

LFS 350 Community Project:
Assessing Island Food Security in Partnership with the
Galiano Island Food Program

LFS 350
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Introduction

According to statistics Canada, Galiano island houses 1260 residents, whereby 42% of the residents are 50-69 years old (Island Trust, 2009). Galiano has 12 restaurants and 3 grocery stores (Personal Communication, 2016). The aim of this project is to gather anecdotal data from residents and strategies for surviving on the island without ferry service. This project partnered with the Galiano Food Program, which focuses on bringing people together with the goal of maintaining food production and agriculture on the island. Furthermore, it aims to re-establish traditional agricultural skills that may have degraded throughout time. Through community events, the Galiano Food Program strives to bring all residents together through recreation and education (J. Wolverton, personal communication, 2016).

Food security is stated as something that “exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences...” (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2003). The Vancouver Island Community Research (VICR) identified the ability to produce food locally as a strong indicator for the level of self-reliance of a community, which reflects the level of food security. In island food systems, local food production is critical due to food importation that is vulnerable to disruptions by extreme weather conditions. Harper supports this through his statement that high tides can affect local markets’ ability to obtain fresh produce to the island (Harper et al, 2015). When reliable transportation is not available, remote communities are more sensitive to food inaccessibility. As a result, people who cannot access nutritious food are more prone to diet-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure (Rodriguez & Grahame, 2016, p. 174). In addition, remote communities relying on imported foods are more susceptible to unstable food prices related to demand and availability in the market (Gilbert & Morgan, 2010, p. 3025). Our research aims to assess the self-sufficiency of Galiano by studying the assets and limitations of food production on the island. With a deeper understanding of the factors affecting food security, we were able to evaluate the effectiveness of the island’s sustainability strategies and find suitable solutions to food security issues.

Project objective(s)

- To determine if the residents experience food shortages when ferries are not running and how frequent the residents face food shortages if imported food sources are not available,
- To investigate limitations of the food system on the island,
- To investigate different methods that could be used to increase the self-reliance of residents and propel the independence of the island’s food system.

Inquiry question(s)

- Do the ferries affect the food system on Galiano Island? How frequent are food shortages on the island if ferries were to stop running?

- What are some limitations that the residents face with their food system? (Limitations from growing their own food, food prices etc.)
- What do residents and community leaders to compensate for food shortage do?

Methods

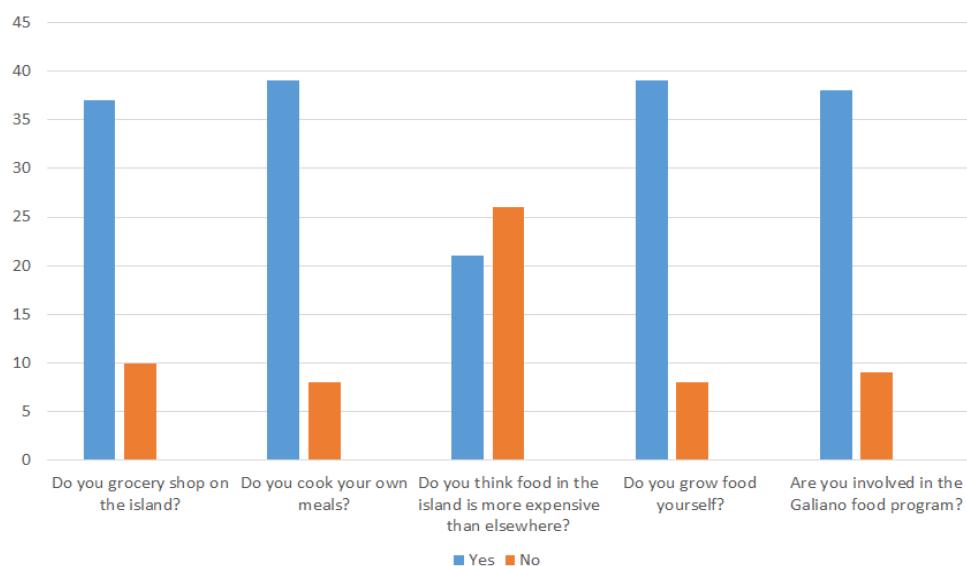
Prior to conducting research, preparations included researching Galiano Island demographics, soil grade information and preparing interview questions. The main method of data collection used was recorded semi-structured resident interviews. Interviews took place at the Day Star Market. In order to broaden the sample size, an online survey (SurveyMonkey) was widely distributed through the Galiano Club and residential mailing list. Both quantitative data, in the form of “yes/no” questions and qualitative data, in the form of anecdotal response, were collected. Responders were asked all of the inquiry questions listed above. Furthermore, observations were taken at visited facilities on Galiano Island. These locations included but were not limited to: the elementary school garden, dining locations, the Galiano Community Hall, the Day Star Market, and the allotment garden. These observations aided research about the tactics Galiano Island is using to face food insecurity in addition to providing evidence of communal reliance.

Once all data had been collected, all information was transcribed and amalgamated. Discrete nominal data (percentages) was extrapolated; in addition, anecdotal data (passages) was collected. This data allowed a comprehensive understanding about Galiano Island food security and the diverse community reliance stratagem.

This research recognized and complied to all ethical considerations. Informed consent was given from all participants, including an option to withhold from voice recording. Any photographs taken on the island do not include residents with exception permiss situations. Furthermore, all information and identity of any participant will be kept anonymous and secure.

Results

Figure 1: Yes/No Online Survey responses



Upon analyzing the online survey results (Appendix 1) and semi-structured interviews (Appendix 3), no responses indicated serious issues of ferry service reliability. Additionally, infrequent ferry stoppages do not result in food shortages for island residents. While 78.8% of survey responses indicate on-island grocery purchases two/three times per week, most residents are fully stocked for unexpected circumstances and 21.3% state that they occasionally purchase goods in bulk off-island (Figure 1). According to 44.7% of the responses perceive food on the island to be more expensive, likely due to the transportation fee added onto import of goods (personal communication). Depending on the family size, about \$500 to \$1300 is spent on food monthly (Personal communication, October 22, 2016)

Limitations of having personal garden plots include time commitment, space, aerable soil, and irrigation (Personal communication, October 22, 2016). 10 respondents from the online survey stated that limited water sources are a main barrier. Additionally seasonal residents limit the amount of time available to tend to a garden (Interview 6, Personal communication, October 22, 2016).

Residents contribute to self-reliance by growing their own food, in addition to making efforts to increase community cohesion. 83% of residents grow their own food (Figure 1). Garden plots range from exclusively growing herbs, to growing about 90% of vegetables for self-use. The on-island vegetable yield is sufficient for islanders, especially during summer months, and imports serve mainly to increase dietary diversity. 81% of survey respondents reported to be involved in the Galiano Food program as a volunteer, worker, or participant in the hosted events and activities (Figure 1).

Discussion

The data provided sufficient information to assess the level of self-reliance on Galiano and to identify the community assets/limitations to food security. This indicates that the project objectives to investigate the reliance on ferry services for food import were successfully accomplished. The survey results show that the majority of the population grow their own food, cook frequently and are able to find necessary items at the local grocery store. This is evidence that the island has a high level of self-sufficiency and rarely experiences food shortages due to unreliable ferry services. The shared concern about water issues shown in the interviews reveals limited water resources as a restricting factor to food production on the island. The strong cultivation culture and community cohesion that was observed greatly increases the amount and variety of food available, reducing the reliance on external resources. Our data significantly contributes to the understanding of factors affecting the sustainability of the Galiano island food system, and reflects the effectiveness of the Galiano food program on improving food security within the community. With our data as a foundation, stakeholders in the local food system will be able to take appropriate actions to further increase self-reliance on the island. As the Strategies for Increasing Food Security on Vancouver Island report states, the fundamental goals

of a regional food system approach are: 1) ...maximize the potential for regional self-reliance with regard to food; 2) ...achieve a high minimum standard of quality food provision for all of the region's residents; and 3) ...sustain and develop the resources upon which the whole system depends. The strong community bond witnessed throughout our project tremendously increases local food production, which provides adequate access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food to the residents, thus leading the Galiano food system closer towards the fundamental goals. As a success in building communal reliance, the Galiano food program provides effective strategies to create a better food system, which can be applied to a larger scale. Although this is true, there were limitations to our methods. It was simply not feasible for us to interview/collect data from the entire island population, therefore we extrapolated results from the 47 that were interviewed and surveyed. Ideally, we would have liked to have the majority participate in the data collection.

Conclusion

The aim of the project was to investigate Galiano Island residents' strategies on surviving without ferry service. We were able to gain knowledge on strategies the residents have to cope with possible food shortage via online survey and in-person interviews. We found that communal reliance is of utmost importance in becoming an independent food system. Additionally, awareness of extreme weather conditions is important to food security. Initially, we expected to learn about food shortage on the island but we realized that food shortage is not the main problem. Galiano Island residents already have strategies to keep them from being food insecure, however, further improvements could be made to enhance their food system; such as improving soil quality, expanding the communal allotment garden, and increase storage space for surplus food.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Questions for Galiano Residents

1. Do you always find what you need, or have there been shortages? (If so, how do you manage with these shortages? How big of an imposition is this?)
2. Do you grow food yourself? If so, are there any limitations? (With respect to water, soil/land, obtaining seeds)
 - a. If you do NOT grow food yourself, but had opportunities to grow your own food, is that something you would consider doing?
 - b. Approximately what percentage of your total food do you grow?
 - c. Do you grow food for market? If so, where is your market? (on-island, off-island).
3. How convenient is grocery shopping and how often do you go?
4. Is it easier to eat out, or cook your own meals?
5. What do you think of the prices at the grocery stores here?
6. Approximately how much do you think you spend on food? Do you think this is a reasonable amount?
7. Are you a participant of the Galiano food program? If yes, how much do you think it benefits you? If no, why not? / did you know about this program at all?

Appendix 2: Critical Reflections

Student 1

This community-based project gives my experience in academic course a touch of the real life work. As a university student, I am used to simplify real issues in the classroom, but through the CBEL project, I feel that the real world is my classroom and the community project is my arena. Although it is a community project, I still have to rely on academic literature as something I use to backup the project's results. I find this to be a dynamic relationship because I am using previous researchers' literature and trying to fit their ideas into the project. Through this practice, it makes me realize that doing a project is not like solving an equation where I have to follow the steps in correct order to get to the right answer. However, I am demanded to have an open mind and be flexible to any changes. With unexpected changes, I am asked to be quick to adapt so the project will continue. The CBEL project has also taught me to improve myself in group work. It is essential to trust my group members, but also trust myself that i can deliver good performance throughout the course. Giving and receiving constructive feedback is also a good way to reflect myself so that I can be a better team player in order to achieve the group's success. On the other hand, I am grateful for the flexible learning sessions because it is not common for us to be given the luxury to design our own timeframe. Through that, it really pushed us to be responsible for our own work. In general, i enjoyed the course and be able to contribute my work for the community.

Student 2

I have thoroughly enjoyed being able to apply theoretical knowledge to a real world experience this term. Too often we ask ourselves the question “when will I ever need to know this?”. In my opinion, this is the critical failure of modern education. I think this course, and in particular the instructors, displayed a wonderful ability to flip traditional education and let us learn for ourselves. Beyond the actual course, I am so grateful for the CBEL project, community partner and experience we had. With this being said, there are some positives and negatives for this course. To begin, I thought the flex learning sessions gave valuable time to meet with our group and sometimes community partner and propel our project forward at the pace this course demands. However, the pace of this course is the only large criticism I have. Quizzes, though I understand the purpose, are frivolous and add unnecessary stress. I would remove them or decrease the number of readings they test. Additionally, the blog posts were a good platform to report progress and I appreciated the two attempts, however three posts instead of four might be better. Additionally having a blog and infographic due sunday, revised infographic due tuesday, presentation due wednesday and the final report and revised blog post due sunday is not a realistic timeline if you are expecting quality work. Overall I really enjoyed this course and with these revisions, I would almost take it again just for fun.

Student 3

This was my first time working closely with a community partner on an academic project. This CBEL project was a very unique experience and I learned a lot within the duration of the project. However, I find time management as our biggest challenge throughout the project. We had limited amount of time (2 days) on the island to collect all of our data. For additional data, we used online survey forum to collect the other responses. I enjoyed the time on the island, and being able to explore a food system outside of Vancouver. It was very unexpected how self-sufficient they are. Comparing to Vancouver where most people eat out and do not grow food, most residents on the island have multiple gardens and majority of them make their own food. With this course, we were able to explore new online formats of reporting our project progress such as the UBC blog. I enjoyed doing these blogs and I found them useful – group members were able to discuss the objectives for the following week and to reflect on the achievements of the previous week. It is a great way to communicate with the group members and to assess the progress within the group. I also enjoyed the flexible learning hours where we could meet up and have some spare time to finish our assignments. I found the objectives of the project slightly vague and hence why our group needs more time to discuss and go through the expectations together.

Student 4

For me, this experience was invaluable in my life. I learned so much from constantly communicating with a community stakeholder, as well as several group members. This CBEL project expanded my horizons and helped me learn more about myself. I was able to gain an

understanding of what it is like to live on an island, which is extremely valuable in my education. Being in LFS and a major in Food and Environment, it is important for me to observe all food systems and how people interact with their land in terms of food. Going to Galiano definitely helped guide me in the right direction of my degree and what I want to do in life. In fact, attending a brunch at Allison's home (a community stakeholder) was most likely the most I have ever learned in a single conversation. Our experience was not like the other students in class got to have. Physically going to the island and planning our trip made our group very close which in turn made it very easy for us to work together. It was also nice having lecture facilitate methods to better execute our project as well as give us time to work on it. Tutorial was also helpful in realizing what we were learning day to day in our experience rather than just thinking about it ourselves. It was nice to hear from other groups and listening to their difficulties in their project. This project made me enjoy this course very much! I was very lucky to be in this group to take this trip and I am most definitely going back, just with a more knowledgeable outlook!

Student 5

I was very fortunate to be part of the Galiano project which deepened my understanding of the importance of communal reliance in creating a food secure environment. Before the project, I thought of food growing as a personal choice rather than a collective effort and I did not see how connections within a community can make a great contribution to food security. After the conversations with the Galiano residents and a tour of the allotment garden as well as the community kitchen, I was surprised by how much a community can achieve by working together as a whole. I learned that a strong community bond shared among residents can provide a network for food trading and the exchange of food growing knowledge and skills, which forms a vibrant food cultivation culture. In addition, creative ideas that individuals came up with to overcome limitations such as water issues can benefit the entire community due to the close relationships between community members. Besides increasing my knowledge about food systems, the Galiano project also provided a great opportunity for me to practise both oral and written communication skills through interacting with the local residents and writing group blogs to report progress. Overall, this project was a very meaningful and unforgettable experience and I believe the skills and knowledge that I gained from the project will continue to benefit me in my academic future.

Student 6

Getting selected to learn about the food system on Galiano island as my first CBEL project is such a pleasure. Meeting my group members was also a relief because we realized that we are all hard workers. When reaching Galiano island, I learned that all of our assumptions on the project were false. Additionally, I was blown away at how prepared everyone on the island is in anticipation of unfortunate weather circumstances. While they did not have troubles in areas that we thought they would (such as ferry stoppages), they were adapted and had methods to get around difficulties that we hadn't focused on (such as usable water supply). The change in our

scope meant more work for our group, as we needed to rework the focus of our project. In doing so, I believe that my group members and I learned more about each of work ethics and emerged more successful after having gone through the struggle of figuring out how we want to go about the project. The flexible learning periods were a major component of the success of our group work. It is an allocated time in which we are all free, to focus on our project. Although our online communication is great, having flexible learning periods is the cherry on top of the cake that allows us to really thrive as a group.

Appendix 3: In Person Semi-Structured Interview answers

Interview 1:

- 1. Do you always find what you need, or have there been shortages? (If so, how do you manage with these shortages? How big of an imposition is this?)**
 - i. Sometimes short of organic items. Otherwise this person gets whatever is coming in and is available. Shortages are not a problem.*
- 2. Do you grow food yourself? If so, are there any limitations? (With respect to water, soil/land, obtaining seeds)**
 - i. Grows fresh vegetables, all organic. For example, kale, cabbage, broccoli, green beans, squash, and so forth. There are not many limitations, as this person has an artesian well (never ending water). Their soil is glaciated off of the hills.*
 - b. If you do NOT grow food yourself, but had opportunities to grow your own food, is that something you would consider doing?**
 - i. N/A*
 - c. Approximately what percentage of your total food do you grow?**
 - i. N/A*
 - d. Do you grow food for market? If so, where is your market? (on-island, off-island).**
 - i. N/A*
- 3. How convenient is grocery shopping and how often do you go?**
 - i. Usually goes to farmers markets first, then the market. Will sometimes go Costco in Victoria for cheese.*
- 4. Is it easier to eat out, or cook your own meals?**
 - i. N/A*
- 5. What do you think of the prices at the grocery stores here?**
 - i. N/A*
- 6. Approximately how much do you think you spend on food? Do you think this is a reasonable amount?**
 - i. N/A*
- 7. Are you a participant of the Galiano food program? If yes, how much do you think it benefits you? If no, why not? / did you know about this program at all?**
 - i. N/A*

Interview 2:

- 1. Do you always find what you need, or have there been shortages? (If so, how do you manage with these shortages? How big of an imposition is this?)**

- i. Interviewee 2 lived on Galiano for a while and the change has been slow, thus they have adapted and doesn't usually come across shortages.
- 2. Do you grow food yourself? If so, are there any limitations? (With respect to water, soil/land, obtaining seeds)**
- a. If you do NOT grow food yourself, but had opportunities to grow your own food, is that something you would consider doing?
 - i. Does not have a garden, but they do have some plants, such as fruit trees. There are limitations in regards to the big fruit trees blocking the sun and shading land around any soil. To adapt to water limitations, interviewee 2 has a well 200ft below sea level.
 - b. Approximately what percentage of your total food do you grow?
 - i. N/A
 - c. Do you grow food for market? If so, where is your market? (on-island, off-island).
 - i. N/A
- 3. How convenient is grocery shopping and how often do you go?**
- i. Goes grocery shopping about 3 times a week and goes to the market almost every day for convenience.
- 4. Is it easier to eat out, or cook your own meals?**
- i. Eats more packaged meals than cooking. Sometimes stocks up on soup and bread from Monday Soup and Bread events.
- 5. What do you think of the prices at the grocery stores here?**
- i. Prices are not an issue. They are reasonable.
- 6. Approximately how much do you think you spend on food? Do you think this is a reasonable amount?**
- i. N/A
- 7. Are you a participant of the Galiano food program? If yes, how much do you think it benefits you? If no, why not? / did you know about this program at all?**
- i. Yes. Attends soup and bread every second Monday, in the community hall.

Interview 3:

1. Do you always find what you need, or have there been shortages? (If so, how do you manage with these shortages? How big of an imposition is this?)
 - i. Always able to find food.
2. Do you grow food yourself? If so, are there any limitations? (With respect to water, soil/land, obtaining seeds)
 - i. Grows food themselves. Some of which include herbs and vegetables. There are not many limitations, but when the community garden occurs, there is less water to use in their own garden. There is also a lot of food trading that occurs between residents, because they cannot buy food from unauthorized vendors.
 - b. If you do NOT grow food yourself, but had opportunities to grow your own food, is that something you would consider doing?
 - i. N/A
 - c. Approximately what percentage of your total food do you grow?
 - i. N/A

- d. Do you grow food for market? If so, where is your market? (on-island, off-island).
 - i. N/A
- 3. How convenient is grocery shopping and how often do you go?
 - i. Goes to the market every day for convenience. Though for shopping they buy more at once because due to being busy and being short on time (but only when they are already in the area). Will often go off island for food, but not during the winter since the ferry is more expensive during that time.
- 4. Is it easier to eat out, or cook your own meals?
 - i. Cooks 100% of their own meals
- 5. What do you think of the prices at the grocery stores here?
 - i. N/A
- 6. Approximately how much do you think you spend on food? Do you think this is a reasonable amount?
 - i. N/A
- 7. Are you a participant of the Galiano food program? If yes, how much do you think it benefits you? If no, why not? / did you know about this program at all?
 - i. N/A

Interview 4:

- 1. Do you always find what you need, or have there been shortages? (If so, how do you manage with these shortages? How big of an imposition is this?)
 - i. Sometimes cannot find organic items. Overall, it is not much of an imposition as they can just buy regular items.
- 2. Do you grow food yourself? If so, are there any limitations? (With respect to water, soil/land, obtaining seeds)
 - i. Grows apples. There are no noticeable limitations.
 - b. If you do NOT grow food yourself, but had opportunities to grow your own food, is that something you would consider doing?
 - i. N/A
 - c. Approximately what percentage of your total food do you grow?
 - i. N/A
 - d. Do you grow food for market? If so, where is your market? (on-island, off-island).
 - i. N/A
- 3. How convenient is grocery shopping and how often do you go?
 - i. Doesn't go off the island much to buy food, though will sometimes go off-island to buy frozen food or bulk.
- 4. Is it easier to eat out, or cook your own meals?
 - i. Food is usually cooked. Rarely goes out to buy pre-made food.
- 5. What do you think of the prices at the grocery stores here?
 - i. Prices are okay. Taxes are included in prices so what is paid is usually the same as the labeled price.
- 6. Approximately how much do you think you spend on food? Do you think this is a reasonable amount?

- i. N/A
7. Are you a participant of the Galiano food program? If yes, how much do you think it benefits you? If no, why not? / did you know about this program at all?
- i. Yes. *Gathers information about connection between buyers and sellers.*

Interview 5:

1. Do you always find what you need, or have there been shortages? (If so, how do you manage with these shortages? How big of an imposition is this?)
 - i. *Always finds what is needed. If not then they can just adjust easily. Sometimes there are shortages of fresh fish.*
2. Do you grow food yourself? If so, are there any limitations? (With respect to water, soil/land, obtaining seeds)
 - a. If you do NOT grow food yourself, but had opportunities to grow your own food, is that something you would consider doing?
 - i. *Comes here part time, so is not able to grow food. Other reasons include not having a fence, thus deer can come in and eat things. There is also a water issue in the Summer. Though they have a well, they cannot be sure how much water is in it.*
 - b. Approximately what percentage of your total food do you grow?
 - i. N/A
 - c. Do you grow food for market? If so, where is your market? (on-island, off-island).
 - i. N/A
3. How convenient is grocery shopping and how often do you go?
 - i. *Goes grocery shopping every other day. There is also a potluck that people often go to for meals.*
4. Is it easier to eat out, or cook your own meals?
 - i. *Only eats out about once a month. Mostly prepares own food.*
5. What do you think of the prices at the grocery stores here?
 - i. *Reasonable.*
6. Approximately how much do you think you spend on food? Do you think this is a reasonable amount?
 - i. *About \$100 a food per month (\$150 if eating out)*
7. Are you a participant of the Galiano food program? If yes, how much do you think it benefits you? If no, why not? / did you know about this program at all?
 - i. N/A

Interview 6:

1. Do you always find what you need, or have there been shortages? (If so, how do you manage with these shortages? How big of an imposition is this?)
 - i. *Doesn't encounter shortages, usually finds what is needed.*
2. Do you grow food yourself? If so, are there any limitations? (With respect to water, soil/land, obtaining seeds)

- a. If you do NOT grow food yourself, but had opportunities to grow your own food, is that something you would consider doing?
 - i. No time to grow own food.
 - b. Approximately what percentage of your total food do you grow?
 - i. N/A
 - c. Do you grow food for market? If so, where is your market? (on-island, off-island).
 - i. N/A
3. How convenient is grocery shopping and how often do you go?
 - i. N/A
 4. Is it easier to eat out, or cook your own meals?
 - i. Usually eats out because there's no time to cook their own meals. (Additionally, there are about 12 places to eat around the island).
 5. What do you think of the prices at the grocery stores here?
 - i. N/A
 6. Approximately how much do you think you spend on food? Do you think this is a reasonable amount?
 - i. About \$1000 per month on food/meals.
 7. Are you a participant of the Galiano food program? If yes, how much do you think it benefits you? If no, why not? / did you know about this program at all?
 - i. N/A

Interview 7:

1. Do you always find what you need, or have there been shortages? (If so, how do you manage with these shortages? How big of an imposition is this?)
 - i. Always goes to the daystar market, and sometimes notices shortages in items such as meats and vegetables.
2. Do you grow food yourself? If so, are there any limitations? (With respect to water, soil/land, obtaining seeds)
 - i. Sometimes grows food for themselves.
 - b. If you do NOT grow food yourself, but had opportunities to grow your own food, is that something you would consider doing?
 - i. N/A
 - c. Approximately what percentage of your total food do you grow?
 - i. N/A
 - d. Do you grow food for market? If so, where is your market? (on-island, off-island).
 - i. N/A
3. How convenient is grocery shopping and how often do you go?
 - i. Grocery shopping is quite convenient. Sometimes goes to Victoria to buy frozen fish and toilet paper about once a month.
4. Is it easier to eat out, or cook your own meals?
 - i. N/A
5. What do you think of the prices at the grocery stores here?
 - i. Some prices are fairly good.

- 6. Approximately how much do you think you spend on food? Do you think this is a reasonable amount?**
 - i. N/A*
- 7. Are you a participant of the Galiano food program? If yes, how much do you think it benefits you? If no, why not? / did you know about this program at all?**
 - i. Sometimes goes to events held by the Galiano Food Program.*