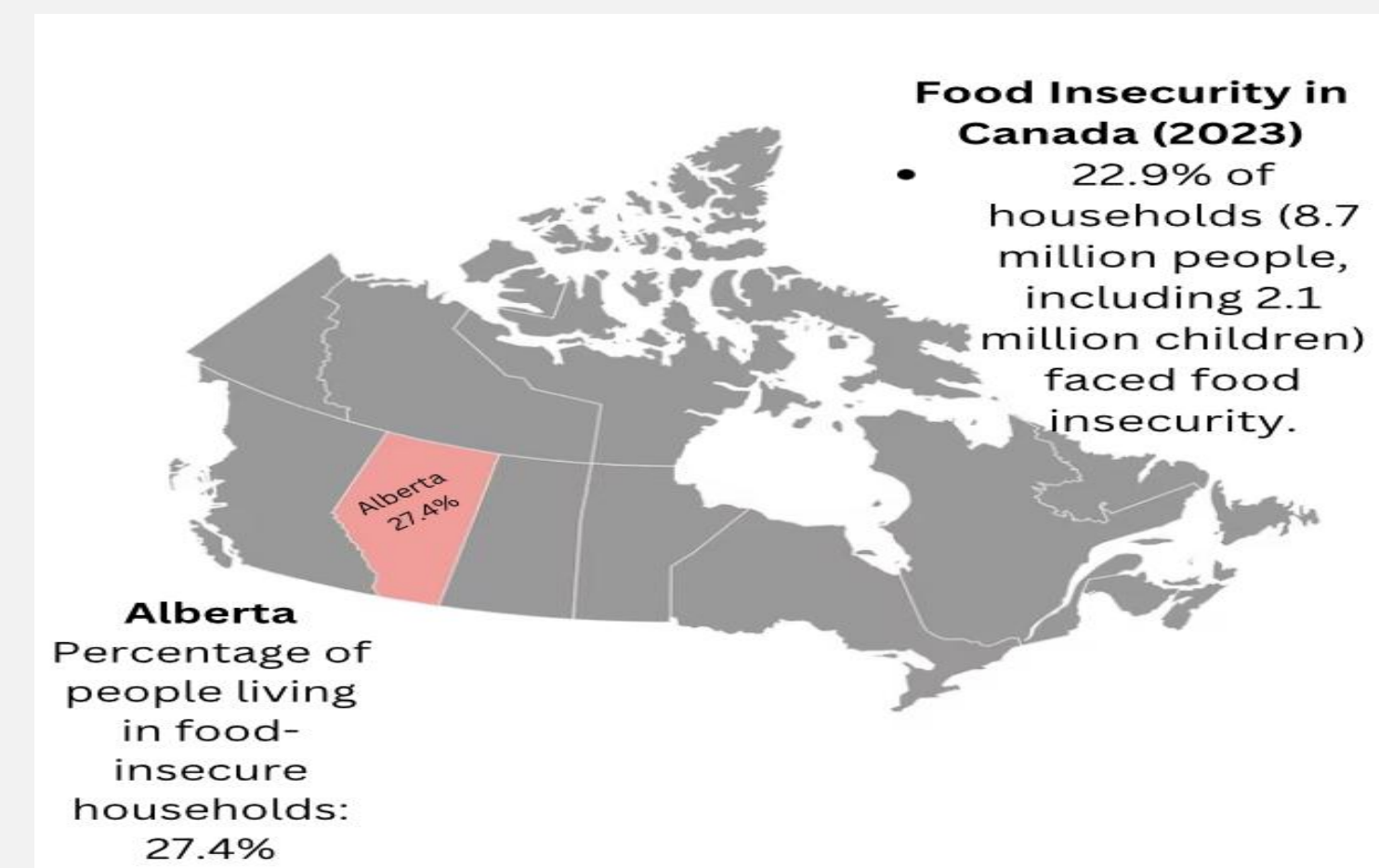


BACKGROUND

- Rising food prices and inflation are driving millions of Canadians into food insecurity, making it difficult for households to access affordable and nutritious food (Dahal et al., 2023).
- Canada's food system is highly concentrated, with few large corporations dominating food production, processing and distribution. This concentrated food system is unsustainable and vulnerable to crises due to its reliance on industrialized production and nonrenewable resources (Wittman et al., 2011).
- This highlights the need for initiatives and interventions to address these challenges and ensure access to healthy and affordable food for Canadians. One such initiative is Food Cooperative, which provides an alternative to corporate-led food systems and helps address food access and affordability issues.



LITERATURE REVIEW

- Cooperatives, which started in Europe in the 19th century, emerged as a response to high market prices to create alternatives to dominant market structures (Bastias, 2013).
- Food cooperatives offer a community-oriented and decentralized approach to food provisioning, strengthening food security and building resilience (Guthman, 2008).
- Food cooperatives promote sustainable food practices by supporting the production and consumption of local, organic, and ethically sourced food (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019).
- However, with the recent food inflation and increasing food insecurity, the role and effectiveness of food cooperatives in addressing these challenges require further exploration.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What roles do food cooperatives in Alberta play in addressing challenges within the food system, particularly in relation to inflation, rising food prices, sustainability, and food insecurity?

METHODOLOGY

Mixed Methods Approach:

- **Semi-structured Interviews:**
Interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders of food cooperatives in Alberta.
- **Surveys:**
Surveys will be distributed to members of food cooperatives in Alberta.
- **Document Analysis:**
Ongoing review of key documents, including annual reports, sustainability reports, press releases, program descriptions, and co-op web pages.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data: Thematic analysis
 Quantitative data: Descriptive and Inferential statistics.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Challenges	Food Co-op Strategies	Examples/Programs
Inflation and Rising Food Prices	• Bulk buying and resource pooling to lower costs for members.	Food basket & Organic box.
	• Local sourcing for economic resilience.	Best from the West.
	• Member incentive and profit redistribution to improve affordability.	Dividends, Cash-back programs, equity benefit.
	• Hydroponic farming for access to affordable local produce year-round.	New Horizon Local Garden.
Sustainability	• Diverting unused food to livestock feed to reduce waste.	Loop program
	• Environmental regeneration to restore ecosystems and promote biodiversity.	Grown with purpose program, hydroponic farming
	• Local and ethical sourcing to reduce carbon emissions.	
Food Security	• Redistributing surplus food through community-driven initiatives to combat hunger.	Fresh Food Rescue Program, Turkey Ham Jam Food Drive
	• Funding and donation programs to support vulnerable populations.	Good Buy to Hunger Program

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Does the current policy framework influence food cooperatives' ability to address rising food prices, food insecurity, and sustainability challenges?
- What policy measures or incentives can the government implement to better support food cooperatives in addressing food insecurity, stabilizing food prices, and promoting sustainable practices?