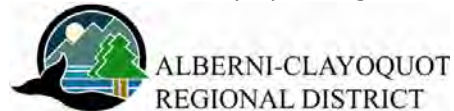




# Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan

## 2011-2031

Prepared for: Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District



April 2011

*Funding provided by:*

Canada 





Somass Farm with Hay Wagons -1914



Photo credit: Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District



Photo Credit: Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

## PART 1

# Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan 2011

## The Profile



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT  
REGIONAL DISTRICT

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## Executive Summary

This document describes the current state of the agriculture industry in the Alberni Valley. The report describes the type of agriculture in the area, the resources used, the capacity of the land, soils, water and other resources to enhance production in the future and the regulations and policy that affect the local industry. It is intended to be a background report for the agricultural plan.

The Alberni Valley has a very favourable climate for agriculture with cool wet winters and hot dry summers. The growing season is, generally, shorter than areas on the east side of Vancouver Island; however, there are sites with microclimates that are suitable to a very wide range of crops. There are 7702 hectares (19,024 acres) of land in the ALR. Only 3171<sup>1</sup> ha (7832 acres) - about 41% is actively farmed. Over 90% of this is used for livestock production or feed for the livestock industry. Only about 239 hectares (590 acres), is used for vegetables, berries, grapes and other horticultural food crops. The valley produces between 5 and 11% of the food consumed locally.

Clearly, there is significant capacity for increased agricultural production in the Alberni Valley. So why isn't it happening?

Profitability, or lack thereof, is probably the main reason. The combined gross farm receipts for the 89 farms in the area are \$5.49 million – an average of \$61,797 per farm. Total operating expenses are \$5.08 million. The farmer keeps about 8 cents of every dollar sold – an average of about \$4606 per farm to cover overhead costs.

Agricultural capability maps indicate that 5184 ha could be improved to prime capability with irrigation – only 554 ha are currently irrigated. Land could be converted to higher value crops, with better margins, if there was more water available for irrigation.

The average age of farm operators is 54.4. It is expensive and time consuming and, it may take different resources, to convert to higher valued crops so long term farmers are resisting changing.

Production is down from historic levels. Processing and distribution facilities have shifted to other areas so access to markets is more challenging for many producers. The livestock industry is in a state of decline. In the past decade, the number of dairy farms has dropped from seven or eight down to one active farm. Long-term livestock farmers are not inclined to switch to horticultural enterprises.

Despite this, the demand for (and interest in) local food has never been stronger. Consumers want to buy food they trust from people they trust. The Alberni Valley has experienced farmers, with quality soils, climate and capital available to produce more. There are opportunities to increase direct-marketed products to local consumer and to tourists. Water is available if systems can be developed to distribute it. The area is somewhat isolated from large scale processing and distribution but that isolation may offer opportunities to produce disease-free commodities or conserve genetics. Assessing the resources and analyzing some of these trends will provide “food for thought” for developing a vision and plan for agriculture in the Alberni Valley.

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<sup>1</sup> 2006 Canadian Census of Agriculture.

## Introduction

The agricultural profile describes the current state of the agriculture industry in the Alberni Valley. It describes some of the history of the industry, where it has come from, where it is now, and some of the trends that suggest where it is going. Basically, this report provides the background information required to define the issues and opportunities, develop the vision and the plan for the future of local agriculture.

## Purpose

The Phase 1 report will contain two main sections:

1. A Profile of the Agricultural Industry in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. The profile is intended to be a long term published document that describes:
  - a. Current agricultural production in the area, and
  - b. The resources used including a land use inventory, and
  - c. The capacity of the land, soils, water and other resources to enhance production in the future, and
  - d. Where the industry is, relative to its potential, if those resources were fully developed and utilized.
2. An Issues and Opportunities Report that describes the issues and opportunities faced by the industry. This will be a dynamic report, a discussion paper that will evolve into the agricultural plan for the area in Phase 2.

## Goals and objectives

The main goal of this phase of the planning process is to describe the resources used by, and available to, the Alberni Valley agriculture industry and the policy framework that the industry operates in. This information will be used to generate an “Issues and Opportunities Report” – a discussion paper containing issues and opportunities and the components of a vision statement.

## Approach

A brief discussion or description about how the information was compiled, analyzed, developed

The information in this report is derived from three main activities:

- A review of existing documentation, plans, studies that have been completed in the area or are relevant to the area
- A detailed analysis of the 2006 Census of agriculture
- A land-use inventory using a combination of local knowledge, aerial photography interpretation, followed by ground proofing.

Digital soil maps have also been generated which show unimproved and improved soil capability for agriculture. These maps are based on mapping completed by the Ministry of Environment in the mid-80s.

Combined, this information defines where the industry has come from, where it is now, and the resources available and policy framework that will guide the development of the industry in the future.

The information will be presented to the public at several forums:

- The Alberni Valley Farmers’ Market – August 7

- The Alberni District Fall Fair – September 9 to September 12
- A Public Open House – date to be determined

It will also be discussed and reviewed by the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Port Alberni Farmers' Institute.

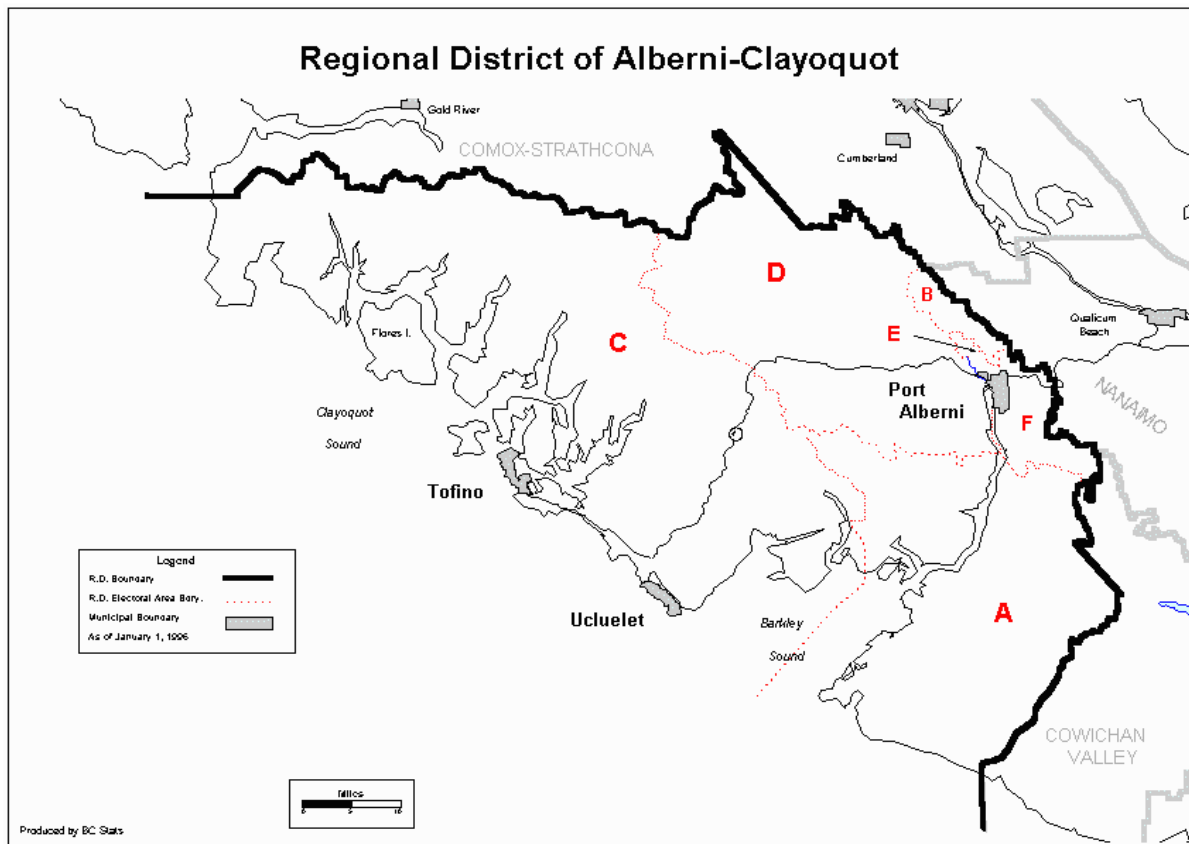
### **Stakeholders**

A list of the groups that were involved, consulted, or participated in developing the report will be added later.

- AC-RD Agricultural Advisory Committee
- AC-RD Staff
- Port Alberni Farmers' Institute
- Port Alberni Farmers' Market Association
- City of Port Alberni Economic Development
- Alberni District Fall Fair
- Hupacasath First Nation
- Tseshaht First Nation
- Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation
- Alberni Valley Transition Town Society
- 4-H members at the Alberni District Fall Fair



## Current Regional Setting



**Figure 1** Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District<sup>2</sup>.

## History of Local Agriculture

A quick look at the site of the old McKinnon's dairy plant says a lot about what has happened to Alberni agriculture. The dairy processing plant is long gone and the milk production that provided the jobs in the plant has moved out of the valley. There is a big box grocery store on the site selling cheap food from all over the globe; little, if any of it, is local. The vineyard, a short distance away, is now the local landmark for agriculture - an indicator of where the industry could be heading?

Although some of the production has moved away, there are still some very dedicated farmers with incredible expertise and experience. The area has a productive land base that has been well managed and maintained and infrastructure that can potentially be revitalized.

Alberni District Fall Fair website: *In the late thirties, the Farmer's Institute hosted the first local Fall Fair. The Alberni Valley was then an active farming community and a venue was needed to exhibit all the fine agricultural products the valley was producing. The fair became a lively social event for hard working people that came together and celebrated the fruits of their year-long labour. In those days, many hours*

<sup>2</sup> In the Census information used in this report, Alberni D includes Electoral Area C, and Alberni F includes Electoral Area E.

were devoted to domestic efforts, such as preserving canning and baking. Showcasing farm produce and livestock. It was a wonderful opportunity to share and socialize.

The Second World War interrupted the flow of the fair, but in early 1946 the Farmers Institute approached the Kinsmen Club of Port Alberni about hosting the event. So in April 1946 the Alberni District Fall Fair became an entity. The first Fall Fair was held in September of that year.

The Alberni District Fall Fair has come a long way since then. Over the years, we've seen the number of buildings increase, gradual development of the grounds and amenities, and additions to displays and attractions. In 1964 Bingo Hauser of West Coast Amusements struck a deal with the fair and brought in a Tilt-A-Whirl and a Nickel Digger. Today Bingo can still be seen roaming the grounds. He is always trying to keep up with trends by bringing new amusement rides. West Coast Amusements remains a family owned business. The Hauser family is proud to say that the Alberni District Fall Fair was one of their first customers.

Other buildings were erected through-out the late seventies and early eighties by volunteers, with such buildings as the Kinsmen Community Center, Stephen's Building, the Van Ipren Building, Kinette Food Booth and the 4-H Cattle Barn. In 1988 – 1989 the fair laid 5,000 square feet of sod to accommodate the Logger Sports Bowl. In 1992 to accommodate the BC Summer Games being hosted in our community, the new Horse Rings were built. In the mid 90's the Tractor Pulls became an added attraction to the fair.

In 2003 the Alberni District Fall Fair board felt we needed recognize the support from the business community so we began our "Partnership Program". Many businesses and individuals have supported the fair for years either in kind or nominal donations, so we wanted to recognize them. To this day we have had a huge response to our Partnership Program as it grows into its 6th year.

Today the Alberni District Fall Fair has an eleven member Board of Directors made up of Kinsmen Club members and volunteers at large as well as one staff to oversee administrative needs. The Fair is fortunate to have many volunteers of all ages that give endless amounts of their time to help out with all aspects of putting on an event of this magnitude. Assistance also comes by way of outside organizations using the fair as a fundraising initiative annually. Groups help out with such things as pre-fair set-up, grounds maintenance, security, parking and gate staff. All revenue that is generated through the Alberni District Fall Fair is re-invested into upkeep of the grounds and to build an exciting event.

The historical information suggests that:

- The Alberni Valley produced more of its own food in the past than it does now, and
- There was considerable infrastructure in place for storage and processing of local food, including McKinnon's Dairy, Hertel Meats, and Port Potato, among others.

Can this infrastructure be revived to help grow the industry in the future?

## Local Market Demographics

The population of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) is 30,664 as shown in Table 1.

Demographics factors that may be relevant to the agricultural plan are as follows<sup>3</sup>:

- The greatest job growth between 2001 and 2006 included 210 jobs in finance, insurance, real estate, management and administration

<sup>3</sup> (Source: "Regional Economic Analysis – Vancouver Island and Central/Sunshine Coast". Vannstruth Consulting Group, January 2009)

- The forest sector lost 475 jobs between 2001 and 2006
- Population growth is minimal – 1% over five years most of which was on First Nations reserves
- The population is expected to decline slightly (estimated 2% drop) by 2011
- The estimated median age in 2007 was 43.2 compared to an average of 43.6 for BC
- Unemployment rates in the ACRD tend to be above the regional and provincial averages
- ACRD is one of three coastal regional districts in which less than 50% of the working age population has postsecondary credentials – “blue-collar” workforce
- The percentage of the population that is retired is increasing. 18% of area income was from pensions in 2005 versus 13% 10 years earlier
- The average income of the experienced labour force (full year/full-time employees) in 2006 was \$43,868. Average income overall was \$31,869. These have been declining over the past 10 years because of the loss of jobs in fishing and forestry. In 1985, ACRD had the second-highest average income in the region; in 2005, the ACRD had dropped to ninth
- Overall, ACRD “has shown the most progress in transitioning its (resource-based) economy...diversifying and capturing a greater share of service oriented economic activity”
- The ACRD has the highest growth rate in tourism in the region from 1995 through to 2007– mainly due to increased interest in the West Coast destinations – Tofino and Ucluelet
- The population age 65+ is expected to increase by 68% in the ACRD by the year 2027

<i>Community</i>	<i>2006 population</i>		<i>Growth (2001-2006)</i>		<i>Density</i>
Port Alberni	17,548	57%	-200	-1%	881
Tofino	1,655	5%	189	13%	157
Ucluelet	1,487	5%	-72	-5%	227
Electoral Areas	7,911	26%	68	1%	1
FN Reserves	2,063	7%	334	19%	90
Total	30,664		319		5

*Density is reported in people per square kilometre.*

**Table 1.** Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District community populations and population growth. (Source: “Regional Economic Analysis – Vancouver Island and Central/Sunshine Coast”. Vannstruth Consulting Group, January 2009)

## Agricultural Resource Base

### Climate

The Alberni Valley has hot dry summers and cool wet winters.

Annual precipitation averages 1910.7 mm, including 114.1 mm average annual snowfall:

- The wet months – Over 80% of the annual precipitation falls between October 1 and March 31.
- The dry months - Precipitation between April 1 and September 30 averages 368.2 mm – only slightly wetter than the Calgary Airport which averages 336.4 mm over the same period.

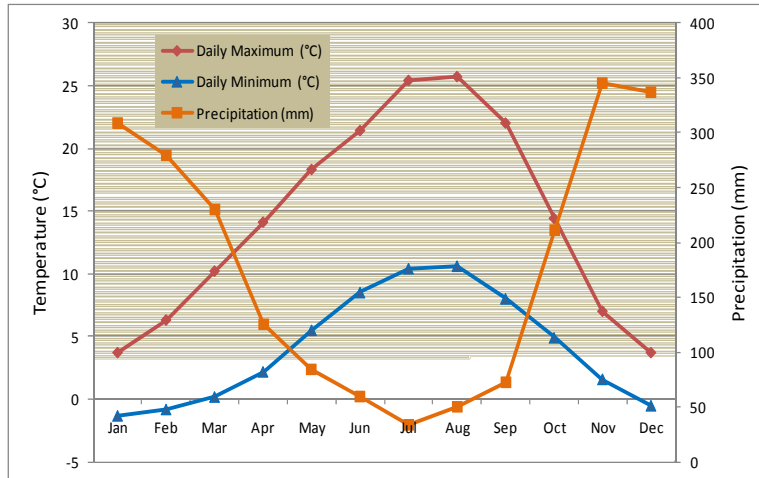


Figure 2 Climate normals for Port Alberni

The impact of this on agriculture is that, most perennial crops require irrigation in the summer as well as drainage to reduce the impact of flooding and high water tables during the wet season.

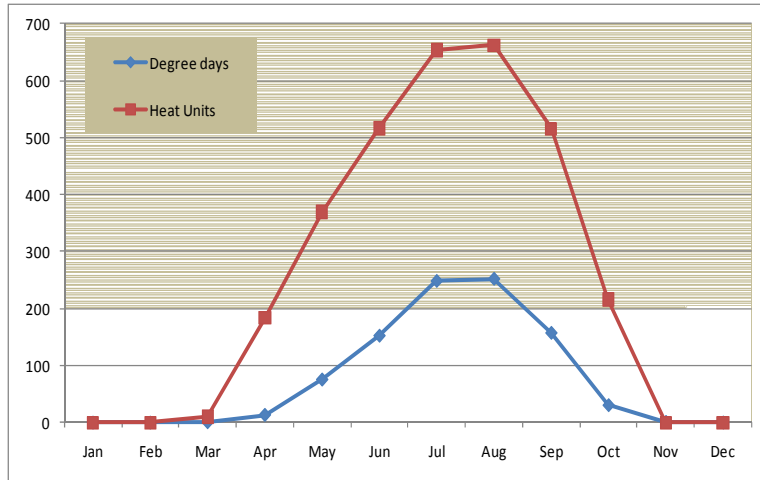
Table 2. Comparison of historical average climatic data<sup>4</sup>

<i>Climatic criteria</i>	<i>Alberni</i>	<i>Vancouver Airport</i>	<i>Saanichton</i>	<i>Cowichan</i>	<i>Penticton</i>
Min temp. <=0°C (days)	98.4	45.9	37.4	91.3	116.0
Max temp. >30°C (days)	11.9	0.2	0.8	4.8	25.9
Max temp. >0°C (days)	359.0	360.8	362.1	361.4	336.2
Days of rainfall	171.8	161.3	150.5	141.5	93.6
Days of snowfall	20.5	10.9	5.8	9.8	27.7
Degree days >10°C	870.0	900.8	809.2	806.9	1180.8
Degree days >5°C	1953.7	2084.8	1996.0	1893.3	2197.8
Hours of bright sunshine	1601.7	1928.0	1886.9	n/a	1956.1
Measurable bright sunshine (days)	271.7	288.5	296.3	n/a	307.4
Sunshine during daylight hours	32.5%	40.3%	39.3%	n/a	40.3%
Ave. Relative humidity (1500LST)	67.7%	70.6%	n/a	n/a	50.1%

<sup>4</sup>www.climate.weatheroffice.gc.ca/climate\_normals/

The weather data for Alberni, quoted above, was collected on the waterfront at an elevation of 2.4 m. There may be areas (south facing slopes, etc) within the valley with microclimatic conditions that are dramatically different than those noted above.

### Growing Season



**Figure 3** Growing degree days and heat units (Port Alberni)

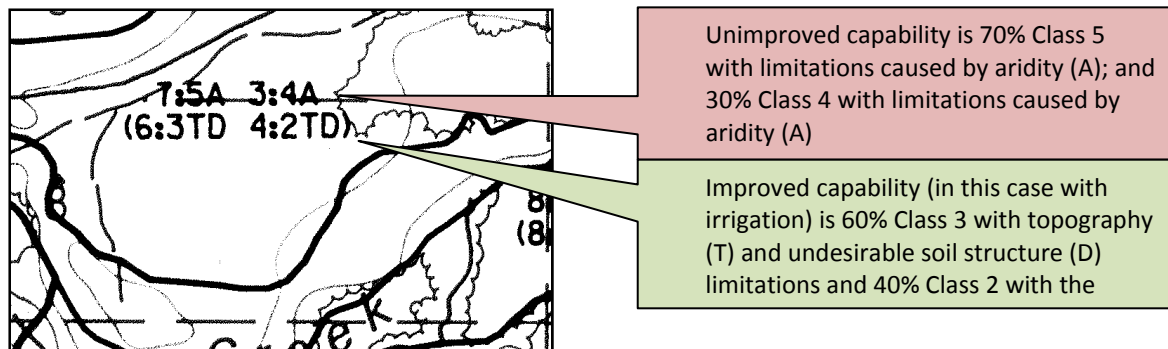
Growing degree days and heat units are measures of the length and intensity of the growing season.

## Soil Capability for Agriculture

### *Major Limitations on Soil Capability*

The Canada Land Inventory (CLI) is a system of ranking the agricultural capability of soils. Capability classes range from Class 1, which has no significant limitations for cropping, to Class 7, which has no capacity for arable cultivation or pasture. Limitations are defined by subclasses including, among others, aridity (A), excess water (W), topography (T), stoniness (P) and undesirable soil structure (D). Most soils can be improved by removing one or more limitations, ie irrigation eliminates aridity and the capability of the irrigated soil is higher. Therefore, CLI maps show an unimproved capability rating and an improved capability rating for each soil area (Figure 4).

Organic (peat) soils are denoted with a “0” preceding the Class, as in 05W. Generally, Class 1 to 3 soils are considered as “prime”. Class 4 have limitations that require special management practices or severely restrict the range of crops, or both. Class 5 soil has limitations that restrict its capability to producing perennial forage crops or other specially adapted crops. There are crops (example - grapes) that thrive on lands with lower capability ratings so CLI ratings cannot always be used as a measure of whether or not land may be suitable for some agricultural uses.



**Figure 4** Sample Canada Land Inventory (CLI) soil capability for agriculture rating  
The BC Ministry of Environment mapped *Land capability for Agriculture for Southeast Vancouver Island* at a 1:20,000 scale in the early 80's. These maps are reasonably accurate. The maps are a useful tool but soil should be ground proofed for specific sites to ensure mapping accuracy. A second set of maps entitled "*Soils of Southeast Vancouver Island*" was completed at the same time and same scale. These maps name and describe individual soil series based on their characteristics.

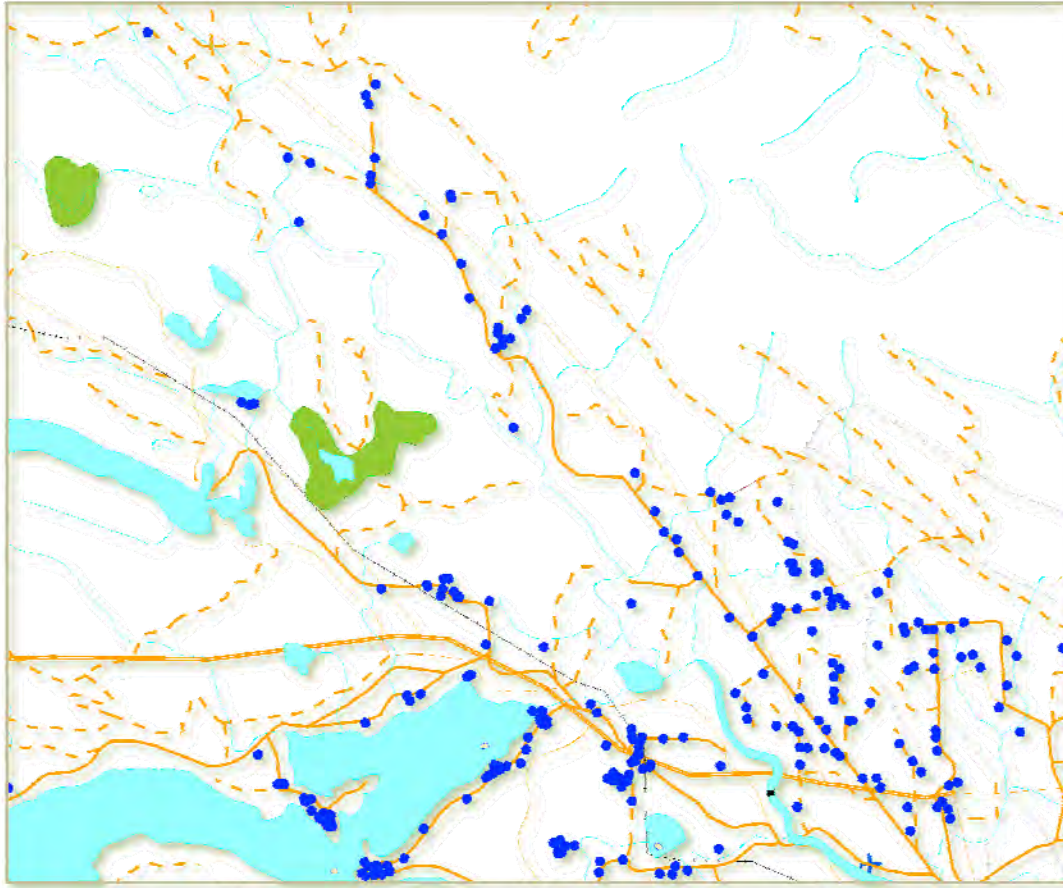
The main limitations on capability in the Alberni Valley are:

- Aridity (A). In 2006, there were 554 ha of irrigated land in the Alberni Valley (about 7.2% of the ALR land). This was up from 365 ha (4.7% of the ALR) in 1996. Assessment of the agricultural capability maps indicates that at least 5184 ha (over 67% of ALR land) could be improved to Class 3 or better with irrigation. Note: the maps include significant area that is outside the ALR so part of the area that can be improved to prime is outside the ALR.
- Excess Wetness (W). The Census does not gather information on drainage improvements. It is estimated that 1445 ha (over 19% of ALR land) could be improved with drainage.
- Stoniness (P). 2206 ha (over 29% of ALR lands) could be improved with rock picking. This is important because stony lands are generally not suited to vegetable production and, in most cases, are only suited to production of perennial grasses. A large percentage of the land in the Alberni Valley (and elsewhere) is only capable of producing forage which livestock can convert to human food.

## Water Resources

### *Groundwater*

Figure 5 shows the location of groundwater wells registered on the BC Water Resource Atlas. Clearly, the majority of rural residents rely on groundwater for domestic use and livestock water.



**Figure 5** Groundwater wells in the Alberni Valley from *BC Water Resource Atlas*.

### *Karst Water*

Many of the local water sources are recharged by Karst formations in the surrounding mountains, especially along the base of the Beaufort Range – the eastern boundary of the Alberni Valley. Industrial activities, such as rock quarrying or forestry, if not properly conducted, can lead to excessive soil erosion, destruction of surface and subsurface karst features, changes in groundwater flows, and contamination, sedimentation, or clogging of underground and surface streams.

Karst<sup>5</sup> is a distinctive topography in which the landscape is largely shaped by the dissolving action of water on carbonate bedrock (usually limestone, dolomite, or marble). This geological process, occurring over many thousands of years, results in unusual surface and subsurface features ranging from sinkholes, vertical shafts, disappearing streams, and springs, to complex underground drainage systems and caves.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/publications/00192/index2.htm>



## *Surface Water – Watersheds*

### **The Stamp-Somass Basin<sup>6</sup>**

Virtually all of the agricultural land in the Alberni Valley is within the Stamp–Somass watershed. The only exception to this is a small area around Cox Lake – south of Port Alberni – which is in the China Creek watershed.

The Stamp-Somass watershed drains an area of about 1,426 square km into the head of the Alberni Inlet. The watershed consists of three major sub basins:

- Sproat (387 km<sup>2</sup>),
- Great Central (651 km<sup>2</sup>)
- Ash (388 km<sup>2</sup>).

Two lakes dominate the Somass watershed: Sproat Lake and Great Central Lake.

Most of the higher elevation areas in the watershed are forested. These forest lands are either private (Island Timberlands LP) or under the control of BC Timber Sales, an independent organization within the Ministry of Forests. The rivers and glaciers at the head of the Ash and Great Central form part of Strathcona Provincial Park.

The area has a long history of First Nations settlement and use, especially the lower Somass and the sockeye spawning lakes.

There is an abundant supply of fresh clean water as the average annual rain fall is nearly two meters in the city of Port Alberni and much greater in the headwaters of the lakes, although much of this (about 80%) falls between October and April, as rain or snow.

The fifty year old dams at Great Central Lake have maintained the Somass River at about 3 times its natural summer flow, originally to dilute the pulp mill's effluent discharge in the estuary. Now that the new pulp mill treatment facilities are operational, the dams are not required for this purpose. A weir at the outlet to Sproat Lake helps maintain minimum lake levels.

**A Somass Basin Water Management Plan** is being developed which takes an all encompassing look at the sources, uses and needs for fresh water in the Somass basin. The plan will describe the issues and make recommendations to deal with them. It will consider:

- Scientific and First Nations traditional knowledge in a framework that prioritizes fish and their watery habitats as the pivotal value in the process.
- Future water supply to identify conservation needs and strategies for ensuring sustainability of water dependant resources including but not limited to domestic, irrigation and power production uses.
- Climate change predictions suggest that winters will get wetter and summers drier
- Water level balances for flood protection, habitat protection in lakes and rivers
- Upgrading and retrofitting dams to meet the long term requirements and multiple interests in fish habitat, power generation, community water supply, recreation, etc
- Future water needs of Port Alberni and Beaver Creek including agriculture, recreational uses of the lakes and rivers, flood control, hydro power generation and wildlife management
- Residential water needs - residents of Cherry and Beaver Creeks and Sproat Lake areas depend upon this system for their drinking water (either from the lakes, rivers and streams or wells). Although the

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.acrd.bc.ca/cms.asp?wpID=217>



city presently draws its water from the China Creek basin it may need to use Sproat or Great Central in the future.

Salmon stocks are vulnerable to the natural warming of the surface of these large lakes. River outflow temperatures become extremely warm and sockeye won't enter the river. They halt their spawning migration, staying in the inlet but, while, adding millions to the Port Alberni economy, their vitality and spawning success gradually declines. In some years, this has resulted in massive sockeye mortality in the inlet, while in other years the effects of drought on sockeye returns and the later ocean survival of their offspring, have severely restricted, or even closed, Alberni sockeye recreational and commercial fisheries. In 2007, closure of the sport and commercial fishery were close and First Nation fisheries were limited, mainly due to the 2003 drought year and subsequent low ocean survivals.

The planning process will develop and assess alternatives for water supply and quality management and seek consensus among all participants on key strategies and projects.

The scope of the SBWMP will include:

- Water quantity management - balancing inflows and supply with multiple use demands (fish conservation flows, power generation, flood management, community use, etc.),
- Water quality management (only as influenced by water quantity management actions),
- Infrastructure requirements - projects necessary to achieve water quantity and quality management strategies.

Information on river flows and temperature collected in the past, along with some special projects in 2008, will be used to develop a model of the river flow and temperature changes. This will show whether the river can be cooled by the application of cooler water from Great Central Lake.

During the process new operating levels will be determined for Great Central, levels that are safe from abnormal rain fall events damaging the wooden dam at Robinson Creek and which are acceptable for fall sockeye spawning.

Note: irrigation requirements for agriculture inherently occur at exactly the same time the water is required for protection of fish habitat as described above. It is suggested that the quantity and quality of water available in mid-summer is less than what is needed for agriculture and fish, let alone other users so infrastructure improvements will likely be needed – perhaps very significant improvements. Fortunately, the topography of the area should allow development of gravity fed water systems which could be more effective and efficient than systems which required pumping for distribution.

### ***Drainage***

At least 1445<sup>7</sup> ha (over 19%) of the ALR land in the area is limited by excess water – poor drainage.

There are two causes for this:

- Soils with high moisture holding capacity, i.e. with higher levels of organic matter or higher percentage of clay, and
- Soils with elevated water tables due to the presence of a hardpan layer at about 1 m depth. Note: this is the more common cause of the excess water limitation and, these soils, are generally too wet in the winter and too dry in the summer. They typically require drainage and irrigation improvements to increase productivity.

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<sup>7</sup> This is the area of soils that have a primary limitation of excess wetness, i.e. the W limitation appears before the other subclass in the unimproved agricultural capability rating. Soils that have an AW limitation, for example are not included in the 1445 hectares.

---

Appropriate installation of draitile on these affected lands can have a more significant benefit than irrigation. Benefits from improved drainage include:

- Reduced saturation of the root zone during the winter which results in deeper roots and better access to nutrients and soil moisture during the summer
- Increased yields
- Faster drying of the soil in the spring which extends the growing season, allows earlier access to fields, and reduces compaction
- Wider range of, generally higher valued, crops
- Increased percolation of water into the soil which distributes nutrients and, potentially, reduces erosion because overland flow of water is reduced.

### *Nutrients*

Although it doesn't show as one of the main limitations, soil fertility and soil nutrient holding capacity is a significant limitation for many of the sandy soils found in the Alberni Valley. This is important because it is very expensive to "import" chemical nutrients and fertilizers from off island sources. There are limited amounts of locally produced nutrients and the volumes of those are declining. In the past, the livestock industry was larger so there were more nutrients available from manure. Fish farm waste and other waste products were more readily available. Maintaining soil fertility, at a cost that is competitive with other areas, is quite challenging.

## Farm Characteristics in Alberni-Clayoquot

### Agricultural Land Base

As of March 2009, there was 7,702 hectares of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in the Alberni Valley. The 2006 Census reported that 3,171 ha (about 41.1%) were used for crops. Of this, it is important to note:

- 2,932 ha (92.5% minimum) is used, specifically, for production of livestock and/or livestock feed
- 239 ha (7.5% maximum – and the land use inventory suggests it is much lower) are used for vegetables, berries, fruits, nuts – horticultural crops but nursery, Christmas trees and sod are included in this acreage.

The total area farmed has increased from 2,480 ha in 1996 to 2,535 ha in 2001 and, up again, to 3,171 ha in 2006 – a 10 year increase of 28%. However, it is suggested that the area farmed has, at best, stayed the same since 2006.

41% of the land is used for agriculture but a much lower percentage is used to its potential!

### Number of Farms

There are 89 farms in the Alberni Valley – up from 81 in the 2001 census. Most of these, 49 (or 55%), are in Alberni B – the Beaver Creek area.

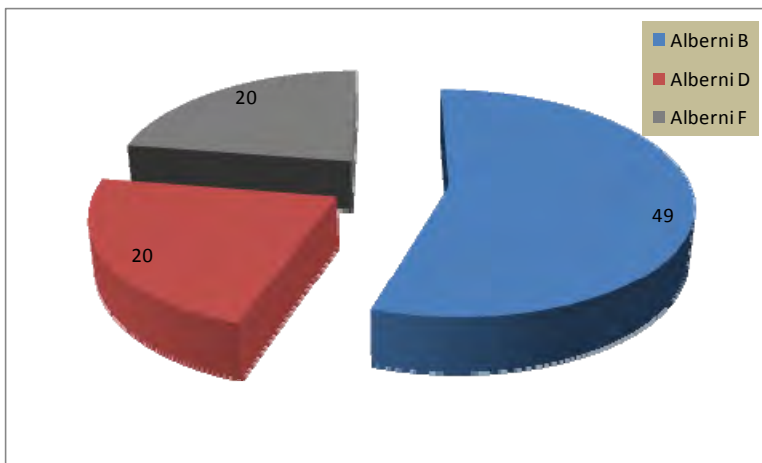


Figure 6 Total farm numbers by Census Reporting Area

## Farm Size – Area

The average farm size is 35.6 ha compared to 31 ha in the 2001 and 1996 census reports. However, the average farm size is misleading. It would probably be difficult to find a 35.6 ha farm. As shown in Table 2, the number of mid-sized farms is, at best, staying the same. Small farms are increasing in number. Larger farms are increasing in size and in number. The ten largest operations farm over 50% of the farmed land.

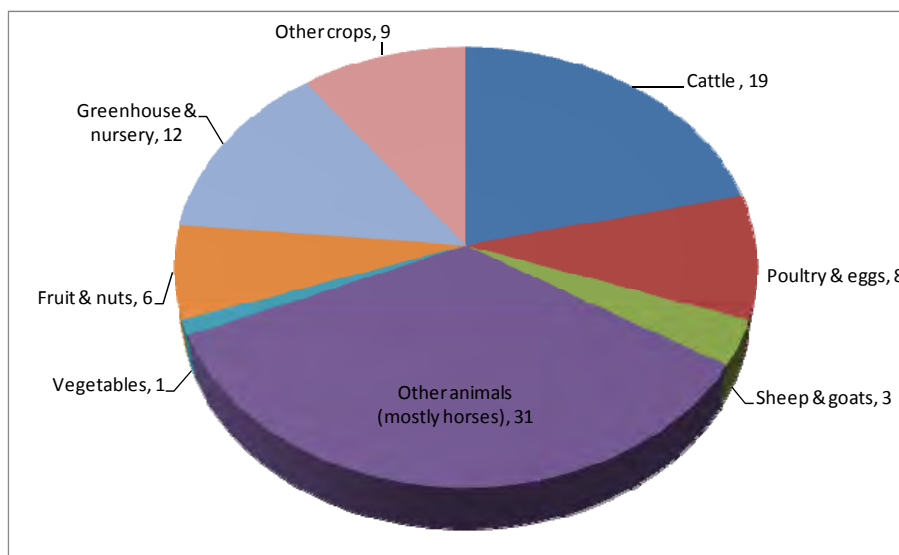
Size of farm Hectares	Alberni-Clayoquot		% of total 2006	% change from 2001	Alberni B 2006	Alberni D 2006	Alberni F 2006
Under 4	21	24	27%	14%	16	4	4
4 – 28	36	39	44%	8%	17	11	11
29 - 52	10	8	9%	-20%	5	0	3
53 - 72	6	7	8%	17%	5	1	1
73 - 97	1	2	2%	100%	2	0	0
98 - 162	4	5	6%	25%	2	2	1
163 - 226	0	1	1%	n/a	0	1	0
227 - 307	3	1	1%	-67%	0	1	0
308 - 453	0	1	1%	n/a	1	0	0
454 - 647	0	1	1%	n/a	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>

**Table 3.** Farm numbers by size (in hectares). Comparison of 2001 and 2006 numbers for the entire Regional District and 2006 numbers by Electoral Area.

In the Alberni Valley, 37% of the parcels being farmed are less than 8 ha and 35% of the parcels in the ALR are under 8 ha. The inventory of smaller lots (i.e. less than 8 ha) is consistent with the current demand for, and use of, ALR land in smaller lot farm operations.

## Types of Enterprises

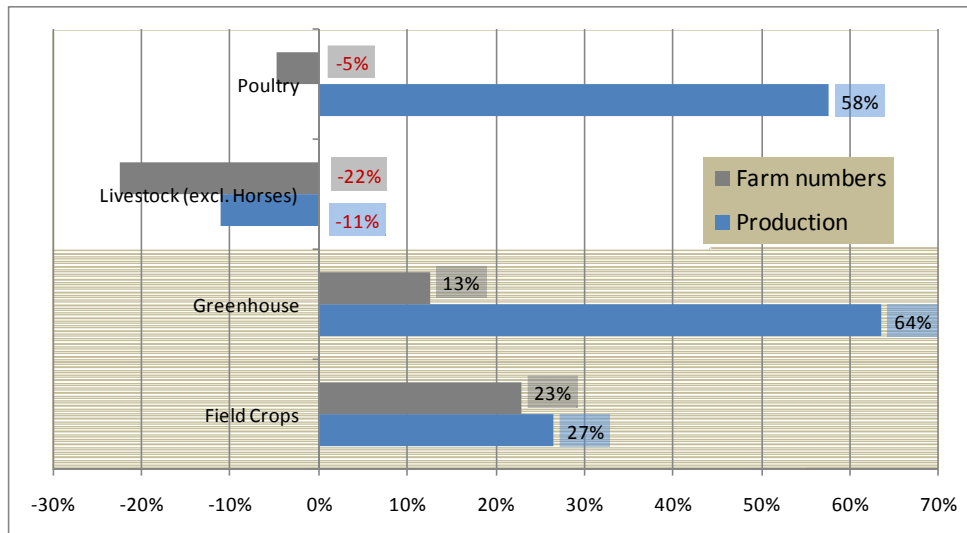
68.5% (61 of 89 farms) of the farms report some form of livestock as the main enterprise. The most common type of livestock is horses (31 farms), followed by cattle (19), poultry and eggs (8) and sheep and goats (3). The trends in types of farm enterprises are shown in the next section – Figure 8.



**Figure 7** Farm numbers by main enterprise as reported in 2006 Census.

## Change in Farm Enterprises

There has been a sharp decline in the number of livestock enterprises (with the exception of horses) and a significant increase in crop farms since 1996 – as shown in Figure 8. This trend is consistent with other areas of Vancouver Island. Livestock production (excluding poultry) is shifting to areas with lower feed and/or land costs, and poultry production is largely concentrated in the lower mainland.

**Figure 8** Change in types of farm enterprises from 1996 to 2006 (number of farms reporting main enterprise.)

Note: the number of horse operations increased by 92% (from 12 to 23) between 1996 and 2006. The number of horses on farms more than doubled - up 110% from 52 in 1996 to 109 in 2006.

## Economic Contribution

### Area Gross Farm Receipts

Gross farm receipts for the Alberni Valley, for the last two census periods, are shown in Table 3. Revenues were up 6% to just under \$5.5 million in 2005, from \$5.2 million in the 2000 production year. This represents about 3.3% of the total farm receipts for Vancouver Island.

Area	Gross receipts		Operating expenses		Gross margin %	
	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005
Alberni-Clayoquot B		\$4,539,683		\$4,034,595		11%
Alberni-Clayoquot D		\$371,508		\$411,862		-11%
Alberni-Clayoquot F		\$580,265		\$621,780		-7%
<b>Total Alberni-Clayoquot</b>	<b>\$5,177,100</b>	<b>\$5,491,456</b>	<b>\$5,048,524</b>	<b>\$5,068,237</b>	<b>2.48%</b>	<b>7.71%</b>

**Table 4.** Gross Farm Revenue (Inflation adjusted to 2005 dollars)

### Profitability

The following sections describe a number of factors that affect profitability of farms and how the Alberni Valley agriculture sector fares compared to other areas. Farm profitability, or lack thereof, is the major underlying issue facing agriculture. If farms were more profitable, many of the other issues identified in this planning process would not exist.

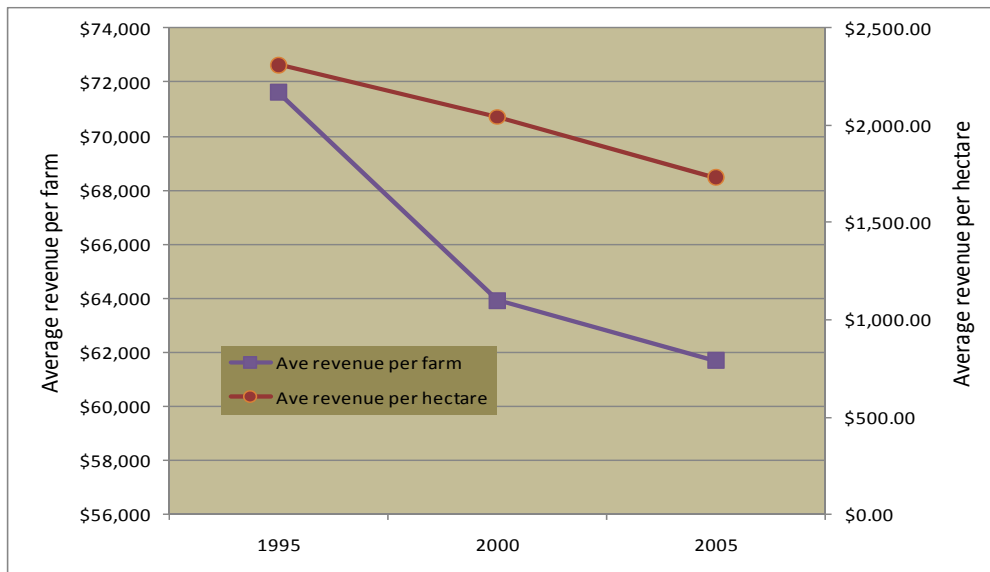
### Gross Margins

Table 3 also shows the reported operating expenses and the resulting gross margin (i.e. gross receipts minus operating expenses which are expenses directly related to production). Basically, it indicates that margins are 7.71%, up significantly from 2.48% in 2000. However, this means that, on average, for every extra dollar of sales generated on farms, the farmer gets 7.7 cents to pay towards overhead costs. These are very tight margins for an industry that has high levels of capital investment.

Opportunity: farmers who can reduce their input costs or increase their prices, even slightly, can very significantly increase their returns. For example, a farmer who could increase their price from \$1.00 to \$1.05, without increasing costs, would pocket 12.7 cents instead of 7.7 cents. This is an increase of 65% in return to the producer.

### Average Revenue per farm

Figure 9 shows the trend in average revenue per farm from 1995 to 2005 for farms in the ACRD. It also shows average revenue per hectare over the same period. The declines are clearly significant. It is suggested that this drop is primarily due to the loss of several dairy farms during this period. The dairy farms generated significant revenues, relative to other farms, and the loss of that revenue pulls the average per farm, and per hectare, down.



**Figure 9** Trends in gross farm revenue 1995 to 2005 (inflation adjusted to 2005 dollars)

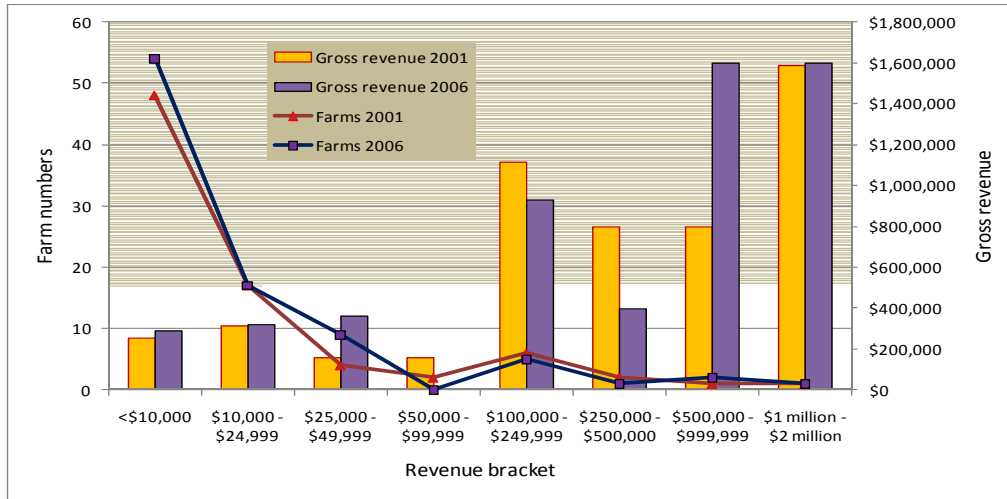
### Farm Size – Revenue

Farm size, in terms of revenue generated, is extremely variable. This is typical of Vancouver Island. Figure 10 shows that the vast majority of the economic activity occurs on the large farms. The 9 largest farms (10% of the 89 farms) generate 82% of the area's gross farm receipts. The smallest farms 54 of 89

or 61%), with sales of less than \$10,000 per year, cumulatively generate about 5% of the area’s gross farm receipts.

Farm numbers increased from 81 to 89 between 2001 and 2006. Six of the eight new farms have sales of less than \$10,000 per year. Farms with sales between \$10,000 and \$100,000 also increased over the same period, from 23 to 26. Farms with sales over \$100,000 declined from 10 to 9 but tended to get bigger; there were 3 farms with sales over \$500,000 in 2006 compared to 2 in 2001.

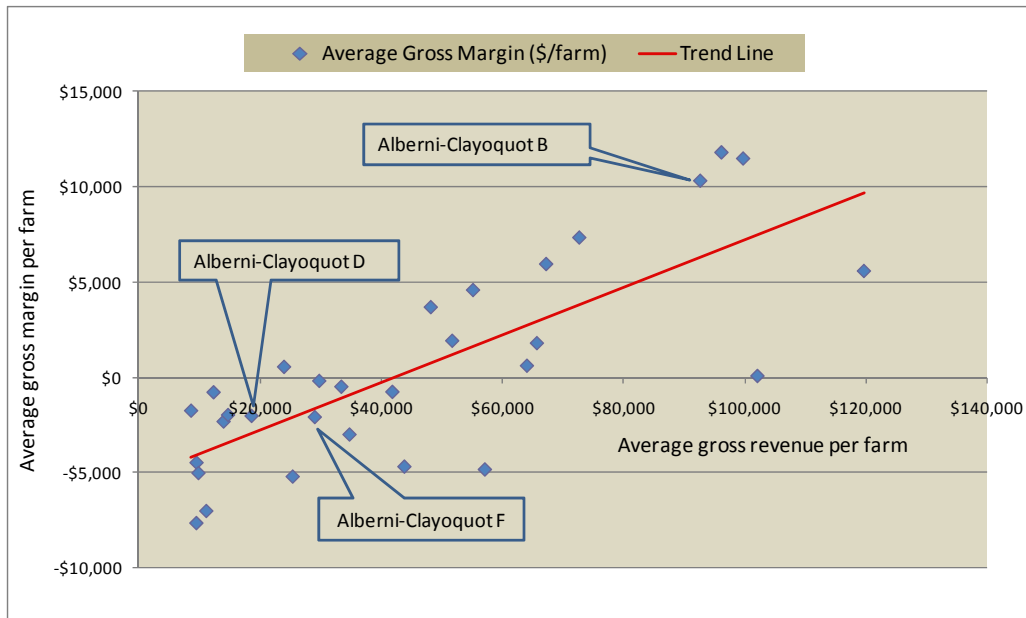
These trends are similar to other parts of Vancouver Island. Large, commodity-producing, farms are getting larger. Small farm numbers are increasing and midsize farms are growing in numbers and in economic output. Many of the farmers market vendors fit into that midsize, developing farm sector producing for niche markets and direct farm sales.



**Figure 10** Farm size and total revenue (Inflation adjusted to 2005 dollars)

**Scale of Farm Operations**

Figure 11 is included to show the importance of economies of scale. The dots on the chart represent the average gross margin per farm in each of the electoral areas, within regional districts, on Vancouver Island. Average gross margins increase with revenue per farm. It is also interesting to note that gross margins tend to be negative for farms with sales below about \$40,000 per year. In 2006, average gross margins in Alberni-Clayoquot B were similar to the most productive areas on Vancouver Island, however, it is suggested that the loss of dairy farms in this electoral area will result in lower margins in the future.

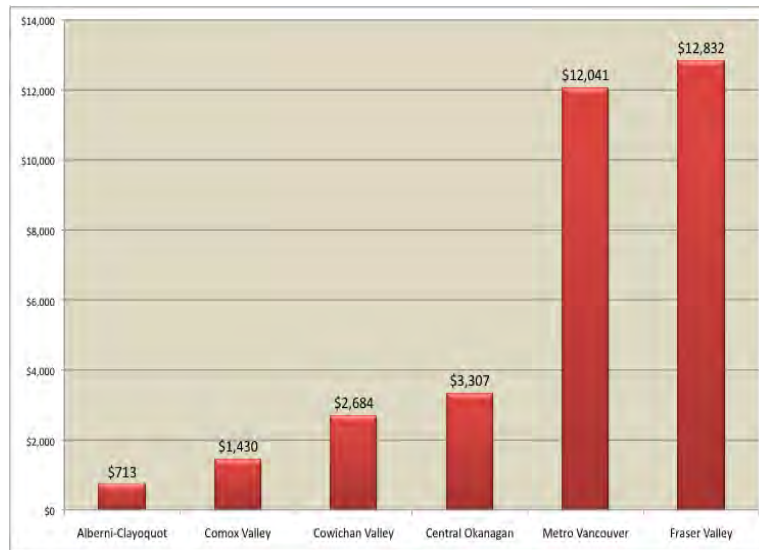


**Figure 11** Average gross margin per farm compared to average gross farm receipts.

**Intensity of Production**

Figure 12 shows the average revenue per hectare (of ALR land) generated by farms in various areas of South Coastal BC. The Alberni-Clayoquot RD is clearly among the least intensively farmed areas. Increased revenue per hectare could be achieved with more:

- land clearing
- irrigation
- drainage improvements
- intensive use of fertilizers and other inputs
- higher value crops
- production of supply managed products or intensive livestock



**Figure 12** Average Revenue per hectare in the ALR for various areas in South Coastal BC



## On Farm Capital

The reported market value of farm capital increased by 80% between 2001 and 2006. Most of this increase was in the value of land and buildings which increased by almost 100% as shown in Table 4.

<i>Type of Capital</i>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2001</b>
Machinery and Equipment	\$7,214,049	\$5,567,717
Livestock and Poultry	\$1,466,144	\$2,255,966
Land and Buildings	\$56,608,279	\$28,460,710
<b>Total Farm Capital</b>	<b>\$65,288,472</b>	<b>\$36,284,393</b>

**Table 5.** Value of farm capital in the ACRD. Farm capital is measured at market value in current dollars in the year reported.

*Note: the reported increase in capital doesn't make sense. The value of farmland probably didn't double between 2001 and 2006 and, although there may have been some investment, it is difficult to imagine where there would have been a doubling of investment? The volume of milk quota probably declined during that period but the unit value of existing quota probably increased.*

## Human Resources

Farms in the Alberni Valley, like the rest of Vancouver Island, tend to be owner operated with only the larger farms employing year-round help. Small farms generally use seasonal employees for harvesting and, possibly, other seasonal operations i.e. seeding and crop maintenance.

### *Farm Operators*<sup>8</sup>

The 2006 Census reports 130 operators on 89 farms compared to 125 operators on 81 farms in 2001. 40 of these operators reported working more than 40 hours per week on the farm; 30 worked between 20 and 40 hours per week and the remainder less than 20 hours per week.

Eighty operators, or 61.5%, have off farm employment. 50 farm operators reported no off farm income. 65 reported less than 20 hours of off farm income per week.

The average age of farm operators in the Alberni Valley, in 2006, was 54.4 - up from 52.4 in 2001. The average age in BC was 53.6 and, on Vancouver Island, 54.6 – all have increased since the 2001 census. Only five (3.85%) of the 130 operators are under 35 years old; this has dropped from 10 in 2001. In BC, about 5.93% and, on Vancouver Island, about 4.83%, of farm operators are under 35.

**Issue:** recruitment of young farmers and succession planning are clearly becoming bigger issues over time.

### *Employment*

Agriculture employs about 2771 weeks of paid labour – equivalent to about 55 full-time jobs (see Table 5). 36%, or 20, of these jobs are seasonal. The remainder are full-time, year-round. Reported

<sup>8</sup> Farm operators are defined as persons who are responsible for the day-to-day management decisions made in the operation of a census form or agricultural operation. Up to three farm operators can be reported per farm.

employment is down from 3178 weeks of paid labour in 2001. This drop in employment is likely related to the loss of dairy farms in the area.

<i>Paid work</i>	<b>2001</b>		<b>2006</b>		<b>% change since 2001</b>
	<i>Farms 2001</i>	<i>Weeks</i>	<i>Farms 2006</i>	<i>Weeks</i>	
Seasonal	18	831	21	991	19%
Year round	13	2347	11	1780	-24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>3178</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>2771</b>	<b>-13%</b>

**Table 6.** Weeks of paid employment on farms in the ACRD (Source: 2006 Census)

## Infrastructure

Agricultural infrastructure is significant for the size of the local industry. This is mainly because the industry was, historically, larger than it is today. Infrastructure was developed to suit the past requirements. Some of this infrastructure is aging and would likely require considerable investment to bring it back into operation.

### *Processing and Value Added*

On farm processing and value-added activities in the Alberni Valley are relatively small-scale with considerable potential to expand. A few farms are involved in agri-tourism activities. Some examples of processing and activities that add value or compliment the farm:

Hertel Meats has processed meat in the Alberni Valley since 1967. Hertels produces a variety of processed pork products which are sold throughout Vancouver Island and the lower mainland. Unfortunately, the island pork industry, which at one time supplied a large portion of the pork for the plant, has virtually disappeared. The plant has resorted to processing mainly pork from other areas.

Chase and Warren<sup>9</sup> established Port Alberni's first winery in 1995. The winery is located at 6253 Drinkwater Rd. The winery features steam train rides, on the nearby Alberni Pacific Railway, and is planning further development on its 35 acre property. Eventually, 25 acres will be in vineyard with at least six main varieties of grapes produced.

Ann and Bob Collins operate Arrowvale Riverside Cottages and campground on a property adjoining their farm. The cottages and campground provide an opportunity to sell farm product fresh to their guests and to casually educate visitors.

First Nations Wildcrafters<sup>10</sup> produces a variety of value-added non-timber forest products using the cultural resources of the local First Nations. They have adopted a Quality Assurance program to ensure food safety in their wild and traditional foods including wild rose petal jelly, wild huckleberry jam, fresh wild mushrooms and decorative floral products using wild harvested crops. Some of their products are sold in one of the main retail chains on Vancouver Island.

Al's Feather Be Gone is a provincially licensed<sup>11</sup> poultry processing plant.

Port Potato previously washed, graded, packaged and distributed product from its facility south of the city of Port Alberni. This storage facility is now empty and idle.

<sup>9</sup> [www.chaseandwarren.ca](http://www.chaseandwarren.ca)

<sup>10</sup> [www.firstnationswildcrafters.com](http://www.firstnationswildcrafters.com)

<sup>11</sup> Pursuant to the British Columbia Meat Inspection Regulation as of August 2010 [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca)

**Issue:** The BC Meat Inspection Regulation, adopted in 2004 and amended in 2010, created challenges for Alberni Valley red meat producers. There are 3 licensed facilities on Vancouver Island (all outside of the Alberni Valley: Gunter Bros. Meats (Courtenay), Valleyview Farms and Rod Plecas Livestock Service (Nanaimo). Hauling animals to these locations adds significant costs to the producer in a sector that has very narrow margins. Also, a large percentage of the agricultural land in the area is only suited to forage production so, if there is no economic use for that forage, beef and other red meat production will inherently decline. Further revisions to the Meat Inspection Regulation<sup>12</sup>, in early 2011, allow producers to apply for a Class E license which permits the slaughter of 10 animals per year to be sold in the Regional District they were raised in.

**Opportunity:** if the meat inspection issue can be resolved or access to affordable processing can be improved, there is a strong demand for local grass fed beef and many of the existing producers have excellent resource bases (experience, equipment, buildings, and productive forage lands) that could be used to produce a consistent branded grass fed beef product. Licensed meat inspection has also opened markets in Victoria and Vancouver that were previously closed to island producers due to lack of federal inspection.

### **Transportation**

The Alberni Valley is “the Gateway to the West Coast”. The area is serviced by Highway 4 which cuts across the island from the Parksville/Qualicum area and continues on to the West Coast communities of Tofino and Ucluelet. Winter conditions on “the hump”, just west of Port Alberni, can make travel on Highway 4 quite treacherous at times. There have been discussions, over the years, about developing alternate routes including upgrading the “Alberni link” via Comox Lake and construction of a link through to Horne Lake. Both of these links would improve access, reduce the length of the trip, to Courtenay. In past years, when there were several dairy farms shipping milk to Courtenay, these routes would have been quite beneficial. There would still be significant advantages to upgrading at least one of these routes.

Port Alberni is also, of course, a port with access to the Pacific Ocean via the Alberni Inlet. The inlet is prone to calm waters, free from navigational obstacles, ice free year-round and can accommodate “Panamax” size vessels. The Port<sup>13</sup> offers direct shipping, and is the closest deep sea port, to the Pacific Rim. There are three deep sea berths with a storage assembly area of 17 acres. The terminal has historically handled lumber, pulp, newsprint, plywood and logs. The mission of the port is to facilitate profitable marine trade and marine related tourism and industry by offering services and leadership that respect both the community and the environment.

Airport - the Alberni Valley Regional Airport which opened in September 1993 services the area. The runway is 4000 feet long asphalt. The airport has several key tenants—primarily related to services to the forest industry. KD Air provides daily flights to Vancouver.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/meat-regulation/> - *The new Class E licence allows on-farm slaughter of a small number of animals annually (1-10 animal units) for direct sale to consumers. Sales are restricted to the regional district in which the meat was produced, and operators are only permitted to slaughter their own animals.*

<sup>13</sup> [www.portalberniportauthority.ca](http://www.portalberniportauthority.ca)

## *Distribution*

### Farmers' Market

The Port Alberni Farmers' Market<sup>14</sup> operates Saturday mornings from 8:30 AM to 12:00 noon, year round. It is located at the Harbour Quay in downtown Port Alberni. There are about 50 vendors of which 20 sell primary farm products. It is a traditional farmers market promoting locally grown produce and locally made products from the ACRD.

### General Distribution

The Alberni Farmer's Directory lists 46 farms that distribute their product as follows:

- 18 are vendors at the Port Alberni Farmers' Market
- 24 list "on farm sales by appointment". 7 of these also sell at the Farmers' Market
- 1 is listed as "weekly farm shares" – Community supported agriculture (CSA)
- 6 listings show only phone and/or email contacts
- 1 – Rage's Farm indicates that their product can be found in local grocery stores
- 5 listings indicate storefront or farmgate sales
  - Arrowvale Farms – on farm sales Saturdays
  - Naesgaards Farms – market on River Road
  - Pete's Mountain Meats – storefront on Johnston Rd., Port Alberni
  - Chase and Warren Winery
  - Gibson's Slaughtering and Custom Cutting

The milk from the dairy farm is hauled to the Saputo (Dairyland) plant in Courtenay and, either packaged there or, shipped to the mainland for processing before distribution to retail outlets.

Greenhouse vegetables, from Rage's Farm, are delivered directly to the stores where they are sold. These are one of the few agricultural products that are not sent to a warehouse and redistributed. Vancouver Island Produce, the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission's agency on Vancouver Island, receives the orders for these products and notifies the producer who then delivers to the store. Virtually all other Vancouver Island products sold through the stores listed below, travel to a distribution center on the mainland and are distributed back to Island locations – two ferry trips to get to a store in the same town that it is produced!

The Alberni Valley is served by 6 significant chain stores, in Port Alberni, as well as a number of convenience and smaller stores in the City and surrounding area.

- Quality Foods – Central Vancouver Island chain with 11 stores. Distribution centre near Qualicum Beach, BC.
- Buy-Low Foods – Western Canadian chain with 16 stores. Distribution centre in Surrey, BC.
- Fairway Market – Vancouver Island owned chain with 8 stores. Distribution from Victoria, BC.
- Extra Foods – one of 106 chain stores in Western Canada. Distribution for BC is from Pitt Meadows.
- Safeway – National chain store. BC distribution is from Vancouver.
- Walmart – Multinational chain store.

There are probably only 3 or 4 local agri-food products that could be found in these chain stores: Hertel Meats, Rage's Farm greenhouse vegetables, First Nations Wildcrafter products, and Van Isle blueberries.

Minor volumes of Alberni product may be sold through local restaurants.

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<sup>14</sup> [www.bcfarmersmarket.org](http://www.bcfarmersmarket.org)

**Issue:** There are significant and increasing, challenges for food producers trying to distribute their product through the major chain stores. From the producer side, the challenges are price related– the price to the producer is too low. From the distributor side, there are increasing concerns with liabilities associated with food safety. Distributors need to be able to guarantee food safety and/or be able to trace product back to the farm. Few producers have been prepared to, or able to, put systems in place to meet these conditions.

**Opportunities:** The Alberni Valley Farmer’s Directory could be expanded to include more detail about the farms and their products including, perhaps, the season. At very least it should include e-mail addresses and websites, if they exist. It certainly is a credit to the local farm community that the directory includes 46 listings with only 89 farms reporting in the census. The Comox Valley directory lists 62 farms with 497 farms reporting.

There is also a significant opportunity to increase the marketing of local products to the West Coast, either through increased marketing to travellers as they pass through Alberni or by distributing and marketing products to restaurants, resorts and markets in Tofino/Ucluelet. Perhaps a separate Farmers’ Market should be established on the West Coast?

### *Training and Education*

North Island College (NIC) has a campus in Port Alberni. NIC has only one agriculture-related course listed in its Continuing Education program: AGRI-1130 “Organic Master Gardener Information Session”. There are no other known courses available in the Alberni Valley that are specifically oriented to agriculture.

### *Agricultural Awareness and Events*

There are a number of local farmers with a key interest in increasing agricultural awareness. The Port Alberni Agricultural Advisory Committee has published a farmer’s directory and committee members are involved in a number of activities and events to improve agricultural awareness and education in the community.

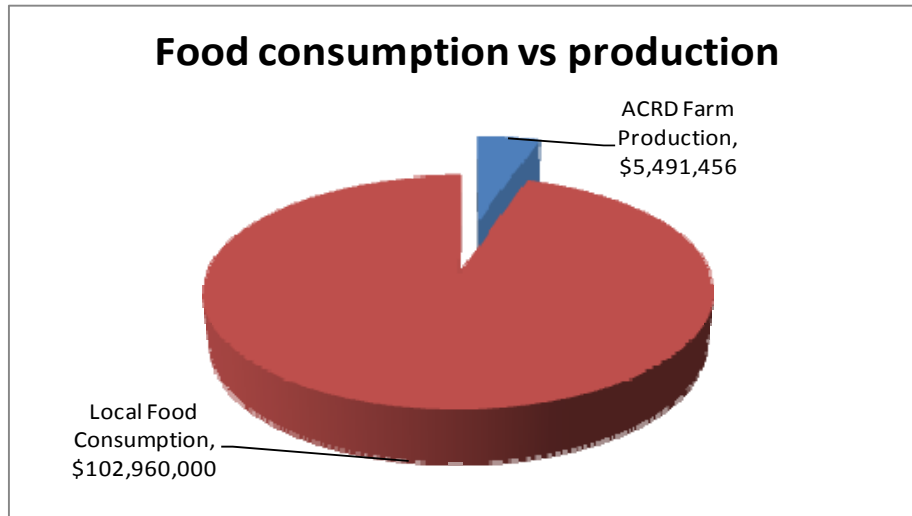
The Alberni Valley Transition Town Society is also actively involved in promoting local agriculture.

Specific events with a focus on agricultural awareness include:

- Alberni District Fall Fair
- Port Alberni Farmers’ Market
- Transition Towns Food Group
- Coastal Community Credit Union Barbecue – 2<sup>nd</sup> annual event on September 15, 2010.

## Food Security

Food self-sufficiency is a popular topic throughout most of Vancouver Island. Two methods were used to estimate food self-sufficiency for the Alberni Valley. Based on those methods, the Alberni Valley produces between 5.3% and 11% of the food consumed.



**Figure 12** Estimated value of production versus consumption of food in the Alberni Valley. The lower estimate, 5.3%, is based on a comparison of the gross farm receipts (as an estimate of the value of local production) and estimated annual expenditures on food in the valley as shown in Figure 13.

The higher estimate, 11%, is based on a method developed by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands<sup>15</sup> which estimates food self-sufficiency based on the land required to produce a healthy diet for one individual as shown in Table 6. The method assumes that, based on average yields for the various components in the healthy diet, a total of 0.524 ha is required to produce a healthy diet of which 0.471 ha is non-irrigated and 0.053 ha is irrigated. Columns (a) and (b) below indicate the production levels in the ACRD in 2006. Columns (c) and (d) indicate proposed targets which would increase self-sufficiency to about 48% - realistic targets for the local land and resource base?

<sup>15</sup> [www.agf.bc.ca/resmgmt/Food\\_Self\\_Reliance/BCFoodSelfReliance\\_Report.pdf](http://www.agf.bc.ca/resmgmt/Food_Self_Reliance/BCFoodSelfReliance_Report.pdf) - BCMAL, 2006

REGION	British Columbia	Vancouver Island	Alberni-Clayoquot	ACRD Production (blue = irrigated)			
				2006 (a)	% (b)	Target? (c)	% (d)
Population	4,113,487	734,860	30,664				
Dairy - fodder	82,270	14,697	613	134	22%	613	100%
- grain	197,447	35,273	1,472	0	0%	0	0%
Meat (non-fish) & alternatives	1,620,714	289,535	12,082	1,636	14%	6,483	54%
Fish	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Grains (food)	119,291	21,311	889	0	0%	0	0%
Vegetables	72,809	13,007	543	13	2%	326	60%
Fruit	62,525	11,170	466	7	2%	280	60%
<i>Sub-Total non-irrigated</i>	<b>1,937,452</b>	<b>346,119</b>	<b>14,443</b>	<b>1,636</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6,483</b>	<b>45%</b>
<i>Sub-total irrigated</i>	<b>218,015</b>	<b>38,948</b>	<b>1,622</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,155,467</b>	<b>385,067</b>	<b>16,065</b>	<b>1,790</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>7,702</b>	<b>48%</b>

**Table 7.** Estimate of local food self-sufficiency based on land required to produce a healthy diet for one individual using methodology developed by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. It should be noted that neither of these methods consider the contribution of fish to the local food supply. In the Alberni Valley, this is a very significant contribution which should be taken into consideration.

### The West Coast Connection

The West Coast connection, the gateway to the West Coast, must be acknowledged as a potential opportunity for marketing Alberni Valley product. Statistics from the Pacific Rim National Park indicate annual tourist visits to the park between 700,000 and 800,000 per year since 2003. Tofino reports 22,000 visitors per day during the summer months. There are a number of high-end resorts in the area. All of those visitors eat. The Alberni Valley is the nearest food producing area to this tourist destination and almost all of those tourists travel through Alberni on the way to the West Coast.

### First Nations

The Tseshaht First Nations have been historically and culturally bound to the ocean. They are fishers and hunters and have used the intertidal resources of their Traditional Territories for food and trade. The Band focus has not been on intensive gathering or agriculture. However a current member of the Tseshaht is engaged in the gathering and processing of non-timber forest products, employing other members of the Band.

Recently (within the past three years), the Tseshaht First Nations purchased approximately 120 hectares of agriculture land from Catalyst Paper. A substantial portion of the land is treed with hybrid poplar, but is not considered as being used to its growing potential. While the Tseshaht have not determined the ultimate use of the land, they have indicated that this property represents an important economic development opportunity in their Comprehensive Community Plan. As such, the Tseshaht are open to ideas to create economic diversity through the use of this property, but only if it makes good economic sense and if the concept is embraced by the community as a whole. Ideas discussed, but not developed, include using the property in some form of marine-based agriculture.

## Ecological Contribution of Agriculture

**Ecological impact could be an element of the vision.** It is suggested that human pressure ultimately determines what the impact will be. In the Alberni Valley, the agricultural plan and the community at large can help encourage sustainable production by supporting producers who are excellent stewards of the land.

What is the ecological impact of agriculture? The Ecological Solutions Roundtable<sup>16</sup> at McGill University completed a project which identified the main “ecological impacts of modern agriculture” as follows:

- Soil erosion – considered the “most serious problem of agriculture... a long history of soil erosion and its impact on civilization is one of devastation”. The project describes various forms of erosion which were primarily related to production of annual crops, mainly cereals. The entire discussion is based on crops and production methods that are used on less than 1% of the land base in the Alberni Valley. Soil erosion as it is described in this project is not an issue in the Alberni Valley.
- Irrigation – in this case, the project describes a negative impact from the depletion of groundwater in major aquifers in dryland areas. Impacts include land subsidence as aquifers are overdrawn, salinization and alkalinization, and the complete depletion of in stream flows in rivers like the Colorado River. The issues described are not really relevant to the Alberni Valley.
- Loss of diversity – this discussion is about converting natural ecosystems into monoculture crops. Mainly, it is about converting tropical forests to crops for human purposes. It could certainly be argued that conversion of coastal forests to agriculture leads to a loss in biodiversity, however, very little land is being cleared for agriculture on Vancouver Island. Generally, it is cleared for other purposes and then converted to agriculture. Furthermore, forage-based agricultural operations tend to provide habitat for a fairly wide range of species—certainly better than intensive mono cropped lands.
- Chemical contamination, pollution of groundwater and surface water, residues on food and pesticide resistance were also on the list of impacts. The potential for these impacts in the Alberni Valley is also lower. According to the 2006 Census, herbicides were used on 1.1% of Alberni farm land compared to 30% in Alberta. Commercial fertilizer was used on 22.6% of Alberni land versus 33% of Alberta farm land.

The true ecological impact of agriculture varies depending on the type of crop, the intensity of production and, perhaps most of all, on the level of management. Generally, more intensive human or farming activities have a more negative ecological impact. In addition to the above, locally produced food, grown in a sustainable manner, can certainly displace intensively produced food grown in areas where there is a significant ecological impact i.e. the hot southern states where they are drawing down aquifers for irrigation. From that perspective, local agriculture has a positive overall impact on the ecology. Also, local agricultural lands are often converted from lands that have been logged and are becoming overgrown with invasive species such as Scotch broom and blackberries. With management, there is ecological improvement as these lands can provide valuable habitat for a wide variety of species.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://eap.mcgill.ca>



## Trends

### Global Trends

Global marketplace – the distribution systems worldwide have developed to the extent that perishable agricultural products can be competitively shipped anywhere in the world without a significant loss in product quality.

Rising incomes in India and China are leading to increasing global demand for food. Billions of dollars have been invested in farmland in Africa and South America to produce food for Asian countries.

Rising energy costs and climate change policy are increasing demand for biofuels causing land to be converted from food production to energy production.

“Good Agricultural Practices”, or GAP, are being developed to create a global standard of sustainable farm practices that will lead to safe and healthy food and non-food farm products.

### Canadian Agricultural Trends

The “foodie” movement is probably the most significant consumer trend related to agriculture. All over North America, there is a shift towards buying local food. The challenge with this is that there is still “cheap food” around and it is better quality than it has been historically because of improvements in distribution. There is stronger demand for local and organic but it comes from a small portion of the population.

The Canadian population is aging which will have implications on the type and quantity of food consumed. There is increasing discussion about the health benefits of foods. Environmental awareness, and public perceptions, will affect food choices in the future.

Consumers are more conscious of food ingredients. More people are “reading the package” to reduce choose foods with zero trans-fats, low sodium, reduced sugar, etc.

Federal policy is addressing food safety and biosecurity types of issues in ways that tend to be challenging for small lot operators.

### Provincial Agricultural Trends

The 100 mile diet and the “buy local” movement are apparently stronger in BC than elsewhere. Vancouver has recently made changes in policy to increase the number of Farmers’ Markets within the city – to improve urban access to local foods.

Climate change policy and environmental awareness are, on one hand, adding to the demand for local food and perhaps creating opportunities for new products but also creating challenges for producers to become greener – to meet new environmental standards.

### Vancouver Island and Regional Trends

The agriculture industry on the island is shifting away from commodity type production towards niche market, agri-tourism, and direct market type farming operations.

The livestock industry is declining fairly rapidly. Swine production disappeared a decade ago. The dairy industry has been shifting over the past 10 years. Quota is leaving the island; the remaining dairy farmers are increasing production. Meat inspection regulations and related policies have reduced access to slaughter and increased the price of processing.

## Policy Framework

### *Federal Policy*

#### **Agriculture and Agri-food Canada**

Canadian agriculture has been shifting and adapting in response to factors such as free trade negotiations, impacts of globalization forces in the food system, increased access to domestic food markets, animal disease outbreaks, and health and food safety concerns. Most recently, added concerns have emerged about food security, global warming, and food self-sufficiency.

#### ***Growing Forward Agricultural Policy Framework***

The current national focus on agriculture is encompassed in the *Growing Forward* Initiative and Growing Forward Framework Agreement negotiated with all provinces and territories. *Growing Forward* emphasizes building a profitable agricultural sector through three strategic outcomes:

- A competitive and innovative sector: from idea to invention to consumer, growing new opportunities that support innovation and competitiveness
- A sector that contributes to society's priorities: enabling the sector to contribute to the priorities of increasingly health-conscious and environmentally aware Canadians
- A sector proactive in managing risks: the business risk management (BRM) suite were the first programs available under Growing Forward, offering more responsive, predictable and bankable programs for farmers.

#### **Business Risk Management (BRM) Suite**

The Business Risk Management Suite consists of several programs that work together to protect farmers against different types of losses and assist with cash flow. The suite includes:

- AgriInvest – a savings account for producers, supported by governments, which provides coverage for small income declines and allows for investments that help mitigate risks or improve market income.
- AgriStability – Provides support when a producer experiences larger farm income losses. The program covers declines of more than 15% in producers' average income from previous years.
- AgriRecovery – A disaster relief framework which provides a coordinated process for federal, provincial and territorial governments to respond rapidly when disasters strike, filling gaps not covered by existing programs.
- AgriInsurance – An existing program which includes insurance against production losses for specified perils (weather, pests, disease) and is being expanded to include more commodities.
- Advance Payments Program (APP)–A complementary program to the others listed above. It helps crop and livestock producers with cash flow and provides flexibility for marketing of commodities.

Agriculture and Agri-food Canada also administer programs related to:

- Agri-industries – related to agricultural products after they leave the farm gate including processed food and beverage programs, food regulations, food distribution, consumer

- research and emerging areas of interest such as biomass and biofuels.
- International Agri-food trade including trade policy, branding Canadian products, export assistance, assistance to the fish and seafood sector, connections to international buyers and foreign investment.
  - Scientific Research relevant to consumers, producers and industry and to the scientific and academic community.
  - Land Management programs related to agroforestry, air quality, biodiversity, water supply and quality, soil and land and irrigation and diversification.

### **Canadian Food Inspection Agency – CFIA**

The CFIA works from the farm gate to the consumer's plate to ensure the safety of Canada's food supply. The agency does this in a number of ways:

- Educating consumers about food handling practices and food-safety risks
- Enforces fair packaging and labelling laws
- Conducts risk assessments of diseases and pests that have been, or could be, introduced into Canada and threaten its plants and animals
- Manages food recalls where needed
- Develops and promotes science-based regulation to:
  - o Regulate and monitor food
  - o Prevent the introduction and spread of pests and diseases of plants, animals and their products
  - o Eradicate or control pests and diseases as required
- Maintains a competitive marketplace and regulatory framework to ensure affordable and high quality products for consumers
- Protects consumers against deceptive and unfair market practices
- Certifies food, plants and animals and their products that are exported
- Regulates biotechnology
- Prevents the transmission of animal diseases to humans
- Acting as the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is responsible for initial import inspections of food, agricultural inputs and agricultural products
- Responds to food safety emergencies or threats to agricultural or forest biosecurity.

### **Fisheries Act**

Producers in the Alberni Valley have raised concerns about the impact of the Fisheries Act on their operations. The streams, watercourses and water bodies, found on many farms are often considered as valuable fish habitat which has the potential to limit development of agricultural lands.

### ***Provincial Legislation and Land Use Policy***

A number of changes have been made to provincial land-use policy since 1986. These are described below. The *Strengthening Farming* initiative was undertaken, over the same period, to increase awareness of these changes and to assist local governments in incorporating these "right to farm" provisions into local policies and bylaws.

The *Strengthening Farming* initiative lists 59 Provincial Acts<sup>17</sup> that affect agriculture. Summaries of some of the most relevant legislation are provided below.

### ***Agricultural Land Commission Act***<sup>18</sup>

The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* provides the legislative framework for the preservation of BC's agricultural land. The legislation provides for the establishment of the provincial Agricultural Land Commission and outlines its objectives, powers, processes, use of land within the ALR, and the relationships with local governments. The act takes precedence over most other provincial legislation and local government bylaws. The purposes of the Agricultural Land Commission are:

- 1) to preserve agricultural land;
- 2) to encourage farming on agricultural land in collaboration with other communities of interest;
- 3) to encourage local governments, First Nations, the government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies.

Accordingly, the Agricultural Land Commission plays a very significant role in the establishment of land-use policy and in the land-use decision-making at the local government level.

### **Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)**

The Agricultural Land Reserve is a provincial zone in which agriculture is recognized as the priority use. The ALR was established in 1973, by way of the *BC Land Commission Act*. The land to be included within the ALR was identified in subsequent years - mostly in 1974 to 1976 with some fine-tuning afterwards. In the Alberni Valley, there was substantial fine-tuning. The review was completed in 1989<sup>19</sup> (using the 1:20,000 scale maps generated in the mid 80's) and resulted in the exclusion of 951 ha and the inclusion of 790 ha.

About 1.12% of the land within the ACRD is currently in the ALR. Of that, 3171 ha (41.1% of the ALR) - 0.4% of the total land base in the Regional District is actively farmed.

**Table 1. Most recent ALR designation**<sup>20</sup>

<b>ALR land</b>	<b>Hectares</b>
At designation	7,935
Inclusions	808
Exclusions	1,041
<b>At January 2010</b>	<b>7,702</b>
Alberni-Clayoquot RD area	688,530
% ALR land	1.12%

<sup>17</sup> [www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/fppa/refguide/other/870218-67\\_Appendix\\_C\\_Prov\\_Legislation](http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/fppa/refguide/other/870218-67_Appendix_C_Prov_Legislation) (2004)

<sup>18</sup> [www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt](http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt)

<sup>19</sup> Correspondence from Roger Cheetham, Regional Planner, Agricultural Land Commission

<sup>20</sup> Source – Agricultural Land Commission. See appendix E for map showing ALR.

### **Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulations**

On November 1, 2002, the new *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and the *Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulations* were brought into force. The regulations essentially describe acceptable “farm uses of agricultural land” in the province. These activities are permitted on ALR lands and may not be prohibited by local government bylaw except a “farm bylaw” prepared under Section 917 of the *Local Government Act*. These activities include the following (detailed descriptions are included in Appendix A and at the Land Commission website: [www.alc.gov.bc.ca](http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca)):

- Farm product processing - storage, packing, product preparation and processing of farm products
- Farm retail sales
- Wineries and cideries
- Additional residences necessary for farm use
- Construction of farm buildings

### **Farm Practices Protection Act**

The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act (FPPA)* was passed in B.C. in April 1996. The intent of the act was to protect farms, using “normal farm practices”, from unwarranted nuisance complaints involving dust, odour, noise and other disturbances. The Farm Practices Board, now called the Farm Industry Review Board, was established to deal with complaints that arise from the Act – to determine whether the disturbance results from normal farm practices.

### **Land Title Act**

The *Land Title Act* gives approving officers the power to assess impacts of new subdivisions on farmland. The approving officer may require buffering of farmland from the subdivision and/or the removal of unnecessary roads to reduce the impact of subdivision on adjacent farmlands.

### **Local Government Act**

The *Local Government Act* provides the legislative framework for local governments. There are provisions in the act that address agriculture including community planning, zoning, nuisance regulations, the removal and deposit of soil, weed and pest control and water use and drainage. Publications are available to assist local government in addressing these issues within their local policies and bylaws.

### **Provincial Farm Classification – BC Assessment**

The *Assessment Act*, administered by BC Assessment, provides for preferred property taxation on lands that qualify as farmland. BC Regulation 411/95 (Standards for the Classification of Land as a Farm) of the *Assessment Act* defines a farm as all or part of a parcel of land used for:

- a) primary agricultural production;
- b) a farmer’s dwelling; or
- c) the training and boarding of horses when operated in conjunction with horse rearing

All farm structures including the farmer’s dwelling will be classified as residential.

There are minimum income requirements to qualify for farm classification as follows:

- a) \$10,000 on land less than 8000 m<sup>2</sup> (2 acres)
- b) \$2,500 on land between 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> (2 acres) and 4 ha (10 acres)
- c) On land larger than four ha (10 acres), \$2,500 plus 5% of the actual value of any farm land in excess of four ha.

Land rented to a “bona fide” farmer may also qualify if there is a written lease in place. Landowners must submit an application for Farm Classification to BC Assessment. Full details on farmland classification in BC are available at the BC Assessment website: [www.bcassessment.bc.ca](http://www.bcassessment.bc.ca).

For the 2009 assessment roll, there were 104 properties fully or partially in farm class within the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District.

In December 2007, the Minister of Small Business and Revenue committed to a review of the farm assessment process. The review was completed to ensure that the assessment system is fair, equitable and supports farming in BC with clear, simple and straightforward regulations and policies. Between September and November 2008, the Farm Assessment Review Panel consulted with people throughout BC to gather input for this process. The panel submitted its report to the province. As a result of the review, the provincial government made a few changes to the regulation relating to farm status (effective for 2010):

- Farm land in the ALR that is in active production will not be split classified, even if some of the land is clearly not producing.
- Farm land that is not in the ALR will not be split classified if at least 50% is in production or contributes to production, or if 25% of the land is in production and a minimum income threshold of \$10,000 is met.
- For leased land, only the land actually in production will be classed as farm.

There are further definitions in the amendments to clarify some of the changes including land uses that “contribute to production”.

### ***Natural Products Marketing (BC) Act - Supply Management***

The *Natural Products Marketing (BC) Act* is the enabling legislation for various marketing boards and commissions in BC. It provides a system that allows individual commodities to promote, control and regulate production, transportation, packing, storage and marketing of natural products in the province.

In the Alberni Valley, producers of the following products are affected by the regulations and policies that have evolved from this act: dairy, chicken, eggs, turkeys, and some vegetables.

Concerns were expressed that quota for production of some of these commodities is moving to lower-cost production areas or that allocation of quota is not consistent with consumption on Vancouver Island – as it has been in the past.

### ***Meat Inspection Regulation – Food Safety Act***

In September 2004, the Province of BC enacted a new *Meat Inspection Regulation* under the *Food Safety Act*. All BC abattoirs that produce meat for human consumption must be licensed either provincially or federally. Only meat from livestock slaughtered in a licensed abattoir can be sold for food. The regulation allowed a two-year transition period to give abattoir operators, livestock farmers and other stakeholders time to adapt.

Prior to enactment of this regulation, abattoirs in designated “Meat Inspection Areas” in BC had to be licensed (except farmers slaughtering their own animals on their own farm). Outside of the meat inspection areas, abattoirs had the choice of being either licensed, or approved by the Regional Health Authorities. Only animals slaughtered in licensed facilities were inspected.

The Alberni Valley was not in a meat inspection area; the Capital Regional District was in a meat inspection area.

The Meat Inspection Regulation has resulted in reduced availability of custom slaughter services for red meat producers in the Alberni Valley. The nearest licensed red meat plants is Gunter Bros Meats in Courtenay.

#### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)

The discovery of BSE in Canada has led to policy and regulation aimed at eradication of the disease. It is now widely accepted that transmission of BSE can only occur when susceptible species consume infected material. The policies and regulations have been designed to ensure that the parts of the animal that could contain the infectious agent, or prion, which are known as Specified Risk Materials (SRM) cannot be consumed by other livestock. The actual volume of SRM produced on Vancouver Island is less than 40 tonnes per year, however, to ensure that it is not fed to livestock, this material is currently shipped to a landfill in Coronation, Alberta – along with other slaughterhouse waste from other areas of BC. The overall impact of these regulations, which are necessary to protect Canada's export cattle markets, represents a significant cost to the island red meat industry.

## Environmental Policy and Regulation

### Environmental Farm Plans

A number of Provincial and Federal regulations and policies affect agriculture. The Canada – BC Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program, launched in 2003, provides a process for individual farmers to evaluate how their operation impacts the environment and plan changes that will and enhance their environmental stewardship. Developing an EFP will help to ensure that farmers are aware of the relevant environmental policies and regulations.

The plan covers environmental issues and concerns related to:

- farm waste, fertilizers, fuel, wood waste, composting, energy use, on farm processing, livestock areas (indoors and out), manure handling, mortality disposal, crop production, pest management, buffers, riparian areas, soil management, water quality and quantity, drainage, irrigation, runoff/leachate, air quality including gas emissions, dust and particulate, odours, burning, and biodiversity among others.

## ***Local Regulations***

### **Official Community Plans**

There are 6 Official Community Plans (OCPs) in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District as follows:

- 1) Bamfield OCP (May, 2000)– no agricultural land use or impact, outside the plan area.
- 2) Beaufort Official Community Plan Bylaw No. P994 (amended in January, 2001 - see below)
- 3) Beaver Creek OCP (adopted November, 1999)
- 4) Cherry Creek OCP (updated December, 2005)
- 5) South Long Beach OCP (February, 2007) – outside the plan area, no agricultural land use or impact
- 6) Sproat Lake OCP (adopted February, 2005)

The City of Port Alberni has also adopted an OCP in 2007. There is agricultural land in four of these plans: Beaufort, Sproat Lake, Beaver Creek, and Cherry Creek.

Below we will discuss the objectives of each community plan as they relate agriculture. At the end of the discussion of each individual OCP, we will highlight the areas of the consolidated zoning bylaw that relate agriculture.

### ***Beaufort Official Community Plan (2001)***

This plan includes, basically, all farms north of the Stamp Falls Provincial Park which would include at least 3 of the past, and the remaining active, dairy farms, as well as Hertel Meats and numerous other farms.

### **Agricultural Objectives**

The Beaufort OCP includes the following objectives related to agriculture:

- 1) To ensure the continued preservation of existing and potential farmland for future generations.
- 2) To support the growth and maintenance of a viable farming community.
- 3) To minimize conflicts between agricultural activities and surrounding land uses.
- 4) To recognize the major role played by the BC Agricultural Land Commission in preservation of agricultural land and agricultural viability.

There are seven related policies listed in the agricultural section which deal with:

- Support for the concept of the Agricultural Land Reserve and recognition that
  - ALR lands fall under the jurisdiction of the BC Agricultural Land Commission Act
  - the commission is obliged to consider individual applications but not obligated to approve applications that do not comply with minimum lot sizes or densities
  - registration of restrictive covenants on ALR lands require the approval of the B.C. Agricultural Land Commission
- Land currently farmed or with agricultural potential are designated as agriculture
- Subdivision of agriculture lands, under the Homesite Severance Policies, may allow lot sizes below that required under existing zoning
- The Regional District supports the interim use of ALR lands for nonfarm purposes such as open space, forestry, recreation and airstrips provided there is no long-term detrimental effect on agricultural potential
- Viable farm units will be retained wherever possible and consolidation of small parcels is encouraged
- Potential conflict between farmland and other neighbouring land uses will be minimized
  - residential acreages will be encouraged to take place outside the ALR



- agriculture will be encouraged to observe relevant codes of practice and environmental guidelines
- new roads will be routed around the ALR
- conditions for mineral and gravel removal

The plan recognizes the rural character of the area. Residential objectives encourage limited residential acreage development that is compatible with the agricultural resource base.

“Acreage Residential” minimum lot sizes are 2 ha (5 acres); “Rural Residential” minimum lot sizes are 4 ha (10 acres). There is provision for small-scale commercial development within the plan area, compatible with Beaufort’s rural and natural resource base.

Environmental objectives include:

- to identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas, including habitat important to the fisheries resource and while life in general
- to protect water sources for irrigation, domestic and fisheries use
- to encourage future development to take place away from lands susceptible to flooding.

Related environmental policies recognize the economic value of fisheries. They also recognize that registration of restrictive covenants requires the approval of the BC Agricultural Land Commission. They protect a 15 m “no disturbance” zone for natural vegetation along the Stamp River. They put limitations on land-use and building within areas that are known to flood.

### ***Sproat Lake Official Community Plan (2005)***

The area of the OCP includes the entire watershed of the Lake and a portion of Great Central Lake as well as part of the watershed of Nahmint Lake and covers a total area of 39,075 ha (150square miles).

One of the Plan goals stated in the Economic Development section of the OCP, is to support the confirmation and strengthening of traditional primary industries such as agriculture and forestry while at the same time realizing opportunities of the new economy.

The OCP includes a large area of undeveloped ALR land as well as a few farms along Central Lake Road. Agriculture in the Sproat Lake area is much smaller in size and is confined to a few areas where soil capability permits agricultural activity, supporting small acreages growing vegetables and fruit. Some lands that are still forested have the capacity for agricultural activity in the future. The OCP intends to protect this land and foresees an increase in agricultural operations supporting agri-tourism activity (ie.farm bed-and-breakfast operations) and new agricultural products and produce and organic farming.

### **Agricultural Objectives**

The Sproat Lake OCP includes the following objectives and policies related to agriculture:

1. To protect land with agricultural capability from inappropriate urban development.
  - a. Designate all land in the agricultural land reserve for large lot sizes and for agricultural use only.
  - b. Keep residential concentrations well removed from agricultural land to avoid friction between intensive urban uses and agricultural operations.
2. To encourage an increase in agricultural activities.
  - a. Encourage the expansion of aggregate tourism, wineries, local-produce oriented food production, more variety of agricultural products and organic farming.

3. To support a review of land within the ALR.
  - a. Liaise with the Agricultural Land Commission to identify sites within the Agricultural Land Reserve that may be excluded were designated for alternate use in this plan, for example the regional airport, airport business Park and the regional motorsports Park.
  - b. Review Regional District zoning bylaws to ensure reasonable compatibility with current agricultural land reserve regulations.

One of the objectives of the Tourism and Culture section of the OCP, was to showcase and encourage the development of eco--tourism and agri-tourism activity.

### ***Beaver Creek OCP (1999)***

59% of Beaver Creek Community Plan area is within the ALR, including the majority of large parcels in the east and north of the study area. At the writing of the plan in 1999 there were three full-time farms and a significant number of part-time or hobby farms. Farming activities within the plan area include the production of vegetables, chickens and beef cattle. Many residents also have horses.

### **Objectives of the OCP**

1. To encourage the growth and maintenance of the viable farming community and a range of rural agricultural-life styles.
2. To preserve lands with agricultural potential.
3. To ensure that conflicts between agriculture and surrounding land uses are kept to a minimum.

### **Policies of the Plan**

- a. All land within the ALR is under the jurisdiction of the ALC act administered by the BC agricultural land commission.
- b. Areas designated as agriculture include the following:
  - lands which are currently being farmed on a full or part-time basis;
  - lands which are deemed to have future agricultural potential;
  - smaller agricultural properties. These may be used as hobby farms and many have potential for commercial agriculture. The plan recognizes that such uses are a legitimate use within the ALR and are an integral part of the rural agricultural character of the community.
- c. Subdivision of lands designated agriculture shall only occur if one or more of the following conditions applies;
  - The land is excluded from the ALR.
  - The land is approved for subdivision within the ALR pursuant to the Agricultural Land Commission Act;
  - The land is exempted by the Agricultural Land Commission Act, regulations thereto, or orders of the Commission.

The only exception to this policy shall be for subdivision approved under the Homesite Severance Guidelines pursuant to the Agricultural Land Commission Act.

- Where subdivision is proposed for lands which are currently in the ALR and where the provisions of policy 2c apply, this plan supports subdivision in accordance with minimum parcel sizes applicable to the land in question as of January 1, 1999.
- Encourages the consolidation of smaller parcels of agricultural land into larger, more productive agricultural units.
- Recognizes the importance to agriculture of a secure supply of water for irrigation and will encourage cooperation between the provincial Ministry of Environment, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Ministry of Agriculture and the farming community in the management of the water resource.
- Supports the interim use of ALR lands for such uses as forestry, silviculture, open space and recreation for these uses will not impair the future agricultural viability of the land in question.
- Potential conflicts between farmland and other neighbouring land uses will be minimized as far as possible:
  - Acreage residential subdivision will be encouraged to take place outside the ALR, creating a buffer between farmland and denser residential areas and the provincial approving officer will be encouraged to ensure that adequate buffering is provided to protect agricultural lands when approving subdivisions.
  - Agricultural operations will be encouraged to observe relevant codes of practice, standards drawn up in terms of the Farm Practice Protection Act and environmental guidelines for various agricultural commodity groups.
- Ancillary farm occupations, including farm retail sales, home occupations and bed-and-breakfast will be encouraged to increase farm viability, provided that such uses are in compliance with the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot Zoning Bylaw and regulations pursuant to the Agricultural Land Commission Act;
- The Ministry of Transportation and Highways will be encouraged to route new roads around, rather than through, the agricultural land reserve.

Policies of the Services and Public Utilities section of the plan include;

- The option of a regional water supply /distribution system should be reconsidered to meet long-term water supply requirements.

The objectives of Residential development include;

- To provide opportunities for a range of rural lifestyles.
- To decrease the density of housing in the vicinity of lands adjacent to the ALR.

Policies of residential land use include:

- Petting farms may be permitted within the rural residential designation provided they are compatible with surrounding land use and access is approved by the Ministry of Transportation and Highways.

Commercial and industrial policy and objectives include;

- to protect residential areas and rural agricultural land uses from the intrusion of undesirable commercial and industrial uses and to avoid land-use conflict.

Environmental policy and objectives include;

- the need to preserve and protect sources of domestic and agricultural water supply.
- Guidelines for lands within the environmentally sensitive area will require development permits. There will be minimum setbacks for agricultural buildings
  - 60 m on the stamp and Somass River.
  - Setbacks from major creeks and wetlands will include the following
    - agricultural buildings designed for intensive livestock operations or for storage of manure - 30 m setback
    - setbacks for any agricultural building from domestic water intake - 30 m
    - other agricultural buildings 15 m
    - others as determined through review by the provincial Ministry of Environment and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.
- The Regional District will establish close working relationships between land owners the farming community and the environmental agencies in the development of an effective, site-specific riparian protection area.
- Land subject to known flooding conditions should, where possible, be used for parks, open space recreation, silviculture or agricultural uses.

Mineral and aggregate resources policies and objectives include;

- the plan recognizes the location of mineral and aggregate resources are difficult to determine in advance and provides for consideration of gravel pits within the agricultural designation. These proposals will be site-specific.

### *Cherry Creek OCP*

#### **Objectives**

In the general section of the community plan objectives and policies, a few objectives relating directly to agriculture read;

- to ensure support for the preservation of agricultural lands and viable agricultural holdings.
- To ensure that future land use patterns do not result in major conflict of use occurring.
- To provide for the preservation of the character of the community and the preservation or enhancement of the quality and way of life of community residents.

Transportation policy and objectives include:

- to prevent potentially negative impacts on agricultural areas by avoiding placing major roads through such areas and by protecting agriculture by buffering and other appropriate measures.
- Liaising with the provincial Agricultural Land Commission to ensure that adequate steps are taken to prevent or minimize impact such as roads, foot paths and trail alignments as they may the potential to negatively impact agricultural land.

Civic, public and institutional uses objectives and policies include;

- permit the short to mid term agricultural use of the area that is recognized as D.L.152 in recognition of BC Hydro's anticipated long-term use for Hydro distribution purposes.

Agricultural use objectives include;

- to retain and preserve, where justified, present and future lands having agricultural potential for this and future generations.
- To support and encourage the development of viable agricultural operations of the plan areas in locations where conflict with other forms of land development are reduced or negated and to ensure that agricultural operations are conducted in accordance with the Code of Agricultural Practice for Waste Management, the Environmental Guidelines for the Various Commodity Groups and Standards drawn up in terms of the Farm Practices Protection Act.

Agricultural use policies include;

- discouraging subdivision of lands designated as agricultural use. Only where such lands are excluded from the ALR, approved for subdivision within the ALR, exempted by the ALR and where strong and valid planning reasons encourage such development will the Regional District support subdivision proposals.
- The only exception to this policy shall be in the case of subdivision approved under the Homesite Severance Guidelines pursuant to the A LC act.
- The consolidation of smaller parcels of agricultural land into larger more productive agricultural units, will be encouraged.
- Support and encourage the interim use of agricultural lands for forestry/silviculture, open space and for recreational uses where such use will not impair the future agricultural viability of the land.
- Encourage use of landscape buffering where there is potential for conflict at the interface of major agricultural use areas with predominantly residential use areas. Such "buffers" are expected to be located within each "use" area/designation with widths dependent on site-specific factors and individual lot/area circumstance.

Residential use policies and objectives include;

- To provide different residential densities. Acreage residential minimum parcel size, .08 hectares (2 acres) and rural residential parcel size 2 ha (5 acres)

#### City of Port Alberni OCP

Council adopted the OCP for the City of Port Alberni in April 2007. The OCP has a brief section on agriculture—less than half a page. It notes that the amount of land within the ALR, in the city, is limited to a single property "that forms part of a contiguous Highway Commercial land-use area on the east side of the city" (part of the property that Extra Foods and the associated mall is located on) and an area on the west side of the city located within the Somass Estuary (lands that have recently been purchased by the Tsechaht First Nation).

This section also notes that urban agriculture is important in achieving a more sustainable food source and creating a secure food supply for the residents of the city.

Related policy includes encouragement and support for market gardens (especially in low-lying areas), urban agriculture, production, processing, distribution and sale of locally grown products as well as public education related to urban agriculture, composting and water conservation. The city is committed to supporting (and potentially expanding) the Port Alberni Farmers Market.

Policy also states that “the city will work with the Agricultural Land Commission in an effort to identify opportunities to enhance and/or promote agriculture in the community”.

### ***The Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot Consolidated Zoning Bylaw***

#### **Zoning district and use regulations**

There are several zones in the zoning bylaw that permit and encourage agricultural activity within the Regional District. The following information is highlights of the consolidated zoning bylaw that relate directly to agriculture. For accurate and more in-depth information please consult the zoning bylaw.

#### **Small Holdings District [A 1]**

This district provides for intensive farming, truck gardening, orchard or nursery cultivation, greenhouses and other intensive rural uses, and for the holding of potential urban land in large parcels for future development.

##### **Permitted uses**

- a. Can have two dwellings
- b. temporary accommodation in the form of mobile homes
- c. not more than two dormitory units
- d. farming, feed and hay dealing, truck gardening, orchard or nursery cultivation, greenhouses and other similar enterprises and uses, including the incidental direct sale of farm produce to the consumer
- e. grazing livestock, but excluding abnormally intensive livestock feeding operations
- f. mushroom growing, provided that such is located at a distance of not less than 30.48 m from all street or lot lines
- g. upland aquaculture [fish farming] including all activities incidental to such operations such as hatchery and nursery facilities, grow out ponds, storage and processing of aquatic organisms cultivated, reared and harvested on the lots

##### **Conditions of use**

A condition of use in this zone is the following statement;

Nothing shall be done in any part of this district that will become an annoyance or nuisance to the surrounding areas by reason of unsightliness, emissions of orders and noise including generator or pump noise and use of flood lighting.

#### **Rural District [A2]**

The district provides for the conservation of agricultural and non-urban land by the holding of land in large parcels, and for the protection of public health, safety and welfare in areas which being subject to periodic floods and overflow are unsuitable for urban-type uses an intensive development.

**Permitted uses**

- 1) up to two dwellings
- 2) where a lot is 4.046 hectares [10 acres] or greater in areas classified as farmland in accordance with the Taxation Act, the following uses shall be permitted provided they are demonstrated to be essential to the operation of the farm.
  - More than one single-family dwelling
  - temporary accommodation in the form of mobile homes
  - not more than two dormitory units
- 3) Arboreta, botanical gardens, wildlife refuges and similar uses
- 4) farming, feed and hay dealing, truck gardening, orchard or nursery cultivation, greenhouses, and other similar enterprises and uses including the incidental direct sale of farm produce to the consumer
- 5) grazing livestock, but excluding abnormally intensive livestock feeding operations
- 6) mushroom growing, provided that such use is located at a distance of not less than 30.48 m from all Street or lot lines
- 7) upland aquaculture, including all activities incidental to such operations such as hatchery and nursery facilities, grow out ponds, storage and processing aquatic organisms cultivated, reared and harvested on the lots
- 8) wineries and cideries provided that a vineyard or orchard at least 2 ha in area is under continuous cultivation on the same farm or legal parcel
- 9) sale of wines and cider produced on the farm and related products, provided that the retail area does not exceed 500 ft.<sup>2</sup> or 5% of the floor area of the winery, whichever is more, winery and cider tours, as ancillary uses to a winery or cidery

**Conditions of use**

A condition of use in this zone is the following statement;

Nothing shall be done in any part of this District that will become an annoyance or nuisance to the surrounding areas by reason of unsightliness, the omission of orders and noise including generator or pump noise and use of floodlighting.

**Forest Rural District [A3]**

This district provides for the retention of undeveloped forest and wild land as non-urban and rural land, and for its use for either large hobby farms or forest and recreation activities

**Permitted Uses**

- 1) No more than two single-family dwellings
- 2) arboreta, botanical gardens, wildlife refuges and similar uses
- 3) Harvesting of wild crops such as salal, ferns, moss, berries, tree seeds.

- 4) upland aquaculture, including all activities incidental to such operations such as hatchery and nursery facilities, grow out ponds, storage and processing aquatic organisms cultivated, reared and harvested on the lots
- 5) wineries and cideries provided that a vineyard or orchard at least 2 ha in area is under continuous cultivation on the same farm or legal parcel
- 6) sale of wines and cider produced on the farm and related products, provided that the retail area does not exceed 500 ft.<sup>2</sup> or 5% of the floor area of the winery, whichever is more, winery and cider tours, as ancillary uses to a winery or cidery

#### **Conditions of use**

A condition of use in this zone is the following statement;

Nothing shall be done in any part of this District within 30.48 m of any other district that will become an annoyance or nuisance to the surrounding areas by reason of unsightliness, the omission of odours, dust, liquid effluent, fumes, smoke, vibration, noise, or glare nor shall anything be done which creates or causes the health, fire or explosion hazard, electrical interference, or undue traffic congestion.

#### **Forest Reserve District (A4)**

The intent of this district is to provide for the retention of forest and wild land. The primary uses allowed by this district are natural resource development and extraction, protecting the land from premature building development or subdivision fragmentation.

#### **Permitted Uses**

- 1) up to two Single-family dwelling
- 2) Farms and grazing of livestock.
- 3) Where property is classified as farmland in accordance with the Taxation Act, the following accessory uses may be permitted provided they are demonstrated to be essential to the operation of farm
  - a. more than one single-family dwelling
  - b. temporary accommodation in the form of mobile homes or dormitory units for employees
- 4) Harvesting of wild crops, such as salal, ferns, moss, berries and tree seeds, or fishing and trapping.
- 5) upland aquaculture, including all activities incidental to such operations such as hatchery and nursery facilities, grow out ponds, storage and processing aquatic organisms cultivated, reared and harvested on the lots
- 6) wineries and cideries provided that a vineyard or orchard at least 2 ha in area is under continuous cultivation on the same farm or legal parcel
- 7) sale of wines and cider produced on the farm and related products, provided that the retail area does not exceed 500 ft.<sup>2</sup> or 5% of the floor area of the winery, whichever is more, winery and cider tours, as ancillary uses to a winery or cidery

#### **Conditions of use**

A condition of use in this zone is the following statement;



The use and operation being proposed is to be conducted so it will not cause or nor permit any objectionable or dangerous conditions outside the property, including but not limited to: noise, vibration, dust, smoke and other kinds of particulate matter, odour, toxic and noxious matter, fire, explosive hazard, heat, humidity and glare.

### **Petting Farm District (A5)**

This district provides for the development of petting farms in rural areas.

#### **Permitted Uses**

- 1) petting farms
- 2) One single-family dwelling
- 3) accessory buildings that include display of crafts, administrative office space, food concession, gift shop, children's play area, picnic area, public toilets., Tack and buggy shop selling items for use by miniature horses.

#### **Conditions of Use**

A condition of use in this district.

Nothing shall be done which is or will become an annoyance or nuisance to the surrounding areas by reason of unsightliness, the emission of odours, liquid effluents, dust, fumes or noise, nor shall anything be done which creates or causes a health hazard or undue traffic congestion

Hours of operation shall be between 9:00 AM and 9:00 PM or dusk; whichever comes first

### **Rural Abattoir (RAB) District**

This district is intended to provide for custom slaughtering on a small scale on large properties located in rural or agricultural areas.

#### **Permitted Uses**

- 1) One abattoir of less than 250 m<sup>2</sup>.
- 2) Maximum one single-family dwelling.

#### **Conditions of Use**

Nothing shall be done which is or will become an annoyance or nuisance to the surrounding areas by reason of unsightliness, the emission of odours, liquid effluents, dust, fumes or noise, nor shall anything be done which creates or causes a health hazard or undue traffic congestion

### **Forest Rural (A3-1) District**

This district provides for the retention of undeveloped forest and wild land as non-urban and rural land, and for its use for either large hobby farms or forest and recreation activities.

#### **Permitted Uses in Forest Rural (A3)**

- 1) Conditions of use where the lands are affected by the agricultural land reserve, approval from the Agricultural Land Commission is required for more than two single-family dwellings.

**Forest Rural District (A3-2)**

This district provides for the retention of undeveloped forest and wild land as non-urban and rural land, and for its use for either large hobby farms or forest and recreation activities.

**Permitted Uses**

- 1) Up to two houses
- 2) Arboreta, botanical gardens, wildlife refuges and similar uses
- 3) Farming, the grazing of livestock, and the incidental, direct sale of farm produce to the consumer, but excluding abnormally intensive livestock feeding operations
- 4) Harvesting of wild crops such as salal, ferns, moss, berries, tree seeds
- 5) Wineries and cideries provided that a vineyard or orchard at least two hectares in area is under continuous cultivation on the same farm or legal parcel
- 6) Sale of wine and cider produced on the farm and related products, provided that the retail area does not exceed 500 ft.<sup>2</sup> or 5% of the floor area of the winery, whichever is more; winery and cidery tours, as ancillary uses to a winery or cidery.

**Conditions of Use**

A condition of use in this district.

Nothing shall be done in any part of this district that will become an annoyance or nuisance to the surrounding areas by reason of unsightliness, the emissions of odours and noise including generator or pump noise and use of floodlighting.



Somass Farm with Hay Wagons - 1914

Alberni Valley Museum



Photo Credit: Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District



Photo Credit: Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

## PART 2

# Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan 2011

## The Action Plan



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT  
REGIONAL DISTRICT

Funding provided by:



## THE VISION

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### The Statement

#### Vision 1

- *“The community in the Alberni Valley will create a positive environment for agriculture by recognizing the requirements of agriculture and encouraging new and established farms to participate in a supportive agricultural framework.*”

OR

#### Vision 2

- *“The Alberni Valley is a place where farmers thrive because of their contribution to the economy, environment, character and health of the community and its people.”*

## Key Components of the Vision

Based on feedback from the community, the 20-year vision for Alberni agriculture must incorporate:

- Fully recognizes the importance of farmers. The word “farmers” is intentionally used in the vision because there was a clear message that the profile of “farmers” needs to be elevated and it is about the people (farmers) not the process (agriculture).
- Economically prosperous but not at the expense of the environment or character of the Alberni Valley. Profitability must be a priority to ensure that the industry grows instead of declining (the current situation) and that the valley produces more of its own food. It should be “more organic” than it is now
- Ensures that agricultural capability is fully realized. The community wants more food but doesn’t want “wall to wall” intensive agriculture. This is the basis for establishing a food self-sufficiency target as a means of defining the balance between economic, environmental and social values.
- An industry that is visible, prominent, strong, recognized, and appreciated
- Protects, maintains, improves the character and quality of life and other social, cultural and historic values that are important to the people of the Alberni Valley - a serious commitment with a friendly spirit.

## The Mission

The mission is to develop the capacity of the resources (land, people and capital) to allow the community to produce 40% of the food consumed locally. The mission that flows out of this plan is to build the capacity to vastly increase the food self-sufficiency of the Alberni Valley. While some in the community wanted to aim higher, the consensus was to target 40%. This plan is based on a 20 year target that would develop the resources (land, labour, capital and management ability) to achieve 40% food self-sufficiency.



## FOOD SELF SUFFICIENCY TARGET

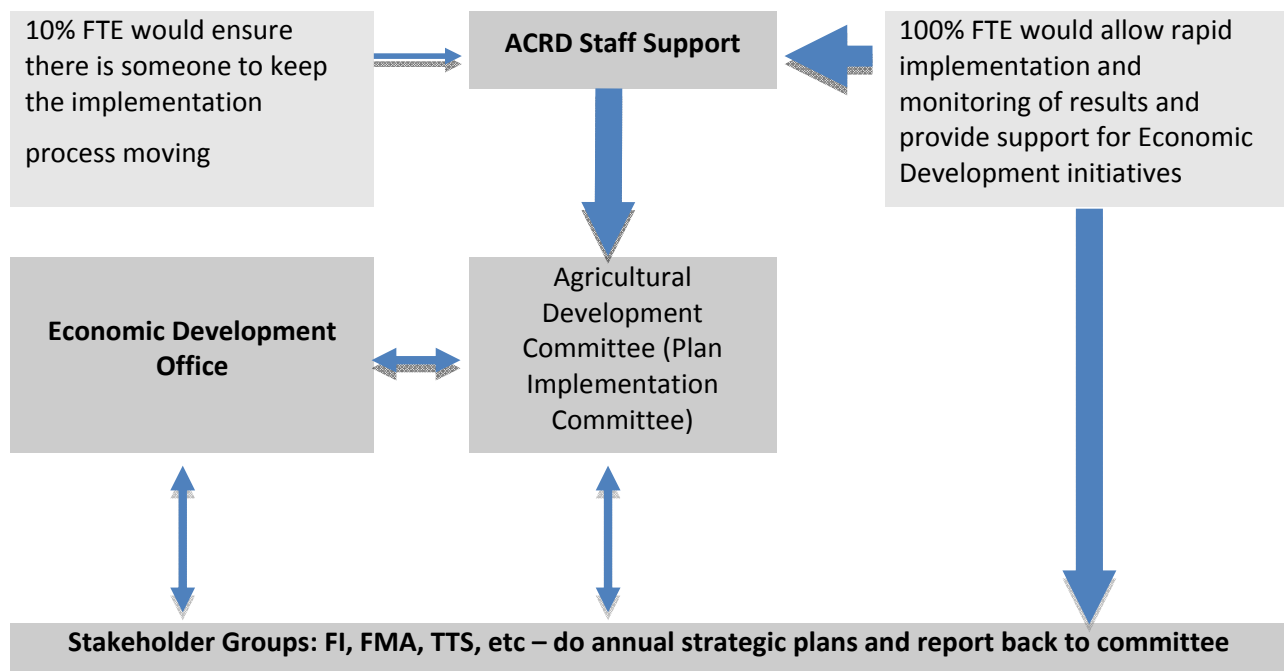
The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, assesses food self-sufficiency based on the area of irrigated and dry land required to produce a healthy diet for one individual. The area required is estimated at 0.524 ha per person of which 0.471 ha is non-irrigated and 0.053 ha is irrigated.

<i>Desired Level of Self-Sufficiency</i>	<i>Current (5%)</i>	<i>Target 40%</i>
<b>Revenue generated - gross</b>	\$5,491,456	\$35,893,359
<b>Revenue generated - per ALR ha</b>	\$713	\$4,660
<b>Water requirements (acre ft)</b>	1,375	1,830
<b>Water requirements (m3)</b>	1,695,817	2,255,971
<b>Cleared land (for food) required (ha)</b>	1,793	4,102

It should be noted that a commitment to a 40% target implies a commitment to helping the industry develop access to at least 1830 acre feet of irrigation water, among other things. Production can be increased with more intensive management and use of other inputs but, without irrigation water, increases in production will be very limited.



## Recommended Structure for Implementation:



## THE ACTION PLAN

### Primary Action Requirements:

The Agricultural Development Committee would be an advisory committee to the local government with the purpose of implementing this plan and assisting in the economic development of a thriving agriculture industry in the Alberni Valley. Its purpose is different than the AAC and its membership should include representatives of key organizations as well as the Economic Development Officer. To be effective, those representatives must be able to engage their organizations.

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<b>To implement the plan</b>	Develop terms of reference and appoint members to an Agricultural Development Committee who will be responsible for implementation and monitoring of the plan	ACRD staff, EDO and AAC, 4-H?	Upon completion of plan	Committee in place.
	Initial meeting to “take ownership of the plan” - endorse it, appoint chair, and set first year priorities and targets	ADC, led by ACRD	By May 31, 2011	
<b>Critical to Plan’s success *****</b>	<b>Each member organization has a strategic planning session to discuss their roles, establish their priorities and set goals for actions</b>	FI, FMA, TTS	By Dec. 31, 2011	
	Annual Committee Meeting to review and monitor progress	ADC	December annually	
	Hold a joint networking session, preferably a casual celebration of local food, with the stakeholder groups to discuss and evaluate progress	All	Summer, every second year	



## Secondary Action Requirements:

### Goal 1: To improve the effectiveness of farm and community organizations

#### Action

**After adoption of the Agricultural Plan, hold a facilitated brainstorming session that will generate an action plan within each stakeholder group (including 4-H) and area of responsibility.**

- Create a Speakers Directory (ADC in cooperation with other regional organizations)

#### Action

**Review a list of educational opportunities (annually). It is suggested that each main stakeholder group creates a list of topics, identify topics to be addressed as monthly meeting topics and topics that require outside help. Develop a proposed calendar to deal with these and establish a committee to organize.**

The following were identified in this planning process and are suggested as a starting point:

- Governance workshop
- Business planning or programs available to assist
- Future farm business structures – co-ops, strata, corporations...
- Succession planning
- Accessing capital – workshop with banker and discussion about other sources – Community Futures, government programs
- Taxation update – HST, property tax, income tax/ computer applications for accounting
- Internet use
- Direct farm marketing – several workshops
- Producing an effective farm product guide or advertising in general
- Karst water – what is it and how can it benefit farm community?
- Small Farm Development Program (NIC)
- Agritourism
- Food safety and traceability - Food regulations at farmers markets.
- Organic/permaculture farming practices

- Distribution – how to get your products into stores and restaurants
- Value added production options (SSFPA)
- Impacts of Climate change?
- Getting the Ear of Government – how to get your voice heard at the provincial and federal level.
- How to use trends to increase your profits.
- Home and Community gardening “how to” courses
- Brainstorm potential local Research and Development opportunities (university, NIC, SR&ED)
- Brainstorm Ecological Benefits of Agriculture and how to capitalize.
- Management Intensive Grazing – increasing profits from forage

## Action

### **Networking between organizations named in this plan. Inviting or encouraging members from other organizations to meetings and events**

- Encourage individual farmers to participate in organizations like the Chamber of Commerce.
- Plan a Farm Tour that includes local politicians and agencies that impact agriculture
- Participate in planning an Island Agricultural Show that will allow local farmers to connect with other farmers on the island and will allow improved exchange of information and ideas at the regional level.

## Action

### **Employ an Agricultural Support Officer**



Men of the Farmers Institute at Chases Farm 1920 - Alberni Valley Museum

## Goal 2: To improve marketing of the Alberni Valley and its agricultural products

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
Brand the Alberni Valley as a producer of quality agrifood products	Start with a joint meeting of key stakeholder groups.	ADC, EDO	2011
	Develop a plan to brand the region based on its unique characteristics for agriculture	Chamber activity or Tourism, or EDO	ongoing
Expand and increase distribution of the local Growers Guide (Note 2)	Marketing workshop to discuss the "how to" of product guides	FM &FI, TTS?	2011 – early
	Work with local print media to develop a print copy for distribution in local paper	EDO, ADC, FM, FI	2011
	Develop an online version with farms mapped and profiled	Work with islandfarmfresh.com	ongoing
To market more product to West Coast tourists	Potential FI, FM workshop to brainstorm how to do this effectively	FI, FM, ADC	2011
	Develop cooperative distribution to ship and sell product in Tofino/Ucluelet during tourist season		
	Start another farmers market at a key time and location to catch West Coast visitors as they pass through Alberni		
	Develop value added products to sell as souvenirs at West Coast sites		
To increase use of the internet for marketing farm products from the Alberni Valley	Start with workshops to discuss the internet, social media and how it can be used to expand markets	FI, FM, ADC	2011

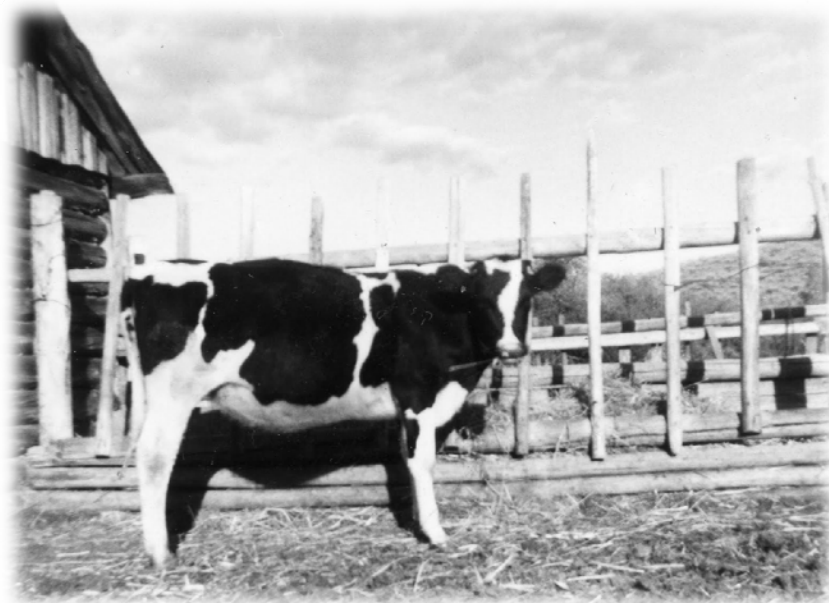
## Goal 3: To improve access to markets for farmers

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
Increase the number of direct market sales within the community	Raise the profile of the Farmers Market by relocating it to a more prominent and easier access site.	FMA, RD	
	Work to get more locally grown product into the grocery stores, institutions and restaurants.	TTS and other food security groups.	
	Create a Buy Local Campaign	EDO, TTS	
Expand local-food job-Training Opportunities	Create an event where the producers could showcase their products; and have strategic networking and educational dialogues with the retail, food industry and institutional markets. Invite Coombs, the West Coast and the local community businesses to the show.	EDO, FI	
	Increase local businesses access to trained staff with skills such as seasonal menu planning, utilizing fresh and local ingredients, butchery, baking	NIC	
Increase the number of direct market sales outside of the community	Public programming, including cooking classes and workshops for adults and youth	Private, public recreation programs, NIC	
	Invite Coombs, the West Coast and the local community businesses to the showcase event and strategic networking and educational dialogues with the retail, food industry and institutional markets.	EDO, FI	

Advocate at the provincial and federal level to support small-scale, diversified farmers in the adoption of food-safety protocols.	Establish a voice at the federal level as protocols are developed, particularly in support of the concerns and needs of the valley's small-scale, diversified farming operations.  A farmer education program to assist farmers in transitioning to new protocols.	AAC	
Create networking opportunities for farmers and the food industry.	Create showcase event – noted earlier.	EDO, FI	
	Host an annual food tradeshow in the Valley.	FI, FMA, EDO	
Enhance the information directory for local food producers	List producers, what they grow and how to contact them. A "Growers Guide" distributed in the newspaper and "online".	FI, FMA, EDO and the Alberni Valley Times, Private Business	
	Create an Online farmers market-website that links suppliers to customers. E.g., SPUD.ca	FI, FMA, EDO, Private	
Increase use of the internet for marketing local farm products.	Deliver a course in social media and internet sales	EDO, FI, private business	
Develop ongoing short course type educational programs for farmers		FI, FMA, TT and other food security groups, NIC	

## Goal 4: To maintain or encourage growth of forage based livestock products

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
To increase scale of production of forage based red meat	Brainstorming session to develop a cooperative production system that will allow branding of local grass fed beef (Note XX). Involve Courtenay group already started on this. (CVFI)	ADC, EDO	2011
	Investigate potential for a community pasture operation with large landholders – private, forest company, First Nations?	ADC with help from	1 to 3 years
	Establish a forage producer group to network amongst producers given that extension programs are no longer doing this	FM, TTS?	1 to 3 years



## Goal 5: To reduce operating costs and/or risk

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
To reduce operating costs	Brainstorming session to identify specific inputs and/or assets that could be purchased or pooled to reduce production costs for local producers	FM, FI	2011
	Investigate potential for custom operator business in the Alberni Valley	FI	1 to 3 years
Workshop to ensure farmers are aware of the programs that are available such as: Agri-invest, Agri-insure, Agri-Stability, Advance Payments Program, Scientific Research and Experimental Development, BC Farm Business Advisory Services, BC Food Safety Systems Implementation Program	FI with help from MAL	Late 2011	



## Goal 6: To increase consumer education and outreach

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
Develop a community wide brand "Eat Local, Eat From the Alberni Valley" Campaign	Hold a joint meeting with Transition Town Society to initiate a process and identify opportunities	FI, TTS	2011
	Establish intermediate and long term targets to encourage consumers to spend a certain percentage percent of their food dollars on foods from local sources	FI, TTS	1 to 3 years
	Develop a web-based method of improving outreach to the community OR subscribe to an existing system as there are many that are currently being developed	FM, TTS	1 to 3 years
	Continue to increase awareness of the benefits of buying local by participating in events like the Fall Fair, CCCU Barbecue		
	Create a local festival around food to celebrate local production – include as many local agrifood and fish products as possible. Increase the number of food events that celebrate the food of the Alberni Valley		



## Goal 7: To improve the productivity of the land base

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
	Meet with forest companies to discuss potential for converting low elevation "forest" land to agriculture	FI	To increase quantity or productivity of land used for agriculture.
	Encourage drainage improvements by holding workshops	FI	
	Hold workshop to discuss alternatives for improved access to local farmland for new farmers and farmers who want to expand production	FI	Create affordable land opportunities for new farmers
	Hold Workshop to discuss alternate business structure models for future farms – co-ops, leasing arrangements, ag industrial park or shared use arrangements, incubator farms, corporations, etc		
	Find or develop a land lease template and develop a land lease registry		
	Work with forest companies to identify lands that can be converted to agricultural use and identify strategies to accomplish this		
	Work with First Nation to identify potential farming opportunities	EDO	
	Ensure there is strong and effective farm representation at water management planning processes		To increase water available for irrigation

## Goal 8: To develop or expand the people (labour and management) capacity needed to grow the industry

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
To recruit new farmers	Ensure that local farm organizations provide a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for visitors and potential new members	FI, FM	
	Develop a program to actively recruit new farmers from other areas based on the agricultural advantages of Alberni – relatively inexpensive but very productive land, available water, strong markets, good climate, etc	EDO, Local real estate, Chamber, Island Timberlands	1 to 3 years
	Hold a Small Farm Development Course	FM, NIC	
To increase the interest of youth in agriculture	Develop a model farm-to-school pre-service teacher instruction program. Farm-to-school programs connect farmers, fresh local food and students (K-12 as well as within the college) to help address two major challenges: healthy eating habits and the loss of farming as a way of life.		
	Support the initiatives that are being developed by the Ag in the Classroom Foundation and work with teachers to get these materials into the classrooms		Ongoing
	Expand 4-H curriculum to include a focus on sustainable food systems OR start a 4-H Community Club.	FI, TTS	1 to 3 years
	Encourage Community Gardens	FM, TTS	1 to 3 years

## Goal 9: To improve access to capital

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
To improve access to capital and/or free up capital for other uses on the farm	Encourage business planning as a tool for accessing capital. The BC Farm Business Assessment Program can assist with business assessments and business planning	MAL – FBA program	
	Develop an equipment pool (Farmers' Institute or Farmers' Market) that will allow farmers access to occasional use of specialized equipment that they cannot justify purchasing	FI,	1 to 3 years
	Develop a lease registry to allow new farmers access to land or to allow existing farmers to expand without having to use their capital for land purchases - noted elsewhere	FM, EDO, AC-RD	
	Investigate potential use of underutilized infrastructure from other sectors, ie vacant cooler, freezer, storage space	ADC, EDO	



## Goal 10: To mitigate the ecological impact on the environment

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
To reduce the impact of individual farms on the environment	Encourage producers to complete and implement environmental farm plans. Note: this, by itself, will identify environmental issues on farms and help to mitigate the impacts of those issues.	FI, FM	
	To encourage reduced use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides		1 to 3 years
	Investigate opportunities for beneficial re-use of waste products for fertilizer or energy sources		
	Investigate use of waste and biomass heat for greenhouse production		
To increase the recognition of the ecological benefits of agriculture.	Hold a joint session of farmers and community to discuss the ecological impacts of agriculture in the community	FM, NIC	



## Goal 11: To Strengthen Local Government Initiatives

Objective	Action	Lead	Timeframe
Ensure local government policy supports agriculture.	AAC reviews all local policy documents including OCP's, Regional Growth Strategies, and ByLaws and recommends changes to ensure consistency with Strengthening Farming Initiative  Promote community engagement to involve citizens in developing food policy and initiatives.	AAC,ACRD, City	Ongoing
	Refer policy issues related to other local resource development, ie, water, to AAC for review and recommendation.	ACRD, City	Ongoing
	Review existing zoning and other bylaws to identify and create policies that remove barriers or in other ways fail to support local farms, small lot farming, small-scale food production in mixed-use and residential neighborhoods, community gardens and associated food enterprises (e.g., slaughter and processing facilities). Flexibility is needed within zoning bylaws to allow for more sustainable development patterns that preserve the Alberni character, allow for growth and support farming activity.	ACRD, City, ADC	Ongoing
Allow for on-farm housing.	Continue to write Zoning bylaws to allow more than one household on a farm, housing for interns on farms and temporary housing for training workers. If the ACRD staff are uncertain of the need for additional residences, the request could be forwarded to the AAC.	ACRD, City	

<p><b>Accept small lot agriculture as a land use that will play an important role in land use planning by linking to environmental, social RD, City and economic issues.</b></p>	<p>Create government policy that supports small lot agriculture.</p> <p>Review RD lands and decide the best use for these lands.</p>		
<p><b>Address the trend toward smaller lot agriculture.</b></p>	<p><b>Create a planning exercise for the design of small lot farming to meet the demand for a 20 year growth scenario.</b></p>		
<p><b>To support or recommend appropriate change in provincial and federal policies.</b></p>	<p><b>Allow the AAC to develop motions, to recommend policy change at the provincial and federal level, which may be forwarded to the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC). An example would be a motion to request that quota levels on Vancouver Island be increased to levels that support regional food self-sufficiency. The motion could be framed so that new quota would be allocated to regions that are producing less than regional consumption</b></p>		
<p><b>Research social enterprise models that may benefit agriculture in the Alberni Valley.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Micro-lending to help establish small enterprises</b></li> <li>• <b>Salvation Army life skills program that work with addictions.</b></li> <li>• <b>Therapeutic horticulture</b></li> <li>• <b>Care farms</b></li> </ul>	<p>TTS, EDO</p>	

## Goal 12: To increase the availability of water for agriculture

Objective	Action Item	Lead	Timelines
To ensure farmers are involved in a local water planning processes	Workshop to advise farmers about the impact of recent policy and regulatory changes on local agriculture	AAC, ACRD, City	Ongoing
	Ensure there is farm representation on all committees related to water use and allocation	AAC	2011
	Dedicate part of the ACC meeting in identifying current and future water supply and demand for agriculture.	AAC	2011
	Develop a long term plan to increase water availability/allocation for farmers	ACRD	2012



Stamp River - photo from Alberni Regional District website

## Summary of Goals

<b>Goal 1:</b>	<b>To improve the effectiveness of farm and community organizations</b>
<b>Goal 2:</b>	<b>To improve marketing of the Alberni Valley and its agricultural products</b>
<b>Goal 3:</b>	<b>To improve access to markets for farmers</b>
<b>Goal 4:</b>	<b>To maintain or encourage growth of forage based livestock products</b>
<b>Goal 5:</b>	<b>To reduce operating costs and/or risk</b>
<b>Goal 6:</b>	<b>To increase consumer education and outreach</b>
<b>Goal 7:</b>	<b>To improve the productivity of the land base</b>
<b>Goal 8:</b>	<b>To develop or expand the people (labour and management) capacity needed to grow the industry</b>
<b>Goal 9:</b>	<b>To improve access to capital</b>
<b>Goal 10:</b>	<b>To mitigate the ecological impact on the environment</b>
<b>Goal 11:</b>	<b>To strengthen local government initiatives</b>
<b>Goal 12:</b>	<b>To increase the availability of water for agriculture</b>