

August 12, 2011

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**AGRICULTURAL AREA PLAN TO LAUNCH IN REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO**

The Regional District of Nanaimo has partnered with the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C. to develop an Agricultural Area Plan for the RDN, and will be launching this exciting project at the upcoming Vancouver Island Exhibition (VIEEx).

The Agricultural Area Plan will celebrate and expand local food production by raising public awareness and identifying barriers and opportunities for growth in the local agriculture industry. The Plan will be developed with input from farmers, food producers and consumers, and it will provide a valuable opportunity for RDN residents to dialogue about the future of agriculture and food in their communities.

“Establishing a future vision for agriculture and the food system will be a key outcome of this process. The creation of an Agricultural Area Plan will serve as an important tool in achieving the goals of encouraging, protecting, and celebrating farming and food productivity in the Region,” said Joe Burnett, RDN Agricultural Advisory Committee Chair.

The RDN will host an information table at the upcoming Vancouver Island Exhibition (VIEEx), where visitors can come and learn more about this project, meet the project team members, and find out how they can get involved. The Plan is being spearheaded by a consulting team who has prepared similar plans for Salt Spring Island, North Saanich, and Denman Island. The RDN’s Agricultural Advisory Committee will also oversee this project. The plan process will involve a land use inventory to be initiated this summer and public open houses and focus group sessions in the fall and winter, to refine the vision for agriculture and identify local issues and opportunities. Online surveys and social media sites will be dedicated to gathering public input and providing timely updates on the project.

“The goal of the plan is to reflect the image of an agricultural future that the community wants, and how it plans to achieve it. It will reflect the community’s identity and values, will align with other plans such as the Regional Growth Strategy, and will be translated into implementable actions,” said Ione Smith, lead project consultant.

The consultant team includes:

Ione Smith, Upland Consulting

Andrea Lawseth, AEL Agroecological Consulting

Derek Masselink, Masselink Environmental Design

Jonathan Franz, Ear to the Ground Planning

For more information visit the Plan’s dedicated website: [www.growingourfuture.ca](http://www.growingourfuture.ca)

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