

FOOD PRODUCERS FORUM LAUNCHES GREENHOUSE OUTREACH PROJECT

Food Producers Forum, a new non-profit society supported community-based food production, is reaching out to seven sites across our province to help local communities plan and design an earth sheltered greenhouse for production of healthy food. We believe this is an essential strategy for restoring food security across Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Greenhouse Outreach Project is the latest phase of five years of collaboration with Memorial University and the O'Brien Farm Foundation, with support from Perfectly Perennial Herbs and Seeds, a local heritage seed company. Funding from Memorial and federal government initiatives is helping us build a demonstration version of the Earth Sheltered Greenhouse at the O'Brien Farm in St. John's, where it will become a training facility for sustainable agriculture.

Seven sites were selected for this phase, based on evaluation of expressions of interest received **from twenty-six communities (!)** across our province. They are:

- *Community Service Garden Project* in the Codroy Valley
- *Gros Morne Farm Market* in Norris Point
- *King's Point Community Garden*
- *Carbonear Food Bank*
- *Kingfisher Farm* in Gambo
- *Knotty Pine Farm and Apiary* in Port Blandford
- *The Pye Centre for Northern Boreal Food Systems* in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador

We will work collaboratively with each community to develop a unique version of our greenhouse design tuned to local needs and growing conditions, to maximize community involvement. With these designs we will turn to government and corporate funders to support the construction and utilization of greenhouses at these sites to expand provincial food security through local production and distribution.

In each case, we will travel to visit the site, bring our community partners into St. John's for collaborative team meetings and to visit the working greenhouse at the O'Brien Farm, and based on what they tell us we will develop a plan and design for their version of the earth sheltered grow structure, to support them in **creating local hubs for food production and food security**.

This project could not have happened without the involvement of our partners, including Memorial University's Office of Public Engagement, the federal Investment Readiness Program, the O'Brien Farm Foundation, the Community Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, Perfectly Perennial Herbs & Seeds, Food First NL and **dozens of suppliers, supporters and volunteers** who **have generously provided energy, advice and hands-on support**.

In addition to this outreach project, **Food Producers Forum has launched an online encyclopedia of information on gardening, growing, foraging, fishing and hunting** (www.foodproducersforum.com). We invite everyone to visit and help us support local food production across our province. You can contact us by email at foodproducersforum@gmail.com for additional information.

EARTH SHELTERED GREENHOUSE Outreach Project - Background

The earth sheltered passive solar structure currently under construction at the O'Brien Farm in St. John's is the result of a five-year collaboration between several departments of Memorial University (Engineering and Applied Sciences, MUN Botanical Garden, School of Business), the O'Brien Farm Foundation and local non-profit groups including a local heritage seed company, Perfectly Perennial Herbs & Seeds.

Design Phase

In Phase One of this project, three undergraduate engineering students at MUN helped design and evaluate a south-facing earth-insulated grow space with a concrete back wall, insulated end walls, insulated rear roof and transparent polycarbonate front roof that could maintain 10 degrees Celsius year-round for less than \$400 per year in electrical heat. With this design in hand we had a structure that could be a tool with multiple social benefits while supporting local food production to address food security in our province.

Consultation Phase

In Phase Two, we gathered twenty-one local stakeholders involved in food production, food education and distribution, to critically evaluate our design and its application in local communities. During ten hours of meetings we explored structural design, the team needed to build and run the greenhouse, operating inputs and costs, the products to be grown and produced and how to create positive community support. These meetings were remarkable for their high level of collaboration; in ten hours the consulting group produced 270 recommendations for greenhouse operation and design and also took a critical look at provincial and municipal policies affecting community food production. *(Copies of this report are available.)*

Construction Phase

Through a new partnership with the O'Brien Farm Foundation we are currently building our demonstration version of the Earth Sheltered Greenhouse at the O'Brien Farm in St. John's, where it will be part of a training centre for sustainable small-scale agriculture. Thanks to additional funding from the federal government, this structure will have solar panels for net metering of power, a built-in rainwater irrigation system, power for lights and heat and a complete digital monitoring and control system, making the structure suitable for research into growing conditions. We plan to have the building complete and operational by mid-June.

Outreach Phase

We are now able to reach out across the province to support groups in rural communities to design and prepare to build their own year-round grow space. Our general goal is to inspire local Food Hubs for community production and distribution of healthy food. Through our new non-profit communication group, Food Producers Forum, we launched the Outreach Phase and received expressions of interest from twenty-six communities, all across the province. We have selected six sites in Newfoundland and one in Labrador for greenhouse design and consultation.

The sites participating in this phase include a community garden project in the Codroy Valley; Gros Morne Farm Market in Norris Point; King's Point Community Garden; Carbonear Food Bank; Kingfisher Farm in Gambo and Knotty Pine Farm and Apiary in Port Blandford. We are waiting to hear back from the Pye Centre in Labrador as a possible seventh site. The results from our design and planning work with these sites will be shared publically and with the twenty sites we could not include in this round, to help them also move forward with developing their food production hubs at the community level.