

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the challenges faced, and responses made by localized food producers and distributors in the Annapolis Valley region of Nova Scotia during the COVID-19 pandemic to support food security and promote resiliency against future disruptions and global crisis phenomena.

The research question for this study was: *How, if at all, does the local food system enhance resilience in the face of global crisis phenomena like the COVID-19 pandemic?* Ten semi-structured interviews were completed that included four food producers, three food distributors and three policy-focused actors. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed according to the phenomenological lens of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975). The results of this research indicated that small-scale, local food system actors were able to successfully adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain resilience and food security. However, local food system actors faced challenges with constantly adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic-related public health regulations, that included additional time required for the distribution of the food product and additional employees. While there were available provincial and government supports and structures, such as advocacy and communication, and monetary funds and loans; there were important pieces of systemic support missing. These missing pieces included increased education and government promotion for consumers around the importance of the local food system, as well as increased acknowledgement of the local food system from provincial and federal governments. To address these changes, the results of this research support key recommendations related to policies, structures, and supports that would benefit the resilience and food security outcomes of the local food system in the face of future disruptions and global crisis phenomena. These recommendations include an early-warning system of monitoring, infrastructure to provide an increased number of accessible distribution networks, a stronger integration between local food system actors and the government, and awareness and education for consumers around role of local food within the food system.