

25 Years in Nova Scotia Agriculture

In 2010 Nova Scotia consumers will spend 9% of their disposable income on food.

This is an historical low and would seem at face value to be a great deal for consumers.

We are fortunate to have retail shelves that are laden with a variety of food choices that we could have only dreamed of two decades ago. This is of course premised on a fossil fuel enabled global trading system which can move perishable food products from around the world to our shelves on a daily basis. This has in part caused the consistent diminishment of market share of food consumed in Nova Scotia which is actually produced in Nova Scotia. We now produce very little of the food we consume in Nova Scotia. This is down dramatically from 25 years ago and has resulted in the tremendous and sometimes traumatic diminishment of our agricultural food processing capacity particularly over the past 10 years. Our ability to process beef, pork, chicken, vegetables and fruit has been reduced dramatically due to the closure of many of our agriculture processing facilities. Sadly thousands of good paying year round jobs have been lost in Nova Scotia in this process. The compounding affect of globalization and retail consolidation have also been major drivers of this trend.

It has been said that no trend can go in one direction forever and of course that is true in the case of agriculture and food as well. Over the past 3 years there have been many indicators which offer hope for a reversal of the trends that have played out over the past 25 years. The ever growing concerns around the environment, food safety and economic sustainability have resulted in an ever expanding consumer interest in sourcing their food from as close to home as possible. Over the past 5 years many small scale artisan processing facilities have started to meet this demand. While still small scale by previous standards these operations are growing year by year based on consumer demand. This is a hopeful trend.