

Celebrate Food Heroes on World Food Day

By Andrea Bassett

Heroes do what matters and contribute to the greater good, but they don't all wear tights and a cape. In fact, my heroes wear work boots and have dirt under their fingernails. My heroes are family farmers around the world who put safe and wholesome food into their local communities and on our tables. Think of the anxiety you would feel if you didn't have access to fresh, farm-grown food, and good nutrition!

Unfortunately, food insecurity happens all over the world, in both poor and wealthy nations and the family farm is an important antidote. It's important that this World Food Day we celebrate family farming and recognize the contributions of the people who feed the world and care for the earth, one small farm at a time.

What is World Food Day?

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) started World Food Day in 1981 to raise awareness about worldwide food security issues. World Food Day 2014 recognizes that family farming plays a significant role in reducing hunger and poverty, increasing food security and livelihoods, and contributing to sustainable development of natural resources, particularly in rural communities.

What is food security?

According to the World Food Summit, "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

The four main elements of food security are:

- Food availability
- Having sufficient means to purchase available food
- Having enough food to eat and be well-nourished
- Meeting these three conditions over the long-term.

"If the farmer is poor, so is the whole country."

-Polish proverb

How does the family farm contribute to food security?

Family farms are responsible for 56% of worldwide agricultural production and research indicates that low-impact organic farming produces similar crop yields to large-scale conventional productions. Food security increases when food is produced locally and economics allow local people to purchase and eat that food. With family farming being so essential to the global food supply, it's no wonder that World Food Day is also about supporting the development of agricultural and social policies that make it easier for families to stay on the

farm. In fact, the UN General Assembly also named 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming.

Here are 7 ways that you can celebrate the family farm on World Food Day:

1. Shop at the farmer's market.
2. Participate in community shared agriculture – a CSA lets you buy a share of produce, meat or dairy directly from your farmer.
3. Encourage your supermarket to carry local, in-season products.
4. Support a farmer in a developing country with a micro-loan on Kiva.
5. Plan to start your own garden in the spring.
6. Take some advice from my favourite farmer Joel Salatin: “know your food, know your farmers, and know your kitchen”.
7. Eat something delicious – it is World Food Day, after all!

World Food Day is spreading the word about food security issues and how to make our global food system more secure for everyone, no matter where they live. Food brings people together, and around the world there are 500 million family farms doing this important work.

Today, I'm celebrating my heroes and their contributions to reduce food insecurity, to feed people and to sustain communities. How will I celebrate? With food, of course!

This article was originally published on Morneau Shepell's WorkHealthLife site:
www.workhealthlife.com/