Food Security

The topic of food security is an emerging issue and is closely linked to land management activities, climate change and the management of wild renewable resources. The following information is provided to introduce the subject to those not familiar with this issue.

Definition:

The World Health Organization defines food security as "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life".

Food Security is defined by Carolina Behe at the 2012 Inuit Circumpolar Council as the successful junction of three components of local resources:

- Availability
- Accessibility
- Utilization

Behe, Carolina. July 10, 2012. How to assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Framework on How to assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic

There is also considerable interest in promoting the use of locally grown, harvested and produced foods. The following websites may appeal to locavores. http://sitkalocalfoodsnetwork.org/; http://www.locavores.com/

Food Vulnerability

Food security may be compromised due to:

- Climate change
- Human developments
- Cultural shifts
- Harvest regulations and competition

Accountability

How do we evaluate and maintain food security

- Understand the dynamics effecting the abundance and distribution of wild resources
- Incorporate and provide consideration for the social and cultural consequences of land management and other human induced sources of disruptions
- Recognize that harvest and land use regulations may effect food security
- Factors affecting food security should be recognized and minimized

Agency Policies

The Strategic Plan for FY2012-2015 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture references food security in Strategic Goal 2, Objective 2.1:

"Restoring declining ecosystems and protecting healthy one will ensure the Nation's lands are resilient to threats and impacts from a changing climate. It will also provide ecosystem benefits, food, fiber, and timber and non-timber products in a sustainable way."

Current Events

The Alaska Federation of Natives adopted a "FOOD SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT OF SUBSISTENCE RESOURCES ACTION PLAN" during their 2012 Annual Convention. Major components of this plan included:

- Restoration of Native rights to harvest wild renewable resources and promote a meaningful role for Alaska Natives in management of the resources
- Expansion of federal jurisdiction to waters up-stream and down-stream from federal enclaves and to Native allotments and advocate for a Constitutional Amendment to Alaska's Constitution that would recognize Alaska Native subsistence rights
- Work within established groups and statues (Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council) to adopt management measures through consultation with affected tribes that will protect subsistence uses

The report "The Inuit and the Right to Food", a submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food for the Official Country, Mission to Canada, 2012; defines the right to food as:

"The right to have regular, permanent and free access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear."

In 2005 Sophie Thériault et al. published an article in the Alaska Law Review, "THE LEGAL PROTECTION OF SUBSISTENCE: A PREREQUISITE OF FOOD SECURITY FOR THE INUIT OF ALASKA". The following is the executive summary:

"For the last twenty-five years, the legal protection of subsistence in Alaska has given rise to legal and political controversies. Subsistence is closely related to the concept of "food security," as defined by the World Food Summit. The purpose of this Article is to highlight the need to recognize and critically examine the link between food security and the efficient legal protection of the traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering activities of the Inuit people of Alaska. The Article first describes the genesis and evolution of the subsistence debate in Alaska. It then attempts to demonstrate that the legal protection of subsistence is a prerequisite to Inuit food security for nutritional, cultural, and economic reasons. Finally, the Article identifies specific features of the Alaskan legal regime that threaten Inuit subsistence and food security."

The Alaska Indigenous blog published an article by Tim Aqukkasuk on August 9, 2013 titled Food Security in the North pt2: how to win the subsistence debate. Concepts highlighted in this blog include:

Conflict should be expected because country food harvesting is governed by state and federal regulation rather than local indigenous management regimes that recognize differences in social and economic circumstances between rural Native and urban non-Native people.