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**SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TRADE COMMITTEE  
ABOUT THE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP  
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The PEI Food Security Network (FSN) is a volunteer-based action and education organization committed to changing community attitudes and public policy to promote food security. Our work is based on several related principles, including:

- the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food are all components of a food system that is influenced by social, economic, cultural and environmental factors, and further, that
- any degradation of the environment is a major constituent of the real cost of food. An ecologically responsible system of food production, processing and distribution is a necessary part of food security.

We believe in the value of community participation in the development of public policy, in the realm of food security as in other areas. For these reasons we are pleased to share our thoughts about the Trans-Pacific Partnership and its impacts on Prince Edward Island, especially within the context of Food Sovereignty, which is defined as:

*the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and the right to define and control our own food and agriculture systems, including markets, production modes, food cultures, and environments.*

Our concerns about the Trans Pacific Partnership include:

- Its promotion of industrial agriculture and harmful environmental effects of potato monoculture
- Interference with supply management and losses to dairy farmers
- The effects on democracy and the environment of the Investor/State Dispute System

Evidence has shown that the path to food security is actually small-scale farming and agroecology, **not** industrial agriculture. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, small farms produce 80% of the food that is consumed worldwide. We need a policy framework designed to support the family farmers who have historically been at the centre of PEI's economy. The TPP tips the balance in favour of an industrial model of agriculture that has resulted in fewer farmers and an aging farm population. It has caused widespread environmental destruction and has done nothing to address the high levels of food insecurity experienced in Island households.

Prince Edward Island is a land of fertile soils and an abundance of clean water. We are surrounded by a healthy, productive marine ecosystem. Our farmers and fishers have the capacity, the experience and skills to produce high quality, nutritious food.

PEI's current strategy for agriculture is focused on large-scale production of potatoes - almost 50% of farm cash receipts is for potatoes, with a large proportion destined for processing into french-fries. In a province known variously as the "Garden of the Gulf", "The Million-Acre Farm" and "Canada's Food Island", it's somewhat ironic that we are so focused on one (it could be argued unhealthy) food product. And it begs the question, what happens when the french fry market hits the wall? In a system so lacking in diversity, PEI farmers are vulnerable to sudden changes in market conditions and environmental impacts, for example of climate change.

The model we've bought into requires monoculture of potatoes and large inputs of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. These factors have contributed to serious environmental problems in Prince Edward Island, including soil erosion and depletion, elevated concentrations of nitrates levels in ground and surface water, anoxic estuaries, fish kills and siltation & sedimentation in our waterways.

### **Nitrates and Anoxia**

In 2008, after hearing submissions from scientists, specialists and community members, the Government of Prince Edward Island released its report on Nitrates in the Groundwater <sup>1</sup> In stark terms, it described the problem. At the time, over 6% of household wells were testing above the safe level for Nitrates in drinking water. Nitrate concentrations in watersheds where there was intensive potato production were also higher than is considered safe for aquatic life and expected to rise over the following 35 years. Recommendations included regulation of the potato industry including mandatory three-year crop rotation (with no exceptions), nutrient management plans, and more investment in organic agriculture.

Nitrates in watersheds are the cause of anoxia, a condition with devastating effects on aquatic life. It happens when excessive Nitrates cause sea lettuce to flourish, die, decompose and consume oxygen. According to PEI's Department of Lands, Communities and the Environment, 19 estuaries became anoxic at least once in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Between 2005 and 2015, 41 estuaries were affected by anoxia, as were numerous freshwater ponds. Researchers at UPEI have found that most of the Nitrate pollution in the Northumberland Strait can be traced back to PEI farms. "It turns out that 95 per cent of the nitrates that are emptying into the Northumberland Strait are coming from this province. And of these, 91 per cent are coming from the Island's agriculture industry."<sup>3</sup> The problem is well documented - studies have shown that excessive nitrate loads from intensive potato production are linked to the reoccurring anoxic events in many estuaries in Prince Edward Island. <sup>4</sup>

### **Pesticides Use and Fish Kills**

The official website of the PEI Department of Lands, Communities and the Environment lists 50 fish kills in PEI watersheds between 1964 and 2011. In this province we have come to expect that over the growing season an extreme rainfall will be followed by reports of a fish kill somewhere in the province, as pesticides recently applied to agricultural fields are washed into streams and rivers. Following a particularly disastrous fish kill in 2013, an "Action Committee" brought together by the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/cofNitrates.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/communities-land-and-environment/anoxic-events>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/News/Local/2016-03-05/article-4456786/Research-finds-most-nitrates-in-Northumberland-Strait-come-from-P.E.I./1>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/cle\\_WA13.pdf](http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/cle_WA13.pdf)

Minister of Environment found that, “on balance of probabilities, the cause of the fish kills in 2002, 2005, 2011 and 2012 was the runoff of water and soil contaminated with pesticides from agricultural fields in potato production during and immediately following heavy rainfall events”.<sup>5</sup>

### **Soil Depletion**

Healthy soil is literally the foundation of food production and a healthy food system. In PEI, industrial agriculture’s intensive methods and dependence on synthetic fertilizers has caused significant depletion of soil organic content. According to the PEI Department of Agriculture & Fisheries, “most of PEI’s agricultural soils currently have organic matter contents of 2-3%; only about 20% of potato fields have organic matter levels above 3% (the level commonly thought needed for good soil quality).” A study published in 2012 showed that between 1999 and 2011 there was a steep decline in soil organic content.<sup>6</sup>

### **Local Food Systems**

In Prince Edward Island as well as in the rest of the country in recent years there has been a dramatic rise in interest in purchasing local foods. “Buy Local” campaigns, community farmers’ markets, and Community Supported Agriculture have gained popularity, and in PEI we see whole months devoted to promotion of local beef or pork or cheese products. There is a drive to connect consumers and producers of food, which in PEI is evident every summer and fall as thousands of people flock to Charlottetown’s Farm Day in the City and to Island farms on Open Farm Day.

There is also strong interest in institutional procurement of local foods by schools, nursing homes and hospitals as a means of creating important local markets for producers and providing students, residents and patients with healthier, fresher food.

A local food system is good for the economy - it creates jobs, in farming and fishing, processing and distribution and supports local businesses and services. It is good for the environment, reducing the amount of food being transported long distances, causing less greenhouse gas emissions.

There is a need for a policy framework and a strategy to support a strong local food system. Our fishers and farmers, with the proper infrastructure, can meet local demand and have product left over to export, nationally and internationally. It’s all a matter of balance, aimed at a food system that provides good quality, nutritious food for the people of PEI, ensures our producers have a livable income and preserves the environment for generations to come.

### **Policies That Support Food Sovereignty**

The Investor/State Dispute provisions contained in the TPP simply make a bad situation even worse. The ISDS opens up the possibility of more suits against Canada from a whole new group of countries. Canada has already had almost 40 ISDS brought against it and has paid out millions of dollars in compensation. The ability of multinational companies to sue a country whenever they perceive a policy or law will interfere with their profit-making puts the rights of corporations over the rights of people, and diminishes the power of governments to make policies that are good for the environment, communities and local economies.

Prince Edward Island is one of the few places with legislation to limit land holdings by individuals and corporations. This is thought to be a defense against land grabbing, and a way of ensuring that farmland is available for future generations of farmers. The law was brought about in the 1980’s at a time when corporations were increasing their control of agriculture in this province. In 2012,

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<sup>5</sup> [www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/elj\\_suslndmngt.pdf](http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/elj_suslndmngt.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/af\\_sw\\_soilq2012-1.pdf](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/af_sw_soilq2012-1.pdf)

corporate interests attempted to have the limits increased – they failed, after wide public consultation revealed how deeply Islanders care about their land. There is concern that any future attempts to strengthen the Act could be the subject of an ISDS challenge, should any foreign interests invested in PEI see the Act as an impediment to their ability to increase production and make more profit.

Similarly, in 1982, in a period of severe drought, the Prince Edward Island government put into effect a moratorium on high capacity wells for irrigation. And, again, in 2014, corporate interests attempted to have the moratorium lifted, on the basis that the wells were needed to produce more potatoes for the export market. The public reacted strongly, defending the moratorium, which had been put in place to protect our water supply and our watersheds, and to date it has not been lifted. Still, there is a fear that in the future, should a multinational corporation invest in PEI, and should a new moratorium or a complete ban be put into place, it could be the subject of an ISDS suit.

### **Supply Management And Effects On Dairy Farmers**

The TPP would allow increased imports of fresh milk into Canada (increases equivalent to 3.25% of Canada's fresh milk supply). Dairy Farmers have expressed their concern about how these new imports will affect their industry, in Canada and here in Prince Edward Island. According to spokespersons for the Dairy Farmers of P.E.I. it takes marketplace away from Canadian producers and processors, permanently.<sup>7</sup>

It has been estimated that PEI dairy farmers will lose close to \$32 million as a result of increased milk imports. (The former Conservative government, when it announced the agreement on the TPP, suggested dairy and egg producers should be compensated to the tune of \$4.3 billion. This number was based on estimates of the impact on farm revenues. Of that amount, \$1.9 billion was allocated to dairy farmers. PEI represents about 1.7% of the total industry, which means \$32.3 million would have been allocated to the PEI dairy industry.)

Supply management has meant Canadian and Island dairy farmers are assured their costs of production and that they can operate without subsidization. It is built upon three pillars: import controls, prices based on the costs of production and matching supply to demand. Trade agreements that interfere in one of these areas threaten the whole system. It should be noted that under NAFTA, US imports of milk components have been allowed and are already a problem for the dairy industry. Supply management is good for consumers, who have access to adequate quantities of healthy food, and for the environment as the need for long-distance transport (and associated Greenhouse Gas Emissions) is reduced.

### **Conclusion**

A food system that meets the needs of people in a changing climate must be focussed on sustainable production and incorporate processes for local distribution and consumption. It would keep control in the hands of people who produce food, and support small family farms. The TPP and other trade agreements that give power to transnational corporate interests impede food security. If we are to engage in the international trade of food products, we must find new ways of doing so, ways that are built upon fairness for producers and workers, livable incomes for consumers, and environmental protection.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-dairy-protest-1.3612636>