for land users (i.e. thinner ice).
- Timing of ice formation/melting creates shorter seasons access the land.
- Thawing permafrost can impact access to harvesting areas.
- Introduction of new species (i.e. deer, beavers, etc.).
- Extreme fire seasons can impact critical habitat areas.
- Changes in water levels (i.e. lower water levels are making it harder for people to go to places where they used to hunt, trap and fish)

Increases to the cost of living

- Climate change can lead to a shortened ice road season, which can impact the cost and availability of shipped food.
- Harvesters are travelling further due to changes on the landscape and changes to wildlife populations and distribution, increasing the costs (fuel and equipment) to go out on the land.

Impacts to livelihoods and sharing of Traditional Knowledge

- To address the high cost of living, people are working in jobs that limit their time on the land.
- Shorter harvest season and less time on the land means less knowledge about the land and food in a changing climate is being shared.

Warming temperatures may increase agriculture production or create new opportunities

- Communities are currently growing food locally which increases access to nutritious, safe, fresh and affordable food.

For more information, contact:

Scott McQueen

Traditional Economy Coordinator
Environment and Natural Resources
(867) 767-9232 ext. 53054
Scott_McQueen@gov.nt.ca

Sarah Dennis

Regional Environmental Coordinator
Environment and Natural Resources
(867) 767-9232 ext. 53053
Sarah_Dennis@gov.nt.ca

Tracey Williams

Northwest Territories Conservation Lead
Nature United
(867) 765-8474
Tracey.Williams@natureunited.ca

Andrew Spring

Research Associate
Wilfrid Laurier University
ASpring@wlu.ca