

Growing Our Future Together

Regional District of Nanaimo

Agricultural Area Plan



August 2012

Prepared by:



Upland Consulting
fostering resilient communities



Funding provided by:



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Acronyms

AAC:	Agricultural Advisory Committee
AAP:	Agricultural Area Plan
ADC:	Agricultural Development Commission
AGRI:	BC Ministry of Agriculture
ALC:	BC Agricultural Land Commission
ALR:	Agricultural Land Reserve
ARDCorp:	BC Agriculture Research and Development Corporation
BCAC:	BC Agriculture Council
BCAA:	BC Assessment Authority
BCAFM:	BC Association of Farmers Markets
BCFSN:	BC Food Systems Network
BCSGA:	BC Shellfish Growers Association
CSR:	Centre for Shellfish Research at Vancouver Island University
EDC:	Economic Development Corporation – City of Nanaimo
FF/CF:	FarmFolk/CityFolk
HRDC:	Human Resources & Development Canada
IAF:	Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC
ILMB:	Integrated Land Management Bureau
MOE:	BC Ministry of Environment
MOTI:	BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
NRCan:	Natural Resources Canada
OCP:	Official Community Plan
RDN:	Regional District of Nanaimo
RGS:	Regional Growth Strategy
SSFPA:	Small Scale Food Processers Association
TLC:	The Land Conservancy BC
UBCM:	Union of BC Municipalities
VIEA:	Vancouver Island Economic Alliance
VIEx:	Vancouver Island Exhibition
VIHA:	Vancouver Island Health Authority
VIU:	Vancouver Island University

Executive Summary

The development of an Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) for the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) was initiated in early 2011 and was jointly funded by the RDN and the Investment in Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAF) through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the BC Ministry of Agriculture. The RDN's Regional Growth Strategy and Official Community Plans (OCPs) recognize agriculture as an important contributor to the local landscape, culture, and economy. For many years, there has been a region-wide commitment to preserve and strengthen the rural economy and increase the viability and productivity of agriculture. Despite this commitment, the agricultural community has expressed a need to address barriers and challenges facing the local agricultural community, hence the purpose of the AAP.

The objectives of the AAP were to provide clear and implementable recommended actions towards the goal of enhancing local food production in the RDN. While international, national, and provincial-level challenges are noted, the focus of the AAP is placed on the capacity and influence of local and regional government and organizations to positively influence the local food sector within the Nanaimo region. The resulting AAP is based on a foundation of extensive community engagement and has been overseen by the RDN Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC). Phase 1 of the AAP process involved conducting a preliminary Agricultural Land Use Inventory; developing a statistical profile of agriculture and aquaculture in the region using available Census data from 1996 to 2006; and examining the biophysical, socio-economic, and regulatory context affecting agriculture and aquaculture uses. The results of this research are presented in a separate document entitled, "Regional District of Nanaimo Agricultural Area Plan - Phase 1: Background Report", dated February 17, 2012. A review of the new 2011 Census data was also completed after the data was published in May 2011. A summary of the data is included in Appendix II of this AAP, and it confirms the findings and conclusions of the Background Report that was used to inform the development of the AAP goals and recommendations.

Phase 2 of the AAP process involved the development of the draft Plan. The AAP contains: a vision statement for agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN based on community input. It also includes goals and objectives for achieving the vision; a review of local land use policies and regulations; recommended actions and key players to lead or support each action; an implementation strategy; a monitoring and evaluation plan; and additional resources and funding information.

Throughout the plan process, the vision statement was refined to help guide the development of recommended goals and actions for implementation of the AAP. The resulting vision reads as follows:

"Agriculture and aquaculture in the region will be valued and farmland will be protected from development. Residents will recognize agriculture and aquaculture as important industries and will respect the role of food producers within both rural and urban settings. Farms will be affordable and profitable and apprenticeships and other training programs will be locally available so that younger generations will be able to join a thriving industry. Alternative land tenure arrangements for housing family and workers on farmland will be common practice. More collaboration will occur between stakeholders and communities to promote shared resources and develop value-added products. Sustainable farming techniques will be elevated and supported. All levels of government will provide expertise and support for agriculture and aquaculture through: the provision of extension services and information; proactive planning for infrastructure, emergency management, and climate change; and the creation of bylaws and streamlined regulations that support agriculture and aquaculture".

Based on extensive community dialogue, the following eight broad goals were identified through the AAP process:

- 1) Protect and Enhance the Agricultural Land Base in the RDN
- 2) Strengthen the Local Agriculture and Aquaculture Economy
- 3) Improve Training, Skills, and Labour Opportunities in the RDN
- 4) Improve Opportunities for On-Farm Water Resource Management
- 5) Address Environmental Sustainability, Wildlife, and Climate Change Challenges in the RDN
- 6) Promote Awareness and Value of Local Agriculture and Aquaculture
- 7) Support Agriculture and Aquaculture in Land Use Regulations and Policies
- 8) Consider Agriculture in Emergency Planning Initiatives

Specific actions to achieve these goals are detailed in the Implementation and Evaluation section (Section 7.0) of the AAP. A list of key players (include leaders and supporting partners) is provided along with the priority level, timeframe, resource implications, and potential funding sources for each action.

Strategies for implementation and monitoring of progress are also provided to ensure the overall success of the AAP. It is suggested that the RDN, or an established Implementation Steering Committee, develop a work plan to act on the AAP recommendations and evaluate the progress of implementation using indicators and biennial reporting to the RDN Agricultural Advisory Committee and Regional Board. The AAP provides references to additional resource information to support the Plan's implementation.

Together, the community insights, recommendations, and implementation framework outlined in this AAP make this Plan a 'living' and 'active' reference to guide decision-making in the RDN and build a spirit of collaboration with member municipalities and all citizens in the region to take action, big or small, in support of local agriculture and aquaculture as we continue *'Growing our Future', together.*



Figure 1. Hay and forage crops. Electoral Area C, RDN.

1.0) Introduction

Geographic Context

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) encompasses approximately 208,000 hectares of land on the central east coast of Vancouver Island and includes roughly 140,000 residents within four municipalities (City of Nanaimo, District of Lantzville, City of Parksville, and Town of Qualicum Beach), seven unincorporated electoral areas (EAs), and six First Nation Reserves. The RDN is the second most heavily populated regional district on Vancouver Island, after the Capital Region, and accounts for 18% of the total population of the island. Approximately 10% of the RDN's land base is within the provincially-designated Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), with some additional lands being farmed outside the ALR. In addition to land-based agriculture, aquaculture is a major contributor to food production in the RDN. Agriculture and aquaculture operations have been important contributors to the local economy for at least the past 200 years.

The RDN benefits from a moderate coastal climate and generally has soils of high agricultural capability (RDN, 2012a). However, challenges to farming exist in the forms of transportation costs, labour shortages, and a lack of local processing facilities. Farms in the RDN can best be characterized as small-to medium-scale, family-run operations. The most widespread crops grown are hay, forage, berries, and fruit trees. Beef cattle, small-scale poultry, and sheep are the most common livestock found in the region. A few dairy and pork operations also exist. Within the RDN, farms in Electoral Areas A and E (including Cedar and Nanoose Bay) are slightly more profitable per hectare than farms in other parts of the RDN (RDN, 2012a). Compared to other regional districts within close proximity on Vancouver Island, farms in the RDN are more profitable per hectare than Port Alberni, but less profitable than farms in the Capital Region and Cowichan Valley, while farms in the Comox Valley are on par with those in the RDN in terms of revenue per hectare. Local seasonal farmers markets are successful, and there is demand for a year-round market in the RDN.

“We moved to the region about a month ago and have been coming to the farmers market every weekend. We love the fresh produce and the variety (of food), there is great variety here.”

– Qualicum Beach Farmers Market shopper.

Food Production and Food Capacity on Vancouver Island

Despite the historically active and productive agricultural and aquaculture industries, the protection of farmland and the economic viability of local food production have emerged as significant concerns in the region. Less than one hundred and fifty years ago there was an abundance of food available for Vancouver Island inhabitants through fishing, hunting, gathering and managed clam and root vegetable sites (Turner and Turner, 2008). However, since the 1950s, there has been a movement away from meeting Vancouver Island's regional food needs through local food production; and a corresponding shift towards increased imports from off the island (MacNair, 2004). Fifty years ago farmers on

Vancouver Island produced an estimated 85% of the Island's food supply; today Island producers provide about 10% of the food consumed (Haddow, 2001).

The relationship between food production and food consumption provides us with a theoretical estimate of the local food capacity of a region. However, it can be challenging to obtain accurate numbers regarding current levels of local food consumption vs. production vs. capacity. Furthermore, the types of crops being grown change rapidly according to market conditions. Most regions in BC do not contain enough nutritional variety to form a complete diet (Morrison, 2009). Some studies have been completed to perform statistical analyses to compare food capacity between Local Health Areas (which make up the Regional Health Authorities) in BC (Morrison, 2011; Morrison, Nelson, and Ostry, 2011). Results from these studies suggest that food capacity on Vancouver Island is more limited than that of the Northern and Peace Region, the Okanagan, and the east Fraser Valley.

Vancouver Island's available food supply is compromised further by the Island's loss of its food processing and storage facilities (Stovel, 2008). Having more of these facilities would enable farmers to store surplus which could be drawn from as needed during less productive seasons, rather than going to waste or being exported. Because of this lack of storage and processing facilities to secure the food produced locally, available food supply is predicted to only sustain the population of Vancouver Island for two to three days in the winter season (VICRA, 2011).

Aquaculture in Context of the Agricultural Area Plan

The Agricultural Area Plan supports both agriculture and aquaculture (as defined below) and recognizes that there are potential sources of conflict between the activities of these industries, in particular the issues of water use and the potential effects of runoff from agricultural and urban land uses into aquaculture sites. The recommendations and actions outlined in the AAP endeavour to address these potential conflicts in a proactive manner in support of both agriculture and aquaculture and to encourage better communication between the two industries (see Recommended Actions 1.3G, 2.2F, 2.5D, 4.1B, 4.1F, 4.2B, and 7.1D in Table 7, Section 6.0 of this Plan).

On Vancouver Island, marine finfish aquaculture operations (or "fish farms") are located, almost exclusively outside the RDN, in areas north of Campbell River due to the necessary operational and climatic conditions. Therefore, for the purposes of this AAP, aquaculture in the RDN is defined as ocean-based operations focussing on the farming of shellfish (mussels, oysters, prawns, crabs). Aquaculture in the RDN is found along the coast with the largest number of licences located in the Nanoose Bay and Qualicum areas. Ocean-based shellfish operations are productive although there are significant regulatory impediments to their expansion and development. A number of land-based finfish licences are also granted in the region; however, no active land-based aquaculture activities were observed during the Land Use Inventory that was conducted for the AAP in August 2011. This may be due to the high operational resource inputs that are required and the need to access large amounts of water.

The Agricultural Area Plan and the Role of the RDN

Agricultural Area Plans recognize agriculture as the highest and best use of agricultural land, and develop strategies to support a viable agricultural industry at the local level (Smith, 1998). These plans

inform the decision-making process and provide a high level of detail specific to the issues relevant to farming and the local food system. A food system is local when it allows farmers, seafood producers, processors, distributors, retailers, and their customers to interact face-to-face. There are many benefits of a localized or regionalized food system including:

- *Development of a stronger and more sustainable local economy.* Food dollars remain in the community to circulate from buyers to sellers and back again. Enhanced local production to meet local food needs also results in more local jobs.
- *Reduction of “food miles” through closer-to-home production.* The shorter the distance that food travels to reach the table, the less is its corresponding environmental impact. It can also reduce packaging, increase composting and reduce waste going to local landfills.
- *Creation of a greater awareness of food-related issues.* Supporting opportunities for community members to connect around food — such as farmers markets, community gardens or advocacy to improve access to healthy foods — builds stronger partnerships and social networks.

The RDN’s Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and Official Community Plans (OCPs) recognize agriculture and aquaculture as important contributors to the local landscape, culture, and economy. There is a region-wide commitment to preserve and strengthen the rural economy and increase the viability and productivity of farmland and food production. The RDN works collaboratively with member municipalities to enhance the environmental, social, and economic well-being of the residents and communities that it serves. While the RDN is spearheading the creation of the AAP, the implementation will require the collaboration of a host of individuals and organizations such as farmers institutes, commodity groups, private industry, community food action groups, environmental NGOs, academic institutes, and provincial and federal government agencies. Therefore, the RDN itself is not solely responsible for the outcomes of the AAP. Many of the recommended actions identify the RDN in a supportive role rather than a lead role, and several actions don’t involve the RDN at all. In order for the AAP to be successful it will require leadership and action from all of those involved in the local food system.



Figure 2. Lori Gillies, The Cluck Stops Here, Coombs/Hilliers Electoral Area F, RDN

2.0) The Agricultural Area Plan Process

In order to better understand the scope of issues facing food producers and other stakeholders in the local food system, the RDN initiated a regional Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) in January 2011. The planning process has been jointly funded by the RDN and the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) of BC through programs it delivers on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the BC Ministry of Agriculture. The objectives of the AAP were to recommend clear and implementable actions towards the goal of enhancing local food production in the RDN. This resulting AAP is based on a broad-based foundation of community engagement and has been overseen by the RDN Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and RDN staff.

While the RDN's growth management plans and OCPs recognize food production as an important contributor to the region's cultural landscape and economy, a detailed plan to achieve these goals was needed, hence the role of the AAP. Public input was a critical requirement for the success of the AAP. A concerted effort was made from the start of the process to connect with all members of the food system, including farmers, processors, grocers/retailers, restaurateurs, educators and non-profits, and consumers, in order to develop an AAP that would be embraced by the community. A multi-faceted engagement strategy was employed to involve the public at every step in the AAP process (RDN, 2012b). Engaging the public helped to:

- Develop and refine a vision for agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN;
- Identify barriers and opportunities for agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN;
- Engage a wide variety of members of the agricultural and food community;
- Utilize innovative engagement tools (e.g. online videos, web-based communications, and an online public opinion survey) to connect with a greater sector of the community;
- Engage residents in meaningful conversations about agriculture and aquaculture planning; and
- Use all of the input to develop meaningful and relevant policy and planning recommendations for the AAP.

Community engagement began in the summer of 2011 and continued throughout the development of the AAP, and will continue into the implementation stages of the planning process. Extensive community outreach occurred between October 2011 and February 2012, through the following initiatives:

- a) *Engagement of food producers and consumers* at local farmers markets and community food events prior to the AAP public open houses to ensure that vendors, consumers and local foodies were aware of the AAP process and opportunities to participate. Activities included attending agricultural events and exhibitions; speaking with people about the AAP; displaying and distributing information, postcards and brochures about the Plan project. Additional conversations with citizens and stakeholders took place online, by phone and in face-to-face meetings. This dynamic approach offered a number of opportunities for RDN residents and interested groups to ask questions, get informed, and become directly involved in the AAP.

- b) *Development of a dedicated AAP website* (<http://www.growingourfuture.ca>) early on to highlight the AAP process; advertise upcoming events; share information and links to relevant reports and publications; and provide opportunities for the people to get involved.
- c) *Development of a three-part video series* to showcase ‘Agriculture in Action’ in the RDN. In October 2011, members of the local agriculture community were interviewed for the videos by the project consultant in locations throughout the region (Cedar, South Wellington, Whiskey Creek, Qualicum, and Coombs). Additional interviews were conducted with residents at local farmers markets, a local food retailer, chefs, etc. These ‘story-telling’ videos were posted online through YouTube and on the *Growing Our Future* website. The intent was to integrate the perspectives of farmers and members of the food system into the AAP planning process, and to celebrate the history and diversity of food production in the RDN.
- d) *Public Open Houses*: In partnership with RDN staff and members of the AAP Steering Committee, the consultant hosted two open houses: in Cedar on November 2nd, 2011 and in Errington on November 3rd, 2011. Approximately 30 people attended the Cedar event and approximately 50 people attended the Errington event. Participants heard from a guest speaker and had the opportunity to participate in small group discussions about a vision for food production, opportunities and constraints, and the role of local government in agriculture and aquaculture. Results from these open houses were documented in the RDN Public Consultation Report (RDN, 2012b).
- e) *Facilitation of two focus group sessions*, held in November 2011 and January 2012, to review and refine the preliminary results from the open houses (Session #1) and to review the draft AAP goals and recommendations (Session #2) with a diverse group of key stakeholders.
- f) *Publication and advertisement of an online survey*, in May and June 2012, to obtain public opinions and comments on the draft AAP goals, vision, key players and funding sources needed for implementation. When asked to describe, in one word, ‘what does agriculture in the Nanaimo region mean to you?’, survey participants responded with the following five most frequently cited words:

“If you eat, you are involved in agriculture.”

– Wendell Berry, American farmer and philosopher.

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

The survey responses were then illustrated in a word collage, visually giving greater prominence to words cited more frequently by participants. This collage is presented on the following page.

- d) Promoted agriculture and aquaculture by enhancing public awareness of its value;
- e) Recommended ways to strengthen the consideration of agriculture in existing land use policies and bylaws;
- f) Identified implementation actions and recommended appropriate priorities to address the issues facing agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN; and
- g) Worked with the Steering Committee and RDN staff to develop a prioritized strategy for implementation and follow up evaluation of the AAP.



Figure 3. Agricultural Area Plan Open House, Errington Community Hall, November 3rd, 2011.

3.0) A Community Vision for Local Agriculture and Aquaculture

A vision for the future of agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN was developed, discussed, and refined throughout the public engagement process. The vision is an important guiding principle that will direct the objectives, actions, and implementation of the AAP. This vision was derived from the policy direction of the RDN Regional Growth Strategy and from public input. It synthesizes the desired goals for farmers, consumers, and other members of the regional food system for the next 20 to 30 years.

“Agriculture and aquaculture in the region will be valued and farmland will be protected from development. Residents will recognize agriculture and aquaculture as important industries and will respect the role of food producers within both rural and urban settings. Farms will be affordable and profitable and apprenticeships and other training programs will be locally available so that younger generations will be able to join a thriving industry. Alternative land tenure arrangements for housing family and workers on farmland will be common practice. More collaboration will occur between stakeholders and communities to promote shared resources and develop value-added products. Sustainable farming techniques will be elevated and supported. All levels of government will provide expertise and support for agriculture and aquaculture through: the provision of extension services and information; proactive planning for infrastructure, emergency management, and climate change; and the creation of bylaws and streamlined regulations that support agriculture and aquaculture”.



Figure 4. Nanoose Edibles Farm, Nanoose, Electoral Area E, RDN.

4.0) Agricultural Area Plan Goals and Objectives

There are eight broad goals and several supporting objectives presented in this AAP that are based on the feedback received throughout the community engagement process. Specific recommended actions for implementation of these goals are provided in Table 7 (Section 6.0) of the Plan as a means to achieve the AAP vision for agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN. The Implementation and Evaluation Section 7.0 further describes the commitments and resources that will likely be needed to ensure the AAP goals are achieved. The purpose and objectives of each goal is discussed below.

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

As evidenced by the Agricultural Land Use Inventory conducted in 2011, a significant portion of the ALR land base is not being used to its fullest food production capacity, with hundreds of hectares remaining forested. At the same time, farmland adjacent to urban areas is being subjected to non-farming pressures that commonly result in disputes between neighbours. To enhance and preserve the use of farmland, farmers will need access to information about agronomic data and the freedom to pursue farming activities with the assurance that disputes from non-farming neighbours will be minimized.

Objectives:

- 1.1) Reinforce the protection of farmland from non-agricultural development and improve the ability to proactively use and manage farmland for agriculture.
- 1.2) Increase the access and availability of agriculture and aquaculture information in the RDN to assist farmers and aquaculture operators.
- 1.3) Encourage access to programs and information that supports the long-term viability of farming and aquaculture.

“The rural urban interface area is very problematic at times for farmers. People love to come and look at our lands and see how beautiful it is but they don’t really want us to work hard or do much that will cause them an inconvenience.”

– Colin Springford, Springford Farms.

Goal #2 - Strengthen the Local Agriculture and Aquaculture Economy

Initiatives are required to assist producers to improve sector viability. Innovation enhances profitability and allows farmers to develop entrepreneurial ideas, gain useful marketing and business management skills, and access capital. However, a detailed economic development strategy for agriculture in the RDN is missing. If developed, this economic development strategy would provide a clear, supported direction for local agricultural enterprises and would support innovative approaches that are tailored to RDN’s specific situation, needs, and values.

Objectives:

- 2.1) Consider an Economic Development Strategy that will provide the conditions to increase the economic viability of agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN.
- 2.2) Evaluate opportunities to market local agriculture and aquaculture.
- 2.3) Create a regional business environment that is conducive to attracting food processing and distribution services.
- 2.4) Facilitate tool sharing and equipment cooperatives between farm networks to reduce input costs.
- 2.5) Encourage the creation of value-added farm products.

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

A lack of training and skills, both for new and existing farmers can be a barrier to achieving innovation, value-added, and other profitability goals. Similarly, a lack of a general farm labour pool prevents many farms from producing and harvesting larger yields and more diverse crops.

Objectives:

- 3.1) Partner with government agencies and commodity groups to address specific regional training needs.
- 3.2) Provide leadership in advertising and coordinating farming and aquaculture employment opportunities.

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

As agricultural operations grow, infrastructure needs grow. Some of the existing water-related infrastructure is in need of repair or improvement to maintain efficient operating conditions. Water access for irrigation and drainage management are increasingly challenging for farmers in the RDN.

Objectives:

- 4.1) Improve access to information regarding watersheds, groundwater, and the effects of local water resource management on agriculture.
- 4.2) Improve opportunities for on-farm water storage, supply, and drainage.

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

Resident geese, habituated deer, black bears, raccoons, starlings, and other wildlife are creating significant impacts on field crops in RDN. Invasive species also pose problems for farmers. Purple loosestrife, burdock, tansy, English ivy, Scotch broom, giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed are a few examples of invasive plants that have caused extensive economic and environmental damage in various regions of BC, necessitating a managed response. Similarly, the increasing pressures of climate change warrant action on the part of both farmers and regulators to adapt to new conditions and mitigate

behaviour to reduce fossil fuel consumption and the production of greenhouse gases (GHGs). Despite these challenges, many farmers have developed an Environmental Farm Plan or other initiatives to better integrate their practices into the surrounding environment. Best management practices can assist in minimizing conflicts with wildlife and maximizing the most efficient use of resources such as soil and water.

Objectives:

- 5.1) Assist farmers with the implementation of sustainable farm practices and technologies.
- 5.2) Address conflicts with wildlife and invasive species.
- 5.3) Support composting of agricultural and aquaculture wastes at both a regional scale and farm scale.
- 5.4) Prepare agriculture and aquaculture for the adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change.
- 5.5) Encourage energy efficient farming activities and the opportunity to produce energy on-farm.

Goal #6 - Promote Awareness and Value of Local Agriculture and Aquaculture

Consumers typically buy and prepare what they are familiar with instead of buying and eating what is available. Furthermore, consumers (and retailers) demand a consistent supply of products year-round (or a spike in certain products during holidays), which is a challenge for most farmers. There is a need for a change in purchasing habits – within the global marketplace labour, production, and transportation costs are artificially low, making it challenging for local producers to compete with low-priced imported food. The public also needs to be educated about the important role of aquaculture (particularly shellfish and land-based finfish production), not only as a sustainable form of food production, but also as a key component in the economic output of the food industry in the region.

Objectives:

- 6.1) Partner with existing organizations to increase the public's knowledge of aquaculture, farming and farmland within the RDN.
- 6.2) Promote local agriculture and aquaculture.

“There needs to be more support for farmers...it’s really tough. What makes me sad is breaking up farms for residential. We’ve only got so much dirt that will grow food.”

– Maureen Pietrzykowski, Hiebert Farm, Cedar

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

While it may not always be the intent, a number of government policies and regulations pose challenges for farmers. In many cases, the requirements affecting farming activities are scattered throughout various sources of legislation, bylaws, zoning regulations and policies. Farmers attempting to work their way through the regulatory system can be shuffled from department to department, and from agency to agency. The desired focus is to make the system more responsive to the needs of the agricultural and aquaculture sector while meeting its regulatory objectives.

Objectives:

- 7.1) Solidify the RDN's role in supporting agricultural, aquaculture, and associated farm practices.
- 7.2) Enhance the RGS and OCPs to strengthen agriculture and aquaculture.
- 7.3) Ensure land use regulations and policies accommodate and encourage agriculture and aquaculture.
- 7.4) Encourage the development of additional policies and actions that benefit RDN agriculture and aquaculture.

Goal #8 - Consider Agriculture in Emergency Planning Initiatives

Objective:

- 8.1) Create agricultural emergency management plans and guidelines to deal with emergency events.



Figure 5. Cedar Farmers Market.

5.0) Regional (RDN) Land Use Policy Framework

Throughout the community engagement process, participants identified a number of government policies and regulations that posed challenges to those involved in food production. These included federal policies (e.g. Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s jurisdiction for seasonal fish habitat in farm ditches); provincial regulations (e.g. the new meat regulations, cost of inspections, farm tax assessments, and quotas); and local/regional regulations.

The manner in which agriculture is considered at the policy level through land use policies in the RGS and OCPs, and subsequently through regulations in the zoning bylaws, is critical to the way in which land use priorities will be set out to support local food production. The RGS and OCPs provide a long term strategy for land use, development, and servicing, and they contain development guidelines which respond to broad community objectives and values. In contrast, a zoning bylaw provides detailed and prescriptive land use regulations according to specific land use categories called zones. Zoning can also address farmland by setting minimum parcel sizes, and the potential for subdivision of agricultural lands.

An overview of the full multi-jurisdictional regulatory system is provided for context in the RDN AAP Background Report (RDN, 2012a). The discussion below focuses on some of the specific land use policies and regulations that the Regional District (RDN) administers which affect agriculture and aquaculture.

5.1) The Role of the BC Agricultural Land Commission

One of the high level regulations affecting agricultural lands in the RDN is the *Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALC Act)*. The BC Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) was created in 1973 to preserve agricultural land as an issue of provincial concern. The ALC’s mandate has three objectives:

- To preserve agricultural land;
- To encourage farming on agricultural land in collaboration with other communities of interest;
- To encourage local governments, first nations, the provincial government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws, and policies.

The ALC administers the *ALC Act* and is responsible for lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), a provincial zone in which agriculture is recognized as the priority use. The purpose of the ALR is to ensure that the province’s agricultural land base is preserved and available for farm uses both now and in the future. The *ALC Act* requires that agricultural land within the ALR not be used for non-farm uses unless specifically permitted by the Act or its associated regulations. The *ALC Act* takes precedence over other provincial legislation and local bylaws and policies.

Up to the 1970s nearly 6,000 hectares of prime agricultural land were lost each year to urban and other uses in BC (ALC, 2012). The provincial government responded by introducing BC’s *Land Commission Act* on April 18, 1973. The Land Commission, appointed by the provincial government, established a special

land use zone called the “Agricultural Land Reserve”. The Act required that the ALR be technically based on biophysical characteristics as outlined by the Canada Land Inventory mapping system. These preliminary technical maps were prepared by the provincial Ministry of Agriculture (Runka, 2006).

In BC, most soils were mapped for agricultural capability ratings in the 1980s, and these maps remain in use throughout the province. Throughout the 1980s, significant funding was allocated to develop a more detailed set of agricultural capability maps to assist with fine-tuning the ALR boundaries in cooperation with municipal and regional district planning efforts (Smith, 2007). Sixty percent of all land excluded from the ALR was approved in the first ten years (1973-1983), a time of “sorting out”, in which the Commission undertook an ALR enhanced fine tuning program and partnered with several local governments in ALR reviews (Smith, 2007).

Applications regarding changes to the ALR are considered on a case-by-case basis and are categorized as exclusion, inclusion, subdivision, and non-farm use applications. Subdivision is restricted within the ALR and any subdivision application involving the ALR must be approved by the ALC as per the *ALR Use, Subdivision, and Procedure Regulation* (ALC, 2006). Furthermore, subdivision applications that meet minimum parcel sizes outlined in the zoning bylaws will not necessarily be approved, rather the Subdivision Approval Officer grants subdivision approval for ALR land at their discretion on a case-by-case basis (ALC, 2006). This important point is often understated in local policy documents; therefore, it is noted in the AAP recommendations (see 7.4A in the implementation action Table 7 in Section 6.0).

The ALC invites comments and input from local governments and Agricultural Advisory Committees regarding the potential impact of ALR exclusion, inclusion, non-farm use, and subdivision applications on the surrounding agricultural community. The ALC has stated specifically that it would welcome comments regarding ALR applications from the RDN and this recommendation is included as action 1.1A in the implementation action table (Table 7).

5.2) Regional Growth Strategy

Another critical policy that the RDN administers is the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The RDN reviewed and adopted an updated RGS, the “Regional District of Nanaimo Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1615”, in 2011. The RGS sets clear direction for the RDN and its member municipalities on their respective roles in managing future growth. The RGS includes agriculture and aquaculture in the vision statement, goals and related policies. The policies and land use designations in the RGS provide the general framework for directing growth and land use activities throughout the region, while detailed policies and regulations that define permitted land uses and provide development guidelines are found within the Electoral Area Official Community Plans (OCPs) and Zoning Bylaws (*Bylaw No. 500*, 1987 and *Bylaw No. 1285*, 2002). The associated maps of land use designations represent the desired future pattern of land use in the region (*RDN Bylaw No. 1615*, 2011).

Most ALR lands in the RDN are included within the RGS land use designation of *Resource Lands & Open Space* (*RDN Bylaw No. 1615*, Map No. 4 and Map No. 5, 2011). The *Resource Lands & Open Space* designation at the RGS level includes land that is primarily intended for resource uses such as agriculture, forestry, aggregate and other resource development; and land that has been designated for long-term open space uses. No new parcels that are smaller than the size supported by the OCP in effect at the date of the adoption of the RGS may be created for lands within this designation. Where existing

zoning permits, smaller parcels may be eligible for subdivision potential; however, if zoning amendments are required then RGS and OCP policies would not support the subdivision application.

A small portion of ALR land is also located in other designations at the RGS level including, *First Nation Lands, Rural Residential Lands, and Rural Village Area*. The total area of ALR land designated outside of *Resource Lands & Open Space* in the RGS is 318.5 ha, as listed by Electoral Area in Table 1.

Table 1. Total Area (ha) of ALR designated outside of Resource & Open Space land use designation in the RDN Regional Growth Strategy (2011).

Electoral Area	Land Use Designation	Total Area (ha)
A	First Nation Lands	123.8
	Rural Residential	2.4
	Rural Village Area	7.5
C	Rural Residential	21.5
E	Rural Residential	8.0
F	Rural Residential	16.7
	Rural Village Area	0.1
G	Rural Residential	14.1
	Rural Village Area	5.8
H	Rural Residential	108.4
	Rural Village Area	10.2
Total		318.5

In order to reduce the potential for conversion of these ALR lands to non-farm uses, and to limit the amount of subdivisions occurring in the ALR, it is recommended that greater consistency between RGS and OCP land use designations is achieved and that an Agricultural Land Use designation is considered at both the RGS and OCP levels, similar to the Agriculture designation found in the OCP for Electoral Area 'A'. That way, if land is removed from the ALR, but is still designated and zoned locally for agriculture, the use of that land will be limited to activities outlined in the Agriculture designation and associated zone, such as farming and silviculture. This recommendation is included as action item 7.2D in Table 7.

5.3) Electoral Area Official Community Plans

The purpose of an Official Community Plan (OCP) is to guide and direct land use and development decision-making within a municipality or unincorporated Electoral Area. It also clearly states the community's values and goals through a vision statement that frames growth management, servicing, transportation, climate change mitigation, environmental protection, the promotion of agriculture, and many other aspects of community planning.

An OCP affects agricultural lands and adjacent lands in several ways, primarily by defining the type of present and future agricultural land uses within the jurisdiction. The OCP may contain policies of the local government respecting the maintenance and enhancement of agriculture, which can include water supply, recreation near farmland, support for the agricultural industry, and safeguarding the ALR. When an OCP is adopted, local government decisions to amend existing regulations and approval requirements must be consistent with the OCP.

Local governments may also designate Development Permit Areas (DPAs) for the protection of farmland in the OCP, and establish guidelines for how development may occur adjacent to the ALR. A DPA is an important tool used by local governments to ensure that the potential impacts of new development are identified and addressed (WCEL, 2005). Many of the Regional District's OCPs include a DPA for farmland protection, with the exception of Electoral Area 'C' and Electoral Area 'F'. There is a general policy in the OCP of Electoral Area 'H' to encourage the use of vegetative buffers between farming and non-farming areas, but a specific DPA is not included. Table 2 summarizes the policies and objectives for each OCP that affect agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN.

Numerous concerns were raised by farmers through community engagement regarding conflicts between agricultural properties and non-farming neighbours. The need to proactively manage the rural residential/farm edge, for example, through improved DPAs for farmland protection, is recommended in action 7.2E in Table 7. This recommendation includes the requirement for new developments adjacent to the ALR to submit an agricultural impact assessment prepared by a Professional Agrologist that would highlight potential impacts on drainage patterns; conserving habitat for pollinators; and to identify buffer design guidelines to reduce potential for conflicts between farmers and residents.

Other examples of OCP policies that promote agriculture and the ALR include (WCEL, 2005 and Smith, 1998):

- Providing for a full range of agricultural uses in the ALR and in agriculturally-zoned areas;
- Encouraging value-added activities that can improve farm viability;
- Providing edge planning through setbacks and buffers when developing land adjacent to agricultural areas;
- Limiting subdivision through the use of large minimum lot sizes;
- Recognizing and protecting the needs and activities of farm operations when considering adjacent and nearby land uses;
- Preserving contiguous areas of agricultural land and avoiding severance by recreation, parks, and transportation and utility corridors; and
- Encouraging partnerships with the agricultural community, senior governments and private enterprise to promote the development of the agricultural sector.

Many of the policies identified on this list are already well incorporated into the OCPs of the RDN's Electoral Areas. The more recent OCPs tend to have stronger policies regarding the support for agriculture and aquaculture, while earlier OCPs (pre-2000) have more potential for enhancing and strengthening these policies. A recommendation to provide support for agriculture and aquaculture in the OCPs, using the Electoral Area 'A' OCP (2011) as an example, is included as action 7.2A in Table 7.

Table 2. Summary of Agriculture and Aquaculture in the Goals, Objectives, Land Use Designations, and Development Permit Areas by Electoral Area OCPs.

Official Community Plan	Goals and Priorities for Agriculture and Aquaculture	Land Use Designations that include Agriculture (Minimum parcel size)	DPAs and Farmland Protection
Electoral Area 'A' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassidy • Cedar • Yellow Point • South Wellington Bylaw No. 1620 (2011)	Goal #1: Growth Management Priorities include: *Creating a Local Food System; *Protecting Rural Integrity and Functioning Rural Landscapes.	*Agriculture Lands - all ALR (8.0 ha). Smaller parcels may be approved through rezoning with ALC approval, no less than 1.0 ha if conditions are met (policy 5.1.13). *Rural Lands – all farmland outside ALR (2.0 ha). May allow two dwellings/parcel if > 2.0 ha (policy 7.2.3) and smaller parcels may be created through rezoning if conditions are met (policy 7.2.4). *Rural Resource Lands - Private Managed Forest Lands (PMFL) or lands previously in the Forest Land Reserve (50.0 ha), new lots within the ALR may be 8.0 ha with ALC approval.	Yes. A minimum 15m wide vegetation buffer must be established parallel to the ALR boundary on the non-ALR property.
Electoral Area 'C' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrowsmith-Benson • Cranberry-Bright Bylaw No. 1148 (1999)	Goal #3: Protect Rural Integrity Goal #6: Create a Vibrant and Sustainable Economy	*Rural Residential Lands – non-ALR hobby farm uses (2.0 ha) with possibly 2 dwellings/parcel on lots >2.0 ha. *Rural Lands – typically not in the ALR (2.0 ha). *Resource Lands - includes ALR land (50.0 ha but 8.0 ha if in ALR). Subdivision of ALR lands to less than 8.0 ha is not supported (see Goal #6).	Yes. A minimum 15m wide vegetation buffer must be established on lands adjoining the ALR boundary within the non-ALR property. Subdivision design must minimize the potential negative impacts on lands within the ALR.
Electoral Area 'C' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Wellington • Pleasant Valley Bylaw No. 1055 (1997)	Included in Community Objectives Section 1.3: * Preserve the rural character and natural amenities in the Plan Area. * Preserve and protect lands that have agricultural and/or natural resource value.	Rural Lands – includes most ALR and Forest Land Reserve (2.0 ha). If Crown Land (forests) or designated as Managed Forest lands then 50.0 ha (see policy 4.2.1). May be permitted up to two dwellings per parcel.	No

Official Community Plan	Goals and Priorities for Agriculture and Aquaculture	Land Use Designations that include Agriculture (Minimum parcel size)	DPAs and Farmland Protection
Electoral Area 'E' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nanoose Bay Bylaw No. 1400 (2005)	Section 3 objectives include: *Minimize conflicts between residential development and agriculture, silviculture, and resource extraction activities. *Protect the agricultural land resources for food production; *Recognize and protect agricultural operations on ALR lands. *Encourage sustainable and environmentally sound farming practices. *Recognize and protect the groundwater needs of agriculture.	*Rural Lands – includes hobby farms outside the ALR (8.0 ha) unless existing zoning permits smaller parcels (see policy 3.3.2). Some rezoning to 4.0 ha permitted if specific conditions are met (see policy 3.3.5). Up to two dwellings per parcel may also be permitted with conditions (policy 3.3.3). *Resource Lands – within ALR (8.0 ha). Other non-ALR Resource Lands including forest/crown lands (50.0 ha or 8.0 ha).	Yes. A minimum 15m wide vegetation buffer must be established on lands adjoining the ALR boundary within the non-ALR property.
Electoral Area 'F' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Errington • Coombs • Hillers Bylaw No. 1152 (1999)	Section 3: Natural Resources * To ensure that residents and government understand that the terms 'agriculture' and 'rural' are not interchangeable. * To increase the local food supply to residents.	Resource Lands – within ALR (4.0 ha), with second dwelling allowed if permitted by ALC. Other Resource Lands (forest/crown lands) have a minimum parcel size of 50.0 ha. <i>Note: In Section 2 – Resource Lands - the OCP directs the RDN to negotiate with the ALC to obtain a General Order for Electoral Area 'F' to allow for an expanded definition of home-based businesses beyond what is normally permitted by the ALC.</i>	No.
Electoral Area 'G' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French Creek • Dashwood • Englishman River Bylaw No. 1540 (2008)	Goal #5: Protecting Rural Integrity Goal #8: Creating a Vibrant and Sustainable Economy	*Rural Lands – primarily ALR land but some lands outside the ALR (8.0 ha). Up to two dwellings per parcel may be permitted with conditions, see policy 5.1.25. *Rural Resource Lands – primarily forestry lands and contains some ALR (50.0 ha).	Yes. A minimum 15m wide vegetation buffer must be established parallel to the ALR boundary on the non-ALR property.
Electoral Area 'H' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaw Hill • Qualicum Bay • Deep Bay • Bowser Bylaw No. 1335 (2003)	Section 3: Natural Resource Management includes Agriculture in 3.1.	*Rural Lands – includes hobby farms not in the ALR (4.0 ha). Some existing zoning permits small parcels. Some rezoning allows 2.0 ha parcels with conditions (policy 5.3.4). *Resource Lands – within ALR lands (8.0 ha) unless existing zoning permits small parcels. Resource Lands outside the ALR (50.0 ha).	No, however the "owners of land adjacent to ALR lands will be encouraged to provide a vegetative buffer between their lands and the ALR lands."

5.4) Zoning Bylaws

It is through the zoning bylaws that the long term goals found in the RGS and OCPs are implemented. Zoning for lands within Electoral Areas 'A', 'C', 'E', 'G', and 'H' is applied through *Bylaw No. 500 (1987, as amended)* while Electoral Area 'F' is governed by *Bylaw No. 1285 (2002, as amended)*. It is important to note that the land use designations for ALR land at the RGS and OCP levels do not always concur with the zoning regulations. In some cases, for example, ALR land is designated for Resource Management at the OCP level but is zoned for recreational use at the parcel level, as indicated in the discussion below. It is worthwhile to examine how ALR land is regulated differently in each Electoral Area, and how this inconsistency affects issues such as minimum parcel size for ALR lands across the region.

OCP policies include recommendations for minimum parcel sizes allowed during subdivision; however, existing zoning may allow smaller parcels to be created. As noted previously, the Subdivision Approval Officer may or may not allow for a parcel within the ALR to be subdivided, regardless of whether the application meets minimum parcel size requirements. The key features of each of the RDN's Electoral Area OCPs, and how they relate to agriculture and aquaculture, are summarized in Table 2.

It is interesting to note that, in addition to ALR lands, there are 91 properties in the RDN that are not within the ALR but have been assigned Farm Tax Status by the BC Assessment Authority (BCAA). These properties are generally small, 4.0 ha on average, and collectively have a total combined area of 366 ha. Comparatively, there are 1,426 parcels of land within the ALR totaling over 19,500 ha, and approximately 5,312 ha (27%) of land within the ALR has been granted Farm Tax Status. Therefore, the majority of agricultural lands in the RDN are located within the ALR.

Each of the RDN's Zoning Bylaws is described below along with a discussion of minimum parcel sizes and their relationship to farm productivity.

5.4.1 ZONING BYLAW NO. 500 (1987)

As noted above, the RDN Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987 applies only to Electoral Areas 'A', 'C', 'E', 'G', and 'H'. Currently, the RDN does not have an "Agriculture" zone specifically set forth in *Bylaw No. 500, 1987*, as is included in *Bylaw No. 1285, 2002*; however agriculture and aquaculture are permitted uses in many of the zones in *Bylaw No. 500*. The bylaw defines "agriculture" as:

"A use providing for the growing, rearing, producing and harvesting of agricultural products, and includes the growing of crops; fruit and berry production; growing trees and shrubs; housing livestock, poultry, fur-bearing animals, bees; animal feeding and holding areas; storage of crops; and the processing of the primary agricultural products harvested, reared or produced on that farm, including the rough sawing of logs, but excludes animal care and specifically excludes the following uses on land located within the Resource Management (RM3) and Rural 5 (RU5) zones that is not located in an agricultural land reserve: feed lot; fur farm; mushroom farm; horse boarding stable; and intensive swine operation.

Notwithstanding the above, for Electoral Area 'G' only, the following accessory uses on lands classified as farm under the Assessment Act:

- a. retail sales of goods wholly produced on the farm where the sales are taking place;*
- b. storing, packing, product preparation, or processing of farm products if at least 50% of the farm product is produced on the farm or is feed required for farm production purposes on the farm;*
- c. temporary and seasonal accommodation on a farm in campsites, seasonal cabins, or short term use of bedrooms including bed and breakfast to a maximum of one accommodation unit per hectare not exceeding a maximum of 10 per parcel provided the total developed area for buildings, landscaping, and access for accommodation is less than 5% of the parcel;*
- d. the breeding of household animals; and,*
- e. agricultural research and education provided that the combined total of any associated buildings and structures required for education and/or research do not exceed 100 m²."*

The following zones in *Bylaw No. 500* permit agriculture, as defined above, and/or aquaculture:

- Commercial Zone (CM8) permits agriculture along with campground use, except "intensive" agriculture (including feed lot, fur farm, mushroom farm, horse boarding stable, and intensive swine operation) is not permitted.
- Resource Management Zones (RM1 to RM5; RM7 to RM9). Many of the RM zones also permit aquaculture and home-based business use. Other non-agricultural uses permitted in the RM zones include extraction, log storage, primary processing, wood waste facilities, and silviculture.
- Rural Zones (RU1 to RU9), with other permitted uses including aquaculture, home-based business, produce stand, nursery, animal care, and other associated farming uses.
- Water Zone (WA1) permits aquaculture and a boat ramp.

"Agricultural industry" is not specifically mentioned within any of the Industrial zones, nor is it defined in the zoning bylaws. An Agricultural Industry Zone, or Agricultural Enterprise Zone, could help direct processing, distribution, and/or value added activities to a specific sub-region. These zones can create a hub of secondary agricultural activity and attract farm sector business investment to the community. These zones have been used in communities such as the City of Surrey and the District of Pitt Meadows. Salt Spring Island is also currently considering the creation of an Agricultural Enterprise Zone. This type of zone may be appropriate for the RDN and is included in recommended action 7.3A in Table 7.

The majority of ALR land in the RDN is zoned either Resource Management or Rural, which permit agriculture use. However, there are some parcels of ALR that fall within zones that do not include agriculture as a permitted use, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. List of zones in which ALR is located but agriculture is not a permitted use (Bylaw No. 500, 1987).

ALR found in Zone	Land Used For	Area (ha)	Electoral Area(s)
Commercial (CM6)	Equestrian business	5.3	E
Conservation (ES1)	Provincial Park and Natures Trust Protected Area	47.3	A, E
Public (PU1)	Schools, Playfields, Senior Social Housing, Bible Camp	27.6	A, H
Public (PU4)	Department of National Defense	64.3	E
Recreation (RC1)	RDN Park	8.4	H
Recreation (RC1)	Golf Courses	80.2	G, H
Recreation (RC2)	Equestrian business	17.2	E
Recreation (RC3)	Campground	17.5	C
Recreation (RC4)	Fish and Game Club	8.8	C
Total		276.6	

As shown in Table 3, approximately 276 hectares of ALR land in the RDN is alienated from farming use based on the existing zoning that allows for non-farm use of the land. It is possible, for example, that the equestrian business operations, zoned CM6 in Electoral Area ‘E’, may eventually revert back to farm use; however, it is unlikely that the other parcels in this category (i.e. in the ALR but not zoned for agriculture) will return to food production. It is possible that the park operated by the RDN that is located within the ALR in Electoral Area ‘H’ may be suitable for a community garden allotment program, incubator farm program, or other activity as identified in recommended action 7.4C in Table 7.

There was some concern raised during public engagement regarding the use of ALR land for non-farm uses, in particular golf courses. There are several recommendations for implementation in Table 7 (e.g. 1.1B, 1.1C, 1.1G, 7.2B, and 7.2C) that address the issues raised regarding non-farm use of ALR land.

5.4.2 ZONING BYLAW NO. 1285 (2002)

The RDN Zoning and Subdivision Bylaw No. 1285, 2002 applies only to Electoral Area ‘F’, which includes the communities of Errington, Coombs, and Hilliers. There is a specific Agriculture zone (A-1) that applies to most ALR land in Area ‘F’. Permitted uses in the A-1 Zone include a dwelling unit, farm use, accessory buildings and structures, farm business, and home based business. Note that the same use described as “agriculture” in Bylaw No. 500 is described as “farm use” in Bylaw No. 1285. The minimum parcel size for land zoned A-1 is 4.0 ha and there is a total of 5,468 ha of land located within this zone, including numerous properties with additional site specific permitted uses (A-1.1 to A-1.28).

Other zones in the bylaw that permit farm use or related uses include the following:

- Agriculture Zone (A-1.7): a site-specific use permitting a composting facility only.
- Commercial Zones (C-1 and C-2): outdoor market.
- Commercial Zone (C-3): food processing, nursery, outdoor market, outdoor sales.
- Forestry Zone (FR-1): farm use and farm business. Note that there is no ALR land within the FR-1 zone.

ALR land can also be found in Electoral Area ‘F’ within zones that do not permit farm use as summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4. List of zones in which ALR is located but agriculture is not a permitted use (Bylaw No. 1285, 2002).

Zone Name	Zone Codes	Hectares
Parks and Open Space 1	P-1	29.4
Institutional/Community Facility 2	T-2	21.2
Comprehensive Development 16	CD-16	8.9
Parks and Open Space 2	P-2	7.7
Rural 1	R-1	3.3
Institutional/Community Facility 1	T-1.3	2.6
Rural Residential 2	R-2	1.3
Total		74.5

Given that “farm use” is not permitted for these ALR lands, a total area of 74.5 ha of ALR land is alienated from agricultural activity in Area ‘F’. As mentioned earlier, the public raised concerns about the conversion of ALR land for non-farm uses. These concerns are addressed by several of the recommended actions in Table 7, including 1.1B; 1.1C; 1.1G; 7.2B; 7.2C.

5.4.3 MINIMUM PARCEL SIZES FOR AGRICULTURE

There is a wide-range of parcel sizes associated with ALR properties in the RDN, from less than 1.0 ha to greater than 300 ha (RDN Agricultural Land Use Inventory, 2011). Minimum parcel sizes need to be appropriately scaled to ensure suitable sites for farming are available throughout the RDN. Appropriate farm sizes tend to range from 8.0 ha to 20.0 ha in most communities in B.C (WCEL, 2005). Very large parcels can be prohibitive for farmers to purchase or lease, due to their high real estate value, while smaller parcels (less than 4.0 ha) can limit the type and viability of agricultural activities for a property. Farm parcels sizes between 8.0 ha and 20.0 ha are, therefore, ideal for both the diversity of productivity that can occur and the affordability of purchasing or leasing the land for new and emerging farmers.

The RDN Agricultural Land Use Inventory (2011) reveals similar conclusions as summarized in Table 5. As the ALR parcel size increases, the proportion of properties farming increases up to a certain point (about 20.0 ha) and then the number of farms in production decreases. The proportion of ALR properties with primarily residential usage is greatest within parcels that are less than 8.0 ha, and the proportion of ALR properties that are primarily treed and/or contain logging activity is greatest within the largest parcels (greater than 20.0 ha).

Table 5. ALR parcel size and associated primary land use in the RDN.

Parcel size	Number of ALR Parcels	Total Area (ha)	Parcels indicating Primary Land Use (%)			
			Rural Residential	Farm or Hobby Farm	Treed or Logged	Other
< 2.0 ha	499	762	53.3	33.5	9.8	3.4
2.1 ha – 7.9 ha	504	2,292	40.1	37.5	18.8	3.6
8.0 ha – 20.0 ha	342	3,918	18.1	46.2	32.2	3.5
> 20.1 ha	173	13,026	2.3	43.3	50.2	2.3
Total	1,518	19,998				

It is important to note that the subdivision districts¹ and minimum lot sizes prescribed in the zoning bylaws, if existing, override the minimum parcel sizes indicated in the OCP policies. Table 6 lists all of the zones and prescribed minimum parcel sizes for the ALR properties within the RDN.



Figure 6. Residential area adjacent to active farming area in the RDN.

¹ Subdivision Districts prescribe the minimum parcel sizes, based on the standard of servicing provision, for lots created by subdivision within Electoral Areas ‘A’, ‘C’, ‘E’, ‘G’ and ‘H’ (see Schedule ‘4B’ of the “Regional District of Nanaimo Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987”). Lots created through subdivision in Electoral Area ‘F’ must meet the minimum lot sizes prescribed in each zone (see Section 4.0 of the “Regional District of Nanaimo Zoning and Subdivision Bylaw No. 1285, 2002”).

Table 6. Minimum parcel sizes (ha) and total area for ALR properties in the RDN.

Minimum Parcel Sizes (ha)	Subdivision District – Schedule ‘4B’ (Bylaw No. 500, 1987)	Zones within the ALR	Electoral Area(s) Affected	Total Area (ha)
1	F	RU-1, RU-5	E, G	23
2	D	ES-1, RU-1, RU-2, RU-4, RU-5, RU-7, RU-9, PU-1, CD-10, RS-6	A, C, E, G, H	6,175
8	B	RU-1, RU-4, RU-7, RU-9, RM-1, RM-3, RM-5, RM-9, RC-1, RC-4, PU-1,	A, C, E, G, H	2,555
20	A	RM-1	H	1,012
50	V	RU-1, RU-5, RU-6, RM-1, RM-3	A, C, E, G, H	716
No subdivision permitted	Z	RU-5, RU-9, RC-1, RC-2, RC-3, PU-3, CM-6, ES-1	C, E, G, H	275
Minimum Parcel Sizes (ha)	Section 4.0 (Bylaw No. 1285, 2002)	Zones within the ALR	Electoral Area Affected	Total Area (ha)
4	A-1	A-1 to A-1.28	F	5,468

Out of the 16,326 ha of ALR land regulated by these zoning requirements:

- 71.5% is included in the less than 8.0 ha allowable subdivision range.
- 21.8% is included in the 8.0 ha to 20.0 ha allowable subdivision range.
- 6.7 % is included in the greater than 20.0 ha allowable subdivision range.

Therefore, despite most OCPs indicating land use designations with an allowable minimum parcel size of 8.0 ha for properties within the ALR, the zoning bylaws indicate that much of the ALR is zoned for parcels smaller than 8.0 ha and some for larger than 20.0 ha as illustrated in Figure 7 below. This discrepancy points to the concern regarding the relationship between farming activity and parcel size as indicated in the Land Use Inventory results in Table 5. Most notably, the potential to subdivide ALR land to smaller parcels (less than or equal to 2.0 ha) where permitted in the zoning and supported by the Subdivision Approval Officer. Large ALR parcels within Subdivision Districts “V” (50.0 ha minimum) and “A” (20.0 ha minimum) would require rezoning to allow subdivision into 8.0 ha to 20.0 ha parcels.

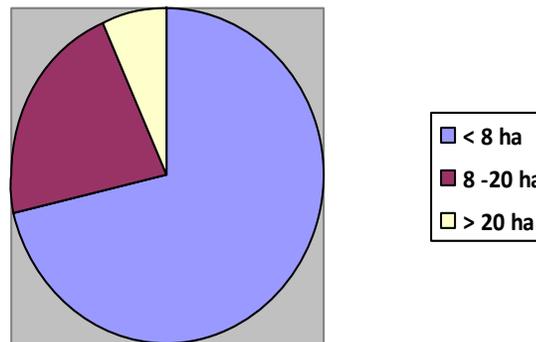


Figure 7. Proportion of ALR land by minimum parcel size.

It is important to emphasize that the Subdivision Approval Officer is not required to grant permission for the subdivision of land simply because the application satisfies the minimum parcel size requirements prescribed in the zoning regulations for ALR properties. If the application is deemed to adversely affect agriculture, or to reduce the potential for agriculture, the application may be rejected (ALC, 1996).

The actions recommended in the Implementation Table 7 in the following section (e.g. 1.1G, 7.2D, and 7.4A) are based on these findings and address the issues raised by some private landowners of large parcels that are currently not being farmed.



Figure 8. Fresh plums and berries, Fiddick's Farm, Cedar, Electoral Area A, RDN.

6.0) Recommended Actions for Implementation

The following table describes specific actions for each of the eight recommended AAP goals and objectives. A list of key players is provided along with priority level, timeframe, resource requirements and suggested sources of funding. The responsibility for the implementation of the RDN AAP rests with the RDN itself; therefore, some of the actions can be implemented by the RDN as the lead. However, for many other actions the RDN may play a supporting role or none at all. The intention is that the entire food community can find a role to play in implementing the AAP.

Actions

A, B, C, etc.: Describes the specific action(s) required to meet the stated objective. Examples of existing initiatives, policies, regulations, and/or programs from other jurisdictions or organizations are indicated whenever possible.

Key Players

Lead(s): One or more stakeholders that are expected to take the lead role in embarking upon the action.
Supporting: One or more stakeholders that the Lead will likely partner with to assist with implementing the action. Actions whereby the RDN plays a lead role have been shaded gray for ease of identification.

Priority

High: Requires urgent attention and action in order for progress to be made and/or in order for other actions to move forward.

Medium: Not critical to improve farming and/or aquaculture, but necessary and important.

Low: Less important but still necessary for improvements in the local agriculture/aquaculture system to be completed.

Timeframe

Short: To be completed within 1 to 3 years after adoption of the AAP.

Medium: To be completed within 3 to 5 years after adoption of the AAP.

Long: To be completed within 5 to 10 years after adoption of the AAP.

Ongoing: Will require continued efforts over the short to long term timeframe.

Resource Requirements and Sources

Negligible: Work on this action may already be in progress, done “in-kind”, or with minimal additional responsibilities and resources required.

Low: Work can be done “in-kind”, through the assistance of volunteers, students and interns, with minimal additional responsibilities and resources, or a combination of the above.

Moderate: Additional funding will likely be required, either by grants or in-kind support.

Significant: New resources will be required and may be acquired by a combination of grants and in-kind support. This type of requirement usually extends beyond the short term.

Agencies that may be able to offer resources or financial support are identified, including those who may offer in-kind support. If the requirements are *Negligible* then additional sources may not be identified if deemed unnecessary.

Table 7. Recommended implementation actions for the RDN Agricultural Area Plan.

Goal #1 - Protect and Enhance the Agricultural Land Base

Objective 1.1)

Reinforce the protection of farmland from non-agricultural development and improve the ability to proactively use and manage farmland for agriculture.

1.1 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Consider updating the AAC Terms of Reference to allow the AAC to make comments on every application (exclusion, non-farm use, subdivision) that is forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). Precedence for the Terms of Reference and protocols exist in many other jurisdictions.</p> <p>Examples: <i>RDN Electoral Area ‘A’ OCP (2011) Policy 5.1.8: The RDN should consider providing comments to the ALC on all applications for non-farm use, subdivision, and exclusion.</i> <i>Sunshine Coast Regional District – AAC Terms of Reference</i> <i>Fraser Valley RD – AAC Terms of Reference</i> <i>City of Penticton – AAC Terms of Reference</i> <i>Ministry of Agriculture’s AAC Terms of Reference template.</i></p>	<p>Lead: RDN</p> <p>Supporting: AGRI</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Requirements: Low to Moderate</p> <p>Source: RDN</p>
<p>B. Consider adopting a “no net loss to agriculture within the same bioregion” criterion when evaluating land development proposals, whether they are within the ALR or adjacent to it. Ensure that any farmland removed is replaced with equivalent Agricultural Capability soils or better. Use the same criterion to plan transportation, drainage and utility corridors.</p> <p>Examples: <i>City of Vernon – OCP Section 12: Agriculture and Food Access</i> <i>City of Surrey - 2003 Policy for Considering Applications for Exclusion of Land from the Agricultural Land Reserve, Policy #051 section 5: Compensation</i></p>	<p>Lead: RDN</p> <p>Supporting: Member municipalities</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Requirements: Low to Moderate</p> <p>Source: RDN</p>
<p>C. Work with the province to create financial deterrents, profit recapture taxes, or penalties applied to ALR that is for sale for non-agricultural land use.</p>	<p>Lead: AGRI, real estate industry</p> <p>Supporting: RDN</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Long</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate</p> <p>Source: Real Estate Foundation</p>

1.1 Actions (cont'd).	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
D. Encourage Member municipalities to form AACs and appoint liaison staff to sit on the RDN AAC.	Lead: Member municipalities Supporting: RDN	High	Short	Requirements: Low
E. Develop guidelines for siting and size of residential uses in the ALR. See the Ministry of Agriculture's Discussion Paper and Bylaw Standard (2011): http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/residential_uses_in_ALR_consultation/Residential_Uses_Discussion_Paper_-_Final_September_2011.pdf Examples: <i>Corporation of Delta Zoning Bylaw (2007) Part 5, A1.</i> <i>City of Richmond Zoning Bylaw (2011) Section 14.1</i>	Leads: RDN , member municipalities Supporting: AGRI	High	Medium	Requirements: Low (templates available from ALC and other jurisdictions) Sources: RDN
F. Advocate BC Assessment Authority (BCAA) for changes in farm tax assessment to include the sale of value-added and agri-tourism products in determining primary production gross income – currently only the sale of raw farm products are included in the calculation of income, and this threshold is often too high for small farms to achieve farm status for tax purposes.	Leads: AGRI, BCAA Supporting: RDN	High	Short	Requirements: Negligible
G. Encourage private companies and landowners with significant land holdings in the ALR to maintain their agricultural potential. Engage in a discussion regarding: the agricultural potential of Resource Lands that no longer have forestry potential; the RDN's interest in seeing the use of these properties maintained and/or developed for agriculture; and the possibility of establishing preparatory zoning that anticipates the sale of these properties for agricultural purposes.	Leads: Private landowners and companies Supporting: RDN, Member municipalities	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Low to Moderate Sources: RDN, privately managed forest operators.
H. Communicate with member municipalities to plan and identify methods to manage the rural-urban fringe (such as buffer areas, drainage plans, and urban containment boundaries) in order to reduce encroachment on farmland and farming and effectively mediate disputes.	Lead: RDN Supporting: Member municipalities	Low	Medium	Requirements: Moderate Source: RDN
I. Improve public awareness and access to information regarding ALR applications for non-farm use and/or subdivision.	Leads: RDN , member municipalities	High	Short	Requirements: Moderate Source: ALR applicants

Objective 1.2)

Increase the access and availability of agriculture and aquaculture information in the RDN to assist farmers and aquaculture operators.

1.2 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Create a webpage for agricultural information and related issues that extends from the RDN website. Use the webpage to promote local farm directory, including a 'operation/farmer of the month' feature, seasonal local food recipes, 'fact sheets' and videos created for the AAP. The directory could also be included as an insert in local newspapers.</p> <p>Examples: <i>City of Surrey:</i> http://www.surrey.ca/for-business/1422.aspx <i>District of Saanich:</i> http://www.saanich.ca/living/community/afs/afshome.html <i>District of Kent:</i> http://www.district.kent.bc.ca/bik-als.html</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, BCAFM, BCFSN</p> <p>Supporting: Economic Development Corporation (EDC), RDN</p>	High	Short	<p>Requirements: Moderate (will require additional RDN staff time or services of an external web designer). Long term maintenance costs will be lower than start-up.</p> <p>Sources: In-kind: RDN, member municipalities, Farmers Institutes Possible summer student position.</p>
<p>B. Use the 2011 Land Use Inventory (LUI) results and 2006 Agricultural Census data to create a baseline of agricultural information and interactive online mapping tool, based on the RDN Map interface. Update the data with subsequent Stats Canada reports to monitor changes to RDN's agricultural sectors.</p>	<p>Lead: RDN, AGRI</p> <p>Supporting: Member municipalities</p>	Medium	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Moderate. Long term maintenance costs will be lower than start-up.</p> <p>Sources: RDN, member municipalities, Farmers Institutes</p>
<p>C. Conduct/undertake the uploading of all provincial soil capability and soil series map data so that farmers can investigate and identify agronomic opportunities and constraints.</p>	<p>Leads: RDN, ALC, AGRI</p>	Medium	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low</p> <p>Sources: ALC (in-kind)</p>
<p>D. Distribute information regarding farm waste composting and the availability of local compost to farms that need to improve soil structure.</p> <p>Example: <i>Earthbank Resource Systems</i></p>	<p>Lead: Farmers Institutes</p> <p>Supporting: Cultivating Soil Solutions</p>	Low	Short	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p>
<p>E. Promote and encourage research into small and medium-sized farming strategies.</p>	<p>Lead: VIU</p> <p>Supporting: Farmers Institutes</p>	Medium	Long	<p>Requirements: Moderate</p> <p>Sources: Academic grants, IAF</p>
<p>F. Assist farmers in accessing other sources of information and funding that result in the implementation of environmental farm management practices.</p>	<p>Leads: AGRI, ARDCorp</p> <p>Supporting: EDC, Farmers Institutes</p>	Medium	Short	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p>

Objective 1.3)

Encourage access to programs and information that supports the long-term viability of farming and aquaculture.

1.3 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Coordinate a farmland clearinghouse or land-linking database to connect potential farmers with voluntary landowners and link it to a regional agriculture website. Include a database maintenance strategy.</p> <p>Examples: <i>TLC's online resource:</i> http://blog.conservancy.bc.ca/agriculture/resources/linking-land-and-farmers/</p>	<p>Leads: The Land Conservancy (TLC), Farmers Institutes, Realtors</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, AGRI</p>	High	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Low. These online databases already exist and need only to upload regional data. TLC may hire a co-op student to create a local database if existing databases are not scaled appropriately.</p>
<p>B. Ease efforts of aquaculture operators in securing licence tenure by hosting consultation sessions with First Nations and other government agencies.</p>	<p>Leads: Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB), Fisheries & Oceans, BC Shellfish Grower's Association (BCSGA)</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, First Nations</p>	High	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Moderate (some staff time for meetings)</p> <p>Sources: RDN, BCSGA, Fisheries and Oceans</p>
<p>C. Provide information to both farmers and non-farming ALR landowners about different types of land use agreements (licences, leases, profit-a-prendres, and memorandums of understanding) to ensure that the maximum amount of farmland is in its most productive use regardless of ownership.</p>	<p>Lead: FarmFolk/CityFolk (FF/CF), West Coast Environmental Law (WCEL), TLC</p> <p>Supporting: AGRI, Farmers Institutes</p>	High	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Low (could be a one-day workshop or could hire a co-op student to develop a handbook).</p> <p>Sources: Real Estate Foundation, TLC, FF/CF, West Coast Environmental Law, AGRI</p>
<p>D. Assist farm families dealing with the challenge of farm succession and financial assistance by connecting them with professional support services and information.</p>	<p>Leads: TLC, FF/CF, AGRI</p> <p>Supporting: Farmers Institutes</p>	High	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Negligible (these online programs already exist, need only to connect to them) or Low.</p> <p>Sources: Real Estate Foundation</p>

1.3 Actions (<i>cont'd</i>)	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
E. Provide access to research and information regarding alternative farm business arrangements such as stratas, cooperatives, and corporations and alternative land ownership/tenure models.	Leads: TLC, FF/CF Supporting: Farmers Institutes	High	Ongoing	Requirements: Low (could be a one-day workshop) Sources: RDN, TLC, AGRI
F. Work with the province to set up an agricultural land bank to purchase farmland from retiring farmers and sell to new farmers.	Lead: AGRI, ALC Supporting: TLC, Farmers Institutes	Low	Long	Requirements: Depends on how the program is implemented (e.g. land purchases vs. land donations) Sources: Donors of funds and donors of land. Real Estate Foundation
G. Foster a culture of co-operation and support between the aquaculture and agriculture industries through increased communication.	Leads: Farmers institutes, BC Shellfish Grower's Association (BCSGA)	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Negligible

Goal #2 - Strengthen the Local Agriculture and Aquaculture Economy

Objective 2.1)

Consider an Economic Development Strategy that will provide the conditions to increase the economic viability of agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN.

2.1 Action	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Secure funding for and create the position of Agricultural Support Officer either through the RDN in collaboration with member municipalities or through an Economic Development Corporation. The role would involve one-on-one support to businesses; responsive and focused assistance to the agriculture sector; and development of promotional and marketing opportunities.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Agricultural Support Officer, Central Okanagan Econ. Devel. Commission;</i> <i>Agri-Investment Officer, Invest Comox Valley.</i></p>	<p>Leads: RDN, Member municipalities</p>	High	Medium	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant and ongoing funding required depending on the nature of the position (full time vs. part time).</p> <p>Sources: RDN, member municipalities, EDC</p>
<p>B. Consider establishing an Agricultural Development Committee (ADC), possibly as an extension of the City of Nanaimo’s Economic Development Corporation (EDC) or through the rural economic development office, with a mandate to improve communication, promote agricultural and aquaculture business development and initiatives, and identify and access funding opportunities. As first order of business, have the ADC pursue an Economic Development Strategy for agriculture in the region.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Central Okanagan RD and City of Kelowna: http://www.investkelowna.com/</i> <i>Comox Valley RD: http://www.investcomoxvalley.com/keySectors/agrifood.htm</i></p>	<p>Leads: EDC, Farmers Institutes</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, City of Nanaimo</p>	High	Short	<p>Requirements: Significant</p> <p>Sources: IAF, RDN and member municipalities, chamber of commerce, Tourism BC</p>
<p>C. Initiate a regional market research project to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current consumer perceptions - Competitive advantages (e.g., organic, quality, freshness) - Market gaps, new product niches and opportunities - Trends and opportunities for processed and value-added products - Potential for expansion of alternative marketing channels. 	<p>Leads: VIU, EDC, Centre for Shellfish Research (CSR)</p> <p>Supporting: Farmers Institutes, VIEA</p>	Medium	Medium	<p>Requirements: Moderate</p> <p>Sources: Chamber of commerce, EDC, commodity groups, academic grants, IAF</p>

Objective 2.2)

Evaluate opportunities to market local agriculture and aquaculture.

2.2 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Create and distribute a local food guide or directory, similar to what is produced in the Comox Valley and Southern Vancouver Island, and include aquaculture. Ensure that it is available online. This would assist not only the public, but also farmers get to know what types of activities are occurring in their area and potentially create opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. Promote those farms that participate in the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) to build consumer awareness of the stewardship efforts by farmers. Work with the tourism industry to develop ‘taste of RDN’ tours, guidebooks, cookbooks and promotions at local and regional restaurants, convention/hotel facilities and other venues.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Comox Valley, Cowichan Valley, City of Prince George, Town of Oliver Southern Vancouver Island, Sunshine Coast, City of Richmond.</i></p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, RDN, BC Association of Farmers Markets (BCAFM)</p> <p>Supporting: Nanaimo Foodshare, Mid-island Sustainability Stewardship Initiative, Tourism BC.</p>	High	Short	<p>Requirements: Low to Moderate. Depends on how the guide is prepared. Many templates and examples will help design costs down. Printing costs can be offset by advertising.</p> <p>Sources: Advertisers, Vancity, Real Estate Foundation (REF)</p>
<p>B. Support a year-round indoor farmers’ market, possibly at the VIE grounds.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Vancouver’s Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan; Moss Street Market, City of Victoria; City of Prince George.</i></p>	<p>Leads: City of Nanaimo, BCAF, Local farmers markets</p> <p>Supporting: RDN</p>	High	Medium	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant depending on location and management model.</p> <p>Sources: Vendor fees, grants, RDN, credit unions</p>
<p>C. Link agri-tourism activities to farm stays, Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOFing), and working holiday programmes and coordinate with the Economic Development Strategy and with other tourism promotion activities and include aquaculture.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Township of Spallumcheen, Township of Langley, Central Okanagan RD, RD Okanagan-Similkameen, Town of Oliver</i> http://winecapitalofcanada.com/</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, EDC, BC Tourism</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, Member municipalities, BCAF, Local farmers markets, TLC</p>	High	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low to Moderate depending on scale of agri-tourism activities.</p> <p>Sources: RDN, BC Tourism, TLC, farmers (in-kind), hotels and restaurants, chamber of commerce.</p>

2.2 Actions (cont'd).	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>D. Develop a Circle Farm Tour, Slow Food Cycle Tour, and other events for the RDN that take members of the public to different farms and highlight farming activities.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Village of Pemberton, Township of Langley, District of Kent/Agassiz, Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows.</i> http://circlefarmtour.com/</p>	<p>Leads: RDN, Member municipalities, Farmers Institutes, EDC</p> <p>Supporting: Vancouver Island University (VIU) Culinary Arts program, BC Tourism, BCAFM</p>	Medium	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low to Significant</p> <p>Sources: RDN, BC Tourism, farmers (in-kind), BCAFM (in-kind), chamber of commerce, local media outlets (in-kind).</p>
<p>E. Set up a system of coordinated distribution for local food products to reach retailers and restaurants. Further develop relationships between RDN farmers, aquaculture operators, and hotels and restaurants on the island. Some food distributors, such as Sysco and Gordon Food Services (Neptune), are assisting by developing contracts with local producers for restaurants who want to profile local foods.</p> <p>Examples: <i>A Salt Spring Island resident is a leader in this area – Pat Rykert.</i></p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes</p> <p>Supporting: Hotels and restaurants, Distribution companies</p>	Medium	Long	<p>Requirements: Depends on how the program is set up. Costs will be low if it simply involves tweaking existing systems.</p> <p>Sources: In-kind from all stakeholders</p>
<p>F. Assist the agricultural and aquaculture community with the development of a common local identity, logo, or brand that can be used to highlight RDN farms and their farm products and differentiate them from other Island farms and farming areas.</p> <p>Examples: <i>City of Richmond, Comox Valley Regional District</i></p>	<p>Leads: EDC, Farmers Institutes, BC Tourism</p> <p>Supporting: BCAFM, CSR</p>	Medium	Long	<p>Requirements: Moderate</p> <p>Sources: IAF, RDN, graphic designer in-kind, other grants</p>
<p>G. Encourage producers to target niche and specialty products, both raw materials and processed goods, and sell to local markets and beyond, including the Community Supported Agriculture model for both agriculture and aquaculture.</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, BCSGA</p> <p>Supporting: EDC, VIU, CSR</p>	Medium	Medium	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p>
<p>H. Create incentives for local retailers to sell local food products – this could involve newsletters directed to stores and other communication materials</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes</p> <p>Supporting: EDC</p>	Medium	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low to Moderate depending on the type of incentives.</p> <p>Sources: IAF, Chamber of Com.</p>

2.2 Actions (cont'd).	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>I. Increase the RDN's recognition as a beautiful coastal agricultural and aquaculture-based community and promote the RDN as a culinary destination with regional specialties.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Comox Valley RD</i> http://www.investcomoxvalley.com/keySectors/aqrifood.htm</p>	<p>Lead: EDC, BC Tourism, Farmers Institutes</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, Member municipalities</p>	Low	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low to Significant depending on the scope and scale of efforts.</p> <p>Sources: BC Tourism, Chamber of commerce, EDO</p>
<p>J. Encourage Farm Credit Canada to create financially supportive tools (loans, credits) for agricultural innovators.</p>	<p>Lead: Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), Commodity Groups</p> <p>Supporting: Credit Agencies, AGRI</p>	Low	Long	<p>Requirements: Negligible to Moderate (time for meetings)</p> <p>Sources: Farmers, commodity groups, and elected officials (all in-kind).</p>
<p>K. Update Shared Harvest Canada website to include the RDN, where members of the food industry and community members can list and source food and farm products for sale or donation.</p> <p>Examples: http://www.sharedharvest.ca/</p>	<p>Lead: Farmers Institutes</p>	Low	Short	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p> <p>Sources: Farmers (in-kind)</p>

Objective 2.3)

Create a regional business environment that is conducive to attracting processing and distribution services.

2.3 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Support and improve linkages to Vancouver Island Produce and other farmer-owned brokerage firms or co-ops to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-ordinate production and on-stream timing, - Provide a central order desk for local retailers, - Provide information about sources of supply and on-farm markets, - Co-ordinate transportation of inputs and goods for sale. <p>Examples: <i>Salt Spring Island; Co-op Atlantic http://www.coopatlastic.ca/;</i> <i>City of Kamloops' Heartland Co-op www.heartlandfoods.ca</i></p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, Retailers, Distribution companies</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, EDC</p>	High	Medium	<p>Requirements: Depends on how the program is carried out. Could be low – moderate.</p> <p>Sources: Co-op Assoc. of BC, Farmers Institutes (in-kind)</p>
<p>B. Develop connections between local farmers and organizations such as the Small Scale Food Processors Association to increase the understanding of local opportunities and how to navigate provincial and federal regulations.</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, BC Agriculture Council (BCAC)</p> <p>Supporting: SSFPA , 4-H Clubs</p>	Medium	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p>
<p>C. Support the establishment of an additional local licenced red meat abattoir (mobile or fixed) in order to keep up with high demand.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Salt Spring Island http://plantofarm.org/Current_Projects.php</i></p>	<p>Lead: Farmers Institutes, SSFPA</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, EDC, AAC</p>	Medium	Long	<p>Requirements: Low (for a feasibility study) – Significant (to set up a new plant).</p> <p>Sources: IAF, SSFPA, private industry</p>
<p>D. Engage ALC and Ministry of Agriculture in discussions regarding regulations related to on-farm processing to communicate how current regulations are limiting the processing local food (meat, eggs) and determine if any exemptions can be made for RDN farmers.</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, AGRI, ALC</p> <p>Supporting: RDN</p>	Low	Long	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p>
<p>E. Partner with VIHA to advertise and provide food safety training to local producers/processors.</p>	<p>Lead: VIHA</p> <p>Supporting: AGRI, Farmers Institutes</p>	Low	Medium	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p> <p>Sources: AGRI</p>

Objective 2.4)

Encourage tool sharing and equipment cooperatives between farm networks to reduce input costs.

2.4 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Meet with the Comox Valley Farmers Institute, who operates a similar equipment sharing endeavour, to discuss opportunities and challenges.	Lead: Farmers Institutes Supporting: Comox Valley Farmers Institute	High	Short	Requirements: Negligible
B. Perform an inventory of regional farm equipment and determine if enough farmers are willing to form an equipment co-operative or on-island share/rental system. The BC Cooperative Association provides information and other support for cooperative farms where resources, capital and knowledge can be pooled.	Lead: Farmers Institutes Supporting: BC Coop Association, VIU	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Low (could get a student or intern to do this) Sources: BC Co-op Assoc., VIU
C. Assist and encourage local groups to develop facilities for storing shared tools and equipment for canning, dehydration, and other forms of food preservation.	Lead: BC Coop Association Supporting: Farmers Institutes, individual farmers	Low	Medium	Requirements: Low to Moderate (depends how the program is developed). Sources: IAF, grants through non-profit societies

Objective 2.5)

Encourage the creation of value-added farm products.

2.5 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Develop a database of local on-farm, aquaculture, and commercial processing facilities in the region. Investigate the feasibility of pursuing community kitchen/other shared processing initiatives to encourage local value-added opportunities.	Leads: Farmers Institutes, BCSGA Supporting: EDC, Nanaimo Foodshare	High	Short	Requirements: Moderate Sources: Chamber of commerce, SSFPA, Vancity
B. Carry out market research to identify trends and opportunities for local value-added products.	Leads: EDC, VIU, BCAC Supporting: Farmers Institutes, BCAFM	High	Long	Requirements: Moderate Sources: Commodity groups, chamber of commerce, IAF, other grants
C. Assess the business feasibility of a local or regional (possible co-op) organization, or partner with existing organizations to develop centralized infrastructure to support local marketing channels, such as handling facilities, cold storage, and heated warehouse space. Example: Co-op Atlantic: http://www.coopatlantic.ca	Leads: EDC, BCAC Supporting: Farmers Institutes, VIU	High	Medium	Requirements: Low to Moderate (depends on how the program is initiated). Sources: BC Co-op Assoc., Farmers Institutes (in-kind), other grants.
D. Encourage farmers, shellfish operators, institutions, and senior governments to work collaboratively and identify value-added opportunities supporting local economic development of the food system. Prepare a brochure highlighting opportunities for value-added food products in the RDN and distribute to the business community and tourism sector.	Leads: EDC, BCSGA, Farmers Institutes Supporting: RDN	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Low Sources: BCSGA, IAF, chamber of commerce
E. Support initiatives to provide shared small-scale processing facilities and equipment such as community kitchens to enhance farmers markets.	Leads: Farmers Institutes, Nanaimo Foodshare Supporting: EDC, RDN, City of Nanaimo	Medium	Long	Requirements: Low if the role is managing a fundraising campaign Sources: AGRI, IAF, SSFPA, other non-profit grants

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

Objective 3.1)

Partner with government agencies and commodity groups to address specific regional training needs.

3.1 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Partner with Farm Business Advisory Services Board, Growing Forward, BC Association for Farmers Markets, or the Canadian Farm Business Management Council to provide educational opportunities for farmers locally or online. Topics could include: meat processing regulations and licensing, aquaculture, business development, farm value assessments, crop diversification, marketing and pricing.</p> <p>Example: http://www.agriwebinar.com</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, AGRI</p> <p>Supporting: VIU, VIHA, CSR, BCSGA</p>	High	Short	<p>Requirements: Low – programs exist provincially but need to be accessed locally.</p> <p>Sources: AGRI (in-kind), Farmers Institutes (in-kind)</p>
<p>B. Support apprenticeships, mentoring, incubator farms, and other farm-based or aquaculture-based employment programs. This could include: industry-based training programs (e.g. for dairy technicians, shellfish operators); Step-Up - a federal mentoring program; Willing Workers on Organic Farms; and VIU's Culinary Arts Program. This will assist new/emerging farmers to gain experience prior to renting or purchasing land. Investigate opportunities for farmers to be reimbursed for time spent working with apprentices.</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, AGRI, commodity groups</p> <p>Supporting: VIU, CSR, academic institutes, VIEx</p>	Medium	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low to Moderate</p> <p>Sources: HRDC, chamber of commerce, CSR, Farmers Institutes, AGRI</p>
<p>C. Support the enhancement of Farmers Institutes and the strengthening of the 4H program.</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, 4-H Clubs</p> <p>Supporting: RDN</p>	Low	Long	<p>Requirements: Low – Moderate</p> <p>Sources: IAF, AGRI, membership dues, project grants, fundraising</p>
<p>D. Explore the promotion and introduction of new crop varieties and techniques to extend the growing season.</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, VIU, CSR</p> <p>Supporting: AGRI</p>	Low	Long	<p>Requirements: Moderate</p> <p>Sources: IAF, AGRI, Agriculture & AgriFood Canada, project grants</p>

Objective 3.2)

Provide leadership in advertising and coordinating farming and aquaculture employment opportunities.

3.2 Action	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Improve the identification of local agricultural and aquaculture job opportunities for youth, especially seasonal opportunities for increased labour. This could be a simple internet-based local labour posting service or pool that better connects food industry workers and employers on a regional basis. The Canadian Agri-Labour Pool could be used as a template to create a similar regional or Vancouver Island-based system.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Stewards of Irreplaceable Land (SOIL):</i> http://www.soilapprenticeships.org/; <i>The Oliver project, a joint venture between the Town of Oliver, AGRI, HRDC, and the Chamber of Commerce.</i> <i>Canadian Agri-Labour Pool:</i> http://www.agri-labourpool.com/</p>	<p>Leads: EDC, Farmers Institutes, Youth employment services</p> <p>Supporting: VIU, commodity groups, other educational institutions, AGRI, Chamber of commerce, HRDC</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate to establish, low to maintain.</p> <p>Sources: HRDC, VIU, Community Futures, Food industry grants.</p>

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

Objective 4.1)

Improve information regarding watersheds, groundwater, and the effects of local water resource management on agriculture and aquaculture.

4.1 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Widely advertise and share the in-depth online map data available on RDN watersheds (WaterMap) and through the BC Water Resources Atlas to regional water users.	Leads: RDN, MOE	High	Medium	Requirements: Low Source: RDN
B. Communicate the progress of the RDN's upcoming Agriculture Water Demand Model project with Farmer Institutes, the aquaculture industry, and other agricultural stakeholders once it is launched and as it progresses.	Leads: RDN Supporting: Farmers Institutes, BCSGA	High	Medium	Requirements: Moderate Source: RDN
C. Consider completing a watercourse classification project on a watershed-by-watershed basis and sharing the results with the agriculture and aquaculture community. Example: <i>Langley Environmental Partners Society:</i> http://www.leps.bc.ca/programs/mapping-a-inventory	Leads: RDN , member municipalities, MOE, F&O Supporting: NGOs	Medium	Long	Requirements: Significant Sources: F&O, BC Ag Council, Pacific Salmon Foundation
D. Review current groundwater inventory and mapping and assess potential opportunities for irrigation from aquifer sources.	Leads: RDN , MOE, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) Supporting: VIU	High	Medium	Requirements: Moderate Sources: MOE, RDN
E. Review the feasibility of reusing wastewater from municipal waste treatment systems, rainwater discharge, or other large water-using activities for use as irrigation water.	Lead: VIU, AGRI, MOE, Farmers Institutes Supporting: RDN, member municipalities	High	Long	Requirements: Low to Moderate for a feasibility study Sources: RDN, IAF, MOE
F. Review opportunities for appropriate additional infrastructure that will enhance agriculture and aquaculture.	Leads: RDN , member municipalities	High	Medium	Requirements: Negligible

Objective 4.2)

Improve opportunities for on-farm water storage, supply, and drainage.

4.2 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Support efforts to allow farmers to develop on-farm water-related infrastructure to help with farm operations (such as storage, holding tanks, ponds, winter water surplus storage).	Leads: RDN , MOE, AGRI Supporting: Member municipalities, F&O	High	Medium	Requirements: Low to Moderate for a feasibility study Sources: RDN, IAF, MOE
B. Address surface water issues and concerns (water quality impacts, fisheries management, flooding, and drainage) through a coordinated approach between agriculture and aquaculture operations.	Leads: RDN , AGRI, BCSGA Supporting: Fisheries and Oceans Canada, MOE, Farmers Institutes	High	Long	Requirements: Low to Significant Sources: RDN, F&O, AGRI
C. Encourage farmers to use provincial and/or federal programs to develop shared facilities and infrastructure (e.g., water storage, distribution). Access any available funding sources such as infrastructure programs to support shared storage facilities and water distribution systems among individual farms.	Lead: Farmers Institutes Supporting: EDC	Medium	Long	Requirements: Moderate Sources: Farm Credit Canada, IAF, ARDCorp
D. Maintain access to adequate quantities of affordable water for farm operators and encourage the continued development and implementation of agricultural water conservation measures.	Leads: RDN , Member municipalities, Improvement Districts	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Low to Significant
E. Use the Ministry of Agriculture Watercourse Classification in Agricultural Areas, and Agricultural Ditch Maintenance Guidelines to help determine drainage priorities and options.	Lead: Farmers Institutes, individual farmers. Supporting: AGRI	Low	Medium	Requirements: Low Sources: AGRI (in-kind)

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

Objective 5.1)

Assist farmers with the implementation of sustainable farm practices and technologies.

5.1 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Advocate for regionally-based ecological goods and services programs to support conservation programs on farmland. Incentives could include tax credits and carbon credits.	Lead: RDN Supporting: TLC, BCAA	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Low to Moderate (staff time for meetings) Sources: RDN
B. Encourage farmers to enroll in the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) to expand agricultural best practices throughout farm operations in the RDN. Example: <i>BC's Environmental Farm Plan:</i> http://www.ARDCorpca/index.php?page_id=14	Leads: AGRI, Farmers Institutes Supporting: RDN	Medium	Short	Requirements: Negligible – just involves advertising opportunities that already exist. Sources: ARDCorp
C. Encourage those with challenging, environmentally sensitive and forested properties to consider alternative ecological and biological farming practices such as organic and biodynamic agriculture, wildcrafting, mushroom foraging, and agroforestry that result in high quality, high value and marketable products.	Lead: Farmers Institutes Supporting: AGRI, ALC, Cultivating Soil Solutions, Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC)	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Low (use existing materials and modify) Sources: AGRI, ARDCorp

Objective 5.2)

Address conflicts with wildlife and invasive species.

5.2 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Advocate to the Ministry of Environment to develop carrying capacity parameters and population management strategies for wildlife in the RDN that are a nuisance to farmers, including consideration of strategies used in other jurisdictions.	Leads: RDN, Farmers Institutes Supporting: MOE, AGRI, Licensed hunters	High	Medium	Requirements: Low (organize/attend meetings with MOE). Sources: In-kind MOE, AGRI, RDN
B. Develop a management strategy for over-abundant, alien, and invasive species on agricultural lands. This management strategy could include recommendations for management of invasive species within non-agricultural lands.	Leads: Invasive Species Council, Farmers Institutes Supporting: MOE, AGRI, RDN	High	Medium	Requirements: Moderate Sources: ARDCorp, MOE
C. Participate in initiatives with environment agencies to seek management solutions to controlling over-abundant wildlife such as rabbits, waterfowl, elk, deer, and black bear populations.	Lead: Farmers Institutes Supporting: MOE, Environment Canada, Ducks Unlimited	Medium	Short	Requirements: Low to Moderate depending on scope of initiatives. Sources: MOE, AGRI, ARDCorp, Ducks Unlimited
D. Develop a public communications tool to inform both farmers and the community about how wildlife is affecting farming, discussing issues and possible solutions such as greenbelts and wildlife corridors (possibly web-site based).	Lead: Farmers Institutes Supporting: MOE, AGRI	Medium	Short	Requirements: Low Sources: ARDCorp, MOE
E. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a farmland-wildlife stewardship organization that delivers programs to recognize valued habitat preservation for wildlife. Example: <i>Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust</i> http://www.deltafarmland.ca/	Lead: Farmers Institutes Supporting: Nature Trust BC, AGRI, MOE, Ducks Unlimited	Medium	Long	Requirements: Moderate to Significant depending on mandate of organization. Sources: Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, Ducks Unlimited, other grants.

Objective 5.3)

Support composting of agricultural and aquaculture wastes at both a regional and farm scale.

5.3 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Work with member municipalities to identify a location for a composting facility that would accept compostable wastes (plant material, manure, fish wastes) from farms and aquaculture operations.</p> <p>Example: <i>Salish Soils (Sechelt):</i> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWRkNDKZ6Ho</p>	<p>Leads: RDN, VIU, Farmers Institutes, Private Industry</p> <p>Supporting: Member municipalities</p>	High	Short	<p>Requirements: Low for a feasibility study - could be a VIU student project. Moderate to Significant for the development of the operation.</p> <p>Sources: RDN, VIU, private industry.</p>
<p>B. Investigate opportunities to connect regional composting and zero waste initiatives with the current nutrient cycling (composting) needs of farmers and aquaculture operators so that excess waste can be made available to those in need of extra nutrients. Identify any regulatory impediments that may exist in achieving this goal.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Langley Environmental Partners Society – Manure Maiden Program:</i> http://www.manuremaiden.com/ <i>Comox Valley Regional District – SkyRocket Compost</i> http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/notices.asp?id=662</p>	<p>Lead: RDN</p>	High	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low for a survey - could be a VIU student project.</p> <p>Sources: RDN, VIU, private industry.</p>
<p>C. Discourage large-scale slash burns and encourage efforts to reduce CO2 emissions from farming activities by promoting green composting, wood re-use, agroforestry techniques, shelterbelts, and alley cropping.</p>	<p>Lead: AGRI</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, member municipalities, MOE</p>	High	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Low</p> <p>Sources: MOE, AGRI, RDN</p>
<p>D. Encourage farmers to use environmental programs and the Scientific Research and Experimental Development Program (SR&ED) to develop beneficial programs for the re-use of waste products.</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, AGRI, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada</p>	Low	Medium	<p>Requirements: Negligible – just involves advertising opportunities that already exist.</p>

Objective 5.4)

Prepare local agriculture and aquaculture sectors for both the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

5.4 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Strengthen references to <i>Bill 27</i> and agriculture in the RGS and provide indications that specific agriculture and aquaculture opportunities are outlined in the AAP. <i>Bill 27</i> gives local governments tools to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and conserve energy by using targets, policies, and actions. GHG reduction targets must be established and local governments must indicate how the targets will be achieved. As a significant land use type, agriculture warrants special attention for GHG reduction actions. For example, in the RDN’s RGS (2011), Goal 1, the following statement is made: “ <i>The RDN and member municipalities can also be instrumental in recognizing the role sustainable forestry practices play in offsetting GHG emissions by storing carbon.</i> ” A similar statement could be made about the agriculture industry. Furthermore, RGS Policy 1.6 specifically addresses the need to work alongside the Forestry Industry. Similar statements could be included regarding the agriculture industry and the role of the regional AAP.	Lead: RDN	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Low to Moderate
B. Explore the role of agriculture in supplying carbon credits and supporting carbon storage techniques. Develop a pilot carbon sequestration incentive program that helps the RDN reduce its carbon footprint and meet <i>Bill 27</i> requirements. Reinvest carbon credits back into agriculture.	Leads: RDN, AGRI, Farmers Institutes Supporting: MOE, commodity groups	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Moderate to Significant Sources: MOE, commodity groups, RDN
C. Highlight achievements related to existing climate action, and best practices in agriculture policy to support mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Examples: http://www.bcagclimateaction.ca/	Leads: AGRI, BC Agriculture and Food Climate Action Initiative Supporting: RDN, member municipalities, Farmers Institutes	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Low – information already exists but extension of knowledge and skills is required. Sources: AGRI, MOE

5.4 Actions (cont'd).	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
D. Include additional agricultural practices (fossil fuel use, fertilizer use, soil conservation measures) when measuring community greenhouse gas inventories on a Regional and/or Electoral Area basis. Currently only livestock-based methane production is included in the Community Energy & Emissions Inventory.	Lead: MOE Supporting: RDN, Member municipalities	High	Ongoing	Requirements: Moderate Sources: MOE
E. Work with farmers to better understand what adaptive technologies and practices are being employed or needed (i.e. successful farming techniques necessary under different climatic factors).	Leads: Farmers Institutes, AGRI	High	Short	Requirements: Low Sources: AGRI, ARDCorp
F. Assist in education around climate change adaptation and agriculture by hosting discussions and workshops on: drought tolerance, crop insurance, integrated management of pests and disease, habitat for pollinators, re-introduction of native grasses for pasturing, using technologies that protect crops from weather damage.	Leads: AGRI, Farmers Institutes, ALC Supporting: RDN	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Low Sources: AGRI, ARDCorp

Objective 5.5)

Encourage energy efficient farming activities and the opportunity to produce energy on-farm

5.5 Action	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Improve energy efficiency by encouraging energy audits of farm operations (for buildings), using timers and sensors on heating, cooling and lighting systems; and installation of energy efficient technologies where possible.</p> <p>Example: <i>BC Agricultural Energy Advisor, BC Climate Action Network</i> http://www.bcagclimateaction.ca/resources-action/energy-consumption-efficiency-overview/</p>	<p>Leads: MOE, AGRI, Farmers Institutes, BCAC</p> <p>Supporting: Fortis BC, BC Hydro, Ministry of Energy, Mines, NRCan, RDN, member municipalities</p>	High	Medium	<p>Requirements: Negligible – the Agricultural Energy Advisor is a free service.</p> <p>Low – for a BC Farm Energy Assessment</p> <p>Sources: BC Climate Action Network, Government of Canada ecoACTION</p>
<p>B. Encourage the development of on-farm energy production programs, which give producers the power to assess and plan renewable energy options for their farms.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Integration of Renewable Energy on Farms (IREF) web tool</i> http://www.farm-energy.ca/IREF/ <i>BC Climate Action Initiative – Clean Energy Production</i> http://www.bcagclimateaction.ca/resources-action/clean-energy-production-overview/ http://www.bcagclimateaction.ca/wp/wp-content/media/CAI-FactSheet-5.pdf</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, AGRI, RDN</p> <p>Supporting: Fortis BC, BC Hydro, Ministry of Energy, Mines, NRCan, AGRI</p>	High	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low to Moderate, information and expertise exists and any upfront investments by the farm operator may be recouped by energy savings.</p> <p>Source: BC Climate Action Network, farmers</p>
<p>C. Support GHG emissions reductions through the use of Best Management Practices and innovative technology in farming and aquaculture operations.</p>	<p>Leads: AGRI, Farmers Institutes</p> <p>Supporting: RDN</p>	Medium	Short	<p>Requirements: Low, information exists but extension of knowledge to the farming community is required.</p> <p>Source: AGRI, BC Climate Action Network</p>

Goal #6 - Promote Awareness and Value of Local Agriculture and Aquaculture

Objective 6.1)

Partner with existing organizations to increase the public’s knowledge of aquaculture, farming and farmland within the RDN

6.1 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Partner with realtors and the Real Estate Board to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage the real estate industry to provide education for realtors to market farmland for farming; - Educate the real estate and development industry regarding the <i>Right to Farm Act</i>. This could involve producing a brochure and communicating with realtors, and lobbying for disclosure statements to be included for property sales adjacent to farms. - Develop information materials that could be provided to new or future residents who have purchased or are considering purchasing ALR property or property adjacent to or nearby farmland or aquaculture operations. <p>Example: <i>Ministry of Agriculture publication, The Countryside and You:</i> http://www.aqf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/800Series/800300-1Countryside.pdf</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, Real Estate Industry, AGRI, ALC</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, member municipalities, agricultural /ALR property owners.</p>	High	Medium	<p>Requirements: Low (e.g. brochures and pamphlets already created by AGRI and local governments).</p> <p>Sources: AGRI (in-kind).</p>
<p>B. Use mainstream and social media in promoting local agriculture and aquaculture business to raise awareness of local agriculture.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Comox Valley Regional District</i> http://www.investcomoxvalley.com/keySectors/agrifood/opportunities.htm <i>RDN Agricultural Plan videos:</i> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqH14FVbVOK</p>	<p>Leads: RDN, member municipalities, EDC</p> <p>Supporting: BCSGA, Farmers Institutes, BCAFM, VIEx</p>	High	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Low (e.g. RDN YouTube videos of local “Agriculture in Action”)</p> <p>Sources: EDC, Chamber of commerce</p>
<p>C. Connect with the public and community groups such as rotary clubs, community gardening associations, and other community groups to make presentations and provide information about the local food system.</p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes</p> <p>Supporting: Community Groups (e.g. VIEx)</p>	Low	Long	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p>

6.1 Actions (<i>cont'd</i>).	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
D. Partner with VIHA dieticians, and nutritionists to explain the health benefits of eating fresh local foods to the general public.	Leads: Farmers Institutes, BC Agricultural Council, VIHA Supporting: RDN, member municipalities	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Low
E. Promote better working relationships between food industry stakeholders by inviting local grocery store representatives, food distributors and processors, youth groups, 4-H members, and others to attend Farmers Institute meetings to promote discussion.	Lead: Farmers Institutes, Food Industry, VIEx	Medium	Short	Requirements: Negligible
F. Support community gardens and urban agriculture demonstrations to promote awareness and seek support for the development of a demonstration farm. Create an opportunity for a demonstration aquaculture operation so that the public could tour the site. Examples: <i>Young Professionals of Nanaimo:</i> http://vimeo.com/23508631 <i>City of Abbotsford:</i> http://www.abbotsford.ca/parksrecreationandculture/parks_fields/community_gardens.htm <i>District of Saanich:</i> http://www.saanich.ca/living/pdf/communitygardenspolicy.pdf	Leads: RDN , member municipalities, Community Gardeners, BCSGA Supporting: Farmers Institutes, CSR, VIU, Nanaimo Foodshare	Low	Medium	Requirements: Low Sources: RDN, non-profit grants, food banks, credit unions.
G. Partner with School Districts to add agriculture and aquaculture into the District school curriculum and extend this up to the University and College level by supporting the provincial Agriculture in the Classroom program; encouraging schools to grow food on school grounds; developing farm-based learning opportunities for credit for high school students; reviving/enhancing 4H programs through the school system; encouraging school policies that provide and promote local food choices for lunch and snack programs; and supporting the creation of scholarships in agriculture/aquaculture to a Grade 12 student interested in pursuing agricultural studies.	Leads: AGRI, Farmers Institutes, Commodity groups, school districts, school boards, Agriculture in the Classroom, VIU Supporting: RDN, Nanaimo FoodShare and other NGOs, Min of Education, ActNowBC, BCAFM, CSR, 4-H Clubs, VIHA	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Low to Significant Sources: School districts (in-kind), Farm 2 School program, ActNowBC, commodity groups, NGO grants.

Objective 6.2)

Promote local agriculture and aquaculture

6.2 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Assist with the promotion of agricultural and aquaculture events and festivals in the RDN with other Vancouver Island events. Encourage agriculture/aquaculture-focused public education activities, events and celebrations. Identify existing activities and events that could feature local agriculture and aquaculture.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Village of Hazelton's Iron Chef Local Food Challenge</i> <i>Nanaimo Foodshare's Community Roots Festival</i> <i>Seedy Saturday</i> <i>Slow Food Events</i> <i>Nanaimo Pumpkin Festival</i> <i>Brant Wildlife Festival</i></p>	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, BC Tourism, chamber of commerce, BCSGA, BCAFM</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, member municipalities, VIEx</p>	Medium	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Low (if simply assisting to advertise other events) – Moderate (if hosting new events).</p> <p>Sources: Chamber of commerce, EDO, hotels and restaurants.</p>
<p>B. Host dialogues to provide opportunities and situations where members of the farming and non-farming community can come together to consider and discuss issues of shared concern.</p>	<p>Lead: Farmers Institutes</p> <p>Supporting: Nanaimo Foodshare, BCFSN, and other NGOs</p>	Low	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Negligible to Low</p> <p>Sources: NGOs (in-kind and grants)</p>
<p>C. Participate in the Island's Agriculture Shows, Seafood Festival, and other similar events.</p>	<p>Lead: Farmers Institutes, BCSGA, food industry</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, member municipalities</p>	Low	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Negligible to Low</p>

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

Objective 7.1)

Solidify the RDN’s role in supporting agriculture, aquaculture, and associated farm practices

7.1 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Ensure that RDN employees, directors, and members of the AAC have the appropriate level of understanding of agriculture, aquaculture, and associated legislative framework that allow them to effectively address the needs of the farming community. This could be achieved by providing professional development workshops and updates.	Lead: RDN Supporting: AGRI, ALC	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Low to Moderate Sources: RDN, AGRI, ALC
B. Find additional ways to provide a “one-window” approach to finding information of agricultural and aquaculture regulations. Reduce or explain the apparent duplication and contradiction in some regulations - for example the four levels of government (including First Nations) regulating aquaculture.	Leads: AGRI, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, MOE Supporting: RDN, First Nations, ALC, member municipalities	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Low to Moderate Sources: RDN, member municipalities, F&O, MOE, First Nations, AGRI, ALC
C. Continue to provide pre-application assistance to farmers requiring approvals for farm related structures and other works that fall under regional authority where applicable (i.e. farm buildings are exempt from building permit process).	Lead: RDN	High	Ongoing	Requirements: Negligible to Low Sources: RDN, member municipalities
D. Strengthen the RDN development approval process to better consider the potential water-related impacts of new development on agriculture and aquaculture (e.g. runoff and rain water management) and ensure that agricultural water supply is not negatively impacted. Establish processes to address water management issues and impacts if they do occur.	Lead: RDN Supporting: Member municipalities, MOTI, MOE, F&O	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Moderate to Significant Sources: RDN, member municipalities

7.1 Actions (cont'd)	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
E. Continue to work with member municipalities to encourage the efficient use of existing serviced urban, and future urban lands as identified in the RDN's Regional Growth Strategy.	Lead: RDN Supporting: Member municipalities	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Negligible to Moderate Sources: RDN, member municipalities
F. Continue to adopt policies and regulations that support urban agriculture.	Lead: RDN Supporting: Member municipalities	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Negligible to Moderate Sources: RDN, member municipalities
G. Monitor Agricultural Land Commission/ALR policy changes and update policies and bylaws as needed.	Leads: RDN , Farmers Institutes Supporting: ALC	Low	Ongoing	Requirements: Negligible to Moderate Sources: RDN, member municipalities
H. Give more consideration to impacts of planning and designing transportation corridors in and adjacent to the ALR to facilitate farmland access and minimize farming disruptions (including on-farm marketing) through subdivision review. Design residential, commercial and industrial areas so that road endings pointed into farmland are avoided. Example: <i>ALC's Subdivision Approval Officer's Toolkit:</i> http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmamt/sf/planaq/subdiv.htm	Lead: MOTI Supporting: Member municipalities, RDN, ALC	High	Ongoing	Requirements: Negligible to Moderate
I. Advocate to the Agricultural Land Commission to change the ALC Act to require notification to the public and RDN Directors of any new ALR exclusion or non-farm use applications.	Leads: RDN , Farmers Institutes Supporting: ALC	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Negligible to Moderate Sources: RDN

Objective 7.2)

Enhance the RGS and OCPs to Strengthen Agriculture and Aquaculture

7.2 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Continue to provide support for agriculture and aquaculture as legitimate activities that increase the RDN's long-term sustainability and resilience as outlined in the RGS and OCPs.</p> <p>Examples: <i>RDN Area A OCP and RDN Area G OCP,</i> <i>Township of Spallumcheen OCP,</i> <i>Central Okanagan Regional District RGS,</i> <i>Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District RGS,</i> <i>District of Saanich OCP,</i> <i>District of North Saanich OCP,</i> <i>Comox Valley Regional District RGS,</i> <i>Cowichan Valley Regional District RGS.</i></p>	<p>Lead: RDN</p> <p>Supporting: Member municipalities</p>	High	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p> <p>Sources: RDN, member municipalities</p>
<p>B. Consider adopting the ALC recommendation of rejecting ALR exclusion and non-farm use applications if they do not align with Electoral Area OCP land use designations and/or zoning, rather than forwarding applications directly to the ALC for decision-making.; or consider adopting a policy to comment on ALR applications, perhaps in combination with a revised Terms of Reference for the AAC (see Recommendation 1.1 A in this Plan).</p>	<p>Lead: RDN</p>	High	Short	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant</p> <p>Source: RDN</p>
<p>C. Strive for greater consistency between land use designations in the RGS and OCPs and zoning in the Zoning Bylaws for ALR land. This may involve creating an Agriculture Land Use Designation at the RGS and OCP levels, as is supported by Electoral Area 'A's OCP. That way, if land is removed from the ALR, but is still designated and zoned locally for agriculture, use of that land will be limited to activities outlined in the Agriculture designation and associated zone, such as farming and silviculture.</p> <p>Examples: RDN Electoral Area 'A' OCP (2011) Policy 5.1.5: Support the creation of an agricultural zone for all lands designated as Agriculture; <i>Ministry of Agriculture's Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas:</i> http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/800Series/840000-1_GuideforByLawDev_TofC.pdf</p>	<p>Lead: RDN</p> <p>Supporting: Member municipalities</p>	High	Ongoing	<p>Requirements: Significant</p> <p>Sources: RDN, member municipalities</p>

7.2 Actions (<i>cont'd</i>).	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>D. Consider adopting a Development Permit Area (DPA) for Farmland Protection in the OCPs for Electoral Areas C, F, and H to ensure consistency throughout the RDN for requirements of development (e.g. vegetative buffers, consideration of road endings) within properties adjacent to ALR land for development permit and subdivision applications on properties adjacent to ALR land. Request member municipalities to adopt similar DPA guidelines for Farmland Protection.</p>	<p>Leads: RDN</p> <p>Supporting: ALC, member municipalities</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant depending on the technical work needed to update policies.</p> <p>Sources: RDN</p>

Objective 7.3)

Ensure Land Use Regulations and Policies Accommodate and Encourage Agriculture and Aquaculture.

7.3 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Work with member municipalities to identify appropriate areas for Industrial and/or Enterprise Zones specific for agriculture/aquaculture uses. This would likely be a subarea of existing industrial and/or commercial zones and is not intended to replace productive farming areas. The intent of the new zone is to enhance the economic viability of farming and promote investment and diversification of the agricultural industry with regulations consistent with the provisions of the <i>ALC Act</i> and regulations.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Salt Spring Island (Agriculture Enterprise zoning proposal being considered);</i> http://www.ecoreality.org/files/RezoningApplication.pdf <i>City of Surrey's Agro-Industrial Zone: Zoning Bylaw No. 1200 (2012) Part 51 (IA), page 51.1.</i> http://www.surrey.ca/bylawsandcouncillibrary/BYL_Zoning_12000.pdf; <i>District of Pitt Meadow's Agricultural and Farm Industry Zone: Zoning Bylaw No. 2505 (2011), Part 8.3 (A-3), page 8-11.</i> http://www.pittmeadows.bc.ca/assets/Bylaws/2505_2011_-_New_Zoning_Bylaw.pdf <i>Local Government Policy Options to Protect Agricultural Land:</i> http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/development/agriculture/AgricultureDocs/Local_Government_Policy_Options_to_Protect_Agricultural_Land.pdf</p>	<p>Leads: RDN, Member municipalities</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant</p> <p>Sources: RDN, member municipalities</p>
<p>B. Despite existing OCP land use designations, consider introducing a new policy that supports the rezoning of ALR lands to a new Agriculture Zone, such as the A-1 Zone located in Electoral Area F (<i>Zoning Bylaw No. 1285, 2002</i>).</p>	<p>Lead: RDN</p> <p>Supporting: Member municipalities</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Long</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant</p>
<p>C. Encourage the development of processing, warehousing, distribution facilities, and retail/sales (including signage) for local food products by ensuring that these activities are recognized as permitted uses in local zoning bylaws (e.g. allow opportunities for combined or cooperative on-farm processing and sales).</p> <p>Examples: <i>City of Kamloops' Heartland Co-op: www.heartlandfoods.ca</i></p>	<p>Lead: RDN</p> <p>Supporting: Member municipalities</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant</p> <p>Sources: RDN, member municipalities</p>

7.3 Actions (cont'd)	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
D. Ensure that all local policies and guidelines are supportive of agriculture and aquaculture.	Lead: RDN Supporting: Member municipalities	High	Ongoing	Requirements: Negligible Sources: RDN, member municipalities
E. Examine the feasibility of identifying “urban agriculture” as an allowed activity within town centres and on rural residential land and perhaps even within green spaces and parklands.	Lead: Member municipalities Supporting: RDN	High	Ongoing	Requirements: Low to Moderate Sources: RDN, member municipalities
F. Update regional and local sign bylaw(s) to allow farm businesses to: - Advertise farms on farm properties and along roadsides; - Identify agricultural and aquaculture areas, similar to groundwater or watershed signs; - Engage the public in respecting farm traffic; - Provide directions to local farmers markets; - Develop themed signs such as a “Wine Route” or “Circle Farm Tour” or “Entering a Farm Fresh Area.” Examples: <i>District of Pitt Meadows Sign Bylaw No. 2248 (2005) page 12 and page 18:</i> http://www.pittmeadows.bc.ca/assets/Bylaws/2248%20-%20Sign%20Bylaw%20Consolidated%20version.pdf <i>City of Abbotsford Sign Bylaw No. 1022 (2001):</i> http://www.prioritypermits.com/signage_blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Abbotsford.pdf <i>City of Surrey Sign Bylaw No. 13656 (1999) page 19-20:</i> http://www.surrey.ca/bylawsandcouncillibrary/BYL_reg_13656.pdf	Leads: RDN, MOTI, Member municipalities Supporting: BC Tourism, , AGRI	High	Short	Requirements: Moderate Sources: RDN, IAF, AGRI, commodity groups, Farmers Institutes (in-kind), other grants

Objective 7.4)

Encourage the Development of Additional Policies and Actions that Benefit RDN Agriculture and Aquaculture.

7.4 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>A. Ensure that all policy documents make it clear that neither a subdivision approving officer nor the ALC is obliged to approve subdivision applications that meet minimum lot sizes in the ALR.</p> <p>Example: <i>ALC's Subdivision Approval Officer's Toolkit:</i> http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmamt/sf/planaq/subdiv.htm</p>	<p>Leads: RDN, member municipalities</p> <p>Supporting: MOTI</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Requirements: Negligible</p>
<p>B. Identify current on-farm or near-farm housing options for farmers and farm labourers. This is an initial first step in a longer process to establish more affordable on-farm farm worker housing that does not compromise the agricultural productivity and integrity of farms.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Ministry of Agriculture's "Regulating temporary farm worker housing in the ALR: Discussion paper and standards"</i> http://www.aqf.gov.bc.ca/resmamt/sf/publications/800221-1_Temp_Farm_Worker_Housing_Mar09.pdf <i>Farm Worker Housing Policy Review, Community Social Planning Council BC:</i> http://www.communitycouncil.ca/pdf/Farm-Worker-Housing-Policy-Review-Report.pdf</p>	<p>Leads: RDN, AGRI</p> <p>Supporting: Farmers Institutes, ALC</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Long</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant</p> <p>Sources: RDN, AGRI, IAF and other grant agencies.</p>
<p>C. Consider putting the purchase of farmlands or covenants by member municipalities and the RDN towards a Regional Farmland Trust for new and emerging farmers, a community allotment gardening program, an incubator farm program, an agricultural demonstration site, and/or small plot intensive agriculture (SPIN farming). SPIN farming is a system that uses a network of back yards, city land, boulevards, and other small underused plots of land to produce food in the same city it is consumed. The SPIN model is attractive for start-up farmers, since it requires minimal investment in equipment and machinery, and utilizes land that does not need to be purchased to be used.</p>	<p>Leads: Nanaimo and Area Land Trust, TLC</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, member municipalities</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Long</p>	<p>Requirements: Depends on how the program is implemented (e.g. land purchases vs. land donations)</p> <p>Sources: Donors of funds and donors of land, Real Estate Foundation.</p>

7.4 Actions (cont'd)	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>D. Reduce regulatory restrictions for farmers who wish to create water holding tanks, detention ponds, or other water-related infrastructure on ALR land.</p>	<p>Leads: MOE, Fisheries & Oceans Canada</p> <p>Supporting: RDN</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Requirements: Low</p>
<p>E. Consider developing Integrated Stormwater Management Plans (ISMPs) in watersheds that drain agricultural areas.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Metro Vancouver: Still Creek Integrated Watershed Management Plan</i> <i>Capital Regional District: Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan</i> <i>District of Central Saanich: Integrated Stormwater Management Plan</i> <i>Ministry of Environment Guidebook:</i> http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/mun-waste/waste-liquid/stormwater/guidebook/pdfs/chapter4.pdf</p>	<p>Leads: RDN, member municipalities</p> <p>Supporting: MOE, Farmers Institutes</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Requirements: Significant</p>
<p>F. Support the establishment of a Food Policy Council to provide ideas and policy recommendations – this could include the development of a Food Charter, a Local Food Procurement Policy, and other policies.</p> <p>Examples: <i>City of Vancouver:</i> http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/foodpolicy/policy/council.htm <i>Capital Region:</i> http://www.communitycouncil.ca/initiatives/crfair/index.html</p>	<p>Lead: RDN, member municipalities</p> <p>Supporting: BCFSN, NGOs and other community groups, Farmers</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Long</p>	<p>Requirements: Low</p> <p>Sources: RDN, member municipalities</p>
<p>G. Consider developing a local food charter, to be adopted by the RDN through the Food Policy Council.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Village of Kaslo: www.nklcss.org/foodcharter.php</i> <i>City of Kamloops:</i> http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/foodpolicy/tools/pdf/Kamloops_Food_Plan.pdf <i>City of Vancouver:</i> http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/foodpolicy/policy/charter.htm</p>	<p>Lead: Food Policy Council</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, member municipalities, BCFSN</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Long</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate to Significant</p>

7.4 Actions (cont'd)	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
<p>H. Develop and implement a local food procurement policy through the Food Policy Council. While annual food purchases are relatively small, such a policy would allow the RDN to demonstrate its commitment and support for local and ethically produced foods and services. The policy could also be adopted by other institutions.</p> <p>Example: <i>Local Food Procurement Policies – A Literature Review</i> http://www.organicagcentre.ca/Docs/LocalFoodProcurementPolicies.pdf</p>	<p>Lead: Food Policy Council</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, member municipalities</p>	Medium	Ongoing	Requirements: Moderate to Significant
<p>I. Consult the document “A Seat at the Table”, produced by the provincial Health Services Authority to provide local governments and consider adopting the policies that are supportive of the AAP goals and objectives.</p> <p>Example: <i>A Seat at the Table:</i> http://www.phsa.ca/NR/rdonlyres/D49BA34E-B326-4302-8D0C-CC8E5A23A64F/0/ASeatattheTableResourceGuideforlocalgovernmentstopromotefoodsecuritycommunities.pdf</p>	Leads: RDN , member municipalities	Low	Short	Requirements: Low Sources: RDN, Member municipalities

Goal #8 - Consider Agriculture in Emergency Planning Initiatives

Objective 8.1)

Create agricultural emergency management plans and guidelines to deal with emergency events.

8.1 Actions	Key Players	Priority	Time Frame	Resource Requirements & Sources
A. Include livestock in emergency plans and identify evacuation, transportation and housing needs of livestock during human caused events, natural physical, biological or chemical crises, or disease events, including possible needs for carcass disposal.	Leads: RDN, AGRI Supporting: Member municipalities	High	Ongoing	Requirements: Negligible Sources: RDN, AGRI
B. Integrate agricultural emergency planning with the RDN's Hazard Vulnerability Risk Analysis, which identifies Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) fire as the number one forest fire threat. Encourage vegetation management (e.g. green space/firebreaks) on or adjacent to farms in areas identified as high risk to mitigate and protect farms from fire loss.	Lead: RDN Supporting: Member municipalities	High	Short	Requirements: Low to Moderate Sources: RDN
C. Investigate the feasibility of implementing flood control strategies for farmland located in flood areas.	Leads: RDN, AGRI, MOTI Supporting: Member municipalities	Medium	Long	Requirements: Moderate to Significant Sources: RDN, AGRI
D. Investigate funds through disaster relief programs and other initiatives to compensate for crop loss due to a flood or other emergency (defined per the <i>Emergency Program Act</i>).	Leads: Farmers Institutes, AGRI Supporting: RDN, Member municipalities	Medium	Medium	Requirements: Low (investigate options). Sources: AGRI

7.0) Implementation and Evaluation

Members of the farming community and concerned citizens have identified many recommendations to help enhance and improve the viability of food production in the RDN. While Table 7 lists key players – both leaders and supporting players for each recommendation – a clear implementation strategy will be necessary. Government staff and resources tend to be stretched and farmers and aquaculture operators are very busy. However, the expertise to manage the plan is definitely available locally. The overall success of the AAP will also depend upon available and committed resources. It is important to note that BC Ministry of Agriculture staff have indicated that the most common reason that AAPs fail to progress is due to a lack of a strong and coordinated Implementation and Evaluation Strategy.

The process and structure of the implementation strategy and associated resource commitments will require Board approval, and this should occur within the budget year following the AAP approval.

7.1) Select Steering Committee

Many actions will require mobilization of both human and financial resources that go beyond the scope and capabilities of the RDN itself. It is therefore suggested that the implementation of the AAP be a shared responsibility between the RDN and other stakeholders. One approach towards the implementation of the AAP is to channel it through a select AAP Implementation Steering Committee. The creation of this select Steering Committee would require approval from the RDN Board.

Members of the select Steering Committee could include:

- Staff and Elected Officials from the RDN and member municipalities;
- Members of the AAC;
- Local farmers institutes;
- BC Shellfish Growers Association;
- Local chamber of commerce;
- Economic Development Corporation;
- Vancouver Island University;
- VIEx;
- BC Ministry of Agriculture;
- Other representatives, as required.

“We need consumers to understand the benefits and challenges of agriculture so that they too can also begin to advocate for local foods.”

– Dr. Jenny Horn, Vancouver Island University

The Steering Committee could have several functions, including but not limited to:

- Developing an initial work plan for acting on the recommended actions;
- Assisting with coordination of key players and stakeholders;
- Identifying sources of funding and assisting with funding applications;
- Monitoring the progress of implementation of the AAP and preparing biennial reports to be presented to the RDN Board and shared publicly on the *Growing Our Future* website;
- Reviewing and revising the work plan and the evaluation mechanism as required.

A Terms of Reference would need to be developed for the Steering Committee and it is recommended that a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be developed for participating organizations.

7.2) Implementation Work Plan

One of the first steps towards AAP implementation for the RDN, or a select Steering Committee, will be to develop a work plan to get the high priority actions underway. It is recommended that the work plan be prepared for a three year period to address all High Priority, Short Term recommendations. The work plan should also identify necessary resources (available and required). This work plan should be developed by the Steering Committee within the budget year following the Board’s approval of the AAP. The Committee will then bring recommendations forward to the Board for direction and decision-making and allocation of resources. It is important to note that the RDN Board will need to consider other regional plans and possible competing interests at the AAP implementation stage.

The suggested Steering Committee will need to determine how to engage volunteers, youth, mentors, professionals, and entrepreneurs to assist in pursuing the work plan tasks. It is also suggested that the recommended actions below (Table 8) be prioritized in the work plan; these have been selected based on their high priority and based on feedback from the farming community and members of the public. In some cases their commencement and/or completion will also allow for other actions to proceed.

Table 8. Suggested priority actions for first year implementation based on high priority and short term goals.

Action Number	Synopsis of Action	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Sources
1.1 - A	Consider updating the AAC Terms of Reference to allow the AAC to make comments on every application (exclusion, non-farm use, subdivision) that is forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). Precedence for the Terms of Reference and protocols exist in many other jurisdictions.	Lead: RDN Supporting: AGRI	Requirements: Low – Moderate Source: RDN
1.2 - A	Create a webpage for agricultural information and related issues that extends from the RDN website or expands the existing AAP website www.growingourfuture.ca .	Leads: Farmers Institutes, BCAFM Supporting: Economic Development Corporation (EDC), RDN	Requirements: Moderate Sources: RDN, member municipalities, Farmers Institutes, possible summer student position.
2.1 - D	Establish an Agricultural Development Committee (ADC), possibly as an extension of the City of Nanaimo’s Economic Development Corporation (EDC). As first order of business, have the ADC pursue an Economic Development Strategy for agriculture in the region.	Leads: EDC, Farmers Institutes, member municipalities, Tourism BC. Supporting: RDN, City of Nanaimo	Requirements: Significant Sources: IAF, RDN and member municipalities, chamber of commerce, Tourism BC

Table 8 continued.

Action Number	Synopsis of Action	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Sources
2.2 - A	Create and distribute a local food guide or directory, similar to what is produced in the Comox Valley and Southern Vancouver Island, and include aquaculture. Ensure that it is available online.	<p>Leads: Farmers Institutes, RDN, BCAFm</p> <p>Supporting: Nanaimo Foodshare, Mid-island Sustainability Stewardship Initiative, Tourism BC, VIU</p>	<p>Requirements: Low to Moderate</p> <p>Sources: Advertisers, Vancity, Real Estate Foundation (REF)</p>
6.1 - G	<p>Partner with School Districts to add agriculture and aquaculture into the District school curriculum and extend this up to the University and College level.</p> <p><i>Example: Ag in the Classroom; VIU.</i></p>	<p>Leads: AGRI, Farmers Institutes, Commodity groups, school districts, school boards</p> <p>Supporting: RDN, Nanaimo FoodShare and other NGOs, Min of Education, ActNowBC, BCAFm, CSR, 4-H Clubs, VIHA</p>	<p>Requirements: Low to Significant</p> <p>Sources: School Districts (in-kind), Farm 2 School program, ActNowBC, commodity groups, NGO grants.</p>
7.2 - B	Consider adopting the ALC recommendation of rejecting ALR exclusion and non-farm use applications if they do not align with Electoral Area OCP land use designations and/or zoning, rather than forwarding applications directly to the ALC for decision-making.; or consider adopting a policy to comment on ALR applications, perhaps in combination with a revised Terms of Reference for the AAC (see Recommendation 1.1 A in this Plan).	<p>Lead: RDN</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate – Significant</p> <p>Sources: RDN</p>
7.3 - F	Update regional and local sign bylaw(s) to better meet the needs of farmers.	<p>Leads: RDN, MOTI, member municipalities</p> <p>Supporting: BC Tourism, AGRI</p>	<p>Requirements: Moderate</p> <p>Sources: RDN, IAF, AGRI, commodity groups, Farmers Institutes (in-kind), other grant agencies.</p>



Figure 9. Showcasing local fresh ingredients at the Cedar Room restaurant, Tigh-Na-Mara Resort, Parksville.

7.3) Ongoing Evaluation of the AAP

It will be important to monitor and evaluate the progress in implementing the AAP to determine the effectiveness of the AAP and identify where potential adjustments could be made to this ‘living’ and ‘active’ Plan. In addition to the work plan, it is also recommended that the RDN, or select Steering Committee, provide an update report to the Board, the AAC, and the community on progress of the AAP every two years. This two-year timeframe will be important, especially at the onset of the AAP’s approval, to ensure that implementation is progressing smoothly. Over time, as many of the short term actions are completed, it may be appropriate to shift the evaluation timeframe to every four years. However, it will be helpful to have at least one work plan report and evaluation session occur per municipal election cycle.

7.4) AAP Monitoring Indicators

The RDN may decide to apply to the IAF for funding to support the implementation of the AAP recommendations. The IAF requires methods of tracking projects to justify ongoing funding support. Therefore, a series of suggested performance indicators have been identified in Table 9 to help determine the progress of the AAP. Indicators provide a means for monitoring and reporting on progress towards the achievement of goals and objectives. Good indicators are clear, measurable, and are often related to other ongoing plans and projects. In this case, many of the indicators in Table 9 overlap with indicators being monitored for the RDN’s Regional Growth Strategy. Over time indicators provide a useful gauge of the success of plans and policies and can help identify areas that need of further review.

Effective indicators have the following characteristics:

- Are measurable against baseline data;
- Are easily monitored;
- Are linked with policy objectives;
- Have political and community support; and
- Are consistent with one another.

The fifteen indicators listed in Table 9 are presented in no particular order and were selected based on their ability to provide a useful gauge of the success of implementation efforts, and to help determine where additional resources may be required to achieve the AAP goals and objectives. The appropriateness of the suggested indicators will need to be evaluated through the implementation of the work plan, and it is recommended that they

“Farmers...don’t stop. All you do is think of another way, another corner to plant, another extension on the barn, to always improve and increase and fill your passion – and it’s never filled. It’s the love of food and the land.”

– Lori Gillies, The Cluck Stops Here, Whisky Creek.

not be viewed in isolation from other plans and policies. It is suggested that these indicators be tracked and included with the work plan and evaluation reporting as described in Sections 7.2 and 7.3 above. In some cases Statistics Canada Agricultural Census data may only be available for update every five years. Many of the indicators used to develop the baseline information provided in the *Phase 1: Background Report* are issued through the Agricultural Census; therefore, this baseline data can be updated and compared over time, as data becomes available, to monitor long term trends.



Figure 10. Farm stand in Errington/Coombs, Electoral Area F, RDN.

Table 9. Agricultural Area Plan suggested monitoring and evaluation indicators.

Suggested Outcomes	Measurable Indicators	Data Sources
Consistent or increased land resource base for food production from both an area and agricultural capability perspective.	Net change in land area of ALR, farmland outside of the ALR with Farm Tax Status, or other lands with agricultural potential.	ALC
Increase in the amount of land for agricultural production.	Amount of land in production (ALR and non-ALR land)	Statistics Canada Agricultural Census; Land Use Inventory
Increase in the number of farm businesses.	Total number of parcels and area (ha) of properties with BCAA Farm Tax Status.	BCAA
Reduction of exclusion and non-farm use applications.	Number of applications originating from within the RDN	RDN, ALC
Decrease in the average age of farmers to indicate more young operators entering the industry.	Number and age of farm operators	Statistics Canada Agricultural Census
Increase in the diversity of food produced in the RDN to strengthen local purchasing choices.	Types and variety of crops and livestock	BC Ministry of Agriculture Statistics; Statistics Canada Agricultural Census; Land Use Inventory
Increase the number of aquaculture businesses and variety of seafood options for local consumers.	Total and type of aquaculture operations	BC Shellfish Growers' Association; Centre for Shellfish Research
Increase in overall profitability of agricultural enterprises.	Gross farm receipts and revenue per hectare of farmland	BC Ministry of Agriculture Statistics; Statistics Canada Agricultural Census
Increased opportunities for local producers to sell their goods.	Number and type of farmers markets, number of retailers carrying locally-produced foods.	BC Association of Farmers Markets; survey of grocers and retailers; survey of farmers
Educating locals and visitors about the regional food system.	Business generated through agri-tourism	BC Tourism; EDC
Use of the AAP to guide local land use decisions.	Consistency in land use designations and zoning between Electoral Areas is achieved	RDN
Increased ability to sell processed and value-added local food products.	Number of food processing and agri-industrial enterprises in the RDN.	RDN, Farmers Institutes, and survey of farmers
Access to farmland is made easier for new and emerging farmers.	The type and number of alternative land agreements in place.	Farmers Institutes and survey of farmers
Increased cooperation and support amongst farmers.	Amount of cooperation in marketing, selling and pricing products; amount of joint purchasing of inputs and tools.	Farmers Institutes and survey of farmers
Increased seasonal and full time labour support.	Number of apprenticeships, training workshops, and jobs.	Statistics Canada Agricultural Census; EDC; and survey of farmers

8.0) Conclusion

It is clear that those involved in agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN are passionate about food production. Farmers are keen to see barriers removed so that their livelihoods can be enhanced and made more economically viable. At the same time, consumers are interested in obtaining more of their food from local sources. The vision, goals, objectives, and recommended implementation actions outlined in this Agricultural Area Plan are all derived from the community engagement process.

The agricultural industry in the RDN has room to grow, from both a diversity of products and revenue-generating perspective. Opportunities include good soil, climate, and fairly abundant water resources. Challenges include the relatively small scale of most farms, which means that leveraging labour, marketing, and processing needs can take extra effort, along with rising costs of inputs and transportation. For the aquaculture industry, the greatest constraint to growth appears to be regulatory inertia given the amount of red tape that needs to be completed in order to expand existing operations or develop new operations. This contextual information is critical to understand in order to move forward with the recommendations to improve the food production sector regionally in both the short and long term.

“What a place! What a place to be a farmer, what a pride it would be if we had good quality local food grown by local farm families in all the restaurants and at the university and in the schools.”

– Barbara Ebell, Nanoose Edible Farms, Nanoose

The development of an AAP for the RDN fulfills, in part, a region-wide commitment to preserve and strengthen the rural economy and increase the viability and productivity of farmland and food production. The AAP includes a vision for food production, goals and objectives for achieving the vision, and a detailed set of recommended actions for implementation. The AAP will provide all members of the food producing community in the RDN, along with elected officials, staff, and other leading agencies in the region, with a strong vision and directive towards increasing food production and enhancing the livelihood of those involved in agriculture and aquaculture in the RDN as we continue ‘*Growing our Future*’, together.





Figure 11. View of Mudge Island, Link Island, and De Courcy Island from Cedar, Electoral Area A, RDN.

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Appendix I: Funding Resources

While a number of the recommended actions can be undertaken by the RDN, Farmers Institutes, and other leading stakeholders in the region additional funding and resources will be required to implement the recommended actions. It will be important to finalize and secure the sources of funding necessary to initiate and complete these actions before too much in-kind and/or volunteer time and energy is spent on them.

The following resources and information are available to assist the various key players and stakeholders in implementing the AAP objectives and actions. These resources may also be of assistance to individuals and citizens in the local agriculture and aquaculture communities. The following resources are listed in alphabetical order.

AGRIFOODBC

AgriFoodBC brings sector stakeholders together to help encourage the sharing of ideas, information, knowledge, best practices and technology tools through an interactive website. The goal is to allow agri-food stakeholders to benefit and enhance their business or organizational success, while saving time and money. The website offers in-kind support by sharing free technology tools (such as website templates, sector statistics analysis, and market reports); a comprehensive listing of hundreds of potential funding sources; and an agriculture news blog.

For more information visit:

<http://www.agrifoodbc.ca/>

BUY BC PROGRAM – BC AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

Launched in 1993, the BUY BC Program is a food and beverage advertising program jointly undertaken by the provincial government and private industry. The Program has now been transferred to the BC Agriculture Council under a licensing agreement with the provincial government and is being managed and directed by industry and agri-food sector Board of Advisors under the umbrella of the BC Agriculture Council.

For detailed program information, benefits, application forms and schedule of fees go to

http://bcac.bc.ca/index.php?page_id=26

COASTAL COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION

The Coastal Community Credit Union has two funding programs, one for small and one for larger amounts, and includes the RDN in its geographic range (Chemainus to Port Hardy). There are three programs that can be accessed for granting purposes.

Branch Investment Program

In addition to larger corporate sponsorships being funded through the Coastal Spirit Fund, each Coastal Community branch supports neighbourhood efforts and initiatives. Requests under \$1,000 (including gifts in-kind), will be directed to a local Coastal Community Branch. Community associations, schools, youth, arts and cultural societies, are just some of the groups that can benefit from our branch investment program.

Coastal Spirit Fund

Registered charity and non-profit groups are eligible for funding through the Coastal Spirit Fund if their donation or sponsorship request exceeds \$1,000. All Coastal Spirit Fund requests will be assessed once per year. As part of the decision process for the Coastal Spirit Fund, we will work with the Community Connection Councils in each region to obtain feedback and recommendations on the applications received. Please carefully read the Funding Guidelines below before applying.

Quadra Credit Union Legacy

Requests of \$1,000 or more will be assessed through the Quadra Credit Union Legacy Fund available through Coastal Community Credit Union. Support from the Legacy Fund will be determined *once* per year with a deadline for applications on October 1st.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.ccu.ca/Personal/InOurCommunities/CommunityPrograms/DonationsAndSponsorships/>

EVERGREEN

Evergreen is a national charity established in 1991 with the mandate to engage Canadians in creating and sustaining dynamic outdoor spaces – in schools, communities and homes (Evergreen, 2012). Evergreen is the leading national funder and facilitator of local, sustainable greening projects in schoolyards, parks and communities through the Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds Grants, Evergreen Common Grounds Grants and the Walmart-Evergreen Green Grants. The *Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds Grants* provide funding for schools to create outdoor classrooms and food gardens. Schools can apply directly for \$500 to \$3,500 twice per year. The *Walmart-Evergreen Green Grants* are available for non-profit organizations looking to employ community-based restoration and stewardship initiatives in urban and urbanizing areas such as naturalization, restoration and stewardship and community food gardens. Funding up to \$10,000 could be obtained to construct community gardens.

More information can be found at: <http://www.evergreen.ca/en/funding/overview.sn>

FARM CREDIT CANADA (FCC)

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is the leading national agricultural lender. Their mission is “to enhance rural Canada by providing specialized and personalized business and financial services and products to farming operations, including family farms, and to those businesses in rural Canada, including small and medium—sized businesses, that are businesses related to farming” (FCC, 2012). FCC offers financing and loans for both producers and agribusinesses, as well as start-up loans for young farmers.

FCC also offers funding for non-profit organizations for capital projects between \$5,000 and \$25,000 through the FCC AgriSpirit Fund. Past projects have included food banks and community gardens (FCC, 2012).

More information about Farm Credit Canada can be found at:

http://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/AboutUs/Responsibility/agrispiritfund_e.asp

FARM TO SCHOOL (F2S) PROGRAM

The Farm to School (F2S) Salad Bar Program was originally established in BC as an initiative of the BC Healthy Living Alliance (BCHLA) and is managed and administered by the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC). The goal of the program is to connect schools with local farms to serve healthy meals in school cafeterias and classrooms. The objectives of the program are:

- To increase fruit and vegetable consumption amongst participating school aged children;
- To increase student knowledge about the local food system, local foods, and nutritional health;
- To enhance student skills in the areas of food production, processing and serving;
- To strengthen local farm, school, and aboriginal partnerships;
- To strengthen the local food economy; and
- To develop promising practice models that are self-financing, eco-friendly and have the potential to be implemented elsewhere.

Similarly to TLC, the F2S Program does not offer direct financial support, however they do provide numerous instructional resources on their website and support of their program staff in establishing new F2S Programs.

More information on this program can be found at:

<http://www.phabc.org/modules.php?name=Farmentoschool>

GROWING FORWARD AGRICULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Growing Forward Agricultural Policy Framework is a Federal initiative delivered through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). Growing Forward provides:

- Flexible programs that adapt to meet regional needs while achieving common national goals;
- Modernized regulatory processes and improved regulatory cooperation to support a competitive and innovative sector and for the betterment of all Canadians;
- Better service delivery through simple and accessible programs and services.

The seven Growing Forward program areas are:

- Agricultural Regulatory Action Plan
- Business Development
- Business Risk Management
- Environment
- Food Safety
- Markets and Trade
- Science

In BC, the Growing Forward initiative is administered by the provincial Ministry of Agriculture. Programs that are relevant to farmers in the RDN include the:

- Environmental Farm Plan;
- BC Food, Fuel and Fibre Innovation Forum Series;
- Enterprise Infrastructure Traceability Program;
- Farm Business Advisory Services Program;
- Food Safety System Implementation (FSSI) (Processor and Producer) Programs;
- Co-operative Development Initiative.

Agri-Environmental Risk Assessment (EFPs) / On-Farm Sustainable Agricultural Practices (BMPs): This is also known as the voluntary and producer driven Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program. The first phase of this program involves the creation of a plan with a planning advisor at no cost to the producer. Once actions have been

identified, some financial incentives exist for implementation of these actions. This program is administered by the BC Agricultural Research and Development Corporation (ARDCorp).

BC Food, Fuel and Fibre Innovation Forum Series: This program involves government and industry working cooperatively to plan and participate in a series of agriculture innovation forums to foster collaborative science, policy and marketing action plans and strategies. This series looks at how agriculture, forestry and energy interact in BC, and how they can contribute to the green economy by discovering innovative ways of working together.

Enterprise Infrastructure Traceability Program: This program is designed to assist agri-food operators to purchase and install traceability infrastructure and/or systems to demonstrate “movement of information” of their agri-food products from receiving to shipping. This program is useful for those involved in certification such as the Certified Organic or Biodynamic programs.

Farm Business Advisory Services Program: There are two tiers to this program, which provides support in increasing farm profitability. The first tier provides consulting services to develop a basic farm financial assessment at only \$100 to the producer and tier two covers 85% of the costs of consulting services for specialized business planning to adopt farm business management practices in 9 management areas.

Food Safety System Implementation (FSSI) (Processor) Program: Administered by the BC Small-Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA), the objective of this program is to increase the number of non-federally registered food processing operations with Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point food safety systems in their operations.

Food Safety System Implementation (FSSI) (Producer) Program: Administered by ARDCorp, the objective of this program is to facilitate early adoption of national On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) systems by producers by offering financial incentives.

Co-operative Development Initiative: This initiative, delivered by the Federal Government and the co-operative sector, is designed to help people develop co-ops and to research and test innovative ways of using the co-operative model.

For more information visit:

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/apf/>

INVESTMENT AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION OF BC

The IAF invests federal and provincial funds to support innovative projects that benefit the agri-food industry in BC (IAF, 2012). The IAF offers a wide range of funding for industry groups and local governments. General funding is available for strategies, plans, programs and projects that push competitive boundaries and lead to sector-wide growth. Start-up funding is not available for individuals, but specific funding programs are available within each category to deal with specific industry issues and enhance the sectors. Funding programs that may be relevant to this AAP include:

- Greenhouse Vegetable Strategic Initiative;
- Food and Beverage Processing;
- Tree Fruit Innovation Initiative;
- Agriculture Environment and Wildlife Fund;
- Agroforestry Industry Development;
- Labour Market and Skills Development Initiative;
- Organic Sector Development Program;
- Farmers Markets Strategic Initiative (delivered by BCAFM);

- Emerging Sectors Initiative: small scale/lot agriculture, natural health products, aboriginal agriculture, agri-tourism and direct farm marketing, apiculture, small-scale food processing and more;
- The Local Government Agriculture Planning Program: funding is available to implement Agriculture Area Plans at 50% matching costs.

The *Islands Agri-Food Initiative* is available to encourage the development of a viable and sustainable agri-food sector on Vancouver Island, Powell River and the Gulf Islands. Projects must support the following strategic priorities (IAF, 2012):

- Enhance market development and promotion of the agri-food industry;
- Increase stakeholder knowledge base in areas such as communications, economic potential, statistical data, marketing and product development;
- Facilitate the development of strategic partnerships; and
- Support increased agri-food processing as a catalyst for rural community development.

Information on each of these initiatives can be found at:

http://www.iafbc.ca/funding_available

The *BC Agriculture Labour Market and Skills Development Initiative* falls under the auspices of the Agri-Food Futures Fund (AFFF). The AFFF is a cost-sharing industry development fund whose goals are the development and sustainability of the agri-food industry in British Columbia. This initiative outlines a proactive, responsive approach to achieving long-term agriculture labour market stability. It outlines goals and actions which focus in an integrated manner on the key attributes of the labour market, thereby achieving a balanced approach and laying out a roadmap to stability.

More information can be found here:

http://www.ARDCorpca/index.php?page_id=31

MCCONNELL FOUNDATION

The Foundation's purpose is to bolster Canada's ability to address complex social, environmental and economic challenges. The Foundation envisions a food system that links growers and consumers in supply chains that incorporate shared values around sustainability, health, and resilience. Local, diverse, and ecologically sustainable food initiatives are multiplying across the country, including eco-certification, regionally focused restaurants and food markets, and healthy supply chain strategies that link informed consumers to local producers. To assist this work, the Foundation launched the Sustainable Food Systems initiative in 2010, aiming at systemic change to increase regional, sustainable food production capacity while enhancing consumers' ability to make healthy food choices.

In late 2011, the Foundation created a *Regional Value Chain Program*, with a focus on strengthening the ability of regional producers, processors, distributors, food service providers and retailers to make healthy, sustainably produced food accessible to all Canadians, by whatever means appropriate in individual communities. The *Value Chain Program* provides resources and funding (with small grants of up to \$15,000) focused on assessment of regional food systems, business planning, and learning for projects working to structure regional food markets around values of sustainability, inclusion and health. Projects that reach the implementation phase will receive support to access matching funds and loan financing.

To date, Value Chain Program grantees include: Southwest Economic Alliance (London Training Centre); Food Matters Manitoba; Antigonish Regional Development Authority; Corporation of the County of Perth; Opportunities Waterloo Region; Nature-Action Québec; Ecology Action Centre; Toronto Food Policy Council; Living Oceans Society; All Things Food Network.

For more information visit:

<http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/en/programs/sustainable-food-systems>

REAL ESTATE FOUNDATION (REF)

The Real Estate Foundation of BC (REF) is a non-profit corporation that receives interest from pooled or “unassigned” trust deposits held by real estate brokers and uses the funds to support real estate related issues such as education, research, law reform and activities intended for the public or professional good including environmental issues related to land and water (REF, 2012). The mission of the Foundation is “to support sustainable real estate and land use practices for the benefit of British Columbians.” Grants are typically administered to non-profit societies, local/regional governments, or academic institutions. One of the program focus areas is Sustainable Food Systems, which involves initiatives that remove barriers or contribute to new approaches and practices in sustainable food systems in BC. These could include land use planning, policy, regulation, design, mapping and feasibility studies within the urban, peri-urban and rural areas of BC. The foundation is particularly interested in:

- Integration of sustainable food systems into community planning, urban design, and neighbourhood planning;
- Regional approaches to food systems planning;
- Inter-relationships between food systems, ecosystems, natural capital, and the built environment; and
- Tools, policies, and legal mechanisms to support access to land for all activities required in a sustainable food system.

More information and past projects can be found on REF’s grants website at <http://www.realestatefoundation.com/grants>

THE LAND CONSERVANCY (TLC)

Established in 1997, the Land Conservancy (TLC) is a charitable, non-profit organization working to “protect important habitat for plants, animals and natural communities as well as properties with historical, cultural, scientific, scenic or compatible recreational value” (TLC, 2012). In recent years, TLC has become well-known for their agricultural programs focusing on land preservation, land stewardship, outreach and education and support for local farmers. They have four agricultural program areas are:

1. Farmland Preservation Program
2. Conservation Partners Program
3. Conservation Farm Holidays
4. Community Farms Program



Although TLC does not have the financial means to offer direct financial support, they do have a wide variety of resources and information available on their website on topics such as conservation covenants; donations, bequests and purchases; alternative farm ownership arrangements and establishing farmland trusts (<http://blog.conservancy.bc.ca/agriculture/programs/>).

The Conservation Partners Program also offers opportunities to farmers who are practicing good land stewardship such as incentives, recognition and assistance. The Conservation Partners Label is well-known and respected and could be an effective marketing tool for RDN farmers.

VANCOUVER ISLAND HEALTH AUTHORITY (VIHA)

In partnership with the Ministry of Health, VIHA offers support for locally-based food security initiatives through the Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) to increase food security for local communities. Proposals are accepted in late fall of each year for projects that contribute to (VIHA, 2009):

- Increased awareness about food security;
- Increased access to local healthy food;
- Increased food knowledge and skills;
- Increased community capacity to address local food security; and
- Increased development and use of policy that supports community food security.

Examples of past projects include community gardens, farmers' markets, community planning, support for local food production, healthy food in public buildings, capacity building activities, community food assessments and local food charters and policies. This funding could be used for farm-to-school programming.

More information can be found on the VIHA website at:

http://www.viha.ca/mho/food/food_security/Community+Food+Action+Initiative.htm

VANCITY

Community Project Grants

The *Community Project Grants* are offered three times per year for up to \$10,000 for projects that focus on people, planet and places. These projects must show people how to build their wealth, create a sustainable place to live or invest for positive change in the community (Vancity, 2012). Projects that allocate resources to marginalized individuals and groups and support them in decision making, program development and delivery are preferred. Grants of this nature could be used to support workshops on agricultural topics such as indigenous food sovereignty and food production and preservation skills.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.vancity.com/MyCommunity/NotForProfit/Grants/CommunityProjectGrants/>

Small Growers Loan Program

This program was established to “help stimulate a viable and sustainable local food system.” Business loans up to \$75,000 are available to small growers, who are trying to get off the ground. Small growers are characterized as:

- Farming under 50 acres in a rural or urban setting
- An individual owner, co-operative owner or leaseholder

Loan approval is based on character, farming training or experience, skills and knowledge and the potential of the business plan.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.vancity.com/MyBusiness/BusinessFinancing/smallbusiness/SmallGrowersFund/>

Vancity Community Foundation

Established in 1989 the Foundation works towards enriching community through gathering together community resources for support of non-profit social enterprises, community owned real estate and collaborative approaches to change (Vancity, 2012):

- Social Enterprise Development: Support of non-profit organizations to develop and operate social enterprises as a tool to meet a range of social, economic or environmental goals in a financially sustainable way.
- Community Owned Real Estate: Investment in initiatives that house individuals and organizations, increase community ownership and assets, and build opportunities for shared spaces and resources.
- Collaboration and networks: Facilitation of collective initiatives that enhance the capacity of organizations to work together towards achievement of shared goals and purposes that benefit community.

More information can be found here:

http://vancitycommunityfoundation.ca/s/strategic_programs.asp

VANCOUVER FOUNDATION

The Vancouver Foundation has also supported various Denman initiatives. Application begins with a Letter of Interest, which if approved leads to a full-on process.

In general, Vancouver Foundation supports growth and innovation through project-based grants for new initiatives that:

1. Are community self-directed:

- demonstrate commitment from applicants and their partners
- link to the organizations' mandates and strategic plans
- build upon community strengths
- show evidence of collaboration with others in the same field
- are funded by 50% or more from other sources
- involve those affected by the proposal in the development, implementation and evaluation of the proposal
- use, enhance, mobilize or expand the skills, capacities and assets of local people and communities

2. Lead to measurable and sustainable impact:

- are likely to be effective and to serve as a model for others
- address root causes
- respond to identified needs and priorities
- show evidence of significant, appropriate and local support
- provide realistic plans for longer-term funding, if the project will be ongoing

More information can be found here:

<http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/>

Appendix II: Summary of 2011 Census of Agriculture Statistics

In order to effectively evaluate the success of the RDN's Agricultural Area Plan it is important to update the Census of Agriculture statistical data every five years to create an accurate picture of agricultural practices over time. The 2011 Census was compiled and released by Statistics Canada in May 2012. A summary of new data is included below to provide some context to the agricultural profile of the RDN in 2011. The new data confirms the findings and conclusions of the Background Report dated February 17, 2012, which was used to inform the development of the AAP goals and recommendations.

LAND USE IN THE RDN

The total number of farms in the RDN increased from 461 in 2006 to 478 in 2011. However, the total area farmed decreased from 8,282 hectares (ha) to 7,938 ha. The total amount of land in the ALR did not change much from 2006 to 2011, with a loss of only 26 hectares, yet the amount of land in crop production decreased from 3,333 ha to 2,827 ha. The natural land for pasture increased dramatically from 1,564 ha in 2006 to 2,173 ha in 2011.

Table A1. Land Use in the RDN (in hectares)

	1996	2001	2006	2011
ALR			18,726	18,700
Total area farmed	10,007	12,081	8,282	7,938
Land in crops	3,235	4,050	3,333	2,827
Summer fallow	440	110	x	7
Tame or seeded pasture	945	1,389	x	597
Natural land for pasture	1,731	2,690	1,564	2,173
All other land (including Christmas trees)	3,656	3,842	2,599	2,334

FARM OPERATOR DATA

The number of farm operators increased in 2011 from 680 operators to 705 operators, however the average age of farm operators increased from 55 years of age in 2006 to 56.5 years of age in 2011. This indicates that there are few young farm operators entering the agriculture sector in the region.

Table A2. Farm Operator Data in the RDN

	2006	2011
Number of farm operators	680	705
Average age of farm operators	55	56.5

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

The number of farm operators working less than 20 hours per week increased from 280 (41%) to 350 (50%) in 2011, demonstrating that farm operators are earning more of their income off farm than in 2006. This is supported by the fact that the number of farm operators working more than 40 hours per week has decreased from 175 (26%) in 2006 to 140 (20%) in 2011.

Table A3. Number of hours per week spent working on the farm

	1996	2001	2006	2011
# Operators reporting	750	730	680	705
Less than 20 hours per week	345	320	280	350
20 – 40 hours per week	230	235	220	230
More than 40 hours per week	175	175	175	140

TOTAL NUMBER OF FARM ENTERPRISES

The total number of farm enterprises changed in a few categories from 2006 to 2011. The number of farms producing fruits, berries and nuts increased from 79 farms in 2006 to 110 farms in 2011. Similarly, the number of vegetable operations increased from 58 farms in 2006 to 88 farms in 2011. It is also interesting to note that the number of cattle and pig farms decreased from 2006 to 2011. The number of cattle farms decreased from 138 farms in 2006 to 104 farms in 2011, while the number of pig farms decreased from 30 farms in 2006 to 26 farms in 2011. This could be due to the high cost of grain and feed supplements as well as the introduction of the new meat regulations requiring slaughter facilities to be federally inspected.

Table A4. Number of farm operations by farm type

	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
	Farms	Farms	Farms	Farms	Farms	Farms
Field Crops	na	na	na	na	na	na
Fruits/Berries/Nuts	89	84	110	78	79	110
Vegetables	34	35	65	68	58	88
Nursery	12	24	46	56	38	44
Poultry	260	270	255	285	239	247
Cattle and Calves	199	206	208	179	138	104
Pigs	54	50	62	44	30	26
Sheep and Lambs	50	73	71	91	69	75
Horses and Ponies	103	117	133	127	119	129

FARM PROFITABILITY

Farm profitability increased from 2006 to 2011. The average revenue per farm increased from \$45,957 in 2006 to \$56,304 in 2011. The average revenue per hectare also increased from \$2,558 in 2006 to \$3,390 in 2011. This could be due to the increase in the rate of inflation or the transition in farm type from livestock production to berry production. Berry crops are a high value commodity and generate a relatively high rate of return.

Table A5. Farm profitability in the RDN

Year	# of Farms	Gross Receipts (\$)	Average per Farm (\$)	Total Farm Area (Hectares)	Average per Hectare (\$)
1996	493	\$ 17,508,293	\$ 35,513	10,007	\$ 1,750
2001	490	\$ 16,612,719	\$ 33,903	12,081	\$ 1,375
2006	461	\$ 21,186,317	\$ 45,957	8,282	\$ 2,558
2011	478	\$ 26,913,383	\$ 56,304	7,938	\$ 3,390

As the gross farm receipts have climbed over the years, so have the farm operating expenses. Nevertheless, the gross margin has increased substantially since 2006 from 0% to 10% in 2011. This means that for every dollar of sales generated the farmer is making 10 cents.

Table A6. Operating expenses in the RDN

Year	Gross Farm Receipts (\$)	Operating Expenses (\$)	Gross Margin (%)
1996	\$ 17,508,293	\$ 18,317,094	-5%
2001	\$ 16,612,719	\$ 17,323,886	-4%
2006	\$ 21,186,317	\$ 21,274,867	0%
2011	\$ 26,913,383	\$ 24,335,565	10%

The RDN has the third highest average revenue per hectare of all of the regional districts on Vancouver Island, below the Cowichan Valley and Capital regions. This ranking has not changed since 2006. The gross farm receipts experienced in the RDN are lower than in the Cowichan Valley, Capital region and the Comox Valley. One possible explanation is that there are several wineries in these other regions generating high revenues. These regions are also home to a higher number of farms than in the RDN.

Table A7. Farm profitability in the Vancouver Island Regional Districts

Location	Number of Farms	Gross Farm Receipts (\$)	Total Farm Area (Hectares)	Average Per Hectare (\$)
Cowichan Valley	685	\$ 48,069,900	10,837	\$ 4,436
Capital	1,093	\$ 50,874,004	13,606	\$ 3,739
RDN	478	\$ 26,913,383	7,938	\$ 3,390
Comox Valley	432	\$ 31,212,798	11,287	\$ 2,765
Alberni-Clayoquot	93	\$ 4,500,709	2,470	\$ 1,822
Strathcona	98	\$ 4,344,725	3,003	\$ 1,447



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