

## CHAPTER 4

# Food Talk: Composing the Agricultural Land Reserve

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Agricultural land is a scarce resource in British Columbia (BC), Canada. Only 5 percent of the provincial land base is considered suitable for agriculture, 2.7 percent capable of growing a reasonable range of crops, and 1.1 percent as prime agricultural land (Smith 2012).<sup>1</sup> Since the 1970s, debates over these limited agricultural lands have been a permanent part of BC's political landscape. The focal point of these debates is the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), a provincial land-use zone created in 1973 to permanently preserve approximately 4.7 million hectares of the province's best agricultural lands. The desire to support agriculture and food security drove the creation of the ALR in the early 1970s when urban sprawl near Vancouver consumed up to 6,000 hectares of farmland annually (Smith 1974, 2012; PALC 1983).

Debates over the ALR amalgamate competing discourses that influence public perceptions of the nature of and solutions to problems confronting agricultural lands. These debates over agricultural lands involve disputes over values, ideologies, and material interests (Demeritt 1995; Bunce 1998; Dixon and Hapke 2003). Food studies scholars are ideally placed to these complex debates and to develop integrated, critical understandings of how discourse, rhetoric, and performativity interact in ways that impact food system change (Knezevic et al. 2014). In this chapter, we analyze the discourses used within these debates to better understand how rhetorical strategies influence how agriculture is ideologically situated, regionally governed, and locally practiced. The rhetorical strategies deployed in debates over BC's

ALR, and North America's agricultural lands, have important impacts on broader food system dynamics.

In this chapter, we use critical discourse analysis to examine how a specific rights-based rhetorical strategy is used to both justify and challenge agricultural land-use policies in the Okanagan Valley, one of Canada's most productive agricultural regions and an important case study of wider debates over agricultural lands in BC and beyond. Debates over BC's agricultural lands increasingly invoke a rights-based rhetorical strategy that uses the language of food (Condon et al. 2010; Wittman and Barbolet 2011). Terms such as "food security" (the right of access to food), "food sovereignty" (the right of people to play a role in shaping their food systems), and "locavorism" (a consumer right to local food) are rights that are claimed in debates at all political scales by both proponents and opponents of food system change (Riches 1999; Van Esterik 1999; Patel 2009; Wittman 2011; Claeys 2012; Allen 2013). Such rights claims are core to the evolution of the modern food movement and outline food justice in policy and practice (Patel 2009; Claeys 2012; Allen 2013). These rights claims are central to the discourses employed by advocates of different policy regimes (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). Invoking this rights-based rhetorical strategy influences not only the outcomes of debate, but also how participants in debates represent themselves, their landscapes, and the ALR. We argue that this rights-based strategy of talking about food system change can be referred to as "food talk" and that how food talk is used in debates over agricultural land is an important area for analysis by academics, policy makers, and activists.

We define food talk as a rhetorical strategy that uses rights claims to justify food system change. The rhetoric of food talk reflects the current proliferation of food-related discourses and is imbued with sets of meanings, embodiments of identity, and socio-political positioning that require investigation and conscious, contextual deployment (Frye and Bruner 2012). While Thompson (2012) proposes that food talk has similarities to rights talk, we argue that food talk is actually an extension of the rhetorical strategy of rights talk into debates over food system change. Rights talk is a persuasive approach to legitimizing political claims within nation-states as it frames all political currency as entitlements and all legitimate political arguments as only those that can be articulated as rights-based claims (Glendon 1991). Critiques of food talk parallel critiques of rights talk. Critics find that this rhetorical strategy of making rights claims is innately linked to liberal individualism and risks being a strategy of individuals making divisive claims against each other rather than collective claims for food

system change (Kneen 2009; Thompson 2012). Yet, in practice, food talk is deployed by individuals, organizations, and social movements to negotiate power at all political levels (Patel 2009; Wittman 2011). In fact, food talk draws on the authority of the nation-state and international institutions to create new types of rights claims, representing the evolution of rights talk in a context of increasing politicization of food systems debates (Claeys 2012).

While food talk can be used as a tool to change food systems, there are potential negative outcomes of deploying food talk to empower marginalized peoples. Foremost, the use of food talk risks institutionalizing subversion—that is, those that use food talk to articulate political positions may alter how they approach social change and how they represent themselves (Claeys 2012). Moreover, like rights talk, food talk fails to address the instability and performativity of rights in social contexts wherein conflicting understanding of rights as well as conflicts between different rights must be negotiated (Tushnet 1984, 1989). For example, the meaning of many of the terms used in food talk can only be substantiated through empirical investigation of the contexts in which the terms are produced, distributed, and consumed (Allen 2013; Desmarais and Wittman 2014). Terms such as “food security” and “food sovereignty” have been reinterpreted over time (Patel 2009), change through action and implementation by regional and local actors (Hinrichs 2013; Allen 2013; Brunori, Malandrini, and Rossi 2013), and are sometimes used by conflicting actors for radically different referents and intended outcomes (Lee 2013; Maye and Kirwan 2013). Despite this ambiguity, food talk is extensively used in public debates and defines the policy context for making food system change. By validating specific political positions, actors, and discourses, the rhetorical strategy of food talk affects policy decisions and changes how agriculture is practised on the ground. Food talk influences how BC’s ALR has become embodied in law, policy, and practice.

Although BC’s ALR is often cited as an exemplary provincial initiative toward food security and agricultural land preservation (Campbell 2006; Condon et al. 2010), it is not the only legislation of its type in Canada. In southern Ontario, the Foodland Guidelines legislation of 1978 was created to preserve agricultural land for local food production and environmental protection, and has evolved into the Greenbelt Protection Act of 2005 (Beesley 2010). Similarly, with the Act Respecting the Preservation of Agricultural Land and Agricultural Activities (originally passed in 1978 and revised in 1997), Quebec established an agricultural zone across the province to protect fertile farmlands (CPTAQ 1999; Caldwell and Dodds-Weir 2009).

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These Canadian policies often result in unique legislation and bylaws that suit local conditions, yet stem from similar concerns about how to respond to the threat of urban sprawl to agricultural production and lands (Beesley 2010). The debates over modifications to, and the continuation of, these other land policies invoke food talk. Understanding how this rhetorical strategy has been deployed in BC may provide insights into the ways that discourses in these other regions influence policy outcomes.

Most of the research related to the public debates over BC's ALR over the last forty years has focussed on the potential impact of different policy models (Stobbe, Cotteleer, and van Kooten 2009; Wittman and Barbolet 2011; Connell et al. 2013) or on the categorization of discourses and policy negotiations (Demeritt 1995; Garrish 2002). In this chapter, we argue that a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which rhetorical strategies such as food talk are used is essential to inform debates and decision making regarding the governance of agricultural land.

### **The Okanagan's Agricultural Landscapes and the Agricultural Land Reserve**

The Okanagan Valley is a 200 kilometre-long, 20 kilometre-wide valley that follows the Okanagan Lake basin within the traditional territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Nation in BC's interior—over 400 kilometres to the east of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. It is home to over 7.5 percent (346,000) of British Columbians, making it the highest-density population in the interior. Despite recent rapid population growth, a diverse agricultural sector continues to be a major contributor to the economy and modern identity of the Okanagan. Vegetable production, ranching, dairy operations, haymaking, and various animal farms can be found throughout the valley. Irrigation and favourable growing conditions have also allowed the Okanagan to establish a commercial reputation as one of the top fruit and wine production regions in Canada (Statistics Canada 2011). The resulting mosaic of urban development within the working agricultural landscape renders the agricultural identity relevant to even rapidly urbanizing areas. The region's agrarian past and present are realized through the landscape and continue to play a significant role in shaping the Okanagan identity (Koroscil 2003; Wagner 2008; Hessing 2010). The agricultural lands in the ALR are an important part of this cultural landscape. At its inception, the ALR included 189,838 hectares of the Okanagan land base. Since 1974, the amount of ALR land in the Okanagan decreased about 5 percent to 180,183 hectares (PALC 2013).

While land has been lost and some high-quality farmland swapped out of the ALR with properties of lesser agricultural value, the ALR has prevented a complete loss of farmland in areas of urban sprawl. This is particularly evident around Kelowna, where, despite strong ALR support, up to 12.9 percent of the city's ALR has been converted out of agriculture (MAL and PALC 2008). As a result, for many local residents, proposed changes to ALR lands or the activities that can be undertaken on these lands imply changes to regional identity.

Conflicting visions of what activities should be allowed on agricultural lands and how agricultural lands should be governed focus on the ALR legislation. Supporters of the ALR legislation discursively position it and the lands it protects as one of the pillars of a sustainable food system. Detractors position the ALR as a dysfunctional set of policies that undermine innovation, property rights, and rural livelihoods. These conflicting positions and visions are negotiated through the processes of local policy creation and regulatory implementation. Food talk is deployed in these negotiations to discursively align local issues and arguments to larger ideological positions and aspects of provincial debates. In this sense, food talk mediates multi-scalar efforts to achieve what Allen (2010) describes as a socially just food system “in which power and material resources are shared equitably” (297). The rhetoric of food talk is especially powerful in these negotiations as there is relatively little publically available research about how the ALR functions or how it impacts the Okanagan landscape and local food justice. In a context wherein many arguments are based on relatively poor statistics or anecdotes, skillful political use of food talk can sway policy, policy makers, and public opinion.

### **Methods: Critical Discourse Analysis for Food Studies Research**

The integrative field of food studies provides a powerful window into the rhetorical strategies, discourses, and power relations that influence BC's ALR. Food studies scholars increasingly use and note the contemporary importance of conducting discourse analysis to examine food and food systems as “fundamental manifestations of issues, tensions, and conundrums related to political, economic, social, and health systems” (Knezevic et al. 2014, 3). For example, in Canada, the increasing momentum of communities of discourse gathered around terms like “food sovereignty” has been noted by several authors who call for a more nuanced examination of how this term is discursively produced and relates to policy advocacy (Desmarais and Wittman 2014). Discourse analysis provides tools to reveal how

claims to certain power relations (e.g., right to be fed, right to food, and right to feed) are created and implemented through discursive practices (Van Esterik 1999; Lee 2013). Researchers have used different techniques of discourse analysis to examine rhetorical strategies and discourses that influence debates over agricultural legislation and land policy throughout North America (Demeritt 1995; Bunce 1998; Dixon and Hapke 2003). In this chapter, we engage specifically with critical discourse analysis (CDA).

CDA challenges assumptions that underpin different discourses thus providing a tool to critique the status quo, particularly the dominant neoliberal discourse that has dominated policy making since the 1970s (van Dijk 1993; Fairclough 2004; Knezevic et al. 2014). CDA allows strategic critique of the use of discourses in the “development, promotion and dissemination of the strategies for social change of particular groups of social agents, and in hegemonic struggle between strategies” (Fairclough 2004, 7). Following Fairclough (1995), we use a three-dimensional CDA framework that examines what Fairclough calls “text,” “discourse practice,” and “sociocultural practice” so that analyses of texts should not be isolated from analysis of institutional and discursive practices within which texts are embedded.

Our primary texts were public applications submitted to the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) of Kelowna. AAC applications typically consist of the following: (1) maps generated by city staff regarding land capability, soil class, satellite images, parcel lines, and zoning; (2) maps generated by consultants (e.g., agrologists) that often indicate soil test locations and soil gradients; (3) ground-level photographs showing land-use patterns; (4) a highly structured report to the committee written by planning staff typically including sections on the purpose, background, site context, project description, and relation to current development policies; (5) the two-page application completed by a landowner; (6) a collection of supporting materials deemed relevant and supportive of the case; and (7) an Agricultural Impact Assessment, if a professional agrologist has prepared one. Applicants typically work with city staff and a professional agrologist to develop their application. They then present their application to the AAC in a public forum where recommendations are made to modify the applications before moving them on to the city council. After the council votes to recommend the application to the provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), the ALC evaluates the application to make a final decision to approve, approve pending changes, or reject the application.

In analyzing the application texts, we examined the structure of the texts (what information was included), how food talk was used to represent

arguments within the text, and how food talk was used to set up writer and reader identities and relations. These texts allow examination of discourse practices—the processes of producing, distributing, transforming, and consuming texts. In addition to looking for food talk terms, we examined intertextuality<sup>2</sup> to provide evidence of links to broader provincial, national, and global debates. In addition to the application texts, we used a purposive sampling strategy to gather materials for analysis of the broader “sociocultural practice.” We included nine interviews with key decision makers in the Okanagan. We also gathered position statements by political groups and organizations concerned with food security in the Okanagan. Furthermore, we analyzed local media and online discussion forums where comments by individual community members yielded an illustrative range of the opinions held by citizens of the Okanagan.

### Composing the ALR

Our analysis revealed that food talk discursively links arguments in application texts and in debates over specific agricultural lands with broader political debate themes and ideological stances. Public statements made by provincial politicians, municipal politicians, and Okanagan residents in debates over the ALR deploy food talk to make claims about what the government should or should not do in regard to agricultural land policy. For example, a right to “food security” is cited by Okanagan farmers and provincial politicians as a reason to support the ALR: “It is inconceivable that the [BC] Liberal government can even consider reducing protection for farmland in British Columbia when there is overwhelming evidence and concern at the global and national level about the looming food security crisis across the world and in our own backyards” (BC farmer Jenny Horn, Letter to Premier, April 2014); “The British Columbia Local Food Act is to improve and maximize food security, economic return and population health outcomes from our public land trust—the agricultural land reserve [sic].... Our province currently lacks a strategy that ensures we are fully capitalizing on our agricultural land base in a way that grows our economy, improves population health and food security. Instead, the government has a plan to undermine that, in the form of Bill 24” (Adrian Dix, NDP MLA and party leader, Hansard House Blues BC, April 2014).

When not explicitly using rights claims like “food security,” public statements parallel the below quotes from an Okanagan resident and a provincial politician by suggesting a broader right to an undefined “food future” for unspecified “local” people that the government has a duty to support:

“As the planet heats, and we become less able to import produce from Mexico and South America, our ability to grow food locally will become vital. It is vital to preserve arable land for future generations” (Contributor to discussion forum, Stop the Swap, January 2014); “I know that farmers, local food lovers, and people concerned about the safety and sustainability of our food will continue to put wind in the sails of their elected representatives, pushing them to do the right thing and stand up for our food future” (Nicolas Simons, NDP MLA and agriculture critic, Official Press Release, February 2014).

Several of the application texts that we examined utilize food talk to discursively link text arguments to broader public debates and ideologies that support discourse-based visions of the ALR. Our analysis of texts and other materials suggests six key discourses are found in ALR debates: agrarianism, Arcadianism, agricultural landscape as Okanagan identity, neoliberal market productivism, progressive farming, and radical farming. The six discourses that we identified above have also been recognized by other researchers examining agricultural land policy in BC and throughout North America (for more information on these discourses, see Demeritt 1995; Dixon and Hapke 2003; and Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). In our data, the use of particular discourses was associated with how people defined terms like “food security,” “agriculture,” “the public good,” “producer rights,” and “the local.” In addition, the different discourses correlated with positions regarding the ALR. These positions simplify the complexities of the ALR by characterizing it as either an impediment to “rational” land use or as an effective policy fulfilling its purpose to preserve agricultural lands that are in productive use. Lacking better publically available data on land change and production in the ALR, these characterizations of the ALR often relay on old data, anecdotes, and ideology.

While the formal nature of ALR applications limits the ideological tenor of arguments as compared to media releases and internet forums, there was still evidence that applicants drew from the above discourses and deployed food talk as a rhetorical strategy. Applicants for changes to the ALR argue that the impacts on agricultural lands should be balanced with other, sometimes ambiguous benefits. Recurring arguments for making changes to ALR lands include saving the family farm, benefits to the public good, providing net benefits to agriculture, increasing cost efficiency, encouraging innovation, and the claim that there were mistakes in the original ALR boundaries. In the two cases we present below, we examine how debate participants and applicants use food talk in attempts to influence public understanding of the



ALR and to position themselves and their arguments regarding changes to the ALR. These deployments of food talk are used to neutralize and undermine counterarguments as an exercise of power. The first case demonstrates how an ALR application text incorporates food talk in an argument for subdivision of a family farm. The second examines food talk in a local debate over a proposed municipal application to make ALR boundary changes—revealing the political process of composing an ALR application text itself.

### Subdividing the Small Farm

The Kowalczyks' 16-hectare family farm is located within the ALR and in an area of rapid population growth within the city boundaries of Kelowna. As protected agricultural land, any subdivision of the Kowalczyk farm requires a costly and time-consuming ALR application. In 2013, the Kowalczyks began working with contracted soil specialists and city staff to make an application that would go to the appointed members of the Kelowna AAC, municipal politicians on the city council, and ultimately the ALC, where a final decision would be rendered on the subdivision. They made a similar application in the 1990s that was rejected, but the Kowalczyks reasoned that this application to subdivide the farm into two smaller family farms should be approved, as their subdivision would provide a net benefit to agriculture. They argued that it would support “local” food security by increasing the number of small farmers, diversifying local agricultural production, improving productivity from the land parcel, and saving their own family farm business.

The applicants deployed agrarian, progressive, and radical farming discourses. They deployed food talk drawing on several media sources to link their proposed subdivision to large political debates. They used extensive quotes from international media (Ahmed 2013), regional media linking the ALR to food production (Steeves 2013), reports on food security and food sovereignty from national non-profit organizations (Rosset 1999; People's Food Policy Project 2011), and an academic article on food sovereignty (Wittman 2011). While these materials come to similar conclusions about the positive support that small farms offer for “local” food security, the concept of “local” is usually geographically ambiguous, or associated with the province or country rather than a municipality.

Two key interlinked arguments used in the text were related to providing a net benefit to agriculture and saving the family farm. Arguing for the net benefits to agriculture, the application text focusses on supporting food security by working against the limits that land speculation has caused for

new farmer entry. The average age of farmers in BC is 55.7 and the high cost of land prevents young farmers from entering the sector because it often surpasses potential agricultural profit margins (Stobbe, Cotteleer, and van Kooten 2009; Tunnicliffe 2013). The application states the following:

It will encourage farming on agricultural land.... Studies done as early as 1999 and into 2012 show that nothing ensures a community's food security as well as a variety of small multi-functional farms rather than the larger monoculture models.... The subdivision of this lot will generate two farms where there was only one. This acreage will be ideal in size and price range for the majority of farmers that are in the market for land today in BC.... The highest demand for agricultural land in BC is for two to five hectare sized farms in or close to urban areas.... Because large parcels (anything larger than 5 hectares) are either beyond the grasp of young farmers or would start them out with such a heavy debt load the likelihood of growing their business past it is very small.

The application also incorporates a narrative about the family farming history, linking their farm to local food security and arguing for the importance of small-scale agriculture. The applicants then discuss the incorporation of innovative value-added agricultural products into their business to demonstrate their efforts to profitably farm the land and to recount how a previous rejection of an ALR application to subdivide the land in the 1990s led to the family farm's current problematic financial situation. They write,

The most successful way to benefit agriculture is to integrate it into the urban landscape; this is remarkably true in spaces like the Okanagan Valley and Kelowna in particular. As the studies and papers included with this application indicate, smaller farms are more likely to not only fit into said landscape, but also encourage more people to get into the business of farming/agriculture. The type of agriculture is also very important. A smaller acreage facilitates a more diverse agro-ecology which is not dependent on world commodity pricing. The farmers are in better control of their markets and revenues which in turn makes them more likely to continue farming and preserve the land for future farming....

We apply for subdivision now in a much more dire situation, having barely come through the recession.... We entreat you to

take the above into consideration as well as the information we have provided with the subdivision proposal information drawing from extensive review of reports and studies on the subject done by local, provincial, national and global stakeholders in food security and agriculture.

The applicants use food talk to position their proposed ALR variance as beneficial to agriculture and position themselves as dedicated farmers who are essential to the Okanagan's unique agricultural landscape. Their use of food talk aligns them with the visions of agricultural landscape articulated in discourses of agrarianism, Arcadianism, and progressive farming. To an extent, the application conflates food security and food sovereignty, not recognizing the more radical rights demands inherent in food sovereignty, which require much more fundamental and structural changes to the food system and the planning processes of the ALR (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). Yet, even without these more radical rights claims, the application's reliance on the progressive farming discourse's version of "food security" is problematic in a policy context dominated by the neoliberal policy discourse and in regard to the bureaucratic interpretation of the ALR legislation.

The progressive farming interpretation of food security directly conflicts with the dominant neoliberal market productivism (agribusiness) interpretation of food security. The progressive interpretation recognizes a global environmental crisis, and then argues for a definition of food security as culturally appropriate, nutritious, and locally sourced foods (though "local" remains geographically ambiguous). The progressive interpretation positions food security as a human right that the state is obligated to secure and the applicants cite this interpretation of food security as the original intent of the ALR legislation. The neoliberal approach to food security, in contrast, rejects that there is a food security crisis at all, and makes the underlying assumption that promoting a profitable international import-export trade structure will provide the general population access to cheap food. Rights claims deployed within the neoliberal market productivism discourse emphasize ideological aspects of neoliberalism. Fetishes with private property rights and idealized markets manifest as an emphasis on allowing lands to be put to "best uses" (i.e., open to international land markets) that would in turn increase the financial stability of current producers and contribute to economies of scale for the BC food supply. By emphasizing cheap agricultural commodities obtained by international trade and a model of agribusiness geared toward exports, the neoliberal version of food security contradicts a food security based on local farmers producing for local

consumers. Wittman and Barbolet (2011) outline these contradictions as they analyze assets (such as the ALR) and structural constraints to implementing a food sovereignty policy model in BC, even while neoliberal provincial and federal policies actively undermine any sort of local food system.

The progressive farming perspective of food security also seems to contradict the provincial ALC staff's interpretation of their mandate to support agriculture by limiting the subdivision of ALR lands and even the language of legislative basis of the ALR, the Agricultural Land Commission Act of 2002. The ALC staff interprets the legislation as a mandate to support agriculture by limiting subdivisions regardless of who owns the land (ALC staff, personal interview, June 2014). So, consolidation of lands under any large-scale land owner is, in this interpretation of ALR legislation, more preferable than subdividing agricultural parcels that would facilitate the entry of small farmers into the current land market. In theory, the existing farming tax incentives enable large-scale landowners to pursue highly productive forms of agriculture. Yet, in practice, these incentives often result in the conversion of land to hay for fodder, which is more profitable than the production of food crops. As such, the legislation provides a disincentive for small-scale mixed farming and encourages farmers to pursue the most profitable farm output, which may not include foodstuffs that contribute to local food security. The realization of "agriculture" in the legislation reveals a fundamental disagreement in interpretation about the value of specific types of agricultural landscapes (one of small-scale farmers focused on regional markets or large scale farmers focused on export) and how to support agriculture in these landscapes. For progressive and radical farming discourses, the legislation seems to undermine the stated goal of supporting agriculture because the legislation has not adequately confronted one of the main challenges to making agriculture lands productive in BC—that is, getting dedicated farmers on the land.

In this case, the Kowalczyk family's application to subdivide the land was both grounded in and challenged by food talk—specifically, claims to support food security—but also a broader set of rights claims and debate themes that include defining agriculture, "the local," and a net benefit to agriculture. The reaction to this application (which is still under consideration at the time of this writing) by bureaucrats and politicians has been negative as the current policy context predominately interprets food talk terms within the neoliberal discourse. Whether or not the applicants are sincere, this application presents a powerful example of the deployment of food talk and how counterpoising deployments of food talk can lead to radically different outcomes.

## Stop the Swap

The “Stop the Swap” campaign was organized by residents of the town of Summerland in opposition to their city council’s proposal to remove agricultural land from the ALR, in exchange for (re)including another parcel of land that is significantly more marginal for agricultural production. Food talk within this campaign and during public hearings regarding the “swap” is illustrative of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the debates surrounding the ALR in the Okanagan.

Summerland has a population of 11,280 (Statistics Canada 2012), and like many other communities in the Okanagan, tourism and agriculture are important for the community’s economy (District of Summerland 2015). Summerland city council is attempting to amend the Official Community Plan (OCP) by removing 80 hectares of class 1, 2, and 3 ALR land to enable residential development in an area north of the city centre. Some of this land slated for removal is currently in use for agriculture. Council has suggested a 91-hectare area of undeveloped hillside for ALR inclusion as compensation for the intended exclusions. A portion of the area that council intends to include in the land reserve was previously removed from the ALR for development in 2005. This land has been assessed as class 5 and 6 when it was ALR land, and at the time it was removed from the ALR it was argued to be unsuitable for agriculture. None of the proposed area has been under agricultural production; in fact, much of it is forested (SSAL 2014). This area has been part of Summerland’s urban growth strategy since 1995 as a potential site for residential or recreational development (District of Summerland 2015).

After council announced these amendments to the OCP in December 2013, many Summerland residents responded negatively to the planned exclusions of agricultural land for development (e.g., letters to the editor were written to several local periodicals). The community organized a forum called “Save Summerland’s Agricultural Land” for the Stop the Swap campaign soon after the proposed removal was announced. Members of this group have been strong voices in opposition to the proposed land swap, organizing a rally, writing letters to local and provincial government representatives, speaking to the media, and gathering signatures against the amendment to the ALR in Summerland (Global News 2013). Local food, future food security, the importance of agriculture in Summerland’s economy, and the atmosphere and aesthetics of their community in attracting tourists and new residents have been central to the arguments against moving forward with the land swap. A Summerland orchardist explained: “Agricultural land is

important for local and provincial food security; it's beautiful, it's economically important, and should continue to be protected because, once developed, it will never grow food again" (Summerland farmer, personal interview, April 2014).

In support of the amendment to remove the land, Summerland's council and community members justify this proposal by claiming that developing the area will lower the residents' carbon footprint by creating new neighbourhoods within walking distance of downtown (public hearing transcript, March 2014). While council recognizes the economic benefits of agriculture for their community, the arguments made by opposition about the need to ensure productive land for the future was refuted in public statements made by Summerland's mayor (Graham 2014). Mayor Janice Perrino stated to a local journalist, "When I hear the fear mongering about food supply I think to myself 'My goodness!' There would have to be an incredible world crisis to actually need that particular land as a food source" (Graham 2014).

Opposition to proposed changes of the OCP amendment was evident when several hundred residents attended the second public hearing on 22 April 2014 (McIver 2014). Of the thirty-nine community members that addressed council, thirty-eight spoke out against council going forward with this proposal (District of Summerland 2014). Despite this substantial opposition, on 28 April 2014, Summerland's city council voted 4 to 1 in favour of amending the OCP, which would re-designate ALR as open for development, and forwarded the exclusion application on to the ALC, where at the time writing, it remains pending (SSAL 2014).

The use of food talk in these debates excludes voices in the community as discourses reinforce inequitable relationships in regards to food justice. Campaign organizers wrote that "the ALR's contribution to current and future food security is of critical importance. Uncertainties relating to climate change and international markets make it all the more important to maintain our food producing lands so that future generations will have the ability to produce food locally" (SSAL 2014). Texts that cite future food security, "the local," and locavorism make assumptions about the geographic spaces in which food security should be pursued and the relevant political levels at which particular policy changes are required. Debate participants that mention future food security are often ambiguous about the population for which food security policy is focused. In addition, as shown in the first case, they commonly invoke food talk rhetoric giving "food security" different operational definitions within opposing discourses. Research on household food insecurity in Canada indicates that those facing food insecurity

are the most marginalized community members (Rideout et al. 2007). Race, gender, ability, and class are identified as major contributing factors, and marginalized members of rural communities are often more at risk because of reduced access to resources such as food banks.

As Kneen (2009) asserts, claiming a right to food, even in a community with a strong local agricultural base, does not translate to all community members having equal access. Left out of discussions about ALR and food access are voices from marginalized and excluded groups that have significant interests in land use and foodways, such as migrant agricultural workers that have no formal political voice (Tomic et al. 2010) and Aboriginal community members that have little say in, but may be impacted by, decisions made on agricultural lands that are in close proximity to reserves or traditional hunting, fishing, and foraging lands. In the Okanagan, all of the ALR-designated lands are on unceded Syilx territory. There was no mention of Aboriginal rights to land or traditional foodways during the public hearings or the online forum for the Stop the Swap campaign. In addition, the rights of migrant workers have been overlooked. Nearly 5,000 foreign workers come to BC each year through the federal Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) (Employment and Social Development Canada 2012). Of those workers, approximately 1,500 work on farms in the Okanagan. ALR policy has a direct impact on the well-being of foreign workers who live on-farm and whose housing is under the constraints of allowable building limitations. Yet these labourers have no voice in decision making around this issue and are isolated by food talk deployment in community discussions. Rights-based claims within food talk that assert a collective right to agricultural land reaffirm boundaries as to who is included in “we” and “ours” and reproduce social norms that exclude non-citizens, Aboriginal peoples, and others not able to participate fully because they are marginalized.

The Stop the Swap campaign argues for preserving ALR in Summerland as the duty of this generation of community members to ensure the rights of future generations of residents. The benefits of the ALR, then, are exclusive to Summerland residents. But not only are benefits limited to the defined community, they are also accessible only to those who can afford them. This is specific to property ownership and residency since anyone who can't afford the costs of living in Summerland will not be considered “eligible” to benefit from the ALR. The first theme involves the nebulous idea of “the local” mentioned above, an idea that connotes an often unspecified geographic community, sometimes associated with nostalgic and idealized

versions of the rural. In this case, the local is constrained to the District of Summerland. The presence of ALR lands in Summerland is positioned as giving residents access to “local food.” Yet the disconnection between locality and income is apparent in this situation. The latest census data (2012) for Summerland shows a predominantly white population, with less than 1 percent of residents identifying as belonging to a visible minority group. While Summerland has a high level of education and an average annual after-tax family income of over \$80,000, the apparent affluence of community members hides a class division as Summerland’s low-income status rate is 11.3 percent (Statistics Canada 2012). While many people in Summerland may have the capacity to access locally produced foods, a significant percentage may be excluded by the cost of local food that caters to tourists seeking the “local experience.”

Another theme in this debate revolves around defining the public good or the relative weight of several public goods. Three prominent aspects of this theme were the framing of “agriculture versus development,” the emphasis on short-term financial gains as a public good, and the emphasis on the cultural functions of agriculture. In the case of Summerland’s proposed amendment that would entail removal of land from ALR specifically to be developed for housing, this debate captures the ongoing perceptions of a struggle between agricultural uses and urban or ex-urban “development” in the form of new residential spaces and thus allows non-agricultural economic development and sustainable urban design advocates (ironically) to argue that agriculture is a relatively non-productive land use. This is seen as a public good from a planning perspective, citing the desirability of higher-density urban spaces, the walkability of neighbourhoods that include housing and businesses, and the need to reduce sprawl that also could result in a lower carbon footprint. This perspective downplays the value of having agriculture or even green spaces within the city limits because that would run counter to the perceived value of using urban space to its “fullest potential.” It would seem that the few to benefit from this “public good” would be those who can afford to buy new single-family homes in an area within walking distance to the city centre. Of course, increased home ownership provides an increase to the tax-base within the municipality; however, those in opposition do not view the gains to the community’s public purse to outweigh the long-term consequences of the loss of prime agricultural land.

Advocates of preserving the ALR emphasize landscape aesthetic and the role of agricultural lands in collective identity. Summerland residents articulating this perspective identify strongly with agriculture as the regional



identity and associate their community with both the Arcadian bucolic utopia and agrarian visions of working landscapes with associated “good farmer” and “strong local community” ideas. This idea was evident in one comment posted on Stop the Swap’s website: “Removing agricultural land and modifying our community’s character eliminates one of the only advantages Summerland has in attracting new residents and retirees to choose our town over other towns in the Okanagan. This is especially true given that the ALR land we are discussing is within easy viewing and walking distance from the downtown core” (SSAL 2014). Opposition to development also includes an element of identity loss. The language and tenor used suggest a sense of bereavement when community members speak about former agricultural lands transformed into housing developments or commercial spaces. The language of food becomes a language of stewardship and thus a community right to defend both a productive future and an identity grounded in a nostalgic, moral landscape.

The case of the proposed land swap in Summerland is an example of how food talk is used in rights-based claims to future food security, access to local food, and agricultural land preservation for the benefit of the community. Those speaking against the removal of land from ALR for development construct agricultural lands as spaces where these concepts come to fruition. However, in practice, the benefits of the ALR are not accessible to everyone in the community, and the claims associated with agricultural spaces are exclusive to particular community members. Though a decision from the ALC on Summerland city council’s application is still pending, council members rejected the arguments made by the opposition, illustrating adherence to the neoliberal model in which “growth” is the priority, and that priority is interpreted as the need to “develop” in the form of housing and businesses at the cost of agriculture.

## Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how the deployment of food talk is used to influence public debates over governance of ALR lands. In so doing, the chapter shows how CDA can be used to help social scientists “illuminate and challenge the dominant epistemological frameworks that assign problem definitions and solutions” (Allen 2013, 136). CDA techniques allowed us to analyze the deployment of a specific rhetorical strategy (in this case food talk), identify communities of discourse, and analyze how doublespeak convolutes public understanding, influences public debates over agricultural lands, and impacts implementation of policy on the ground.

In conducting CDA, we examined ways in which food talk allows local residents to link arguments in ALR applications and local agricultural land debates to broader ideological frames and provincial, national, and global debates. We found that while food talk is used to change public understanding of the ALR, it also repositions applicants to the ALR and advocates of food system change as claimants for rights. This repositioning requires evidence of individual or group rights and can inadvertently exclude marginalized groups if not carefully deployed.

Food talk can be a double-edged sword for marginalized groups such as migrant workers, small farmers, and the economically underprivileged. The reproduction of different discourses involved in debates over agricultural lands creates communities of discourse that use different versions of food talk. In the case of the ALR, terms such as “food security” and “local food” take on different, often contradicting definitions within competing discourses. The power relations of different communities of discourse are revealed when more dominant discourses are able to redefine the referents of food talk and influence policy outcomes. As shown in the cases presented above, wherein productivist strategies for export-oriented markets lead to challenges to the ALR, and as recognized in literature on BC’s policy climate (Wittman and Barbolet 2011), neoliberal market productivism has preponderant authority in BC’s current policy context. The hegemonic status of this discourse relates to the circles of power that perpetuate the discourse through the creation and implementation of provincial and municipal policies. It is these circles that choose which food talk is legitimate and who will benefit from new policies and interpretations of existing legislation. For ALR applicants, a misunderstanding of how proponents of the dominant neoliberal discourse interpret their rights claims can lead to rejection of their attempts to support agriculture.

In summary, attention to how food talk is discursively deployed reveals pathways to influence policy models by changing terminology and rhetorical strategies. As we have shown above, linking rhetorical strategies to discourse and policy outcomes is critical to realizing policies that promote food justice.

## Notes

- 1 The Canadian Land Inventory (CLI) classifies the agricultural potential for lands into seven classes (1–7) from highest to lowest. Prime agricultural lands include CLI class 1–3 lands. Class 1–4 lands include land capable of growing a range of crops. The constraints of class 5 allow only the production of perennial forage crops and specially adapted crops, class 6 lands typically can support some grazing, and class 7 lands are not capable of supporting grazing.

- 2 “Intertextuality” refers to the relation of the application texts to other texts—that is, how texts cite and draw from other texts to validate points regarding changes to ALR lands.

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