**Dalhousie University Study Sheds Light on Campus Food Banks and Student Food Insecurity in Maritime Canada**

**Halifax, September 8, 2023** - A study conducted by the **Agri-Food Analytics** Lab at **Dalhousie University**, led by **Mitch Archibald** and co-authored by **Dr. Sylvain Charlebois**, has unveiled crucial insights into Campus Food Banks (CFBs) and the pervasive issue of student food insecurity in the Maritime provinces of Canada. The study, which scrutinized demographic characteristics, motivations, and challenges faced by 133 students across 11 academic institutions, has highlighted the pressing need for attention to this critical issue.

The research confirmed existing scholarship, revealing that students identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and/or 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual) **tend to experience higher levels of food insecurity compared to their counterparts**. Additionally, the study highlighted the significant relationship between food security and academic success, financial stability, and general well-being.

A unique observation emerged when analyzing the economic dimensions of the sample population. **Students from more food-insecure households exhibited higher median individual incomes but lower median household incomes**, challenging conventional metrics for assessing resource allocation and financial stability within diverse household compositions.

Awareness proved to be a critical factor affecting access to CFBs. **The study revealed that approximately 40% of students from moderately to severely food-insecure households lacked knowledge about how to access CFBs or were unaware of their existence**. The results emphasize the need for increased marketing and promotional efforts by CFB administrators to reach a broader population of students experiencing food insecurity.

Lead author **Mitch Archibald** commented on the study's findings, saying, "Our research sheds light on the complex web of factors influencing student food insecurity and their engagement with Campus Food Banks. It underscores the urgency of addressing this issue and highlights the need for innovative solutions and greater awareness to ensure that no student goes hungry on our campuses."

The frequency of CFB utilization was also a focal point of the research. **Twice as many students accessed CFBs monthly compared to off-campus food banks**. However, the study highlighted a potential gap in reaching students from severely food-insecure households, with less than one-third accessing CFBs monthly. This raises questions about the effectiveness of prior engagement with CFBs in mitigating food insecurity.

The study delved into the motivating factors behind student engagement with CFBs, revealing that students with higher levels of household food insecurity were slightly more comfortable accessing CFBs. However, **over 50% of students facing severe food insecurity expressed reservations about using CFBs, indicating a potential stigma associated with these resources**.

Moreover, the research revealed that a substantial portion of students, even those with moderate to severe food insecurity, did not perceive themselves as eligible to access CFBs, while others did not deem it necessary to do so. The governance model of CFBs appeared to influence students' willingness to engage with these services, **with students generally feeling more comfortable with CFBs administered by their academic institutions**.

Co-author **Dr. Sylvain Charlebois** emphasized, "Understanding the dynamics of student food insecurity is essential, and our research provides critical insights into this pressing challenge. We are committed to supporting initiatives that will make a tangible difference in the lives of students across the Maritime provinces and beyond."

The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of reshaping student attitudes toward CFBs and considering the governance model employed by CFBs to expand outreach to students in need. These findings offer valuable opportunities for CFB administrators to develop strategic initiatives to address student food insecurity more effectively.

Download the preliminary results of the survey in English and French at <https://www.dal.ca/sites/agri-food.html>.

**Contacts**

Mitch Archibald, Research Associate

Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University

[mitch.archibald@nshealth.ca](mailto:mitch.archibald@nshealth.ca)

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Director

Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University

[sylvain.charlebois@dal.ca](mailto:sylvain.charlebois@dal.ca)

Janet Music, Research Program Coordinator

Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University

[janet.music@dal.ca](mailto:janet.music@dal.ca)

**Disclosure**: Funding for the survey was provided by Dalhousie University.