

Harvest Moon Society Marketing Co-operative: Building Social Capital through an Alternative Food Economy

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Project Summary

Rural areas in Canada are currently facing a myriad of issues contributing to rural decline and are in the process of redefining themselves to adjust to a changing rural landscape. While the economic dynamics of community development are important, it is clear that social and environmental components are necessary as well. The roles of the voluntary sector and co-operatives in simultaneously building social and economic capital are increasingly recognized and play a central role in rural rejuvenation. However, most studies of this nature have focused on urban communities.

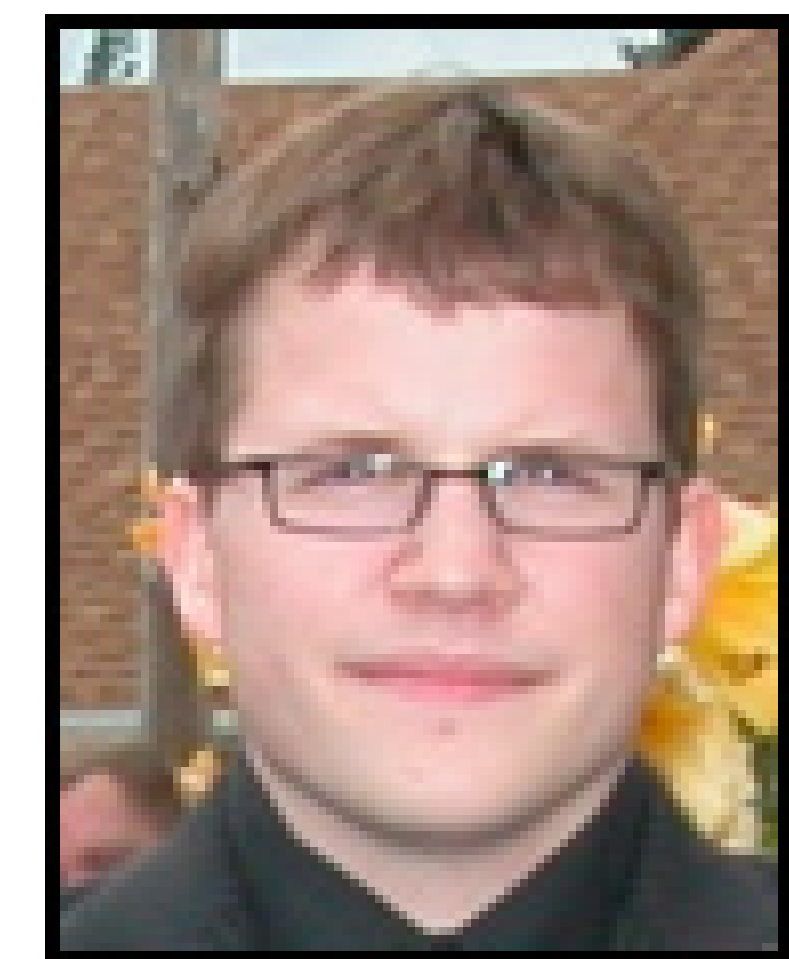
The Harvest Moon Society and the University of Manitoba Environmental Conservation Laboratory are working collaboratively with a group of producers in southwestern Manitoba who are in the early stages of developing a producer-driven collective marketing co-operative. The producer group has self-identified as a social enterprise committed to increasing the profitability of production, building healthy communities and environment, and working towards a just and sustainable food system.

Key Objectives

The proposed community-based research project will identify how new generation co-operatives, and specifically those focused on local food systems, increase social cohesion and social capital within the immediate marketing group, the larger communities in which they are nested, and among the diverse stakeholders represented in the food system. A combination of individual interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires will be used to gain insight into the social economy as it relates to local food systems. This advocacy research study will employ participatory action research methods that will at once give voice to producers, benefit the community, and contribute to the theoretical literature on the linkages between the social economy and risk and adaptation in rural communities.

Community Partner: Harvest Moon Society

Term of Project: May 2007 – May 2008



Colin Anderson

