



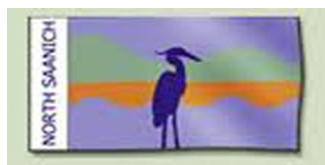
# **NORTH SAANICH AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

MAY 2012

A report of the



COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
**research·insights·solutions**



## NORTH SAANICH AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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We also thank community and sector organizations for their input, including: the Food for the Future Society, the Peninsula Agriculture Commission, the South Island Direct Farm Marketing Associations, the Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, the University of Victoria Research Chair on the Social Determinants of Health, the Vancouver Island Health Authority, the BC Ministry of Agriculture, and members of the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Roundtable (CR-FAIR).

We received substantial advice from over seventy-five local farmers and stakeholders in the agri-food sector and thank them for their time from their busy schedules.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This recommended Economic Development Strategy for Agriculture addresses key opportunities and challenges for the agri-food sector in the District based on current statistical trends, evidence of what is working in the region, and other places in BC, plus input from stakeholders on what is needed in this community to strengthen the viability of agriculture.

The agri-food sector is the primary focus of this Strategy. It is composed of those operations that produce and sell food commodities as opposed to other farm activities. It is one of the four major economic sectors in the District and the Saanich Peninsula, contributing a substantial amount of revenue to the local economy and tax rolls. The District has the highest average annual farm sale revenues of any municipality on Vancouver Island.

There are major signs of growth and revitalization in the agri-food sector because of both macro-economic and consumer demand factors. This comes after a long period of decline due to competition from low cost import products, and rising capital costs for local producers. Canada-wide growth in agri-food sales was 11.2% nationally and 4% in BC in 2011.<sup>1</sup> There are major opportunities for value added, intensive, niche and scaled up production of agri-food products and related agri-tourism and food-related retail business development. At the same time, local "garden" and other non-commercial production of food contributes to food security and is a significant activity of choice amongst North Saanich residents.

The largest challenge facing agri-food producers is one of financial viability. Input and capital costs have risen while competition from imported food has kept prices low. An enabling environment for agriculture involving cooperation between local government and agri-food producers can therefore be of vital assistance to the 135 farms on the District's tax roll.

Strategies in other communities in BC have focussed on business – local government cooperation in agricultural economic development. Best practices have emerged that involve:

- supporting the development of local agri-food organizations and alliances to strengthen the sector's own development and leadership
- improving and harmonizing the local government regulatory environment
- ensuring affordable and stable input costs for utilities like water that local governments can control
- promoting and marketing regions and communities as agriculture and food destinations
- educating and engaging the public in supporting local agricultural products and experiences
- supporting land use for, and investment in, infrastructure for local processing and distribution

<sup>1</sup> Net Farm Income Account, Feb 23 2012, Statistics Canada

- supporting community acquisition of agricultural land for farming and related “food hub” functions
- marketing the area for agri-food investment and business location, to create distinctive clusters of agri-business value chains

Through consultation with local stakeholders, we heard consistent messages about the elements necessary to increase the economic viability of agriculture in North Saanich. The main messages were as follows:

- In order to increase the viability of the sector we need to have organizations with leadership and capacity to implement actions and continue to develop and keep the sector vibrant.
- The other vital aspect is to have an informed and supportive consumer base that will invest in this sector every day and buy food locally.
- Investment in growth of the sector and in particular, in vital infrastructure such as land, processing, storage and distribution is critical.
- Food producers must be able to have the means to access these assets to be successful, especially in regards to land.
- Investment in food producer expertise is critical and with the loss of a regional agrologist we must find ways to fill this role.
- Building a sense of being, and acumen as, business professionals within the sector is important.
- Local government can work to create a positive environment for agriculture and can lobby senior levels of government to create a more enabling environment.
- Strengthening the food economy is larger than looking at the commercial agri-food sector, but also encompasses the broad range of more informal activities and transactions related to growing and distributing food.
- First Nations have a major interest in food and nutrition and are valuable partners in the region.

The Strategy recommended below seeks to address these issues, and build on models of best practice in local government partnerships with the agri-food sector.

## PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR AGRICULTURE

*Based on the analysis in this report we propose the following Economic Development Strategy for Agriculture to North Saanich District Council.*

### Goal:

Increase the viability of the agriculture and food sector, including both the commercial and informal aspects of food production and distribution within the food system in the Municipality of North Saanich.

### Objective 1:

Promote and educate about the value of agriculture in North Saanich by building points of contact with the food and farming community that contribute to growing public demand for local food.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
1.1 Develop a strategy with community partners that expands the existing "Flavour Trail" annual event into a permanent promotion of the District and Peninsula as an agri-food destination inclusive of farms, markets, restaurants, wineries, cideries and other food experiences.	District staff supported by the AAC, grant in aid support, website promotion	Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Peninsula Agriculture Commission, Food for the Future Society, Direct Farm Marketing Association, Tourism Associations, Capital Region Food and Ag Roundtable, Victoria Airport Authority, BC Ferries, other Peninsula Municipalities
1.2 Support the development of a "Buy Local" and "Peninsula Grown" campaign and institutional procurement policies to advantage local food producers.	As Above	As Above
1.3 Promote with School Board, recreation, community agencies and producers an annual program of educational activities with consumers and students on the importance of local food production.	As Above	Panorama Recreation Centre, School Board, community organizations, agricultural stakeholders, CR-FAIR, food retailers and wholesalers.

**Objective 2:**

Leverage investment in and build the agri-food sector, and the infrastructure it needs to thrive.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
2.1 Investigate partnerships to create a local commercially viable abattoir, inclusive of existing operators, adapting the successful business plan used by the Salt Spring Island Agriculture Alliance, identifying potential sites.	District staff supported by AAC.	Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Community Council, Peninsula Agriculture Commission, other agri-food stakeholders, Municipalities of Central Saanich, Sidney and Saanich.
2.2 Support the development of a sustainable business plan for the operation of a food hub on Sandown or other municipal lands inclusive of a range of commercial and agriculture incubation functions.	Mayor and Council District Staff supported by AAC.	Farmlands Trust and other stakeholders.
2.3 Create an annual levy or donor option for District (and potentially CRD) tax payers to contribute to an agricultural legacy fund to make patient loans or equity investments in agricultural land retention and agri-business infrastructure, inclusive of the idea of a "Farm Bucks" \$10 redeemable voucher for local farm purchases.	Mayor and Council District Staff supported by AAC.	CRD, Community Council, other financial and agricultural stakeholders.
2.4 Increase investment from new agri-business entrepreneurs by promoting North Saanich as a great place to farm and set up food related businesses. Create a brochure and campaign to promote the location of new agri-food businesses and investments in the District.	District Staff supported by AAC.	Peninsula Chamber of Commerce Greater Victoria Real Estate Board Community Council
2.5 Promote the development of a plan to increase use of private, community and local government facilities for informal food production, processing, community kitchens, food recovery and distribution activities.	District staff supported by AAC	Vancouver Island Health Authority, Community Kitchens Network, Capital Region Food and Agriculture Roundtable, local food providing organizations.

**Objective 3:**

Support retention and access to land for new farmers and for scaling up of food production by existing farmers.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
3.1 Promote the database for land lease matching between agricultural landowners and prospective farmers now available on the District's agriculture web page; provide incentives for landowners to register.	District Administration	Capital Region Food and Agriculture Roundtable, other municipalities and stakeholders
3.2 Promote to the CRD and BC Government an agriculture investment fund for the region that would assist with retention and succession involving farm lands	CRD discussion	CRD, BC Government, CR-FAIR, UBCM
3.3 Inventory appropriate existing municipally owned lands for potential agriculture leases and incorporate a land lease and new farmer incubation function into any municipal land lease arrangements for a "food hub". Also, indicate any available land for use for community gardens or other food growing opportunities.	District Planning	Farmlands Trust
3.4 Advocate for continued agricultural use of the land and facilities of the Federal Centre for Plant Health	Mayor and Council	All agricultural stakeholders and Peninsula municipalities



**Objective 4:**

Support sector development to invest in current and future generations of innovative and successful farmers.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
4.1 Support a farmer-to-farmer annual one-day learning event.	Grant aid	CR-FAIR, Peninsula Agriculture Commission, Direct Farm Marketing Association, other Peninsula municipalities
4.2 Support a business retention, expansion and succession training program inclusive of a tailored agri-food sector component.	Grant support to Chamber together with Central Saanich and Sidney	Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
4.3 Advocate with agricultural stakeholders across the Peninsula with post-secondary institutions and the BC government the creation of an extension service for the region.	District staff supported by AAC	BC Government, regional post-secondary institutions, CRD, Peninsula municipalities, UBCM
4.4 Strengthen collaboration and leadership by key food and agriculture organizations through the creation of an Alliance to champion sector development.	District staff supported by AAC	Peninsula Agriculture Commission, Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Direct Farm Marketing Association, CR-FAIR, other stakeholders
4.5 Support the development of investment proposals to implement this Agri-food economic development strategy on a peninsula-wide basis.	District staff supported by AAC	Agricultural stakeholders, other Peninsula municipalities, Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, CR-FAIR, Western Diversification Canada, Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC, Real Estate Foundation of BC, Van City Community Foundation
4.6 Engage with First Nations on cooperation in developing and implementing initiatives for agri-food development and marketing.	District staff supported by AAC	Tsawout and other First Nations, Farmlands Trust, CR-FAIR.

**Objective 5:**

Create an enabling policy environment for agriculture.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
5.1 Ease the restrictions on farm structures, cold frames and green houses in the District's Zoning Bylaws and regulations.	Planning & Building Inspection Departments	
5.2 Allow more frequent burning by farm operations that are classified as such in the District's tax rolls.	Municipal administration and fire department	
5.3 Develop a standardized sign design and brand for farm signage already allowed under the bylaw, coordinated with the permanent "flavour trail" promotion above.	Planning department supported by AAC	
5.4 Support the development and implementation of the food and agriculture strategy of the Regional Sustainability Plan of the Capital Regional District.	Mayor and Council. Planning Department supported by AAC	Capital Regional District
5.5 Convene a meeting of Council representatives from the District, Central Saanich, Sidney and Saanich to discuss collaboration on municipal support and harmonized regulation for agriculture.	Mayor and Council. Planning Department supported by AAC	Municipalities of Central Saanich, Sidney and Saanich.
5.6 Identify bylaws in other jurisdictions that could be adapted to North Saanich that make the regulatory environment more enabling for agri-tourism and agri-food processing.	Planning Department supported by AAC	UVic Coop student program
5.7 Identify and advocate for changes in BC Assessment authority regulation that are barriers to agricultural land leases.	Planning Department, Mayor and Council, supported by AAC	Other Peninsula municipalities, CRD, UBCM
5.8 Continue to advocate for affordable water utility rates for farmers.	Mayor and Council	CRD, other Peninsula municipalities

## BACKGROUND

The District of North Saanich commissioned an economic development strategy for agriculture at a meeting of Mayor and Council in September 2011. The District approved an Agricultural Plan in 2010 and a Whole Community Agriculture Strategy in 2011 that recommended the development of an economic strategy for agriculture. Council discussion on measures to support economic development for agriculture date back to March 2004.

The Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria conducted the development of the strategy as part of its mandate as a non-profit association of community and regional stakeholders committed to contributing to social, economic and environmental planning for the well-being of residents and communities. The Council manages the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and worked with the Capital Regional District on the food and agriculture component of the draft Regional Sustainability Plan.

The development of the strategy involved the following key activities:

1. Analysis of existing relevant District planning documents and recommendations going back to 2004.
2. Analysis of statistical data on the status of and trends in the agri-food sector.
3. Analysis of best practices and strategies in other jurisdictions.
4. Key informant interviews (in-person and by telephone) with over 75 individual farmers and agri-food producers representative of the continuum of types and scales of farm operations in the District.
5. Key informant interviews with other business and sector interests (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, food retailers, BC Ministry of Agriculture, financial institutions).
6. Meetings with key agricultural organizations to discuss solutions and strategies, including: the Peninsula Agriculture Commission; the North Saanich Agriculture Advisory Commission; the Food for the Future Society; the Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association, and; the Food Policy Working Group of the Capital Regional District Food and Agriculture Roundtable.
7. On-line information and invitation to comment on the District and Community Council websites.
8. A consultation meeting with stakeholders on draft recommendations.
9. A meeting with representatives of some Peninsula municipalities to discuss findings of relevance to inter-municipal and regional cooperation.

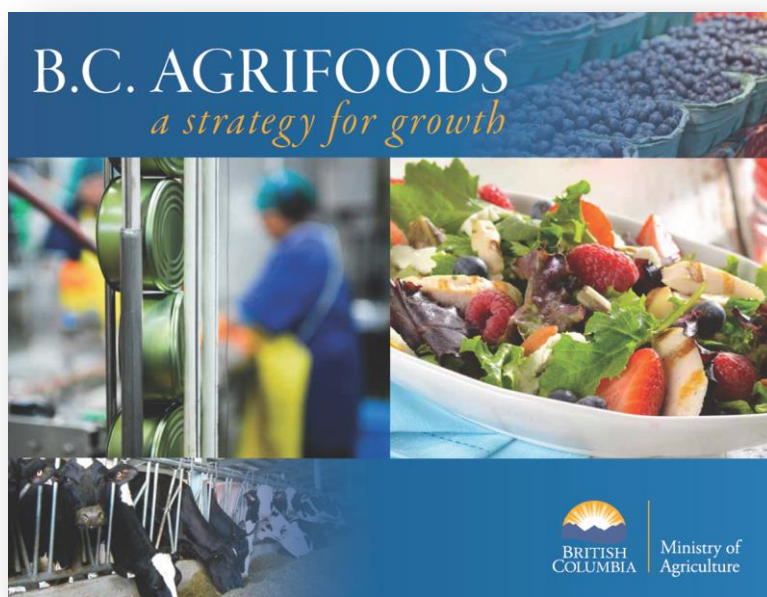
## THE IMPORTANCE AND STATUS OF THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

The relative conditions of the agriculture and food production sector in the District are influenced by national, provincial and regional trends. The agri-food sector in BC contributes gross revenues of \$10.5 billion a year to the BC economy (2010) and ranks first or 2nd in Canada in the production of 12 major fruit and vegetable commodities according to the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Annual growth in Canadian farm cash receipts is estimated to have been 11.2% in Canada in 2011, and 4% in BC.<sup>2</sup> Increased demand for local food produce and agriculture is expected to remain a major economic factor in BC despite competition from food imports, and the number of local farm markets in BC has more than doubled since 2000 (for further data on trends see [B.C. Agri-food: a Strategy for Growth, Ministry of Agriculture, 2012](#)).

Vancouver Island's climate and general soil conditions have made for an attractive setting for agricultural production, with most production concentrated in the Capital Region, Cowichan and Comox Valleys. Agricultural production declined in the 1970s and 1980s in the Capital Region, but has seen major growth in both economic production and employment in recent years.

Employment in the sector grew by 17% between 2001 and 2005, the second highest growth sector in the Capital Region labour market.

North Saanich has one of the highest concentrations of farm income of any municipality on Vancouver Island, and the highest average annual gross farm receipts per farm of any municipality on the Island, \$119,674 compared with a Vancouver Island average of \$58,874 in 2005.<sup>3</sup> Gross revenues for farms in the District increased by 212% over the last twenty years. Central Saanich has the second highest farm income of municipalities on the Island, making the Peninsula a major centre for agri-food production.



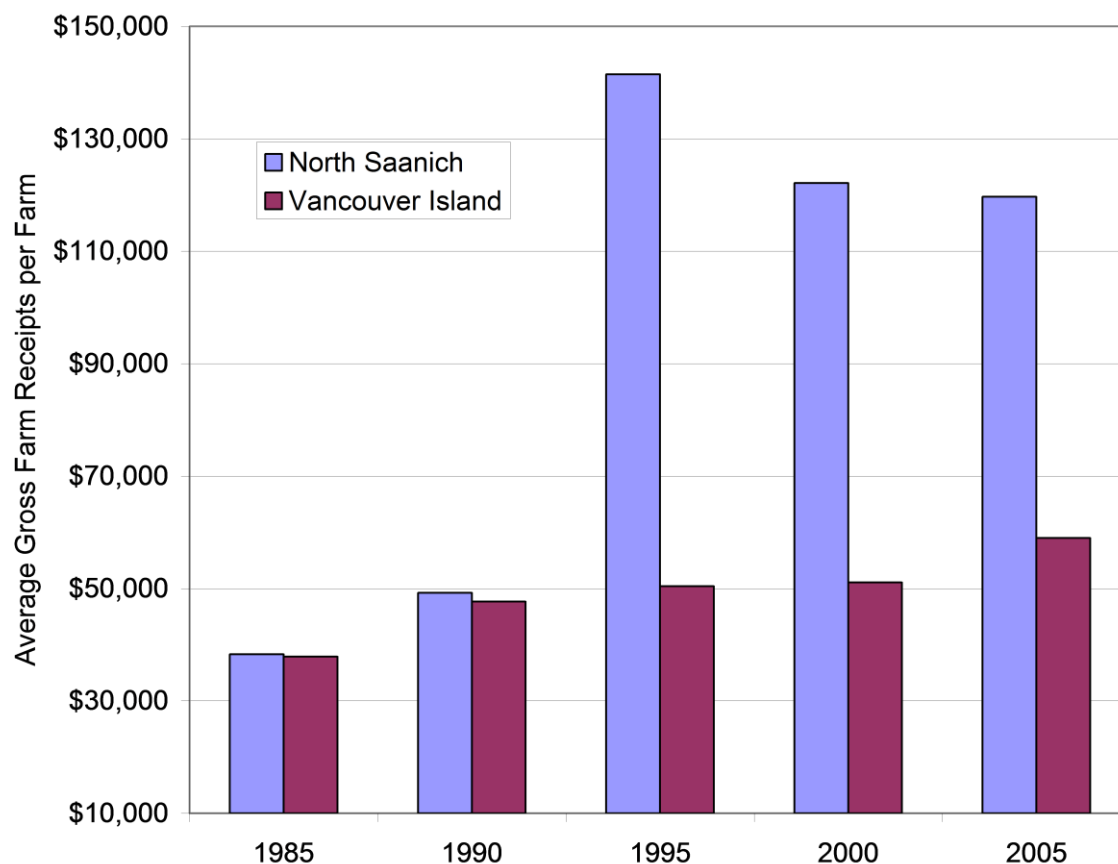
<sup>2</sup> Net Farm Income Account, Feb 23 2012, Statistics Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Stats Canada, 2006 Census of Agriculture.

There are 135 farm operations classified as such in the District tax rolls. They accounted for 5,114 weeks of paid labour in 2005. Total farm capital in the District amounted to \$113,234,538 and total farm receipts were \$9,334,553. Farms paid a total of \$3.5 m in wages, and \$8.9 m in expenses, major inputs to the local economy<sup>4</sup>. Agriculture is one of the four major economic sectors in the District, with transportation (airport, ferries), manufacturing/trade and public services.

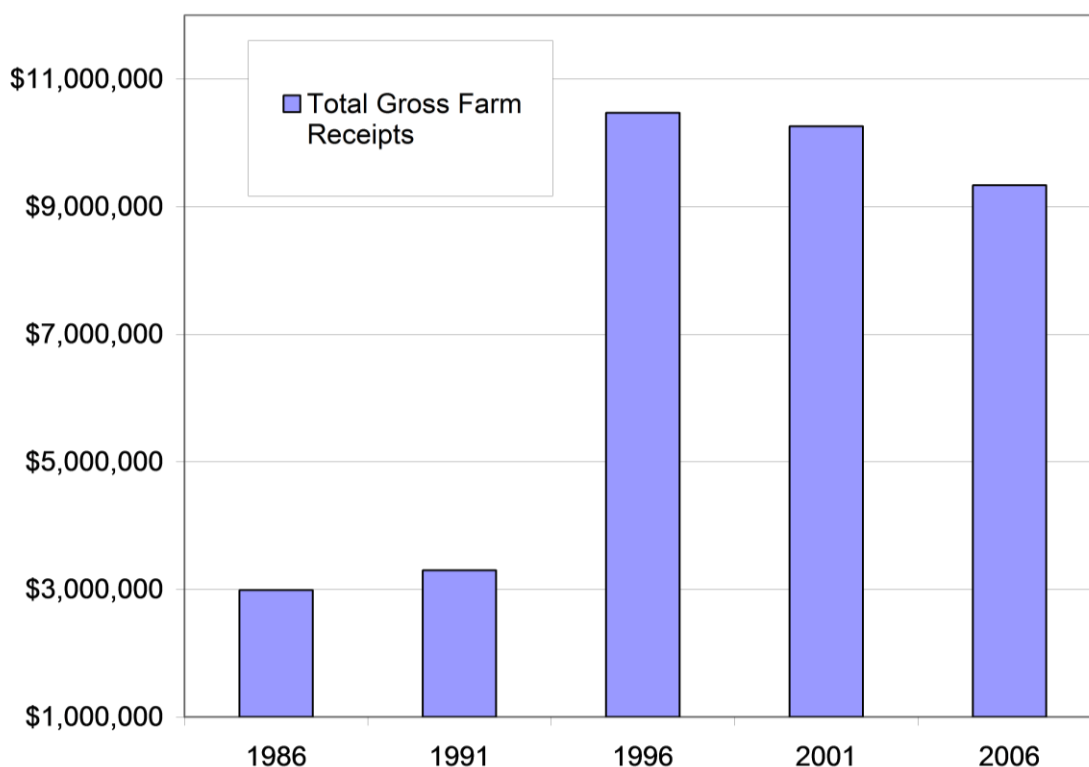
Anecdotal evidence also suggests a concentration of commercial and industrial businesses in North and Central Saanich that provide support services to agriculture throughout Southern Vancouver Island. North Saanich has the highest average annual farm income of any municipality on Vancouver Island, with average annual gross farm receipts of \$119,674 compared with an average of \$58,874 for Vancouver Island as a whole.

### AVERAGE GROSS FARM RECEIPTS



<sup>4</sup> District of North Saanich Agricultural Overview, 2008, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

### TOTAL GROSS FARM RECEIPTS



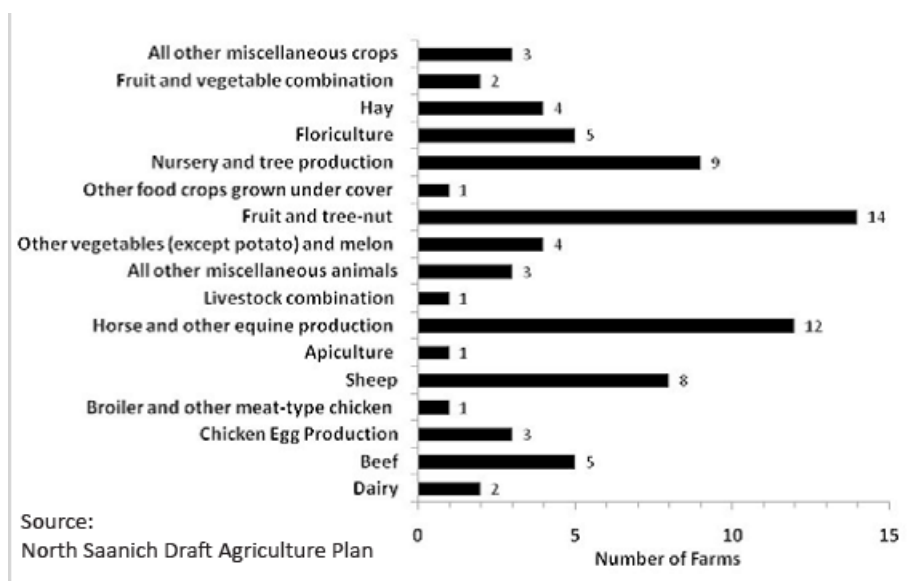
The average gross farm income in the District increased by more than 200% over the last twenty years.

However only five North Saanich farms reported gross receipts of over \$500 k and average annual net income per farm was \$5,580<sup>5</sup> suggesting that a substantial number of farm operations are small scale and provide only a part of household income. The smaller scale farm sector produces for direct sale, retail sale, and hay/silage sale for other farms. Larger scale farms are mostly dairy and livestock producers.

There has been significant growth in direct farm marketing by small scale producers, diversification of crops, investment in value-added, intensive farming of vegetable produce, expansion of agri-tourism operations, and increases in the use of cold frames and green houses to expand growing season and produce varieties. Niche agri-food production in the District and on the Peninsula has increased in a variety of areas, including wineries, cideries, nuts, vegetables, fruits, specialized fruit trees, berries, poultry, and grain.

<sup>5</sup> North Saanich Draft Agriculture Plan, 2010.

### NORTH SAANICH FARMS (n=78) CLASSIFIED BY INDUSTRY Census 2006



The local seasonal farm market in the District, together with other farm markets in the region, have increased opportunities for direct sales, together with growth in farm gate sales, and on-farm retail sales. Independent food retailers (e.g. Deep Cove Market, Red Barn) have contributed to local purchasing of produce, and some large supermarket operations (e.g. Thrifty Foods) have increased their purchase of local produce. The Island Chefs Collaborative has also invested in local producers to increase the supply of niche produce to high-end restaurant operations. In general demand for local fresh produce has been increasing at least in line with Canada-wide trends. Some stakeholders suggest that local demand for fresh vegetable produce exceeds supply.

The total area being farmed in the District grew by about 10% over the last 20 years and amounts to 1,226 hectares according to the 2006 Census of Agriculture. This represents 9% of all land being farmed in the CRD compared with the District's 3% share of regional population.<sup>6</sup> In 2009, 35% of the North Saanich inland land area was in the Agricultural Land Reserve and represents nearly one third of the total land base.

A substantial portion of land in the ALR (45%) is not fully utilized for agricultural production. A portion of land in the ALR is actually controlled by agencies (the Plant Health Centre, and the Victoria Airport Authority) that come under federal jurisdiction and are not under the authority of the BC Agricultural Land Commission. The Airport Authority has substantial leases for farm operations on their land. The Government of Canada has just announced the closure of the Plant Health Centre.

The majority of farm operations are by the land owner; however a significant minority involves land leases. The District's 2011 Agricultural Study suggested that a small number of respondents were interested in leasing land, matched by a similar number interested in providing land for lease. The

<sup>6</sup> District of North Saanich Agricultural Overview, 2008, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

Study also indicated some substantial interest in expanding production on unutilized agricultural land. Twenty respondents to the study (almost 20% of those surveyed) identified their farming operations as being for self-consumption and/or donation.

There are probably a much larger number of residential properties producing food for the same purposes. Small scale farms and “garden” operations together make a contribution to local food security and benefit the local community by providing fresh local food for consumption by District residents. In some cases market garden production on residents’ land is donated to social service agencies providing a vital source of healthy food to low income residents. However larger scale and intensive commercial production makes up the bulk of local and regional food production that is of scale to make a major contribution to the local economy and food security.

The commercial agri-food sector faces a difficult business climate to remain viable. There are relatively high input and capital (land, buildings, equipment) costs relative to low cost producers in other places. According the 2005 Census of Agriculture Central Saanich farmers made \$77 in average annual income that year, and their counterparts in North Saanich made an average of \$5,580. Economic viability is therefore a substantial issue for local agri-food producers.



## KEY FACTORS

Fifty years ago agricultural production on the Island met over 50% of local food needs, that is now down to less than 10%. It is estimated that Vancouver Island has a supply of only 3 days of fresh food to feed its population in the event of being cut off in a disaster. The Saanich Peninsula produces only 23.2% % of its consumption of vegetables, and 24.3% of its consumption of dairy products.

Food security has become a major concern for public authorities, for economic, social and environmental reasons. Transportation associated with the importation of food accounts for a major portion of carbon emissions in Canada with resulting impacts on climate change. Food imports and their costs are cited as a major issue for the future sustainability of local and regional economies. However, as energy costs rise and are reflected in transportation and imported food costs, the re-localization of economic activity, including agriculture, is expected to increase.

There is therefore a long term future for increased local agricultural production, regardless of the trends in the last 50 years, on a purely economic basis. Consumer preference trends from concerns with food safety, health, and community well-being increase these prospects. The "100 mile diet", "Buy Local", "Slow Food", "Food Secure" and other movements have had an impact on local demand for agri-food produce, resulting at least in part in the unprecedented 11.2% annual increase in farm cash receipts Canada-wide in 2011. Opportunities for import substitution through local production and marketing of agri-food products are increasing, and many other areas of Canada are taking advantage of those opportunities through local agricultural economic development strategies.

Some additional key **factors** relevant to economic development for agriculture in this region include:

## MARKET ACCESS

Those regions with a relatively high average household income, as is the case with the Capital Region, are likely to have less resistance to price differences for local food, and will have the highest levels of market opportunity. The relative proximity of North Saanich and the Peninsula generally to markets in Greater Victoria gives the agri-food sector some advantages over other regions on Vancouver Island, but requires it to target that larger market.



## IMPORT SUBSTITUTION AND LOCAL PROCUREMENT

There are major opportunities to expand food production for “import substitution” if consumer, retail and wholesale arrangements could be enhanced. Local food procurement policies by companies and public institutions are beginning to focus on local production. The University of Victoria has recently enhanced its procurement policies to favor local food sourcing and a number of other public institutions and private sector companies are moving to similar “Buy Local” priorities.

## DIRECT FARM MARKETING

Expanded farm market opportunities offer additional sales venues for local farmers. On-farm markets, and value-added production and sales are growing and are a significant source of additional potential revenue for farm producers. The South Island Direct Farm Marketing Association plays an important role in promoting farm gate, on-farm, and farm market opportunities to consumers, as well as events that promote those opportunities. Public education about and interest in buying direct from farmers and farm markets has been increasing.



## AGRI-FOOD TOURISM

Destination tourism for agri-food experiences is estimated to be increasing in market demand, with promotions of “flavor trail” and “farm and food circuits” on a permanent basis attracting consumers. Southern Vancouver Island is already reaping benefits from local, national and international agri-tourism from this market. The Peninsula Chamber of Commerce is working on promotion strategies that could build on existing District “Flavor Trail” initiatives. Members of the Island Chef’s Collaborative are involved in similar promotions.

## CRITICAL MASS

The District and Peninsula as a whole has a critical mass of agricultural producers with experience across a variety of sectors on which further value added, diversified and scaled up production can be built. Those producers are able to make informed decisions about investment in their own farms, and through collaborative networks like the Peninsula Agriculture Commission, can help one another with market and business analysis. There are also important elements of infrastructure in place for cold storage and distribution (e.g. the Saanich Peninsula Vegetable Coop).

## INVESTMENT

There are emerging investors in agri-food production, from new farmers (young professionals and retirees) to financial institutions (Vancity Credit Union) to government agencies (Investment Agriculture Foundation, Western Economic Diversification Canada) to business immigrants. The Community Planning Council of Greater Victoria is currently working with multiple investors on the creation of a “Community Investment Fund” to provide patient debt and equity capital for community economic development in the region for which value-added agri-food businesses have been identified as a potential investment stream.

## SECTOR AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

There are significant partners in promoting economic development for the agricultural sector that have relevant expertise, for example the South Island Direct Farm Marketing Association, the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, and the Peninsula Agriculture Commission. Public education and engagement has also been increasing through organizations such as the Capital Food and Agriculture Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and locally the “North Saanich Food for the Future Society”. The activities of these organizations combine to contribute to momentum, awareness and critical mass for strengthening local agri-food demand and production.

## CROSS-MUNICIPAL INTEREST

There is interest across Peninsula municipalities in creating an enabling environment for local agriculture inclusive of Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney. Agriculture plans and initiatives to invest in supporting agri-food production have taken place in a number of the Region’s municipalities. The Capital Regional District has developed a draft food and agriculture strategy as part of the Region’s Sustainability Plan, that also supports an enabling regulatory environment for agriculture. The District of Central Saanich is currently consulting on a new “Farm Worker Housing Bylaw” to address the shortage of affordable housing for farm workers. There is potential to create an enabling environment for agriculture across municipal boundaries on the Peninsula with municipalities learning from one another’s experiences and best practices.



## REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Previous and current consultation with stakeholders indicates a number of concerns with municipal regulations as they impact farm operations. In general there is a view that progress has been made in attempting to promote the agri-food sector by the municipality and that some clarity has been brought to the planning regulations of the District relative to those of the Agricultural Land Commission. However there are concerns about restrictive burning regulations for farm operators, engineering requirements for cold frame and greenhouse installation, and lack of clarity on the precedence of ALC regulation of ancillary farm buildings.

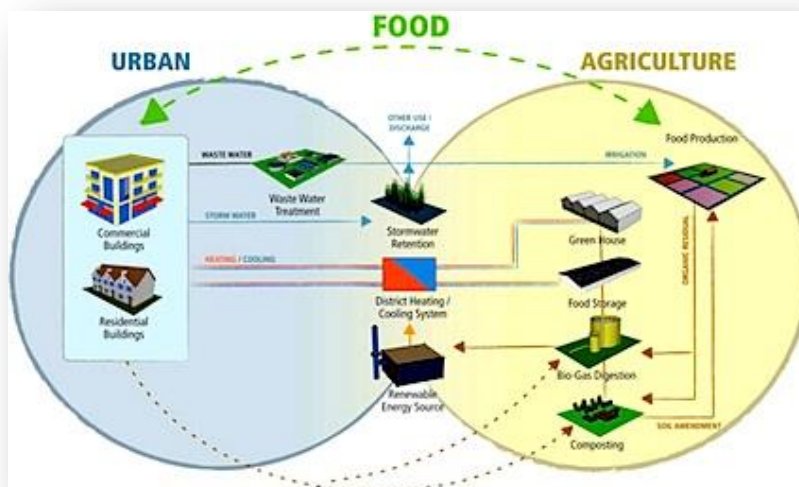


## EXTENSION SERVICES

The provision of extension services to farmers in the region has shrunk as a result of federal and provincial cut backs in funding. One full time position for the region was eliminated. This has resulted in a knowledge and support gap for both new and existing producers. Access to information from the BC Ministry of Agriculture is limited to periodic statistical and market reports and on-line resources. There is virtually no extension service to local producers to advise them on farm and market opportunities. This creates a major competitive disadvantage for local producers compared with those in other Provinces and Countries, who are better serviced with outreach extension programs. There are few post-secondary programs that can fill the gap in reduction of government extension programs, compared with the USA where publicly funded colleges have to provide such a service as a requirement of the US Constitution. Reductions in agricultural extension services by senior levels of government are self-defeating as they result in a net reduction in productivity and income to the economy from the agricultural sector. There is a good case for advocacy by local governments through the UBCM to the Province to reinstate regional outreach extension services, perhaps by redirecting funds from the current BC Investment Agriculture Foundation.

## BUSINESS SERVICES

There is a major learning curve for new farmers, whether retirees, mid-life “switchers” or young agriculturists. Business development and planning tools are critical to this learning curve, beyond the life style and values-based passion for farming. Chambers of Commerce have important skills in business retention, succession and planning that could be applied to agri-food business settings. The Peninsula Chamber is actively promoting this kind of program.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

The major infrastructure gap cited by stakeholders relates to abattoir facilities for meat/livestock processing. Local producers currently have to transport product to Cobble Hill or beyond since the introduction of new meat processing regulations. Agri-food stakeholders on Salt Spring Island have banded together to invest in a sector owned abattoir facility and the business plan for that initiative is adaptable to the Saanich Peninsula. There may also be gaps in cold storage, distribution, processing and packaging infrastructure that need to be addressed to increase economically viable production, either by the more efficient use of existing facilities or investment in new ones.



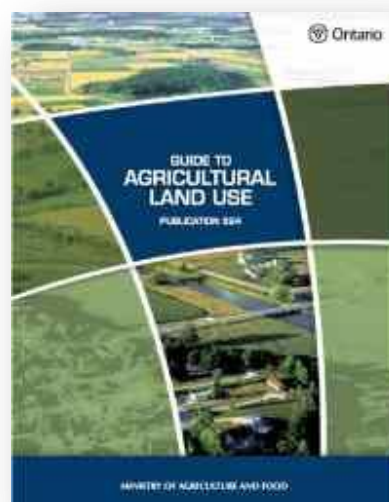


## LESSONS FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES

Analysis of economic development plans, strategies and initiatives for agriculture in other parts of British Columbia indicate a growing momentum by local governments to support and promote the agri-food sector. Local or Community Economic Development has traditionally sought to promote sectors and assets that are unique to local communities that help grow community owned businesses and jobs rather than attempting to influence macro-economic factors and sectors beyond local influence. Many municipalities and regional districts in BC have chosen to take a role in partnership with agri-food businesses to promote their development, from wineries in the Okanagan to dairy and livestock production in Abbotsford. The attached table provides a summary of key components of these strategies (Attachment One).

Best practices in Business – Local Government cooperation in agricultural economic development have emerged that involves:

- Supporting the development of local agri-food organizations and alliances to strengthen the sector's own development and leadership
- improving and harmonizing the local government regulatory environment
- ensuring affordable and stable input costs for utilities like water that local governments can control
- promoting and marketing regions and communities as agriculture and food destinations
- educating and engaging the public in supporting local agricultural products and experiences
- supporting land use for, and investment in, infrastructure for local processing and distribution
- supporting community acquisition of agricultural land for farming and related "food hub" functions
- marketing the area for agri-food investment and business location, to create distinctive clusters of agri-business value chains



In our analysis, the following are key lessons and potential actions relevant to the circumstances of North Saanich.

### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Both in BC and across Canada, there has been a growing emphasis on collaborative initiatives by local governments, agri-food producers and community organizations concerned with food security. This has been reflected in North Saanich through the Agriculture Advisory Commission and in the development of the 2010 Agricultural Plan, and 2011 Whole Community Agricultural

## Strategy.

The Peninsula Agriculture Commission and South Island Direct Farm Marketing Association provide important roles in representing agriculture interests. In the Capital Region, the Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) has provided a platform for thirty member organizations to take action on building a sustainable food and agriculture system since 1999. The Peninsula Chamber of Commerce works on business development and promotion issues with its members in North and Central Saanich and Sidney.

However there is no single body that takes leadership on agri-food economic development in the District or region, and this is a gap compared with other communities. In the Comox Valley for example the Farmer's Institute champions sector development, owns a drainage plough for use of its members, and works with the Comox Valley Economic Development Commission on farm promotion and agri-food development. Similar arrangements for taking leadership on agricultural economic development have emerged in communities and regions like Upper Skeena, Abbotsford, Powell River, the West Kootenays, and the Cowichan Valley. On Salt Spring Island an Agricultural Alliance has been created to develop new infrastructure and investment opportunities for the sector.

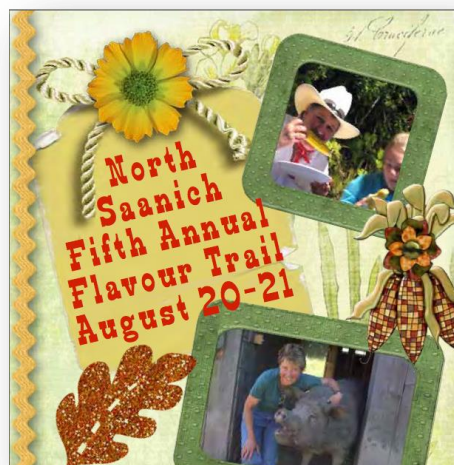
## INVESTMENT

A number of regions have been successful at attracting private investment for the agri-food and related tourism sectors. Some regions have specifically tried to create a "centre of excellence" or "cluster" of agri-food related enterprises and research facilities (e.g. Abbotsford). Some regions (e.g. Comox Valley) have also targeted private investment and new business immigrants through international trade fairs and the promotion of farm property sales.

In other regions debt financing for community farm centres, food hubs and other commercially viable but community owned farm operations have been obtained from finance institutions, public, community and private sector investors. These centres have then generated additional revenue opportunities for local individual farmers. Individual agri-food businesses have also benefited from the availability of tax credit incentivized local investment funds, a version of which is currently being developed for the Capital Region. The range of investment and philanthropic finance sources for food-related business and community initiatives have grown and are being tapped into by other regions of Vancouver Island and BC.

## PROMOTION

Marketing and promotion has mainly been focused in North Saanich on the Flavour Trail event. Models from other places suggest highly successful returns



on permanent promotion campaigns for agriculture and food producers, retailers and restaurants in a given locality (e.g. Charlevoix Flavour Trail). This involves a full range of local community food experiences (marine, farm, winery, cidery, etc.), a permanent promotion program integrated with local and regional tourism strategies, and a sequence of events that farm owners support and buy into.

In regions that build critical mass across their agri-food sector through intensive promotion, growth in and profitability of local food production has been significant. In the Charlevoix region of Quebec, the Comox and Cowichan valleys on Vancouver Island, local, regional, national and international promotion activities have been successful in building new markets for local producers, and new markets for agri-tourism development that contribute to farm family livelihoods.

## FARM/FOOD HUB

A number of communities in BC, and throughout North America, have seen the development of a “food hub” that concentrates a number of agri-food infrastructures with farm incubation/new farmer leases, farm market, training/extension, research, and agri-tourism functions. Previous District reports have referred to the need for an “agriplex” to carry out this kind of function and since 2004 reports to Council have referenced the Sandown Property as a potential site, which is the subject now of a major proposal to District Council.

There are a number of similar models of municipally supported farm demonstration project and “food hub”, including:

- Bruce D. Campbell Farm and Discovery Center, Manitoba
- Senden Agriculture Center and Demonstration Farm in Hazelton
- Bakerview EcoDairy-Farm Start Incubator Farm Abbotsford
- UBC Farm, Vancouver

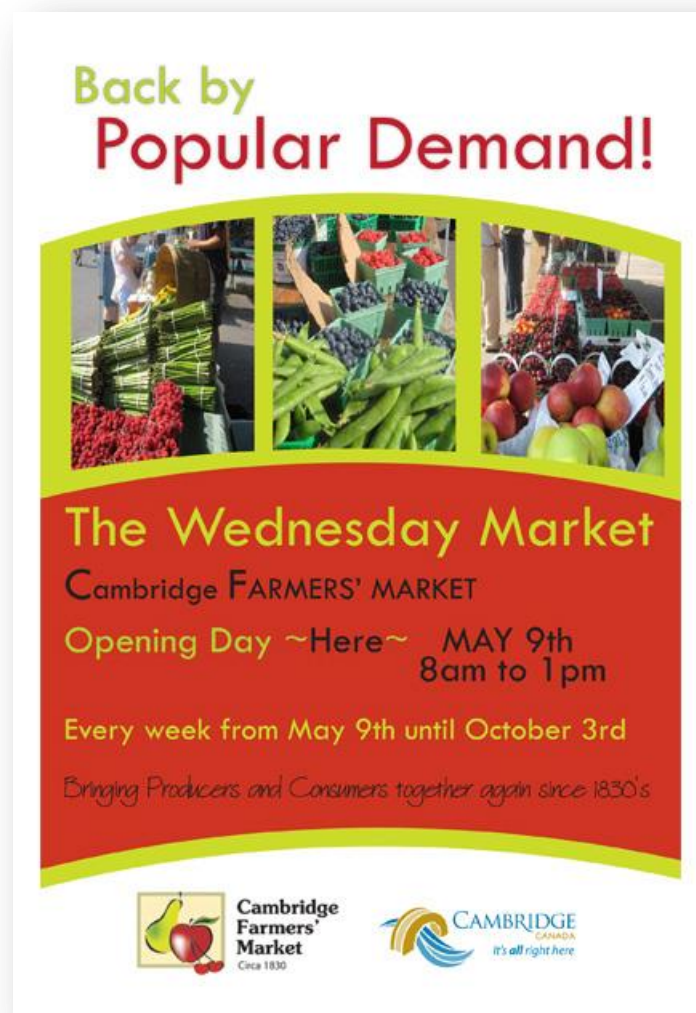


A “whole farm” project with a similar function has been recommended as part of Powell River’s Economic Development Strategy for Agriculture. A food hub also exists in Kaslo (West Kootenays) and there are other projects of larger scale supported by local and state governments in the USA. The common business plan feature of these food hubs is municipal or other public land lease support, but stakeholder and community management of the operational costs. A number of stakeholders are interested in developing a viable business plan for the Sandown property as a “Food Hub” based on these models.



## FARM MARKETS

Permanent farm markets have been developed in other communities, and this was a recommendation of the Whole Community Agriculture Strategy for North Saanich. Most case studies on their development and operation (e.g. Charlottetown, PEI) suggest a need for substantial stakeholder investment and buy-in. In other regions, as in the Capital Region, a variety of seasonal markets with a range of local products (not just food) have developed. Further consideration of the business plan requirements and options for farm market development should address lessons learned from other communities.



## STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIES

This strategy was developed through bringing together a wide range of knowledge and information about the agri-food sector, economic development and local resources and opportunities. The process involved over 75 residents in the District and the five most relevant food, agriculture and business organizations (the Peninsula Agriculture Commission, the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Roundtable, North Saanich Food for the Future Society, the North Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission, the South Island Direct Farm Marketing Association, and the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce).

The approach for the consultation was to utilize existing research on the subject that has already been undertaken by the Municipality of North Saanich, other local, regional and provincial governments, and agriculture and economic development organizations. This included looking at promising models and initiatives from other jurisdictions relevant to this region. The research was gathered and then discussed with local agriculture organizations, local government planners, regional agrologists, the Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, and a wide range of people involved in the agriculture and food sector. From here, recommendations were brought forward for further discussion and prioritization by the wide range of participants who specifically looked at how to transform the recommendations into realistic and tangible actions at a workshop at the Mary Winspear Centre on March 13, 2012. Finally, a meeting was held at the Central Saanich Municipal Hall to discuss findings that might be relevant to Regional District interests and those of other Peninsula municipalities. Representatives of North and Central Saanich, and Saanich attended.

## SUMMARY OF INPUT

While most of the input provided focused on identification of issues and opportunities for action related to the food and agriculture economy some important questions emerged that need to be considered as they have great impact on the way we approach taking action, and our chances for success. These are:

1. **Scope:** What would the scope of this strategy be in terms of the food system and also in terms of its geographical area? With intention, this strategy covers more than just the production side of our food system but also looks at gaps and opportunities in food processing, distribution, promotion and retail. It also looks at both the formal and more informal (such as backyard growing, community kitchens, and distribution initiatives) aspects of the food and agriculture economy. In addition, we heard loud and clear that the recommended actions need to be taken at a greater geographical and jurisdictional scale than North Saanich. In some cases recommendations look at Peninsula wide initiatives, or for cooperation between the municipalities and the region.

2. **Role:** The second area that emerged throughout the discussions was in regards to determining whose role it was to lead, partner or inform the recommendations. We heard a wide range of opinions on this topic and advice on what roles the municipality, the farm community, local organizations, financial institutions and investors, other levels of government, and consumers could be playing.
3. **Capacity and Resources:** The third and important aspect relates to how the recommendations are implemented. Where is there capacity and resources available? We heard that work going forward needs to deal with gaps, strengthen and build capacity in order to mobilize this plan with efficiency and impact.

We have attempted to keep these questions central in discussions to ensure that the recommendations for action coming forward consider these aspects as we move forward.

The most consistent and frequently mentioned elements necessary to increase the economic viability of agriculture in North Saanich coming from stakeholders included:

- In order to increase the viability of the sector we need to have organizations with leadership and capacity to implement actions and continue to develop and keep the sector vibrant.
- The other vital aspect is to have an informed and supportive consumer base that will invest in this sector every day and buy food locally.
- Investment in growth of the sector and in particular, in vital infrastructure such as land, processing, storage and distribution is critical.
- Food producers must be able to have the means to access these assets to be successful, especially in regards to land.
- Investment in food producer expertise is critical and with the loss of a regional agrologist we must find ways to fill this role.
- Building a sense of being, and acumen as, business professionals within the sector is important.
- Local government can work to create a positive environment for agriculture and can lobby senior levels of government to create a more enabling environment.
- Strengthening the food economy is larger than looking at the commercial agri-food sector, but also encompasses the broad range of more informal activities and transactions related to growing and distributing food.
- First Nations have a major interest in food and nutrition and are valuable partners in the region.

## PRIORITIES

The priority objectives and suggested actions we heard from stakeholders include the following:

### Objective 1:

*Promote and educate about the value of agriculture in North Saanich by building points of contact with the food and farming community that contributes to growing public demand for local food.*

Across the board, we heard that in order for the agriculture and food sector to flourish, it was very important to have an educated and engaged consumer base both on the Peninsula and in Greater Victoria. Acknowledging the importance and value of agriculture in the District was seen as critical in making agriculture a higher priority and that the more points of interaction that consumers could have with growing food, farms and farmers; a better understanding of agriculture and increase in support and sales would occur.

Stakeholders recognized existing initiatives of great value in this area include the North Saanich Market, the DFMA Farm Fresh Guide, Tour of Farms, and the North Saanich Flavour Trail. Key areas that were identified to encourage and expand are a permanent market, the Flavour Trail and the promotion of “buy local” at the industry, institutional, and household levels. Most agreed that the scope of initiatives should reach beyond North Saanich and there was strong support for encouraging inter-municipal cooperation and promoting “Peninsula Grown”.

### Priority Actions:

- **Differentiation of Peninsula Product — “Peninsula Grown” Brand:** Confirmed at the Stakeholder meeting held in May was the interest by local growers and other stakeholders in having a “Peninsula Grown” brand, and to work with local industry and retailers to use this geographic indicator in the packaging and presentation of local products to the public. More work will need to be done to look at how to implement this and to build on the already known “Rooster logo” created as the Island Farmers Alliance, which has significant consumer caché.
- **Integrated Promotion-Enhanced Flavour Trail:** There is much room an opportunity to build on the Flavour Trail with interlaced purposes: as a promotion and marketing campaign, a sector development driver and as a community building initiative. The enhanced Flavour Trail could expand on current activities to increase the scope to peninsula wide and involve marine based activities and restaurants serving local food.

Key components could include promotional material, an Annual Flavour Trail Event, and farm tours. We would build on what is already happening, however, brand and market these activities as a “Flavour Trail” package brought together by many partners. Promotion would be scaled up through web based and print materials, and made visible through high profile information kiosks, through the municipalities, Tourism agencies and at events,

tradeshows. It was suggested that the enhanced Peninsula wide Flavour Trail could be initiated within one year, and be partnership based. The municipal role would be to work with potential partners to support promotion of Flavour Trail and Flavour Trail events. Continue to ensure municipal bylaws are supportive of signage. Utilize the municipal website for promotion, with links to Tourism Victoria, Chamber and Chamber partners. Other key partners would be the Direct Farm Marketing Association, Saanich Fair Society, and CR-FAIR.

- **Continue to explore options for permanent market locations on the Peninsula.**  
Creating a permanent market location was rated highly among many constituents. It was cited as a key way for people to interact directly with farmers. Concerns in this area revolved around the capital cost of investing in a permanent market site and the question of population threshold needed to support a permanent market.

Location was also cited as a key concern, with the need to be sensitive to the proximity of local farms whose mainstay is direct farm sales.

## Objective 2:

*Leverage investment in and build the agri-food sector, and the infrastructure it needs to thrive.*

There are a number of opinions and approaches suggested around encouraging investment in the agri-food system and in terms of specific infrastructure pieces that have the potential to 1) increase production for a growing “local food” market and 2) making farming and food production a more profitable enterprise.

During the consultation, we heard that this area is where we need to continue to gather expertise, put pen to paper and find right sized solutions for North Saanich farmers and food producers. Some investment was said to be required on individual farms, and others spoke to facilities or equipment that made sense to share or centralize (central market, meat or vegetable processing facility, food hub). We generally heard these larger types of investments would work minimally, with a peninsula wide catchment.

We heard that to continue to build production levels to better serve the “local food” and niche markets (through farm markets, box programs, direct farm markets and specialty distributors) requires a focus on ensuring access to land and water, and the facilities or equipment for storage and processing that allow an operation to grow.

Currently we have very few larger operations or coops in place that can provide a quantity and consistency of supply that can serve larger markets (public institutions such as the University of Victoria, wholesalers, independent, and retail grocers.) The ability to aggregate growers/suppliers to bring up volume is also seen as an opportunity to interact with these growing markets.

Many lamented that meat production continues to be fairly small scale with a number of meat growers working to supply local butchers and smaller outlets. A lack of abattoirs and meat processing facilities, alongside the costs associated with transporting animals up island or off island, has dampened meat production considerably. There was much interest in determining the

feasibility of a multi species processing facility on the peninsula, and whether through coordination of production, we could support such a facility. Would this capacity encourage more people to produce chickens and turkeys, pork and beef? Many suggested looking to the example of the Salt Spring Island model, with an interest to see how that facility fares and the impacts it has on island meat production.

There is mixed opinion on the feasibility of many of these types of initiatives due to current production levels. However, we also heard that if facilities existed and returns were good then the belief was that more people would get into production. Immediate priorities focused on meat slaughter and processing, mapping licensed food processing kitchens and storage capacities, and aggregation and distribution hubs. There was also interest expressed in looking at how the Sandown Raceway proposal could meet some of these needs.

Working with local financial institutions, creating community investment funds, utilizing an agriculture levy to generate funds, and work in partnerships to pool resources, were all identified as ways to create capital to invest in agriculture sector development initiatives.

### Priority Actions:

- **Map and promote the network of existing facilities available** commercially licensed food processing kitchens, transportation and storage facilities available to different business scales.
- **Feasibility study for a local peninsula based abattoir** involving local producers. Look to Salt Spring model to inform this work in the region.
- **Explore vehicles that could supply Institutions:** Explore opportunities to grow production and organizing to meet institutional purchasing needs and promote these to farmers or farm business groups.
- **Identify potential value chains.** Work with Chamber to look at value chain development for local industries including the tourism sector.
- **Prepare a business case for an Agri-Food Hub.** Utilize existing opportunities and infrastructure such as the Saanich Fairgrounds or Sandown Raceway to look at the creation of agriculture hub that combines access to land and/or greenhouses, training and education, market place, vegetable and fruit aggregator, storage and processing that would allow the sector to “scale up” supply. What needs to happen for this to be feasible?
- **Make resources available for investment.** Work with key partners to investigate financing options and pooling resources and ideas such as the creation of an annual levy or donor option for District (and potentially CRD) tax payers to contribute to an agricultural legacy fund to make patient loans or equity investments in agricultural land retention and agri-business infrastructure, inclusive of the idea of a “Farm Bucks” \$10 redeemable voucher for local farm purchases.

### Objective 3:

*Support retention and access to land for new farmers and for scaling up of food production by existing farmers.*

Maintaining a permanent agriculture land base was identified as critical to the future of agriculture and food production. This necessitates that the District continue to articulate and maintain policies and bylaws that support the preservation of farmland and keeping North Saanich rural, as well as to develop strategies to educate and raise public and decision maker understanding of the importance of the value of farmland in the district. Stakeholders spoke to concerns of the loss of farmland but also that lands that are designated as agriculture are not productive or in use. It was repeatedly affirmed that we must go beyond land preservation to finding strategies to encourage farmers to have access to these lands and put them into food production.

A number of approaches were suggested in this area. Some suggestions included: to support connecting farmers to the farmland through promoting land linking databases; and providing incentives to landowners to either lease, share or farm their own lands. It was also suggested to promote North Saanich to potential entrepreneurs as an attractive place for agriculture and food sector businesses to thrive. We also heard that it was important for North Saanich to work with alongside other municipalities to advocate to other levels of government and authorities on a number of fronts: to ensure that the Agriculture Land Reserve was protected, that the CRD maintained the Urban Containment Boundary, that BC Assessment continue to review farm assessments to more actively encouraged farming, and to work to enable landowners ability to create long-term leases.

Many supported the use of public and municipal lands (and in particular the Sandown lands) to create opportunities to access land particularly for young/new farmers and for smaller scale, intensive, and diversified models. Long-term leases on these lands could be created at fair market values. It was important to farmers that these types of arrangements did not create unfair advantage to some farmers over others.

### Priority Actions:

- **Maintain land use policies** that ensure land base for long-term agriculture, including a “no net loss” to the Agriculture Land Reserve in North Saanich.
- **Maintain links to the data bank** of farmland leasing opportunities (Linking Land and Farmers) on the municipal website.
- **Support a regional farmland trust** that can support private and public lands into trust and explore the potential creation of a regional agriculture and farmland levy or similar mechanism that would enable putting lands into permanent trust for agriculture and allow investment in vital infrastructure (extension services is also a priority). An innovative suggestion was that in order to give residents more choice about the levy, suggesting that a voucher could be issued in the same amount as the proposed levy and this voucher would be redeemable at local farms and farm markets. This would encourage residents to buy



local infusing dollars into the local agrifood sector, and any amount that was not redeemed would build the fund for agriculture land and sector development needs.

#### **Objective 4:**

*Support sector development to invest in current and future generations of innovative and successful farmers.*

One of the most often mentioned topics in the consultation was the need to improve the support available for farmers in managing their crops, lands and farm businesses.

With the loss of extension services, most farmers are relying on the web and “over the fence” advice to deal with challenges. We heard that information accessed through websites is often difficult to sift through to find relevant or particularly localized information. There is a strong need for on-site assessments and accessing local knowledge.

A whole range of options surfaced for developing more resources in this area (such as reinstatement of extension services, to creation of “Farm Mentor” databases or networks, apprenticeships such as models like Stewards of Irreplaceable Land (SOIL), learning events like “Farmer 2 Farmer” , Chamber supported business leadership seminars and workshops, and potentially partnerships with local academic institutions). The creation of a **virtual agriculture office** was suggested as an interim step to provide resources and links that are locally relevant, and potentially ways to link “experts” to field producers’ questions.

In particular, people spoke to the concern of getting new farmers into farming because so many current farmers are nearing retirement age. These new farmers need to access information and advice, but also need land and infrastructure that would allow them to succeed. Mentorship and land access for new farmers through land sharing, land leases and incubator farms were suggested.

It is also important to mention that many respondents also saw it as important to continue to build capacity for food growing and preparation in the general public as this contributes to health, wellbeing and food security of all residents. Seen as an added benefit of this was that the more people who grew and were connected to food, the more would understand and become interested in local agriculture.

One of the things that came apparent from speaking with those involved in farm and food organizations and with the farm community is that there is a lack of leadership, capacity and resources to undertake some of the key work to support individual farms or to strengthen the develop and sustain the sector, let alone to implement this plan. In many other areas, this has been the role of a Farmer’s Institute. With no local institute or other organization taking on a coordinating role, there was a feeling that there may be some merit to forming an Agriculture Alliance as one way of moving forward greater coordination and action.



## Priority Actions:

- **Explore how to provide the service that Extension Services once provided:** what models for funding and implementing a regional extension would work? Are there other ways to provide this service? Could we look to the use of a Virtual Agriculture Extension Office in the interim, that would be linked through the municipalities website and provide further links to other resources?
- **Create opportunities to get farmers together to share knowledge:** the example of the Farmer 2 Farmer Conference was given as a good example of a useful format.
- **Mentorship and supporting new farmers:** a farm mentor network would be valuable and to find ways to support young people to get into farming through training programs and access to land, supporting “incubator farms” ( potential for Sandown or municipal lands to be utilized), business leadership program aimed at \$10,000 to \$100,000 range, linking to supportive coop or value chain relationships
- **Strengthen informal food growers and producers:** Support and encourage activities such as community gardens, , Spin Farming, edible landscaping, seed saving and sharing and other forms of urban agriculture, as well as community kitchens, food buying clubs, food skills workshops, neighborhood ovens and food celebrations at all levels.
- **Strengthen farm organizations and ability to act as a leader and partner in implementation of the strategy:** Provide support to existing farm organizations and support their efforts to better cooperation and collaboration. Potentially revitalize Farmer Institute or create something new, like an Agriculture Alliance.

## Objective 5:

### *Create an enabling policy environment for agriculture.*

Jurisdiction around policy and legislation that impacts agriculture occurs at many different levels of government, and is a real challenge for farmers and food producers. There is the feeling that local governments can play a significant role in creating a friendly policy environment for agriculture- in some cases through supportive policy, and in others by “getting out of the way”. Stakeholders feel that it is within the scope of local government to ensure a secure, affordable, and productive land base, a clean and adequate water supply; and the ability to minimize input costs for agriculture through such activities as supporting the utilization of organic waste streams, and access to competitive water rates. Local governments could also minimize the “red tape” associated with operations, in particular to signage, and farmworker housing bylaws. Another thing we heard is the desire to have North Saanich work with other local governments to increase regional coordination of effort, as well as to advocate collectively to other levels of government on farm related issues. There is some recognition that the municipality already has many progressive policies towards agriculture and has been taking an active role in advocate for agriculture and food at the regional level.

**Priority Actions:**

- Support for agriculture seen as a valid role for North Saanich
- Support for the use of municipal land for agriculture purposes and food security goals
- More flexibility in burning regulations
- Continue to ensure reduced water rates for farmers
- Continue to explore bylaws that effect roadside sales and signage for traditional and non-traditional farms.
- Allow growing produce, grass, flowers ornamental shrubs or trees as a home occupation,
- Continue to look at farmworker housing needs as they evolve
- More flexible regulation of Greenhouse infrastructure as agriculture accessory buildings,
- Consider new incentives and disincentives for (taxation) to encourage active production of agriculture lands
- Recycling of organic matters encouraged for farmland use
- Animal control bylaws supportive of poultry livestock, beekeeping in all areas
- Advocate to other levels of government:
  - Support for Regional o farmland preservation including exploration of regional farmland trust
  - Food safety and health regulatory frameworks that are scaled appropriately for small farm businesses
  - Agriculture Land Reserve supported
  - Work with other municipalities, Province and CRD on regulation and monitoring of fill on farmlands Extension for farmers

## PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR AGRICULTURE

*Based on the analysis in this report we propose the following Economic Development Strategy for Agriculture to North Saanich District Council.*

### Goal:

Increase the viability of the agriculture and food sector, including both the commercial and informal aspects of food production and distribution within the food system in the Municipality of North Saanich.

### Objective 1:

Promote and educate about the value of agriculture in North Saanich by building points of contact with the food and farming community that contribute to growing public demand for local food.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
1.1 Develop a strategy with community partners that expands the existing "Flavour Trail" annual event into a permanent promotion of the District and Peninsula as an agri-food destination inclusive of farms, markets, restaurants, wineries, cideries and other food experiences.	District staff supported by the AAC, grant in aid support, website promotion	Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Peninsula Agriculture Commission, Food for the Future Society, Direct Farm Marketing Association, Tourism Associations, Capital Region Food and Ag Roundtable, Victoria Airport Authority, BC Ferries, other Peninsula Municipalities
1.2 Support the development of a "Buy Local" and "Peninsula Grown" campaign and institutional procurement policies to advantage local food producers.	As Above	As Above
1.3 Promote with School Board, recreation, community agencies and producers an annual program of educational activities with consumers and students on the importance of local food production.	As Above	Panorama Recreation Centre, School Board, community organizations, agricultural stakeholders, CR-FAIR, food retailers and wholesalers.

**Objective 2:**

Leverage investment in and build the agri-food sector, and the infrastructure it needs to thrive.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
<p>2.1</p> <p>Investigate partnerships to create a local commercially viable abattoir, inclusive of existing operators, adapting the successful business plan used by the Salt Spring Island Agriculture Alliance, identifying potential sites.</p>	District staff supported by AAC.	Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Community Council, Peninsula Agriculture Commission, other agri-food stakeholders, Municipalities of Central Saanich, Sidney and Saanich.
<p>2.2</p> <p>Support the development of a sustainable business plan for the operation of a food hub on Sandown or other municipal lands inclusive of a range of commercial and agriculture incubation functions.</p>	Mayor and Council District Staff supported by AAC.	Farmlands Trust and other stakeholders.
<p>2.3</p> <p>Create an annual levy or donor option for District (and potentially CRD) tax payers to contribute to an agricultural legacy fund to make patient loans or equity investments in agricultural land retention and agri-business infrastructure, inclusive of the idea of a "Farm Bucks" \$10 redeemable voucher for local farm purchases.</p>	Mayor and Council District Staff supported by AAC.	CRD, Community Council, other financial and agricultural stakeholders.
<p>2.4</p> <p>Increase investment from new agri-business entrepreneurs by promoting North Saanich as a great place to farm and set up food related businesses. Create a brochure and campaign to promote the location of new agri-food businesses and investments in the District.</p>	District Staff supported by AAC.	Peninsula Chamber of Commerce Greater Victoria Real Estate Board Community Council
<p>2.5</p> <p>Promote the development of a plan to increase use of private, community and local government facilities for informal food production, processing, community kitchens, food recovery and distribution activities.</p>	District staff supported by AAC	Vancouver Island Health Authority, Community Kitchens Network, Capital Region Food and Agriculture Roundtable, local food providing organizations.

**Objective 3:**

Support retention and access to land for new farmers and for scaling up of food production by existing farmers.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
3.1 Promote the database for land lease matching between agricultural landowners and prospective farmers now available on the District's agriculture web page; provide incentives for landowners to register.	District Administration	Capital Region Food and Agriculture Roundtable, other municipalities and stakeholders
3.2 Promote to the CRD and BC Government an agriculture investment fund for the region that would assist with retention and succession involving farm lands	CRD discussion	CRD, BC Government, CR-FAIR, UBCM
3.3 Inventory appropriate existing municipally owned lands for potential agriculture leases and incorporate a land lease and new farmer incubation function into any municipal land lease arrangements for a "food hub". Also, indicate any available land for use for community gardens or other food growing opportunities.	District Planning	Farmlands Trust
3.4 Advocate for continued agricultural use of the land and facilities of the Federal Centre for Plant Health	Mayor and Council	All agricultural stakeholders and Peninsula municipalities

**Objective 4:**

Support sector development to invest in current and future generations of innovative and successful farmers.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
4.1 Support a farmer-to-farmer annual one-day learning event.	Grant aid	CR-FAIR, Peninsula Agriculture Commission, Direct Farm Marketing Association, other Peninsula municipalities
4.2 Support a business retention, expansion and succession training program inclusive of a tailored agri-food sector component.	Grant support to Chamber together with Central Saanich and Sidney	Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
4.3 Advocate with agricultural stakeholders across the Peninsula with post-secondary institutions and the BC government the creation of an extension service for the region.	District staff supported by AAC	BC Government, regional post-secondary institutions, CRD, Peninsula municipalities, UBCM
4.4 Strengthen collaboration and leadership by key food and agriculture organizations through the creation of an Alliance to champion sector development.	District staff supported by AAC	Peninsula Agriculture Commission, Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Direct Farm Marketing Association, CR-FAIR, other stakeholders
4.5 Support the development of investment proposals to implement this Agri-food economic development strategy on a peninsula-wide basis.	District staff supported by AAC	Agricultural stakeholders, other Peninsula municipalities, Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, CR-FAIR, Western Diversification Canada, Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC, Real Estate Foundation of BC, Van City Community Foundation
4.6 Engage with First Nations on cooperation in developing and implementing initiatives for agri-food development and marketing.	District staff supported by AAC	Tsawout and other First Nations, Farmlands Trust, CR-FAIR.

**Objective 5:**

Create an enabling policy environment for agriculture.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL ROLES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
5.1 Ease the restrictions on farm structures, cold frames and green houses in the District's Zoning Bylaws and regulations.	Planning & Building Inspection Departments	
5.2 Allow more frequent burning by farm operations that are classified as such in the District's tax rolls.	Municipal administration and fire department	
5.3 Develop a standardized sign design and brand for farm signage already allowed under the bylaw, coordinated with the permanent "flavour trail" promotion above.	Planning department supported by AAC	
5.4 Support the development and implementation of the food and agriculture strategy of the Regional Sustainability Plan of the Capital Regional District.	Mayor and Council. Planning Department supported by AAC	Capital Regional District
5.5 Convene a meeting of Council representatives from the District, Central Saanich, Sidney and Saanich to discuss collaboration on municipal support and harmonized regulation for agriculture.	Mayor and Council. Planning Department supported by AAC	Municipalities of Central Saanich, Sidney and Saanich.
5.6 Identify bylaws in other jurisdictions that could be adapted to North Saanich that make the regulatory environment more enabling for agri-tourism and agri-food processing.	Planning Department supported by AAC	UVic Coop student program
5.7 Identify and advocate for changes in BC Assessment authority regulation that are barriers to agricultural land leases.	Planning Department, Mayor and Council, supported by AAC	Other Peninsula municipalities, CRD, UBCM
5.8 Continue to advocate for affordable water utility rates for farmers.	Mayor and Council	CRD, other Peninsula municipalities

## ATTACHMENT ONE

### SUMMARY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ORGANIZATION/ JURISDICTION	POLICY/STRATEGY	COMMENTS
CRD Roundtable on the Environment: Food and Agriculture Subcommittee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide zoning and possibly land for a permanent farmers market, for community gardens and for a community farm.</li> <li>Include a Food Strategy in the Regional Growth Strategy and Official Community Plan.</li> <li>Adopt a Food Charter.</li> <li>Support development of a regional/municipal Food Directory</li> <li>Institute local food purchasing policies for local/regional governments.</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.communitycouncil.ca/CR-FAIR_nl/PDFs/RTE-Agricultural-Legal-Policy-Analysis.pdf">http://www.communitycouncil.ca/CR-FAIR_nl/PDFs/RTE-Agricultural-Legal-Policy-Analysis.pdf</a>  Published in June 2009, focus on recommendations for potential action by local governments to protect and enhance agriculture
The Land Conservancy's Farming and Food Future: A Local Government Toolkit for Sustainable Food Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop food procurement policies and specify exemptions for food where purchase price may influence availability.</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/programs/farm/CFPdocs/toolkit_final.pdf">http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/programs/farm/CFPdocs/toolkit_final.pdf</a>  Published in December 2009, focuses on farm-based agriculture, but the tools, information, and resources can also be applied to urban food production.
Cowichan Region Agricultural Area Plan	<p>Objective 1c: To improve the connection between agriculture and the community</p> <p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Continue to promote agriculture by holding events that connect the community with agriculture, i.e. farm tours, open houses.</li> <li>2) Encourage, promote and attend Farmers' Markets.</li> <li>3) Work with organizations like the Cowichan Green Community who have an expressed</li> </ol>	<a href="http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/DocumentView.aspx?DID=7080">http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/DocumentView.aspx?DID=7080</a>  May 2010. Economic Development is one of 2 strategic directions: This is a dynamic, supply side strategy that helps the industry develop capacity



	<p>interest in supporting local agriculture</p> <p>4) Support the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation. Ask for their materials, conduct farm tours and gain an increased presence in the classroom.</p> <p>5) Use new tools, such as social networks, to reach out to a larger portion of the population. If needed, invite a specialist to a meeting to describe these and how they can be used to connect with the broader community.</p>	<p>and allows the industry to shift production and optimize production to match current market conditions at any given point in time.</p>
Central Saanich Agricultural Area Plan	<p>Objective #3: Improve the Viability of Agricultural Enterprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate with the CRD for lower agricultural water rates</li> <li>• Lobby province to develop farm tax classification for structures used in primary and value added agricultural production in bona fide agricultural enterprises</li> <li>• Create a public regional farmland trust to purchase of land or covenants by municipal and/or regional governments (Regional Acquisition Fund) for lease or resale to farmers, using a designated property tax to generate funds</li> <li>• Lobby the province to create financial deterrents, profit recapture taxes, or penalties applied to farmland sales for non-agricultural land use</li> <li>• Lobby the province to consider setting up an agricultural land bank to purchase farmland from retiring farmers and sell to new entrants.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.centralesaanich.ca/Assets/Central+Saanich/Planning+and+Building+Services/Planning/Ag+Area+Plan/Phase+3+Draft+Ag+Plan.pdf?method=1">http://www.centralesaanich.ca/Assets/Central+Saanich/Planning+and+Building+Services/Planning/Ag+Area+Plan/Phase+3+Draft+Ag+Plan.pdf?method=1</a></p> <p>Phase 3 Report of the AAP published in May 2011</p>
District of Sooke	<p>Agriculture is not part of the economic development plan, but the following objectives apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote growth and expansion of value added forestry, fishing and agriculture;</li> <li>• Develop and link locally based workforce and training programs that support a viable restoration of the economy, such as sustainably eco-based managed fisheries</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.sooke.ca/assets/Documents~and~Forms/Bylaws/400%20OCP%20ADOPTED%20MAY%2017%2010.pdf">http://www.sooke.ca/assets/Documents~and~Forms/Bylaws/400%20OCP%20ADOPTED%20MAY%2017%2010.pdf</a></p> <p>march 2010</p>

	<p>and forestry practices;</p> <p>As part of the Agriculture and food security strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate land for the location of a farmers' market, either temporary, seasonal or permanent, for a street farm market with consideration given to the provision of potable water and sewer facilities if there is preparation of food on site;</li> <li>• Create a recurring \$10,000 food security reserve fund to help fund and create community gardens and other food security initiatives.</li> </ul>	
Lower Mainland	<p>Become market oriented and proactive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage producers to target niche and specialty products, and sell to world markets</li> <li>• Carry out market research aimed at identifying trends and opportunities for local value-added products</li> <li>• Build on current marketing initiatives to promote greater learning and involvement by producers</li> <li>• Design strategies to attract processors to the area; explore the "organic baby food" processing concept.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/development/agriculture/AgricultureDocs/EconomicStrategyforAgricultureMainReport.PDF">http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/development/agriculture/AgricultureDocs/EconomicStrategyforAgricultureMainReport.PDF</a></p> <p>NOTE: the report states that "the problem is not selecting the right strategy; it is about effectively implementing an agreed strategy. Implementation requires focus, leadership and a coordinated approach to improvement. Also, a private sector leadership vacuum in the agricultural sector is mentioned as a barrier to getting things done.</p>
Maple Ridge Agricultural Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with producers and local entrepreneurs to explore the feasibility of an agro-industrial infrastructure strategy that could include: shared industrial spaces; branding; small scale processing facilities; community kitchens; mobile slaughter facilities.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.mapleridge.ca/assets/Default/Clerks/Committees~and~Commissions/Agricultural~Advisory~Committee/pdfs/ag_plan.pdf">http://www.mapleridge.ca/assets/Default/Clerks/Committees~and~Commissions/Agricultural~Advisory~Committee/pdfs/ag_plan.pdf</a></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the Diversity of Agricultural Activity (equestrian, agro-tourism) to protect the land base through active use, create demand for services and workers, and support the infrastructure also required for food production.</li> </ul>	December 2009
Comox Valley Agricultural Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Issues and Opportunities           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Promote small-scale agriculture as an economic development opportunity in the region and work with real estate agencies to inform them of the productive potential of small holdings.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Marketing           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. This will require effort at all levels “internationally, provincially, on Vancouver Island and locally” to inform consumers about the availability of local products and the advantages of Valley products. Local marketing effort should be based on the market research noted above.</li> <li>. The agricultural industry in the Valley could benefit from a “centre” that is recognized by both the farm community and by consumers. Such a centre could be a meeting place, a source of information for consumers and producers, and an “icon” to promote local agriculture and locally grown products.</li> <li>. Ask the Economic Development Society to periodically “scan” available information on new production opportunities, and when an option that appears to “fit” with the opportunities in the Comox Valley is noted, work with the Farmers Institute, MAFF, and Producer groups to gather information and assess options.</li> <li>. Marketing: Co-op advertising to increase the recognition of the Fresh From the Island Logo; Perhaps the message on the billboard could be changed to a ‘buy local food products’ message, such as Farmers Market locations and times; Promote Valley food products to the expanding tourism market that visits the Valley and region.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/uploadedFiles/Community_Planning/Reports/Ag_Plan/CVAP_Phase1Report2_ALL.pdf">http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/uploadedFiles/Community_Planning/Reports/Ag_Plan/CVAP_Phase1Report2_ALL.pdf</a></p> <p>this is all from the report from 2002</p>

Regional District of Central Kootenay Agricultural Area Plan	<p>SECURE FOOD SUPPLY RECOMMENDATION #5: It is recommended that the RDCK encourage the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission to update and disseminate "The Countryside and You" booklet in print and electronic format, and other quality material as appropriate.</p> <p>SECURE FOOD SUPPLY RECOMMENDATION #6: It is recommended that the RDCK support agencies like the Kaslo Food Hub to establish small-scale local food distribution centres in other communities.</p> <p>SECURE FOOD SUPPLY RECOMMENDATION #7: It is recommended that the RDCK assess and initiate mechanisms to expand local market options for regional food.</p> <p>SECURE FOOD SUPPLY RECOMMENDATION #8: It is recommended that the RDCK encourage the creation of a regional food and farm marketing program that includes regional food and seasonality guides.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.rdck.bc.ca/publications/pdf/RDCK_AgPlan_only-1.pdf">http://www.rdck.bc.ca/publications/pdf/RDCK_AgPlan_only-1.pdf</a></p> <p>Note that recommended strategies are not framed as part of 'economic development'</p>
City of Abbotsford Agriculture Strategy	<p>From the strategies for "immediate action" (within a year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve local business awareness of agriculture: liaise with ACOC; develop communication strategy; create communication materials.</li> <li>• Create signage that identifies agricultural areas and products: engage support groups, develop messaging, signage specification and strategy.</li> <li>• Attract agro-industrial research, technology expertise and funding into the city: identify projects, knowledge gaps, and potential partners.</li> <li>• Use the city's Agricultural Trust Fund to further agricultural investment, research and innovation: develop mechanism to evaluate applications for funding.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.abbotsford.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=15758">http://www.abbotsford.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=15758</a></p> <p>march 2011</p>
Powell River Economic Development Plan for Agriculture	Goal 2 calls to increase capacity and improve the economies of scale of agriculture in the Regional. Objectives 2a and 2b address the	<p><a href="http://www.prreds.com/attachments/2009/PRAGstudy.pdf">http://www.prreds.com/attachments/2009/PRAGstudy.pdf</a></p>

	<p>need to improve access to land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 2c: to improve local government support for agriculture in the Regional District: Complete an agricultural area plan; Provide support for infrastructure that is required by agriculture. This could potentially include: Sites for Farmers' Markets, Access to water for irrigation, Assistance with drainage projects, Access to nutrients, Assistance with increased capacity at all levels including (potentially) the Full Circle Farm.</li> </ul> <p>Goal 4 of the plan is to investigate and develop the "Full Circle Farm" concept:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 4a: to determine feasibility of the proposed farm. Move from defining the concept to describing the proposed business – add detail to the concept in progress SALSA with support from PRFI. This action will help identify some significant challenges – prioritize these, identify "show stoppers", if they exist, and other major hurdles. A business plan outline was provided to SALSA as a guided for identifying key questions/issues. Answer the big questions. A rough estimate suggests capital requirements of about \$4.5 million will likely be the main issue to address. Identify sources and roughly estimate the operating revenue for the farm – including training and education revenue and potentially tipping fees for re-use of wastes.</li> <li>Objective 4b: to investigate land requirements and availability. Identify the land requirements for the Full Circle farm in terms of quality and quantity, and shortlist the potential land parcels which meet these requirements.</li> </ul> <p>Goal 7 – to reduce reliability on imported input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 7a: to displace imported chemical fertilizers. Conduct an inventory of local sources of organic nutrients and wastes and evaluate the potential to use them or convert them into organic fertilizer.</li> </ul>	<p>November 2009</p> <p>The other goals are:</p> <p>Goal 1 – to improve on the current soil mapping for the region</p> <p>Goal 3 – to improve training and access to information for farmers</p> <p>Goal 5 – to strengthen communications within and outside the farming community</p> <p>Goal 6 – to improve food self-sufficiency, marketing and distribution</p>
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## ATTACHMENT TWO

### SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

#### The Peninsula Agriculture Commission (PAC)

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PAC is a body that has traditionally advised on farm matters on the Saanich Peninsula but is increasing becoming a regional reference point for agriculture and agriculture policy. Its members are made up of farmers and representatives from the food sector along with representatives from local governments from the region. Priorities and actions identified were:

- 1. Land:** Land prices are very high and accessibility is an issue, and although you can lease land this greatly limits what you can farm. Creating access to land for farming must be part of an economic strategy. Suggestions were supporting land linking, land leases, providing municipal lands for farming at market lease rates so as not to create competitive advantages or disadvantages in the farm community.
- 2. Extension/advice:** There is a need for some type of agriculture extension for farmers. Currently information is accessed through websites but it is often difficult to find relevant or particularly localized information. Need the ability to have on-site assessment. An opportunity may be to utilize farmer networks, through such events like "Farmer 2 Farmer" or connections to "Mentor" farmers. Also need more support with mentorship and land access for new farmers
- 3. Promotion:** Various actions to increase visibility and marketing opportunities such as markets and events, such as the Flavour Trail, there was support for the SVDFMA to have a role in these activities.
- 4. Agriculture Infrastructure:** Building processing infrastructure with support for actions such as undertaking a feasibility study and establish Abattoir/Meat Processing capacity, looking at commercial kitchen facilities, and of slightly lower priority- storage and cold packing. Also with considerable support was exploring how Sandown may be an agriculture hub that accommodates these different aspects listed above.
- 5. Advocacy related to External Forces:** There was some discussion about external forces of trade agreements and also the threats to supply management, and the pressures this puts on local farmers to compete with external suppliers. There is a need for local governments and the public to advocate for local farmers in this environment.

## The North Saanich Agriculture Advisory Commission

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The North Saanich Agriculture Advisory Commission is a body that takes referrals from Council on topics related to agriculture in North Saanich. The members participated in a workshop that drew from their expertise and we learned the highest rated objectives for the committee in terms of priority is Land Base, followed by market development, and labour and sector development.

1. **Land base:** It was stated that it is critical to continue to articulate and maintain the District's policies and bylaws that support the preservation of farmland and keeping North Saanich rural, as well as to develop strategies to educate and raise public and decision maker understanding of the importance of the value of agriculture and farmland in the district. They pointed to the use of municipal lands and in particular, the Sandown lands as an opportunity for young/new farmers to access land especially for smaller scale, intensive and diversified models.
2. **Market Development:** Supporting marketing campaigns, farm markets and events such as the Flavour Trail were seen as central to growing agriculture in North Saanich. Part of this work must include a continued effort to support adequate Road-side signage. It was recommended that research and analysis on the development of a permanent public market should be undertaken as it was both an entry point to marketing for smaller vendors and an opportunity to expand the market for vendors and buyers.
3. **Processing and Infrastructure:** Some key needs for processing were identified including the development of a local abattoir for chicken and sheep; with the recommendation to undertake a feasibility study, not only looking at current need but if access to a local Abattoir would be a driver for an increase in meat production. There was also significant interest in looking at the potential Sandown as an agriculture hub or a center for Innovation and Technology (food production, processing, marketing, composting, and energy). Also important to see if local churches or businesses may have appropriate facilities and find ways to create incentives to make them available.
4. **Labour and Sector development:** participants rated as high priority to explore and increase Extension service, training, and information sharing opportunities. Ideas on how to address this topic included continuing existing ways to share farmer knowledge and skills including supporting previous successes such as the Farmer 2 Farmer conference and models like Stewards of Irreplaceable Land (SOIL) Apprenticeships. Other ideas include supporting opportunities for farmers to get together more regularly to share knowledge (, i.e. Farmers' Institute). It was seen as a key priority to re-establish Extension Services with a professional agrologists with local knowledge and experience to advise farmers on growing



conditions, markets, and new products on a fee for service basis; establishing this service could be done in partnership with other neighbouring municipalities. Creation of a **virtual agriculture office** was suggested as an interim step to provide resources and links that are locally relevant, and potentially ways to link “experts” to field producers’ questions. There were also ideas put forward for creative approaches to creating Labour pools either through federal and provincial skills training and employment programs or business models such as Student Painters.

5. **Economic Viability:** Some priorities identified that could increase viability were to incentivize shifts in production to food (tax incentives), to practice and promote local procurement policies by the Municipality and other businesses based in North Saanich, and support maintaining lower costs for farm inputs such as water rates and supporting bulk buying of farm inputs.

## **The Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association**

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The Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association is a non-profit association of more than 75 growers and producers on Southern Vancouver Island, British Columbia, who sell their farm and vineyard products directly to consumers. This association produces the Farm Fresh consumer’s guide.

The key issues and/or opportunities identified at their November 24, 2011 meeting were the need to establish or strengthen the following:

1. **Local Abattoir:** There is need to undertake a feasibility study and establish a local abattoir, that would service North Saanich and the Peninsula. There was interest in looking at the Salt Spring model and process as an example for the Peninsula.
2. **Extension Services:** There was very strong support for looking at how to re-establish Extension Services on the Peninsula to assist farmers with very localized knowledge and on farm advice. This would include everything from appropriate crops and varieties, to diseases and pest control, as well as farm business and marketing advice.
3. **Opportunities to get farmers together: It was identified as a priority to find ways to bring the** farm community together learn and support collaboration with the example of the Farmer 2 Farmer conference as a good example of a useful format.
4. **Mentorship and supporting new farmers:** As farmers are retiring and we need to encourage the new generation of farmers it was felt that a farm mentor network would be

valuable and to find ways to support young people to get into farming through training programs and access to land.

5. **Public Education and Promotion:** It was seen as important to work together across municipal boundaries and with partners such as the SVDFMA and Chamber of Commerce to undertake a program to increase the public's knowledge of both the economic value of agriculture but also of the opportunities to experience agriculture and food. Bob Thompson, Communications Coordinator and creator of the Farm Fresh Guide met with us separately to build on this and specifically discuss with us the idea to develop a **Flavour Trail and Agri-Tourism Program**. This could be a comprehensive multi partnered program that would encourage people to spend a day on the Flavour Trail, combine farm tours and markets. Some key things to consider are to ensure consumer trust through integrity of the program, to promote this within a rural tourism rubric and to continue to utilize existing brands such as the Island Rooster, developed by the Island Farm Alliance. Key partners could be the SVDFMA, Municipalities and the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce.
6. **Agri-Food Hub:** In looking at building capacity in the sector to process and market it was recommended to utilize existing opportunities and infrastructure such as the Saanich Fairgrounds or Sandown Raceway to look at the creation of agriculture hub that combines education, market place, experimental crops and research, potential to link in other food producers such as a winery distiller, cheesemaker, and butchers. Having a strong anchor tenant would help to make it sustainable.

## North Saanich

### Food for the Future Society

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The North Saanich Food for the Future Society (NSFF) was formed in 2008 with a mandate to support and promote sustainable agriculture in the municipality of North Saanich.

The importance of protecting the "land base" was the most important for this group, followed by "market development", and "labour and sector development". The objective with the least priority for this group was economic viability, although the activity "municipal support for maintaining or decreasing farm input costs: compost, water, land tax incentives, wild life management support", was rated as high priority.

**1. Market Development:** This was the most important objective of participants and two specific activities are high priority for all: Support marketing campaigns, farm markets and events (e.g. Flavour Trail), and support the growth of Farm markets – permanent and seasonal locations. Develop and encourage "Buy Local" procurement policies was also considered a high. The group was supportive of development of an agriculture commercial hub and suggested (looking at

models in PEI and New Brunswick) where producers have developed a cooperative marketing model.

**2. Land Base:** The most important priority for this group was to develop and maintain bylaws that support maintaining the agricultural land base. There is also great interest in activities to provide service that links available farm land with future farmers.

**3. Processing and Infrastructure:** The alternative of on-farm processing facilities was suggested, as opposed to a large abattoir, which would stimulate farmers to increase poultry production. Explore models such as the Salt Spring Island processing plant. Concerns were raised over the volume of production to justify a specific to North Saanich cold storage facility or abattoir.

**4. Labour and Sector development:** This group also identified the need for extension services for the sector, along with training on business planning, farm management, and environmental management. They also thought a system where more experience farmers could mentor inexperienced farmers would be a valuable asset to the sector. Other pieces held important were to raise awareness about successful young farmers and food producers in the municipality and find other incentives to attract and retain new farmers.

**5. Promotion of Agriculture:** Education is essential to maintain agriculture. The group spent a good amount of time discussing this objective and several ideas were brought forward including the importance launching a public education campaign to educate people about the value and importance of agriculture that included redefining agriculture and farmer to include smaller home-based food producers, informal farmers, and hobby farmers. Working to promote food growing to children and young people was also seen as important.

**6. Economic Viability:** Municipal support for maintaining or decreasing farm input costs: compost, water, land tax incentives, and for wild life management. In looking at farm economic viability we need to ensure that practices are sustainable and do not deplete the natural resources over time. Alternative forms of food production need to be included in the strategy, as a way of strengthening food security, such as home and backyard vegetable gardens.

## Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR)

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CR-FAIR is a network of 26 food and farm related organizations in the Capital Region working to bring about positive change in the food and agriculture system. Members of the Steering Committee identified the following priorities for economic development in North Saanich in the context of development across the region.

1. **Integrated Regional Food and Agriculture Sector:** Work to create an integrated Agriculture and Food Sector Economic Development strategy for the Capital Region that involves a comprehensive inventory of agriculture production and infrastructure assets, and works with key stakeholders to identify key opportunities to drive economic development and profitability of the sector. Link this to the opportunities identified in the Vancouver Island Coast Regional Framework for Action.
2. **Productive and Protected Land Base:** Continue to ensure that land remains in the agriculture land reserve as a permanent foundation for agriculture and food production. Develop policy and strategies that support municipally supported agriculture such as utilization of municipal lands and the creation of an Agriculture and Farmland Levy that allows us to put lands into permanent trust for agriculture. Maintain the Urban Containment Boundary.
3. **Agriculture Infrastructure:** Explore development of key facilities that are agriculture sector development drivers such as farm business aggregators, farm coops, permanent downtown public market, distribution cooperatives, local abattoirs and processing facilities, value chain development, daylight network of available transportation and storage facilities available to different business scales. Look to Salt Spring models to inform this work in the region, as well as local investment partnerships.
4. **Build Extension/advice:** Absolutely critical to have a reliable and accessible local knowledge base for new and existing farmers, potentially through fee for service or subsidized extension of a professional agrologist, a teaching and learning facility potentially partnered to Camosun, University of Victoria or Vancouver Island University. Potential to establish informal farmer mentorship network as a stepping stone or part of this service.
5. **Strengthen the Informal Food Economy:** It is a priority to continue to build capacity for food growing, preparation, and storage in the general public as this contributes to health, wellbeing and security of regions residents. Activities such as community gardens, , Spin Farming, edible landscaping, seed saving and sharing and other forms of urban agriculture, as well as community kitchens, food buying clubs, food skills workshops, neighbourhood ovens and food celebrations need to encouraged at all levels.

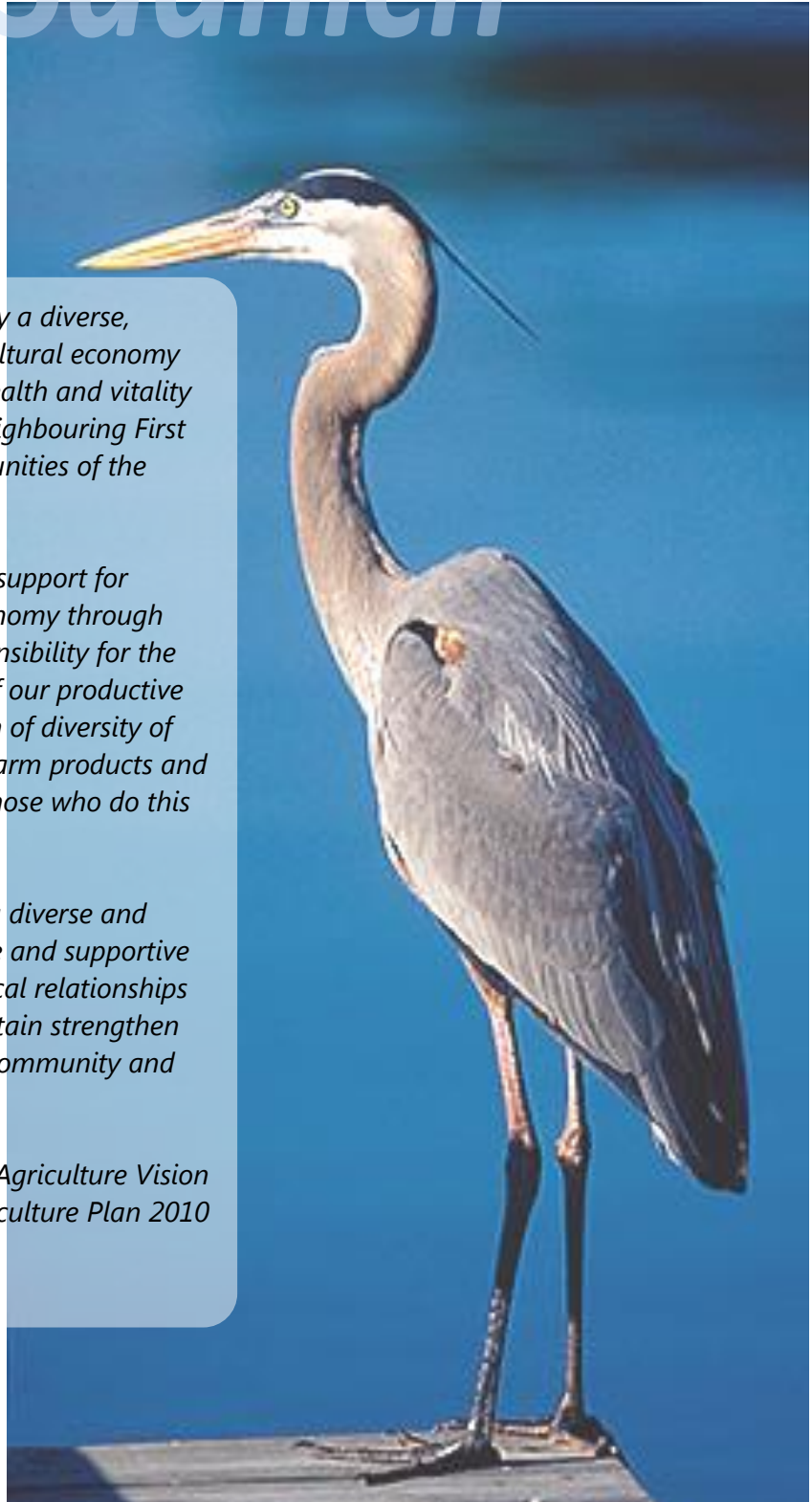
# North Saanich

*"North Saanich is sustained by a diverse, productive and vibrant agricultural economy that ensures the long-term health and vitality of our community and the neighbouring First Nation and municipal communities of the Saanich Peninsula.*

*We actively demonstrate our support for agricultural heritage and economy through our involvement in and responsibility for the ownership and stewardship of our productive lands, the growing production of diversity of high quality local foods and farm products and by our care and support for those who do this work.*

*In doing so we have created a diverse and exemplary network of positive and supportive economic, social, and ecological relationships and interconnections that sustain strengthen and define our vibrant rural community and its agricultural enterprises"*

*North Saanich Agriculture Vision  
North Saanich Agriculture Plan 2010*





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