



RDN REPORT	
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JUN 29 2012	
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BOARD	

## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Jeremy Holm  
Manager, Current Planning

**DATE:** June 27, 2012

**FROM:** Lainya Rowett  
Senior Planner

**FILE:** 0360 20 AAC

**SUBJECT:** Agricultural Area Plan – Results of Online Public Survey and Status Update

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### PURPOSE

To provide information to the Committee of the Whole on the results of the online public survey for the draft Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Agricultural Area Plan, and to provide a status update on the Plan.

### BACKGROUND

In May 2012, the Committee of the Whole received the draft RDN Agricultural Area Plan (AAP). Subsequently, staff worked with the project consultant, Upland Consulting, to create an online public survey to solicit further public comment on the draft AAP and its recommended goals and objectives. The survey was posted from May 15, 2012 until June 15, 2012 and a total of 112 people participated. The following discussion provides a summary of the results of this survey.

### DISCUSSION

The online survey consisted of seventeen questions seeking public comment on the following information in relation to the draft AAP:

- how people heard about the Plan;
- the Plan vision statement;
- public perception of agriculture in the region;
- the Plan goals and objectives;
- potential key players and funding agencies that could support Plan implementation;
- demographic profile of survey participants; and
- general comments on the draft Plan.

### *Survey Results*

A detailed analysis of the survey responses is provided in this report (see Attachment 1 Summary of Online Survey Results). In general, most people indicated that they heard about the Agricultural Area Plan through reading an article in the local newspaper or visiting the project web site ([www.growingourfuture.ca](http://www.growingourfuture.ca)). For others, it was the first time they had heard about the Plan. Many indicated they had communicated directly with RDN staff and/or the project consultant.

Approximately 78% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the vision statement in the draft Plan. Some people provided comments on how they would change the vision statement. Further discussion on these comments is provided in the next section on themes/issues raised in the responses.

When asked to describe, in one word, what agriculture in the Nanaimo region means to each survey participant, the top five most frequently used words included:

1. Food
2. Sustainability
3. Security
4. Health
5. Survival

other commonly used words included: local, fresh, self-sufficiency and employment.

The majority of respondents (average 87%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with each of the draft Plan goals and objectives.

The survey also presented a list of potential key players and a list of funding agencies that were identified in the draft Plan as supporting partners for Plan implementation. The public was encouraged to add any partners who were not identified on these lists, and several additional partners were identified.

The demographic profile of survey participants revealed that most of them (31%) live in the City of Nanaimo, while 13% live in Electoral Area ‘H’ and 11% live in Electoral Area ‘A’. There was some representation from every electoral area and member municipality in the region. Fifty per cent of respondents said they have lived in the region for more than 20 years; another 20% have lived in the region for 6-10 years. The majority of people (61%) were aged 50-69 years, while another 28% were aged 30-49 years.

At the end of the survey, 49 people provided additional general comments on the draft Plan (see Attachment 1 Summary of Online Survey Results). The nature of these comments varied, but typically referenced the following:

- Individual experiences and challenges of viable local agriculture in the RDN (e.g. cost-prohibitive land prices, restrictive regulations, lack of animal slaughtering facilities);
- Suggested solutions to support local agriculture and aquaculture (e.g. diversification, grass-roots initiatives, public education, stronger support from senior levels of government);
- Positive feedback on the Plan (e.g. RDN taking action and making this Plan a priority, draft recommendations support local agriculture/aquaculture).
- Collective desire to see the Plan implemented and more food grown locally.

#### ***Common Themes/Issues Raised in Response to the Draft AAP Goals***

Staff reviewed all comments provided in response to the draft AAP goals, specifically, to determine if there were any re-occurring themes or issues raised that may require further revisions to the draft Plan. The following seven themes/issues were identified:

1. The vision statement is lengthy and the wording needs some clarification.
2. The Plan should acknowledge potential sources of conflict between agriculture and aquaculture activities and discuss how these industries need to work cooperatively.
3. Suggestion to establish agriculture and aquaculture targets.
4. Comment that not all ALR land should be protected, but that ALR should be based on its potential for agricultural production.
5. The role of private enterprise in supporting agriculture and aquaculture as economically viable industries should be recognized in the Plan.
6. Agricultural lands need access to receive compost materials. Need to consider impacts of waste stream licensing regulations.
7. Additional key players and funding agencies were suggested by respondents.

The survey comments, along with a revised draft Plan as amended to include comments provided by Board Directors, were presented to the RDN Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) (the AAP Steering Committee) at their meeting held on June 22, 2012. Each of the seven themes/issues identified from the survey comments was presented to the AAC with a proposed amendment to the draft Plan. The AAC endorsed the proposed amendments as detailed in the draft AAC minutes, which also appear on the July 10, 2012 Committee of the Whole agenda. Staff are working with Upland Consulting to incorporate these amendments and all final edits into the AAP for the Board's consideration of plan adoption in the late summer 2012.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. To receive the Agricultural Area Plan status update and the "Summary of online survey results for the RDN Draft Agricultural Area Plan".
2. To provide staff with alternative direction.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The draft Agricultural Area Plan includes a variety of recommendations and implementation actions for consideration by the Board. The resource implications of these recommendations will be reviewed by the Board as part of the Board's direction in implementing the Plan and would be considered through the adoption of annual budgets along with other competing priorities. It is anticipated that the final AAP document will be brought forward to the Board for consideration of adoption in the late summer 2012.

#### **SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS**

The draft RDN Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) was received by the RDN Board in April 2012. Subsequently, staff and the project consultant initiated an online public survey to gather public comment on the draft Plan and its recommended goals and objectives. The survey was posted from May 15, 2012 until June 15, 2012 and a total of 112 people participated. This report is intended to provide a status update on the AAP and a summary of the survey results in order to prepare the final AAP document for the Board's consideration of adoption in the late summer 2012.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the the status update on the AAP and the “Summary of online survey results for the RDN Draft Agricultural Area Plan” be received.



Report Writer



General Manager Concurrency



Manager Concurrency

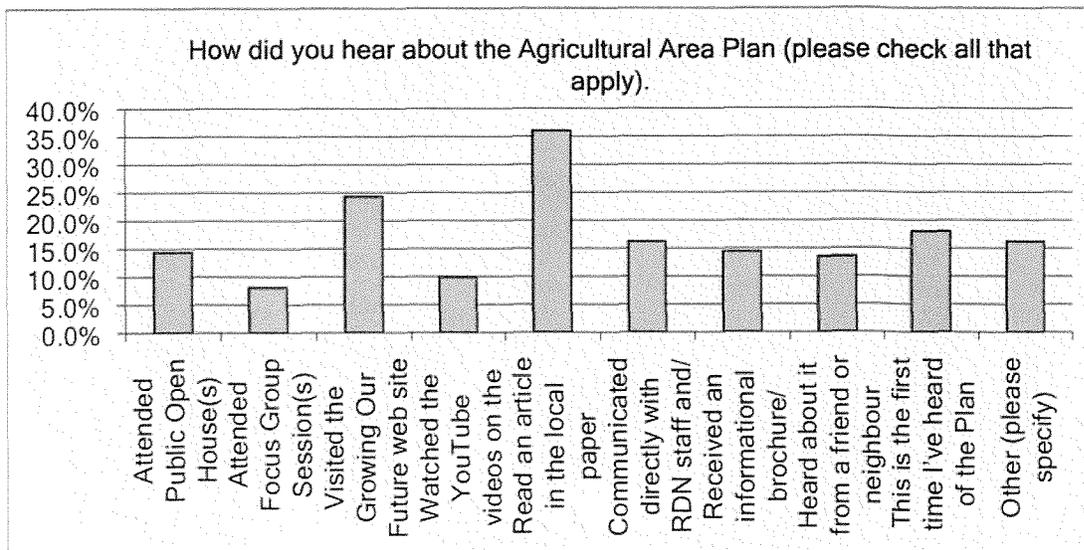


CAO Concurrency

**Attachment 1**  
**Summary of Online Survey Results for the RDN Draft Agricultural Area Plan**  
**June 20, 2012**

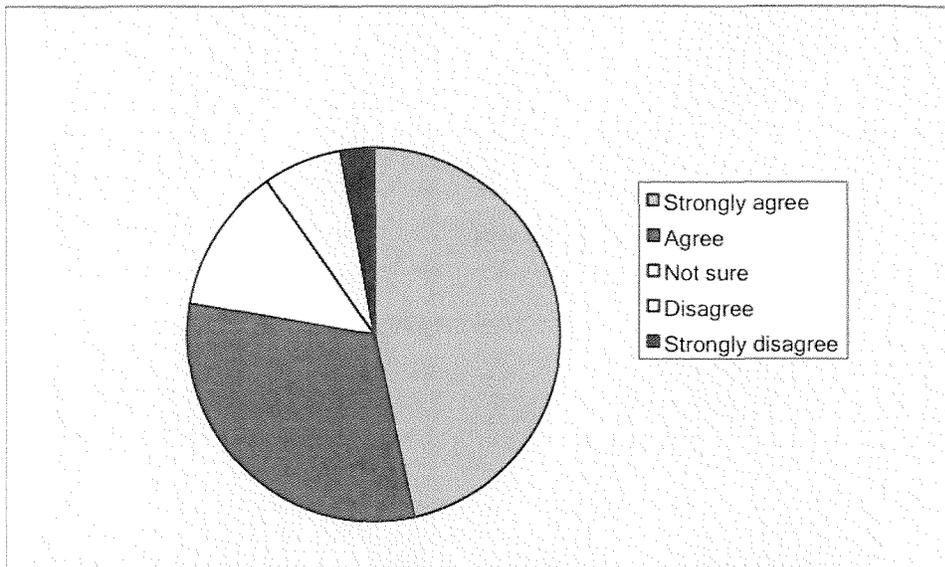
**Q1. How did you hear about the Agricultural Area Plan (please check all that apply)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Attended Public Open House(s)	14.4%	16
Attended Focus Group Session(s)	8.1%	9
Visited the Growing Our Future web site	24.3%	27
Watched the YouTube videos on the Growing Our Future web site	9.9%	11
Read an article in the local paper	36.0%	40
Communicated directly with RDN staff and/or the project Consultant	16.2%	18
Received an informational brochure/postcard at the Farmers Market or other event	14.4%	16
Heard about it from a friend or neighbour	13.5%	15
This is the first time I've heard of the Plan	18.0%	20
Other (please specify)	16.2%	18
<i>answered question</i>		<b>111</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>



**Q2. Do you agree that the Vision statement reflects your own Vision for agriculture in the Nanaimo region? Please select one:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	46.6%	48
Agree	31.1%	32
Not sure	12.6%	13
Disagree	6.8%	7
Strongly disagree	2.9%	3
If you disagree please explain why:		18
<i>answered question</i>		<b>103</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>9</b>



**Would you add or change any part of the Vision statement?**

Answer Options	Response Count
Yes	38
<i>answered question</i>	
<b>38</b>	
<i>skipped question</i>	
<b>74</b>	

**In ONE WORD please describe what agriculture in the Nanaimo region means to you.**

Answer Options	Response Count
	97
<i>answered question</i>	
<b>97</b>	
<i>skipped question</i>	
<b>15</b>	

### Questions Regarding Public Support for the Draft AAP Goals:

#### Goal #1 - Protect and Enhance the Agricultural Land Base in the RDN

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	65.2%	60
Agree	21.7%	20
Not Sure	5.4%	5
Disagree	4.3%	4
Strongly Disagree	3.3%	3
If you disagree please explain why:		12
<i>answered question</i>		92
<i>skipped question</i>		20

#### Goal #2 - Strengthen the Local Agriculture and Aquaculture Economy

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	58.5%	55
Agree	30.9%	29
Not Sure	3.2%	3
Disagree	3.2%	3
Strongly Disagree	4.3%	4
If you disagree please explain why:		8
<i>answered question</i>		94
<i>skipped question</i>		18

#### Goal #3 - Improve Training, Skills, and Labour Opportunities in the RDN

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	52.2%	48
Agree	34.8%	32
Not Sure	9.8%	9
Disagree	1.1%	1
Strongly Disagree	2.2%	2
If you disagree please explain why:		9
<i>answered question</i>		92
<i>skipped question</i>		20

#### Goal #4 - Improve Opportunities for On-Farm Water Resource Management

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	57.6%	53
Agree	28.3%	26
Not Sure	8.7%	8
Disagree	2.2%	2

Strongly Disagree	3.3%	3
If you disagree please explain why:		12
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>92</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>20</b>

**Goal #5 - Address Environmental Sustainability, Wildlife, and Climate Change Challenges in the RDN**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	63.4%	59
Agree	24.7%	23
Not Sure	6.5%	6
Disagree	2.2%	2
Strongly Disagree	3.2%	3
If you disagree please explain why:		14
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>93</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>19</b>

**Goal #6 - Promote Agriculture and Aquaculture through Education and Celebration**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	55.4%	51
Agree	32.6%	30
Not Sure	8.7%	8
Disagree	1.1%	1
Strongly Disagree	2.2%	2
If you disagree please explain why:		11
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>92</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>20</b>

**Goal #7 - Support Agriculture and Aquaculture in Land Use Regulations and Policies**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	50.0%	46
Agree	32.6%	30
Not Sure	9.8%	9
Disagree	3.3%	3
Strongly Disagree	4.3%	4
If you disagree please explain why:		17
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>92</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>20</b>

**Common Themes/Issues Raised in Survey Responses to AAP Goals:**

The following public comments were re-occurring in response to the draft AAP Goals:

1. The vision statement is lengthy and the wording needs some clarification.
2. The Plan should acknowledge potential sources of conflict between agriculture on aquaculture activities and discuss how these industries need to work cooperatively.

3. Suggestion to establish agriculture and aquaculture targets.
4. Comment that not all ALR land should be protected, but that ALR should be based on its potential for agricultural production.
5. The role of private enterprise in supporting agriculture and aquaculture as economically viable industries should be recognized in the Plan.
6. Agricultural lands need access to receive compost materials. Need to consider impacts of waste stream licensing regulations.
7. Additional key players and funding agencies were suggested by respondents.

**Q 12, Can you think of any additional potential partners who are not identified in this list?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	55.6%	50
Yes (please specify which organizations are missing and how they should be involved):	44.4%	40
<i>answered question</i>		<b>90</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>22</b>

**Q, 13 - Are you aware of any additional funding agencies that may be able to support the implementation of the actions identified in the Draft Agricultural Area Plan?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	80.5%	70
Yes (please specify and indicate which actions of the Ag Area Plan they might support):	19.5%	17
<i>answered question</i>		<b>87</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>25</b>

**Q. 14 - In which area of the Regional District of Nanaimo do you live in? Please choose one:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Lantzville	8.6%	8
Nanaimo	31.2%	29
Parksville	3.2%	3
Qualicum Beach	2.2%	2
Electoral Area 'A' (Cassidy, Cedar, Yellowpoint, South Wellington)	10.8%	10
Electoral Area 'B' (Gabriola, DeCourcy, Mudge Islands)	2.2%	2
Electoral Area 'C' (Extension, Arrowsmith-Benson, East Wellington, Pleasant Valley)	6.5%	6
Electoral Area 'E' (Nanoose Bay)	7.5%	7
Electoral Area 'F' (Coombs, Hilliers, Errington)	3.2%	3
Electoral Area 'G' (French Creek, Dashwood, Englishman River)	5.4%	5
Electoral Area 'H' (Qualicum Bay, Deep Bay, Bowser)	12.9%	12
Out of the region (please specify):	6.5%	6
<i>answered question</i>		<b>93</b>

<i>skipped question</i>			19
<b>Q. 15 - How long have you lived in the Nanaimo region?</b>			
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
1 year or less	4.3%	4	
2-5 years	10.8%	10	
6-10 years	20.4%	19	
11-20 years	15.1%	14	
More than 20 years	49.5%	46	
<i>answered question</i>			93
<i>skipped question</i>			19
<b>Q. 16 - Which category below includes your age?</b>			
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
15 or younger	0.0%	0	
16-20	1.1%	1	
21-29	1.1%	1	
30-39	15.2%	14	
40-49	13.0%	12	
50-59	27.2%	25	
60-69	33.7%	31	
70 or older	8.7%	8	
<i>answered question</i>			92
<i>skipped question</i>			20
<b>Q. 17- Do you have any additional comments?</b>			
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
No	41.0%	34	
Yes:	59.0%	49	
<i>answered question</i>			83
<i>skipped question</i>			29

**General Comments Provided in Survey:**

During emergencies, livestock handling poses a big challenge.

As a young farmer who struggles with land access I will be happy to see these plans implemented.

I am a small business operator in North Nanaimo on 17 acres, I would love to know how I can use my land for my soil business and or growing for the community

It is great to see a comprehensive agricultural plan for the RDN - well done to the staff and volunteer members who worked so hard to develop this. It would be great to see farmer's markets all over the region so we can access locally grown products direct from the growers more easily than we could get imported food from the grocery store. I know there are a few markets around now, but it would be wonderful to see more!

Agriculture is very important to everyone. Our children need to know that their food does not come only from the grocery store. We need to be able to produce sustainable and affordable food for all, locally. I certainly agree with the need for an Agricultural Area Plan both personally and also with the Vancouver Island Exhibition's proposed Agricultural Center.

It's nice to see that this is a priority! About time!:)

I believe that local farming is necessary to our physical well-being and to our sense of community. We all need to be responsible for our choices and to be aware of where our food comes from and how it is grown. If we do not encourage local farming we become dependent on other countries, other economies, other ideologies, and we lose valuable agricultural land and opportunity. Let's support BC grown. Let's learn to pay more for local that is healthy and sustainable. Let's buy seasonally. Let's have our farmers earn a good living.

Every year Nanaimo river takes more of the farm. Dykes beside the river to protect Harmac wells make it worse for the farm that cannot afford a dyke. How much does the federal government spend dredging the farmland that the river deposits. Maybe dyking the farmland is money better spent?

It all sounds great, but let's see if it can be implemented?

Provide land use policy and guidance through zoning that does not promote agriculture in the coastal waterfront zone, in particular, near sensitive shellfish tenures. Embrace Aquaculture by protecting the water from pollution from farming practices in Baynes Sound. Promote responsible development.

farming and food production is essential in these times and in the future but as I mentioned before the RDN has cut land in half and I am one who is stuck with 4 acres that can't be removed from the ALR and have 2 acres that are light industrial making it difficult to do anything with the land, not benefiting anyone or anything. If it is a "farm" producing food it should remain as such but the RDN should not force these terms on the land that isn't being used for that purpose now or in the past or future. Changes need to be made to address this as more residential land is also needed.

To my knowledge there are no fish farms in this area and if they were to come they should be not pens in the water but tanks on land.

Promotion of farming is a nice thought but there are so many restrictions and regulations regarding how the produce gets to the consumer. I own 20 acres of farm-able land but the governing bodies involved in food safe requirements make it impossible for me to resume the farming I once did, namely beef, chicken and pork. The costs involved in getting the animal to the final consumer have become too great especially now that the small butchers have been run out of the area.

Baynes Sound (Deep Bay) aquaculture should be protected from run-off due to urban and agricultural development.

There is too much land used and wasted growing hay for horses etc. There are too many hobby farms, between 2-10 acres that have income of just over \$2500 to qualify to pay farm taxes vs. property taxes, which is ludicrous in this day and age. Minimum amount should be increased to \$5000.

I've tried to get my 2.5 acre property in the farm status category to raise beef, but it seems to be quite cumbersome to get an approval.

Over 50 years ago Vancouver Island use to grow 50% of our own food. It has shrunk to only 5%. Growing more local base food has more nutrients and there is less impact on energy resources. Food grown locally tastes better, too.

Our family is very interested in purchasing a piece of ALR land - it is owned by a wealthy foreigner, the asking price is unrealistic (not just by our standards), the land has not been cared for and needs a lot of input to get it to a production stage, and there is HST on the land, until the rules change - and then there will still be GST. It is frustrating to see the assessment continue to increase when the value isn't there, even though farmland has become a hot commodity.

Aquaculture is water based, but it may be processed on land. It is governed by the provincial and federal governments. Unless the regional district now has jurisdiction over ocean activities, then isn't the RDN outside its jurisdiction? Land activities should include inspection of any shellfish processing for infringement of zoning designations. If all aquaculture requires ALR land, then review of the current situation is necessary.

I have just purchased 5 acres in Cedar and besides training/boarding horses, trying to find other profitable uses for the land. I appreciate the effort put forward in this program.

There are rules existing. Farmers must survive or fail on their own efforts. If not successful then they fail and have to sell the land to someone who will either succeed or fail Governments cannot make people succeed. I will buy local produce and even pay more if there is a good taste however I look after my budget and will buy whatever is equal in freshness and taste and at an equal price.

I proudly purchase from and support local companies such as Paradise Foods, and I am very happy to see more focus on local food production and land protection. Any and all organic opportunities I highly recommend too, and will support.

This plan is well thought out and I believe it contains a number of good objectives which will get us closer to producing more locally grown food. However, as with other high level Ag plans I have read such as this, there is never enough emphasis placed on the actual business of farming and how these farms actually make money, or go broke. Costs and inputs are key, and how to reduce costs and inputs needs to be a primary focus. Just for example; land is a primary cost of any successful farming operation, and increasing the supply of good, affordable, and arable land is barely mentioned. Although touched on in objective 1.1 G, we MUST HAVE flexibility in our RGS', OCP's, and subdivision land use policies to create more land for agriculture thereby reducing the price of farm land overall. Forestry Companies, Developers and Farm Owners, should be encouraged to bring forward agricultural based development initiatives which are outside the realm of normal (i.e. cookie cutter) thinking. Perhaps, this might include a turn-key, master planned farming community? This is just an example. By encouraging a MIXTURE of both farm and non-farm uses on certain ALR parcels the overall economics of the operation will work and thereby ensure the actual productive lands are actually used for farming rather than just laying fallow. No disrespect to the RDN or the writer, but too often these overarching policy plans just want to draw a line in the sand (i.e. line on the map), convey a set of ideals, and hope that it all comes together...eventually. If some subdivision of ALR is a means to an 'end' so be it. Provided at the 'end' we have more land in food production. That is the real goal here isn't it? This is a good start but it needs further thought as to how/why people are motivated to do things. If we don't acknowledge simple land economics, what drives people to enter new business, and provide proper incentives for farmers, people considering farming, or people considering developing their land, I am afraid nothing will change.

Keep it simple - reduce the red tape and explanations as this plan moves forward.

Be flexible and nothing is permanent. Keep it simple.

This is very exciting and as a new farmer to the area, I look forward to participating in some of the programs.

We must make farms affordable and profitable so young people will consider it as an occupation or career. We need to put a higher value (not monetary) on farmland in terms of ensuring our own local food supply, quality of life, providing green space for wildlife etc. We have a very limited supply of farmland and I would hate to see in the RDN what has taken place in areas like Richmond & Surrey where so much good farmland has been covered with subdivisions and warehouses. Please do not let that happen here.

The loss/un-use of farm land shocks me, good farms being subdivided or even worse torn up and then neglected. We have to encourage gardens on all scales; I'd like to see more demonstration gardens/farms and a market for the small producer and big scale growers. And I think diversity is essential both for healthy farms and to provide full sustainability in our region.

This needs a lot more work. Whatever you do please make sure that there are no subsidies to rural activities. This will spell their death knell. Help them stand on their own two feet.

Include a plan for more community gardens in low income housing projects. Ask the people what their food security needs are. Encourage the Parks and Recreation to plant fruit and nut trees to line the streets, edible creeping thyme instead of grass. Consult with communities our size from other countries who have built sustainable agricultural bases.

My husband and I have a small poultry farm (2 and one half acres) within the City of Nanaimo. We are putting in an application to the BC Assessment Authority for farm status. We sincerely hope that because of the size of our farm we will not be excluded from the Agricultural Area Plan. This is our retirement dream and will welcome any information and help that will become available. A lot of the information we now have regarding farming has been trial and error and somewhat expensive. I believe the RDN is on the right track here.

If you are really serious about this, then you will need to have slaughter houses for livestock, the requisite veterinarians, etc, but at least if the food is for local consumption it would not require federal/provincial inspection, but tight municipal inspection.

Let's make it happen by following through.

There are strong economic benefits to buying local, we need to market and build on this fact.

Whatever guidelines become regulations be prepared to enforce them expediently. Monetary fines are still the most effective in our culture for obtaining compliance.

I'd like to highlight that the most important areas in this plan are: preserving arable land from development, reconstituting by-laws and other municipal regulations to be more supportive of agriculture, and educating the general public on the importance of local agriculture/requirements of farming operations (so that people can gain understanding of how much benefit they receive by tolerating minor inconveniences such as odours, etc).

Think outside of the box, and get real. This is a nice start, but you are not dealing with the real issues.

Just want to emphasize concern that the RDN is currently threatening legal action against people who deliver soil inputs (e.g. grass clippings) to a farmer who is a personal friend. Zero Waste says the farmer needs to have a Waste Stream Management licence in order to accept this material. Ridiculous! Bylaw 1386 needs to be amended so that it cannot be interpreted to confuse intentional delivery of harmless compostables with random dumping of garbage.

In terms of long term benefits, Nanaimo could really make its mark with tourists being a Green City. Imagine the true possibilities of this opportunity! Vancouver, Victoria all have their own green claims, let's put Nanaimo on the map too!

Hire Dirk Becker as soon as possible.

Looks good so far. Time will tell. Don't get too much government involvement. Let it be more people directed.

This issue is watched by more people and countries than you realize: how it is handled will be a benchmark for other regions of Canada and areas of the world. Vancouver Island is attracting some "heavy hitters" in the food security industry, (such as Arzeena Hamir) and great strides in change will now come forward. This is not just a goal for Nanaimo: it is a game changer! Too bad I moved!

I am so happy to see this happening. Thank you

If agriculture is to survive in the region farm salaries must increase substantially. There is no way to move forward with farm development without money to support it. All regional initiatives need to keep that as a central goal.

For agriculture to survive, it must be part of the larger picture - provincial. I can't stress enough how aspects must be meshed to give ALR land survival. Failing that, there will continue to be more and more productive land exit agriculture and turned into recreational properties.

How much will this cost? Who pays

As one of the few remaining livestock producers of any size left in the area it seems most of this is directed towards horticultural with little if any thought given to the production of meat. Putting 4H at the top of the list is a perfect example of how little people know about the actual production of meat and by doing this (4H at top) the general thought seems to be that the current 4H program produces farmers which it certainly does not. It is a social org and a "baby sitting service". Seems no one wants to deal with the whole meat production issue and yet at one time local meat production out stripped local vegetable production by a long way in this area. For the most part what remains are the folks with big houses etc looking for easy "farm status" for property tax purposes. Livestock are used for lawn mowers but not actually produced in any numbers. We do however have an increasing number of feed lots more or less in "hidden from the public eye" who are filling the void buy bringing in animals for 60-90 day feeding on Island (finishing) and who are then selling (legally by definition) "local" meat. Some of these are actually originating from across the US/Canada border with BC the province with the most feeder lambs being brought up from Idaho and Montana. Livestock birth to plate production is expensive, requires a much larger investment, much smaller profit margin and gets way less support than does vegetable production yet we have a normal profile of "meat eaters". The consumer/retailers needs more education about this situation and anyone interested in starting some sort of production beyond archiving farm status needs to be encouraged by increasing infrastructure and public awareness. Livestock are not pets (per the current 4H programs version who no longer require any activities associated with production such as being required to actually take part in the raising of the animal, keeping a log of expenses etc but instead concentrate on, social skills, primping for the show ring and teaching their "project" tricks). Consumers all need to face the reality that meat does not originate from a cooler truck delivered to the back door of their local food store. The province has given the SPCA control over livestock handling issues yet the SPCA relies on volunteers who know nothing about livestock or livestock production.

You can't farm if you can't bring in organic material to keep your soil fertile. The Zero Waste by-laws are currently being used to prevent one (that I am aware of) local farm from accepting grass clippings, manure, and wood chips that people want to give them. Seems the producers of these "waste" products can only get rid of them by taking them to a licensed facility.... where they probably have to pay to dump. I see it as totally ridiculous that a by-law claiming to promote Zero Waste actually makes valuable fertilizer a waste product.

If you want to achieve your vision of a vibrant agricultural community/economy, the RDN will have to make it possible for younger farmers in greater number to get on the land. Alternative forms of land tenure that allow more farm owners to live on the non-agricultural areas within the farm's boundaries will be crucial. Joint owners will be active in the farming. Employees are too expensive and not involved enough. Providing signage that explains the farming going on behind the sign to people passing by would increase the public's knowledge of farming and help to achieve Goal #6. I spend a great deal of time explaining farming practices (especially organic) to non-farmers. I have some great ideas about placement.