

Moving Agriculture Forward in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District



Findings and Recommendations Based on Five Identified
Initiatives from the Agricultural Plan Implementation Strategy
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Executive Summary

The 2011 Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan identified and set a long term goal of a viable and thriving agricultural community and 40% regional food security by the year 2031. In order to make this goal a reality, an Agricultural Support Worker Team has conducted research and initiated the implementation of five specific initiatives as identified by the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. This document provides an overview of findings and recommendations for next-step initiatives.

Key findings all point to an underlying issue - there are not currently enough people involved in agriculture to maximize food production and meet local demand. When this is twinned with valid concerns regarding the succession of existing farms, one concludes there is an immediate need to create supports which will educate and recruit a younger generation to choose farming as a viable future. Currently, public perception perceives farming as a lifestyle choice rather than an income generator and almost all farms within the scope of the ACRD have a supplemental source of income.

Discussions with restaurants, caterers and other food consumers indicate there is a growing and unmet demand for local produce. The need for an organizing body to coordinate and support a farm-to-table initiative is evident and the recent involvement of the ACRD governance has been widely recognized and appreciated. Ongoing dialogue via social media, the support of a regional Buy Local campaign and networking with other regional organizations must continue. In order to assist with the implementation of food security related initiatives, the regional district must continually seek out grant and funding opportunities not only for itself but also for its current and potential farmers and community groups.

Barriers to agriculture which were identified include: water issues especially affordable water, lack of educational supports and a need to establish land linkages and leasing opportunities for young aspiring farmers who lack adequate funds to deal with the capital investment required for farm start up. The Agricultural Support Workers recommend that the regional district work with the Young Agrarians to develop these opportunities within the region.

Other key recommendations include: a planning charrette for the Johnson Street corridor, the creation of a limited regional farmers' market manager, and putting forward an application to host the 2017 Island Agriculture Show. Working in conjunction with the municipality of Port Alberni, the ACRD can pursue a planning charrette for the Johnson Street corridor which would incorporate an agricultural showcase and community engagement site. A long term plan and vision for this corridor is essential to attract new economic opportunities, including agricultural, into the Alberni Valley. A limited market manager will help to unify and support regional farmers' markets. This regional market manager will focus on marketing support, general public promotion of markets, and assist with the coordination of produce for delivery to the markets in West Coast Communities. Finally, the time-sensitive submission of an application to host the Island Agriculture Show in 2017 will increase the profile of agriculture within the region and provide an opportunity for various stakeholders to work together in promoting agriculture within our diverse region.

Moving forward, it is important that the ACRD capitalize on current momentum. An opportunity exists for the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District to play a leading role in moving agriculture forward, fulfilling the food security mandate of the 2011 Agricultural Plan.

Introduction

Throughout the project, the team reviewed and summarized secondary documentation, identified key stakeholders and initiated a focused dialogue. The team designed, distributed and compiled the results of three distinct surveys targeting food producers, food purchasers, and the shellfish industry. During this time, the team regularly interacted with an advisory board primarily made up of members of the agricultural community and other relevant stakeholders.

The team has examined strategies to create a vibrant cohesive farmers' market community through an initial assessment of the current markets, discussion with farmers' market boards around their long term vision, as well as a review of models of excellence within the provincial farmers' market community. The team began to investigate the unique needs and challenges that shellfish growers face in order to assist and enhance their ability to market their products successfully. An assessment of barriers facing farmers and consumers was examined and potential solutions to create a seamless transition from farm to table addressed.

The team has created tangible improvements for the farmer, consumer and the regional district. These include, two updated farmers' directories and an informational document which provides a simple and accessible overview of potential funding streams including grant opportunities, specific farm loan initiatives and other programs applicable to agriculture and food security initiatives. When relevant, the team made individual farmers and shellfish growers aware of certain applicable funding that they could pursue. The team also identified and applied for various funding opportunities on behalf of the Regional District to expand upon the current knowledge base, offering more opportunities for agriculture to thrive within the ACRD.

All members of the project team worked together to find innovative ways to meet the tangible deliverables as outlined in the initial proposal. Social media was effectively used to promote events related to agriculture within the ACRD, primarily through the creation of an "ACRD What's on Your Fork" Facebook page. Moving forward, the team has proposed several recommendations and stressed the importance of a long range vision accompanied by some prioritized goals. The diversity of the team twinned with a history of community involvement ensured the shared role of the agricultural support worker was well received within the wider community, keeping the profile of the regional district engaged, positive and forward thinking.

1. Realizing Improvements to the Farmers' Market

Throughout the course of this contract, members of the team initiated discussion with stakeholders within the five regional farmers' markets. The stakeholders ranged from individual farmers that are vendors at the various markets, to the executive boards of the Spirit Square Farmers' Market, the Port Alberni Farmers' Market and the market managers of the Tofino Market, Ucluelet Night Market and the Sunset Market. Throughout the course of discussions, various scenarios were examined with regards to the markets including: hiring an independent market manager, amalgamating the two concurrent Saturday markets, changing days and times of existing markets, potential supports to improve profile of markets, and identifying obstacles to attracting vendors and consumers.

Trends of Farmers' Markets in BC

The demand for locally produced, fresh and nutritious food has grown rapidly over the past ten years, and so too has the number of farmers' markets. Today, farmers' markets operate in every type of community across BC, from cities to suburbs to rural communities. These are due in part as a response to socio-economic and environmental concerns not met by conventional food systems. Farmers' Markets create a venue for groups of vendors to gather and achieve common goals, such as immediate payment and revenue, while simultaneously promoting community building and aiding local economic growth. Farmers' Markets also serve as an incubator for new farmers who can use the market to test their products in an inexpensive, uncomplicated way.

Farmers' Markets not only contribute to the visibility and availability of local food, they also provide a platform for a wide range of stakeholders to meet, learn and mobilize knowledge about the possibilities of local food systems. Social values and relationships appear to be the essential building blocks of a successful farmers' market. Markets provide a space within the community for farmers, shoppers, entertainers, craftspeople, volunteers, managers and others to meet, mingle and interact.

The themes which consistently emerged from our conversations were: being able to tell the story of food, providing people with choice regarding alternative food systems and the idea that markets are a place of celebration, fostering a sense of community. In addition to the benefit of providing consumers with a political and ethical options regarding where they spend their dollars, there is a large social component of the various farmers' markets.

Current Snapshot of Five Farmers' Markets

Port Alberni Farmers' Market

Port Alberni Farmers' Market is the original market within Port Alberni. It has between 45-50 vendors throughout the summer months with the vendors reduced by half during the winter months. It has recently moved locales from the Harbour Quay to the old Cherry Creek School.

The management structure of this market is a farmer run board of directors. The board feels that public perception is detrimental regarding the creation of a new farmers' market and the public should not deem it as such. They advise that public perception of a "split" is an inaccurate assessment as two markets offer consumers more variety, and has increased the profile of farmers' markets by being in a new locale which serves a new cross-section of the community.

Most members like the new location at the old Cherry Creek School as there is the option of setting up indoors which solves the issue of exposure to the elements. Though they recognize that transportation is now an issue for some attendees, most vendors have found that they haven't lost their customer base as their established customers have either followed them to the new site or now frequent both Saturday markets. They also report having new customers residing in the Cherry Creek area.

Interest was expressed by the executive when approached with the idea of creating an 'Agricultural Center of Excellence', or more specifically the idea of a collective food hub. It seemed as if there was a new dedicated building in the region that they would consider moving the market but currently vendors appreciate the option of being inside during the winter months.

The Port Alberni Farmers' Market believes that the ACRD can help to encourage a vibrant agricultural sector by raising awareness about value of local food, profiling the strengths of Farmers Markets, perhaps by offering monthly advertising in local papers (featuring vendors and products available at each market and/or agricultural content in general) and continuing to apply for grant money when available such as coupon program.

Spirit Square Farmers' Market

The Spirit Square Market located at the Harbour Quay is farmer run and managed. The members of the Spirit Square Market are attached to the sense of gathering and place provided by the Harbour Quay locale. They are willing to deal with the elements that a year-round outdoor market has and have pursued funding to purchase heaters. They feel they provide a valuable community service in the uptown area and that accessibility is not an issue due to public washrooms including handicap facilities as well as the availability of a bus route. The board expressed that they have a different demographic than the other markets and have clientele residing in the downtown area does not typically have access local food.

In particular, the Spirit Square Farmers' Market notes a high use of a nutritional coupon program. Data from the BC Association of Farmer's Markets '2014 Redemption and Distribution Charts' for the Farmer's Market Nutrition Coupon Program outlines the weekly use of coupons at both Spirit Square and the Port Alberni Farmers' Market. The total number of coupons received at Spirit Square was 3750 compared to the 1559 coupons at Port Alberni Farmers Market. This does point to an increased use of the market by lower income individuals who can particularly benefit from the positive health effects that accessing fresh agricultural products in the downtown core provides.

The Spirit Square Farmers' Market also supports the focus of creating an Agricultural Center. They noted that though this would be an ideal scenario they would probably not relocate. This farmers' market is happy with its current location, day and time and is generally not interested in moving though some members have indicated that they feel having two markets is detrimental to the industry as a whole. In general, they expressed support for trying to get more (especially younger) people into agriculture and they would like to see workshops and supports around land linking.

The members of the board noted that it is difficult to address current complaints of the public (a perceived general negative impression of the concurrent Saturday markets). The vendor's experience is that many people go to both. Spirit Square Farmers' Market reports a population of about 15 farmers in the summer in addition to its artisan vendors.

Sunset Market

The Sunset Market is a seasonal open air market located at the Victoria Quay, which occurs on Wednesday nights beginning the end of June and running through to the end of August. It is a partnership between the Hupacaseth First Nation and the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce. The biggest challenge this market currently faces is a lack of vendors selling produce (lots of crafts). The current market manager has reduced the price of tables providing a “farmer rate” with the hope of attracting some midweek vendors for the upcoming 2015 season.

The Sunset Market would like to pursue funding/grants and partnerships to secure a location that could be used to permanently house the market as well as potentially have several other features that would be welcome within the community such as a community kitchen, freezers, a small fish processing area that could be utilized by the Hupacaseth and then fish sold onsite, a band shell to promote live music, as well as culturally appropriate signage and art.

Tofino Market

The Tofino Market is a very successful market and is able to capitalize on the profile of the West Coast as a recreational destination. The influx of tourists during the market season helps to stimulate and shape the local economy. Currently they have a substantial lack of produce and would be interested in coordinating shipments of veggies to the West Coast to alleviate this problem. In the past farmers have come out with produce from Alberni Valley but they generally found it difficult to justify the cost of time and transport to the West Coast.

The Tofino Market has expressed an interest in the collection of produce in the Alberni Valley for a coordinated bulk shipment to market for resale. The demand for local produce is very strong in Tofino and people are willing to pay premium prices for fresh produce, especially if it is organic. The Tofino Market is actively seeking out farmers to provide them with produce. They will provide the transportation from Port Alberni to Tofino and set up the booth and sell and remit the money back to the individual farmers. This market begins mid-May and it remains to be seen how successful this coordinated effort will be due to current lack of production in Alberni Valley. Providing this alternative may be a good opportunity to encourage small scale growers that feel they don't have enough time or the variety of produce to attend the markets here in the Valley.

Ucluelet Night Market

The Ucluelet Night Market runs Friday evenings through the summer season. While communication with the Market Manager was limited, one farm was identified who regularly supplies fresh produce to the market, that being Medicine Farm from the Port Albion area. Generally, this is much less a Farmers' Market than it is a general market. The management of this market is under transition but the current management was excited about having produce from the Alberni Valley at the market, and was willing to help with transportation issues as well as offering to help person a table at the market that would sell produce from the Alberni Valley. The demand for local, organic produce is very strong as exhibited in Tofino and the population is accustomed to high food prices.

Barriers to Participation at Farmers' Markets

The perceived barriers to participation at the current markets were as varied as the people questioned. Everyone had a unique set of circumstances that limited their time and ability to participate at the various markets. Some of the generalized comments that arose were: lack of time or produce to make a table worthwhile, meat processing regulations (this included shellfish), and not enough of a customer base to support their attendance profitably.

More specific constraints and barriers to participation at the local markets identified by respondents of the farmer survey were:

- No samples/demos allowed
- Time of market and location; need to amalgamate to draw in more crowds
- Not being allowed to raise animals on 1 acre in city limits
- Low prices; Port Alberni markets have consistently lower prices than surrounding communities
- Customer base not extensive enough
- Transportation
- Lack of time
- Lack of produce or vendors already growing too much of the same product
- Farm is currently too small a scale to make it worthwhile; could potentially share a stall if it was allowed
- Are not confident they will be able to make enough profit at the market to cover the input costs of participating in the market (such as labour, time factors such as driving time, and market stall fees)
- Not able to make the commitment to attend a market on a regular basis
- Poor "ambience" with the low amount of vendors at the markets
- Vendors with lots of product need a more tailgate sales at markets, therefore parking needs to improve
- Would like more central location to capture west coast goers

Ways to Promote Attendance at the Markets

Social Media and Technology

The use of the internet and social media as a promotional strategy is currently being employed by the various farmers' markets as well as individual vendors at the markets. Facebook seems to be the predominate form of social media currently being used. The 'Young Agrarians', a very popular organization experiencing exponential growth, cites social media as their #1 marketing tool. Having started on 3 years ago, their organization now has more than 10,000 followers. "*We are using the power of media and the internet, and bringing people together in real time-to build community and grow 'good, clean, and fair' food.*" All three Alberni Valley Markets report that social media is an important marketing tool particularly for sharing events and special promotions.

The Social Media Director for the very successful Comox Valley Farmers' Market employs various types of social media to attract different demographics. According to the director, Facebook is the most popular form of social media for middle aged women, and Instagram and Twitter and U Tube are more popular with the younger generation. Comox Valley Farmers' Market and the Young Agrarians utilize all forms of social media with great success.

The team reached out directly to producers, buyers and other stakeholders using email. Subscription to an 'ACRD Agriculturally Focused Email List' was solicited and 52 members have now joined. Email proved to be the most consistent, reliable and cost-effective means of sharing information with the community and allowed for easy response and questioning where required.

Continued Use of the Coupon Program Initiative

There are many ways in which attendance could be promoted through the use of expanded coupon or similar programs. For example, the Squamish Farmers' Market has successfully partnered with their local credit union, Squamish Savings, which allows more than 20 families and seniors to get involved in the coupon program. They use the BCAFM model and simply inject the donated funds and piggyback on the existing program infrastructure.

If the coupon program is not sufficient then either the markets themselves or other sponsoring agencies could offer a monthly "senior's discount". For example, the first market of the month could offer a 10% discount to seniors. This technique is currently employed by the Vancouver Farmers' Market.

Increasing Ambiance of Farmers' Markets

A weekly theme for the markets is an idea which incorporates the seasons and highlights the produce that is currently available. While it does require more organization and publicity, the payoff could result with increased numbers of people attending the markets.

Music is another way to promote more people to come out to the community event, although one must ensure that the music is complementary rather than competing. If a dollar amount is not feasible then a system in which the musicians are paid with products donated by vendors or offer market dollars/vouchers/tokens could be explored. This idea could also be used for photographers or artists in exchange for promotional material for the market. Markets could also designate a promotional table for a budding artist to exhibit work for a week.

Offering a "Friends of the Market" Program

This idea has been effectively used in various markets. For example, The Haney Farmers Market has a \$15 membership program for customers where "Friends of the Market" receive a book of coupons, discounts on monthly Member Appreciation Days, and a newsletter of special events. The Vancouver Farmers' Market offers a similar program along with different membership sizes.

Increasing Accessibility

Some markets have been able to work with their municipality or regional district to get public transportation to the markets. Another idea for markets where transportation poses challenges is to facilitate a ride-share program, either through sign-up at the market, or online through a tab on the market website. This would be effective for the Port Alberni Farmers' Market as it does pose some transportation issues. Or perhaps the idea of a shuttle that could run between the two Saturday markets could be examined.

A New 'Showcase' Building and Market Site

A new, 4-season Farmers' Market Building and site would certainly increase interest in Alberni Valley markets, both for public attendance and producer participation. Many farmers have

expressed that having two Saturday markets has decreased their interest in participating in the market-they don't want to choose between the two and/or find the situation distasteful. This sentiment has been echoed by the public. A new showcase site independently managed, situated in a high traffic and visible location could solve this long standing issue. The idea would be to create something so great that both the public and producers would choose to participate and that the market and its surroundings would provide tourists and locals alike with a comfortable place to relax as well as shop.

The key components identified when addressing location and the success of farmers' markets:

- Adequate parking
- Accessibility-public transportation
- Central area
- Washrooms-handicap accessible
- Visibility
- Ambiance of site-music that is appropriate to an all ages venue
- Regular hours on specific day
- Ability to pull in potential customers
- Adequate protection from the weather, inside option

Successful Models of Farmers' Markets Management

Good market management can be the difference between successful community engagement, market profitability and baseline attendance. Currently, Alberni Valley markets are managed by volunteers who are also farmers and extremely taxed with regards to time. While they have done very well at marketing and running their markets, they have also expressed, along with many other stakeholders, that an independent market manager would be ideal. A significant increase of the profile of regional farmers' markets could occur with this dedicated and paid management.

Relationships and knowledge transfers take place between managers and vendors. Managers offer coaching and advice on table displays and liaise with potential new vendors who are invited to sell at the market (adding to the range and quality of products to the market). As market managers share stories with others about products, marketing and vendor experiences, they learn from one another and build relationships that are the foundational to successful partnerships. Market manager's effectively network with other communities and brainstorm about how to host better markets, improve vendor displays and discuss rule, regulations and other topics with pertinent to members and markets. What encourages this knowledge exchange is that each market is unique. Other markets are not necessarily competition.

Many markets have paid managers who make arrangements for tables and direct marketing initiatives, events, fundraisers and community involvement. These managers have clear directive and responsibility to their vendors, who can form a board and make recommendations and approve policy changes. Managers can be paid through a variety of ways including increased table fees, collecting a portion of table profits, fundraising events and grant applications. The Comox Valley Farmers Market currently charges vendors a percentage of their earnings at the market, and pays both a market manager as well as a social media person with the profits. The BC Farmers Market Association is developing a certification program for market managers where there will be clear guidelines for farmers' market boards and managers to draw from to create policy.

Conclusion

Farmers' Markets are experiencing a period of strong growth due to increasing interest in the establishment of alternative models to the current conventional food system. Now is a critical time to reflect on successful models when contemplating how to best move forward. There is a identified need to build the social and physical infrastructure required to advance local food networks. Further research is needed to explore the factors limiting our local farmers' market and to best replicate the mechanisms and trajectories of successful developments in other communities.

The public and the various farmers markets realize the value and importance of supporting farmers' markets within the region. Some individuals privately stated that their preference is to have a large amalgamated market within the Alberni Valley, as they felt it made more sense financially and would create a more cohesive community and gathering place that ultimately better served the agricultural community. This also seems to be the general sentiment expressed by the majority of the general public and those that choose to purchase food at both markets. However, vendors in particular were generally emphatic with regards to having two markets that run on a concurrent day and time. Most vendors felt this was not an issue as it created healthy competition and allowed vendors and the public options. Regardless of individual viewpoints around this specific issue, the value of farmers' markets is not disputed and the discrepancy exists only as to where and when they are being held.

In general, within the Alberni Valley there is a strong desire for a market uptown by the uptown community. Area businesses' express support for the market as they experience a multiplier effect but feel there needs to be more signage directing people there. The Agricultural Support Workers also noticed a strong desire for market along the Johnson corridor but this vision is not necessarily coming from the farmers themselves, but instead from an economic development and community profile point of view. For success in a wider sustainable community development context a farmers' market should be accessible and inclusive of low income consumers and marginalized groups.

Throughout our discussions with the various Farmers' Markets the issue that emerged again and again was the lack of vendors and produce. Number one issue: We need more farmers! Need younger farmers! All the markets would like to see education around new municipal bylaws that promote urban farming thus in turn hopefully attracting new vendors to markets as well as the promotion of and continued support for agriculture in the region. There has been interest expressed in more workshops on farming, water management, land leasing, mentorship opportunities and farm tours that would introduce potential new farmers to farming within the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District.

2. Identify Marketing Opportunities through Farm Gate Sales

Farm gate sales can be a profitable venture for farmers and provide consumers an opportunity to engage with and support local farmers. Events such as Family Farm Days have been hugely successful and popular within the ACRD for both farmers and residents. The team's objective was to assist local farmers in improving farm gate profitability by finding ways to increase awareness of existing farm gate sales, streamline the delivery of farm gate products, as well as providing potential customers with the information needed to encourage them to choose farm gate sales as an integral way to promote food security. Opening a farm gate to the public can increase the income streams of farmers through tour fees and educational events in addition to the direct sale of products.

Farm Directories

The team worked on updating the existing local farmers' directory and was able to put together a revised 3 fold pamphlet prior to the Alberni Valley Fall Fair in September. The Alberni Valley Transition Town Society (AVTTS) was able to distribute at the fair and throughout the fall and winter of 2014/15.

The team later joined an identified initiative between the AVTTS and Alberni Valley Times to aid in creating a new and expanded directory in a magazine style format similar to the Comox Valley Growers' Guide. This project demanded a significant amount of input and time however a comprehensive document was released on April 29, 2015. It proved difficult to solicit listings from farmers, despite the ACRD sponsorship. The AV Times also reported that it was difficult to solicit paid advertisements for the publication. Regardless, all parties involved feel the publication long term success and that it offers significant benefits to agriculture within the community. The AV Times noted that it is normal for the first run of a new publication to have lower interest than subsequent publications and they are planning to update the directory annually with a much reduced cost and time allocation.

The directory is 24 pages, and will have a circulation of about 15,000 copies. The AV Times suggest putting 7500 copies in the paper with the remainder going to tourist centres and event tables. It will likely not get on the ferries this year without additional funding. The AV Times will post the directory online and the ACRD can post a link on their website.

The directory includes: farmer listings and an index, maps, a 'What's in Season' chart, calendar of events, a Small Producers Guide; listings for Community Gardens, Farmers' Markets, internet resources, and regional business' who buy local product; a letter from the Mayor of Port Alberni about urban farming and municipal support for agriculture, and articles about the Farmers Institute, opportunities in agriculture, seed library, water wise gardening, general agricultural assets of the region, and the benefits of buying locally.

The farm listings include contact information and the farmer's method of sales, (ie. Farm gate, Wednesday to Friday, 12-4). The maps show the location of farms as well as other appropriate information such as, if the farmer is a vendor at a farmers market and if so which one, website or Facebook pages, and email addresses.

Increased Awareness of Urban Farming

Editorials in the Farmer Directory directly address and promote urban small scale market gardening/farming with the intent of increasing public awareness of backyard beekeeping, chickens, and urban markets as per new bylaws.

According to Mirabel Urban Farm, some of Port Alberni's municipal government is supportive of getting folks to get more involved in urban agriculture in particular, Mike Ruttan (mayor), Chris Alemany (city councillor) and Scott Smith (city planner). Mirabel Urban Farm is teaming up with a master gardener to give workshops at their urban farm throughout the 2015 growing season to encourage folks to take up urban farming.

The City of Port Alberni has recently launched a new website featuring pages which specifically highlight and explain their new bylaws and regulations around urban farm stands, beekeeping and backyard chickens. The newly formed Food Security and Climate Change committee for the City of Port Alberni further exhibits the municipality's commitment to furthering agricultural initiatives within the city. The city is also currently considering and exploring options for the purchase of a 5 acre orchard for community use. Branding the City of Port Alberni and the ACRD as friendly to small scale agriculture is key to increasing overall production and generating interest from 'young agrarians' in relocating to the area.

Barriers to Farm Gate Sales

The obstacles identified by respondents to the farmers' survey were:

- Cost of advertising
- Location is remote, thus lack of traffic
- Costs surrounding licensing/taxation
- Vancouver Island Health Authority regulations
- Cost of insurance
- Issues of biosecurity
- Inability to produce enough; unhappy customers when sold out
- Have to remain home to wait for customers; staffing
- Lack of an abattoir
- Lack of signage to direct traffic and increase advertising
- Low price of produce
- Alberni customer base not extensive enough
- Depressed economy
- Limited sales to 10 head per year for fallow deer
- The \$150 fee that the municipality requires for a business license which is needed for urban farm gate sales

Ways to Promote Farm Gate Sales

The Alberni Valley farmers enjoy the annual Family Farm Day and feel that this is a very beneficial event for the community of Port Alberni. At this point in time there are not enough farms on the West Coast to support a Family Farm Day event where several farms are featured but the regional district could help promote events such as Seedy Saturday, and the Clayoquot Oyster Festival. The district of Tofino is has an annual public 'Tofino Garden Tour' where people open their properties to the public and often food producing gardens are highlighted.

There was interest in expanding on the Family Farm Day initiative, in particular by introducing a similar event with a workshop/educational component attached. Dr. Jenny Horn from Vancouver Island University is researching the viability of a Central Island program where farmers tour other farms and learn best practices from their peers. The proposed program would pay farmers to host these events, bringing an additional mode of income generation. The same could be done for members of the public, in particular for smaller scale agriculture and backyard gardeners, schools and educational institutions.

A general increase in the profile of regional agriculture and local food will result in an increase in farm gate sales. There is anecdotal evidence of increasing farm gate sales as members of the public become '*turned onto*' local food. People report significant satisfaction from purchasing directly on the farm and being able to visit farmers and see the sites where their food is being produced. Marketing and branding of local food and farmers will continue to increase the demand for farm gate sales.

Logistical factors are a big consideration to whether a farmer will open his/her gate to the public. In particular, insurance requirements can be daunting. Agri-tourism is a developing trend, an insurance policy for which will run a minimum of about \$850 annually. Clear communication about a hosting organizations' liability coverage when hosting farm tour type events would decrease these concerns as well as allowing an increase in farmer profits due to greater promotion and marketing in general. Greater understanding, explanation and the possible relaxation of relevant bylaws and business/tax issues could also have an impact on a decision to open a farm gate stand.

3. Develop local marketing opportunities in the Alberni Valley, the West Coast and Vancouver Island.

As the agricultural sector grows, so too will the need for additional marketing opportunities. Marketing is a time consuming procedure for already time-strapped farmers and a systematic structure and resource list within the ACRD would be highly beneficial. The agricultural support team worked to help local farmers improve profitability by developing strong local marketing relationships with retail outlets, restaurants and wholesalers. The team investigated ways to coordinate communication between farmers and retail outlets and restaurants to help streamline the reliable delivery of product.

Data was collected to explore an alliance with local producers and restaurants through a consultation with chefs, retail stores and markets which identified barriers, potential solutions, and guidelines. A survey was designed to guide our conversation and conducted with several food buyers ranging from individual caterers, small storefronts, local restaurants and high end restaurants. All expressed a desire for local food due to consumer demand but also with the philosophy that fresh is best!

The emerging themes that evolved out of our discussions were:

- Price point
- Consistency of product
- Ordering and delivery logistics
- Quality
- Availability of product during shoulder seasons
- Food safety concerns

The agricultural implementation team consulted with retail outlets and restaurants to help bring awareness of local products available, although at this point in time there is insufficient produce to provide many restaurants with a consistent, reliable product. Through this consultation process the team was able to gather data to create recommended guidelines for producers that are trying to expand and venturing out into the world of marketing to restaurants. This document for local farmers outlines possible marketing opportunities and general advice for communicating and working with restaurants, retailers and wholesalers was created and is included in the newly published Growers Guide. This document highlighted the need for producers to engage in pre-season communication and development of a comprehensive marketing package, followed by the consistent and reliable delivery of product. ([Appendix 1](#))

ACRD “What’s on Your Fork?” Logo

The team also designed and developed a logo “ACRD What’s on Your Fork”. The logo was developed as an attempt to draw awareness to the entire ACRD and the amount of local food that is produced there. The logo depicts a clear visual covering the entire region of the ACRD and the tines of the fork were carefully placed on the different regions of the district to recognize the producers on the West Coast, including shellfish growers.



This logo could be used by restaurants to indicate which foods on the menu are locally produced, on signs and advertisements of stores who sell local produce, shellfish and seaweed producers as well as farmers who are processing and selling local food.

The team utilized social media primarily through a creation of an “ACRD What’s on Your Fork” Facebook site to increase the flow of information and relevant work being done by the regional district. The page currently has 304 “likes” and according to the statistics collected on that page was that at one point when boosting a post the page was viewed by 6,089 people.

Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild

Bobby Lax of the Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild (TUCG) was contacted and through dialogue he stressed the main emphasis one needs to address when looking at coordinating farmers to restaurants is to: match the size of producer with the size of consumer. To increase the content of local produce in restaurants he suggests starting with one item on the menu showcasing local and then expanding to incorporate more local items. He has found that consistency is the biggest issue when dealing with farmers on Vancouver Island.

The Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild is hoping to set up a cold storage area that would benefit the Guild as well as farmers shipping to the West Coast. They are searching for appropriate funding to help with make this project a reality and have money to invest for matching funds. This would help to increase food security on the West Coast quite dramatically.

Using a Web-based Platform to Streamline Sales

Bobby Lax of the TUCG, has a web based platform although it is only accessible through an annual membership/fee which is somewhat exclusive and he only operates on the West Coast. Our Local Markets tried a web based platform and after a season of running in 2013 decided Port Alberni was not quite ready for this and put their online portion of sales on pause.

Discussion was conducted with Nanotech industry regarding the development of a web-based platform to coordinate the selling and buying of produce. They have offered to run a web-based platform for a % of produce sold. This discussion in the preliminary stage until the key issue of production is resolved as a web-based platform is premature. The Cowichan Valley is just initiated its cooperative web-based model and should be monitored as if this model is successful it could be replicated within the ACRD.

4. Include shellfish growers in the local agricultural initiatives.

Shellfish is a valuable west coast product with high agricultural potential. Shellfish farming provides an opportunity to engage and support first nations in local agricultural initiatives. Shellfish growers face a unique needs and challenges (certified processing, distance to market, consistently low prices) which need to be addressed separately from the land based farmers, yet still included in a complete farm to market strategy.

Our objective was to provide support for shellfish growers to market their products within the ACRD and throughout Vancouver Island. Extensive documentation exists with regards to the shellfish industry as well as specific supports. Their highest needs seem to be related to processing regulations and transportation to a regulated facility. There was found to be significant issues about ocean acidification leading to loss of product and lowered seed production, as well as a desire to protect important shellfish beds and habitat, particularly in the Barkley Sound area.

A survey was design and distributed without great response. The intent of the survey was to initiate a dialogue with any person that may have an interest or are actively involved with the shellfish industry, primarily focusing on assessing the specific needs of the industry within the regional district. Contact to the First Nations was initiated by a letter of introduction that went into the media kits for an all nations fisheries summit. Outreach was initiated to foster and enhance a working relationship and rapport with shellfish growers on the west coast and outlying communities.

One of the ways we may be able to provide support for shellfish growers and other harvesters of the sea (such as kelp producers), would be to help market products within the ACRD and throughout Vancouver Island. We can also increase the profile of individual shellfish growers, other ocean producers and harvesters of food products through the inclusion of their contact data in the new "Growers Directory" being released this spring. There is currently one shellfish grower included in the directory.

There is interest on the West Coast in obtaining support with their Oyster Festival and two new fish distributors within the Valley have been identified and they are interested in obtaining information relevant to them in terms of available funding and marketing opportunities. When and where appropriate the team was able to bring awareness to individual growers of applicable funding opportunities. It might be beneficial for the ACRD to participate in some fashion in the Oyster Festival to get first hand contact with some of the shellfish growers to better learn about their challenges and needs for assistance in production and marketing.

5. Secure grant opportunities for the local agricultural sector to aid in the implementation of Agricultural Plan initiatives.

The ACRD requires funding and support in order to implement the initiatives of the Agricultural Plan. Many grants exist to support communities in establishing food security and agricultural viability. The provincial government has recently established some new grant and funding opportunities which are substantial. Food security is a buzz word and the province is looking to aid most aspects of the food industry. 'Buy Local' campaigns are emerging and the current provincial Agricultural Minister has been working to achieve the vision of a food secure British Columbia. There is an aggressive campaign to expand the hectares within the province that are focused on production.

Funding Opportunities

The team sought out funding opportunities which provide financial support to farmers, shellfish producers and the ACRD on the whole. The team made the regional district aware of applicable grant and funding opportunities and aided in the application process. 100% funding was approved for one workshop and the ACRD was able to host a day long series of workshops featuring 4 presenters (the presenters were picked based on content identified through the farmer survey). This event saw 30 people in total participating and the feedback has been positive. The attendance based on the extremely short notice of the approval of the event exemplifies the need for a continuation and desire for relevant workshops.

Eat West Coast, and the Tofino Community Food Initiative have also expressed a great need for more food growing information of any type to relieve their food security issues and would be very interested in cost sharing for workshops in order to obtain grant money for them. It is difficult for people interested in food production to attend workshops elsewhere because of their isolated geographic situation and the high cost of transportation.

One of the spinoffs of holding events such as these is the ability to network with other farmers and share ideas. Farmers are beginning to feel and recognize the support of the ACRD and getting excited about the possibility of moving forward together.

Application for a Feasibility Study of an Abattoir

One of the concerns expressed by farmers in the Alberni Valley was the hardship caused by the change in the Federal Meat Inspection protocol in 2008. This required quite expensive upgrades to existing facilities and resulted in farmers having to truck their cattle to a government approved facility for processing. The nearest of these facilities is in Courtenay, with two others located a bit further away in Nanaimo. This situation requires the farmers to spend a full day of transportation for each round of slaughter as well as the purchase of specialized vehicles and insurance.

Transportation of animals to slaughter is stressful for the animals as well as for the farmer, and some farmers expressed concern about their ability to track their animals and keep them in the best possible condition before and during slaughter. This change in regulations yielded a significant drop in local livestock production in the Alberni Valley, even though the price for grass fed beef has increased, and the demand for local meat is high throughout the ACRD. Since much of the land in the ACRD is only suitable for forage and livestock production a

significant part of the agricultural industry in the district is affected.

In response to the inquiries from farmers around this issue the team approached the ACRD to see if they would back the application for grant money to investigate the feasibility of constructing a local abattoir. Alana Wilson from Agriculture Investment BC was consulted on the possibility of obtaining funding for such a study, and since this study addresses goals that came out of the Agricultural Plan done in 2011, specifically Goal 4 (To maintain and encourage growth of forage based livestock products) and 7 (To improve the productivity of the land base) she agreed that this would be a worthwhile project to consider for funding. The application draft was completed by the team in March and submitted to the ACRD for final approval and the eventual submission to the Agriculture Investment BC Board.

Document describing relevant grants, funding opportunities and loans

A cohesive document was developed which pulls in several applicable grants, matching funds and loan opportunities all with the intent of supporting agricultural initiatives. It clearly outlines the objectives of each grant, who is applicable, amount available, deadlines, and contact info for more follow up. ([Appendix 2](#)).

Since this information is subject to constant change, it is important that the ACRD and the Agricultural Support Team continue to monitor and revise the list, and make farmers and other food businesses aware of its existence and accessibility. This is a valuable aid list that has great potential to further the expansion of the local food industry.

Recommendations for Moving Forward:

The overriding recommendation is that the Agricultural Support Workers continue to research and pursue applicable grants and other appropriate funding avenues that promote the local food initiatives. The following recommendations for moving forward are focused on long-term visioning to bring community stakeholders into partnership, continued promotion of agriculture with the ACRD and the recruitment of new farmers to the region. Grant opportunities will need to be investigated and solicited for all initiatives.

Recommendations are grouped into two categories: Priority 1 - Recommendations that are in process or ready to initiate and implement. Priority 2 - Notable interest and areas of further exploration.

Priority 1 (Ready to initiate and implement)

1. Continue Networking Opportunities and Support Food Security Related Projects
2. Johnson Road Corridor Strategic Plan
3. Secure and Develop Public Sites for Community and Agricultural Use
4. Host 2017 Island Agricultural Show
5. Support Farmers' Markets and Improve Public Perception of Markets
6. Implement a Regional Buy-Local Campaign
7. Work with Young Agrarians to Promote Local Agriculture
8. Facilitate Workshops, Tours and Educational Events (specific focus)
9. Encourage and Support Urban Farming Initiatives
10. Investigate Options to Support Agricultural Use of Water

Priority 2 (Notable interest for further exploration)

1. Feasibility Study for Barriers to Agriculture on the West Coast
2. Development of Regional Agriculture Center
3. Promote the Development of Regional Environmental Standards
4. Develop Regulatory Handbook for Producers and Processors including fish and shellfish
5. Video Promotion of Agricultural Opportunities
6. Development of food buying and selling co-op
7. Assist with development of an online platform for agricultural product marketing and distribution
8. Establish an Annual 'Feast of Fields and Waters Event'
9. Assist with the development of a tool and resource collective
10. Conduct Public Land Survey and GIS Mapping Project

The advantage of having a long term visioning process in place and creating a staff position to ensure continuity and a well set trajectory for increasing and improving agriculture within the region cannot be overstated. The Agricultural Support Workers would like the regional district to consider undergoing a long term visioning process that would create a 5 year plan for moving forward. The development of a regional agricultural facility would be an attainable goal if spread out over a longer time frame. We recommend that the regional district establish an 'Office of Agriculture and Food Security'. The person staffed in that office would be responsible for networking and improving relationships with various community stakeholders. This would provide more continuity than an annual contract position.

The position would include ongoing support for websites, social media and email lists. Requirements would entail supporting producers, processors and community groups in applying for grants and other relevant programs, providing aid in annual Farmer/Food events and garnering funding for workshops. There should be limited staff management of Farmers' Markets and/or regional agricultural facility in which the officer could begin to address issues of policy and programs to support institutional purchasing of local product as well as implementing best practices to move agriculture forward.

Priority 1 – In Process or Ready to Initiate and Implement

1. Continue Networking Opportunities and Support Food Security Related Projects

There are many groups within the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District who are working to contribute to food security and increased local food production, processing and distribution. There is significant and increasing public support for these groups and there are a number of food security related projects in beginning stages, backed by significant human energy but lacking in funds and, sometimes, connections to other community resources. Many of these groups point to overlapping goals and redundancy within their efforts.

We are at the cusp of a boom in regional coordination of food security and agricultural projects. The ACRD needs to remain an active partner and participant at the many organizational tables within its region. The following actions are recommended:

- Meet regularly with the Farmers' Institute, Alberni Valley Transition Towns Society, City of Port Alberni Food Security and Climate Change Committee, Eat West Coast and Agricultural Development Committee
- Maintain social media presence and platform
- Set up a formal email newsletter service through 'Mail Chimp' or 'Constant Contact'
- Support individual farmers and processors with regulatory issues and farm status acquisition and grant applications
- Support First Nations communities to develop, maintain and enhance programs related to food security and distribution
- Assist business and organizations with grant applications and referrals, including updated a List of Grants, Loans and Programs annually
- Assist with updates to the 'Growers Guide' annually
- Continue to add content to and improve the agricultural page on the ACRD website
- Work in conjunction with restaurants, business' and non-profit organizations to assist them with local food initiatives and programs
- Sponsor programs which directly offer education for agriculture and healthy food for children/youth and programs which increase local food acquisition for and distribution to lower income and elderly residents.
- Support and maintain a presence at events such as the Alberni District Fall Fair, Family Farms Day, Apple Pressing Event, Seedy Saturdays, Oyster Festival, Feast, and Farmers' Markets

2. Johnson Road Corridor Strategic Plan

Statistics indicate that about a half million tourists travel though the Johnston Street and River Road Corridor to access the West Coast each year. Since the majority of farm land in the Alberni Valley is not located within view of this corridor, many people from outside the Valley are

not aware of the thriving Agricultural Industry and potential that exists for reasonably priced, high quality farms, and farm lands.

A long term plan and vision for this corridor is essential to attract new economic opportunities, including agricultural, into the Alberni Valley. Michael Von Hausen, a land planning consultant, has been identified as a potential lead for exploration of options for improvement. He has been funded by the Real Estate Foundation to plan a number of successful municipal projects including the highly successful Pemberton Community Barn Project. The team contacted with Mr Von Hausen regarding a planning charrette focused on increasing the aesthetics and functionality of this important road corridor. Mr. Von Hausen expressed interest in participating in the initiative and the information was forwarded to the chief economic development officer, Pat Deakin, for further consideration. Pam Shaw, a geography instructor from VIU also expressed interest in participating in the planning by using the opportunity as a learning exercise for her geography class. Pursuing these initiatives could cost the City of Port Alberni and ACRD very little, as grants are available for these planning exercises, and students could work at the cost of expenses to travel to Port Alberni.

This initiative would boost regional agriculture in a number of ways. While at once beautifying the road corridor though Alberni, it would also highlight the farms, farm markets, and agricultural resources in the area though a cohesive signage system. The planning charrette would bring together various interested stakeholders working on regional food security and agriculture including Farmers' Markets and First Nation interests such as fish and aquaculture sales at Clutesi Marina. Furthermore, it would consider other regional opportunities for parks, green spaces, and public spaces and incorporate cohesive signage for other areas of interest and attractions.

A number of stakeholders have indicated interest in developing the potential of this corridor, including the City of Port Alberni, AVTTS, Farmers Institute, West Coast Aquatic, Community Forest, Chamber of Commerce and North Island College.

3. Secure and Develop Public Sites for Community and Agricultural Use

Concurrent to the Michael Von Hausen Planning Charrette, two identified sites along the Johnson St. Corridor will be explored for further development for the purpose of agriculture. Stirling Field and the 17 acre property behind No Frills are both City of Port Alberni lands which are currently under-utilised and have significant potential.

The planning charrette will include investigation, general proposals and land use recommendations for the 2 properties with specific regard to the following identified needs;

- New Farmers Market building
- Community kitchen
- Outdoor theatre/public event venue
- Tool library/agricultural equipment storage
- Office space for Farmers Institute/AVTTS
- Community fridge/freezer
- Abattoir/custom cutting facility
- Warehouse/Distribution Site or Farm Store
- Trout Pond
- Local food cafe/restaurant/deli
- Community farm

- Community garden
- Agricultural training center
- Agro-Forestry Interpretive center

Stirling Field

The team recommends working with Sunset Market, the City of Port Alberni and various First Nations to initiate the construction of a multi-use building on Stirling Field. A cohesive plan could join a First Nations Interpretive information Center at Victoria Quay with fish operations and infrastructure at Clutesi Marina and finally a community building at Stirling field. The community building would be designed for use by regional Farmers' Markets and include weather protection in winter, but also be used as outdoor theatre/stage and public venue for events such as Salmon Festival. It would feature fridges/freezers and a small commercial kitchen for package/storage of fish and agricultural products which could house a cafe/food stand venue during market days or throughout the week. The property would be maintained as a public park and also feature picnic tables. It could be rented for weddings or other private events as well. The City of Port Alberni has indicated support for such a facility as long as it was used throughout the week and for a variety of functions, not solely a Farmers' Market.

Many options for funding would be available for such a community project and it could be completed within a reasonable timeline. The Timber Framers Guild would be solicited to consider it as one of their 'community projects'. The Timber Framers Guild recently assisted with the construction of the Pemberton Barn, a two million facility which only ended up costing the municipality \$75,000. (due to substantial volunteer effort and the use of the project as a training program).

17 Acre Property Adjacent to No Frills

This property was put in to the Agricultural Land Reserve when the No Frills development was approved. At the same time, the City of Port Alberni committed to provide drainage, stumpage and water on the site when a long term lease was confirmed for agricultural use. It is a property with a long history of debate as to its potential and future use.

The team recommends putting this parcel of land into a community land trust with a long term vision of transforming this property into become an 'Agricultural Center of Excellence' and a showcase property for agriculture in the region. It has potential as a community farm, incubator farm, community equipment storage facility, agro-forestry interpretive and demonstration site, custom cutting facility, community processing facility, office spaces for agricultural groups, public demonstration site and educational facility.

Development of the site will take significant resources and a number of years. The vision can be fleshed out as part of the planning charrette and steps taken, including the creation of a community land trust, to secure the site and convince stakeholders of the viability and benefits of such a project in the longer term.

4. Host the Island Agriculture Show in 2017

Through discussions with farmers and other relevant stakeholders, the Agricultural Implementation Team recommends that one of the most effective ways of promoting agriculture and enhancing the profile of our current agricultural community would be to support an application to host the 2017 Island Agriculture Show. When the Island Agriculture Show concept was initially conceived it was thought that it would be a rotating show between the Duncan, Courtenay and Port Alberni Communities. To date it has been held in Duncan twice

and this past year in Courtenay. Next year is slated again for Duncan and other communities on the Island are becoming interested in hosting this event. Thus timing is crucial as we feel hosting of the 2017 Ag Show is a crucial part of branding the ACRD as an Agricultural hot spot on Vancouver Island and exhibiting this to potential newcomers.

Although it will require a huge coordinated effort, the team feels that hosting the event fits the mandate not only of the regional district but also the municipal government. It provides the opportunity to provide traction and something to work towards within the agricultural community and offers a significant economic development potential. It also provides an excellent opportunity to reach out to our outlying communities on the West Coast and showcase the bounty of the sea in that region.

5. Work with Young Agrarians on Land Linking Opportunities

The most prominent theme that the team encountered during discussions with stakeholders was the need for new farmers and increased production in the region. There is a high interest both in attracting young people in to agriculture and, from some of our older farmers, an interest in leasing their land and retiring.

The Young Agrarians is a fairly new organization which has experienced exponential growth in BC and across the country. They have a significant on-line following for their vision and platform, which is to provide support for young farmers to enter the industry and to support environmentally sustainable agriculture. Young Agrarians offer workshops, tours and networking opportunities to its followers.

Discussions with the Young Agrarians have led to opportunities in using their platform to attract young farmers into the region. Specifically, Young Agrarians have tentatively offered;

- 1) Marketing and promotional support for a regional event - This would include a tour of farms in the region which are interested in leasing land to new farmers.
- 2) A specialized, 6 hour workshop describing the technicalities of land leasing and linking options
- 3) An option for a monthly blog entry on its highly viewed website - The blog entry could showcase a regional farm, farmer or program and would be intended to solicit interest in the region to a key group of future food producers.

These types of joint projects with Young Agrarians would showcase the commitment the ACRD has made to agriculture across Canada.

6. Support Farmers' Markets and Improve Public Perception of Markets

There is wide spread support for a thriving Farmers' Market Community in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. Within the Alberni Valley, while the vendors and market boards general indicated satisfaction with their current markets, the agricultural implementation team consistently heard from the public and other non-farm stakeholders in the community they would like to see one large, cohesive market. We also heard from new farmers that they are confused as to why two markets exist and although they are enthusiastic about selling at the farmers market are reluctant to have to pick between the two. Both markets consistently said they needed more vendors, more farmers and a larger customer base to draw from and many vendors stated privately that if the markets were combined that the consumers have more variety available and that the profitability of the farmers' market would likely increase. However, it is not likely that there will be an immediate amalgamation of the Saturday markets, as neither board has indicated interest in moving.

At a workshop on April 26, 2015, Dr. Jenny Horn suggested the use of an impartial facilitator to support reconciliation. The community of Duncan had a similarly divided market a number of years ago and after a mediation process now boasts a thriving, vibrant farmers market in its downtown core. The key factors to resolving the split in Duncan was by the city, regional district, economic development office and the Farmers Institute coming together to push a reconciliation forward. Farmers from both markets did express some interest in working together after hearing Dr Jenny Horn speak, and one farmer expressed interest in having her speak again to the farmers of the markets, and moving towards a resolution for the benefit of all.

While mediation remains an option and could be investigated for future use, there is no immediate interest in either of the Saturday markets to move location or dates. In the meantime, we recommend that ACRD staff and/or Agriculture Support Worker/s act as a limited Regional Market Manager with a focus on marketing support, general public promotion of markets and assisting with coordination of produce for delivery to the markets in West Coast Communities. Farmers' Markets in the region generally supported a paid market manager, provided the farmers themselves assisting in and/or made the final decisions. In general, there was disbelief that paid support would ever be possible, though it seemed a desirable scenario to many vendors.

The tasks of this limited Regional Market Manager would include the following:

- Securing a weekly ad in local newspapers highlighting 'What's in Season' and any special market events or promotions in the region.
- Continuing to research and suggest best practices for markets
- Working to change public perception of dysfunction at the markets
- Attending a variety of farmers markets on a regular basis throughout the summer season in order to conduct simple customer surveys and obtain valuable research data. This would be done using the tools for rapid market assessment as developed by the University of Oregon. The data would help to; create a profile of those who utilize the market and why, identify what demographics are missing at our markets, look closer at improvements for the shoulder seasons of the markets and raising awareness of an ethnic profile.
- While at the Farmers' Markets, run a public awareness campaign for local agriculture in general using materials developed throughout the Agricultural Plan Implementation project.
- Support the West Coast Markets by assisting to coordinate the collection of small amounts of excess produce from small growers and facilitating distribution to the West Coast. In the immediate term, this could be as simple as a Facebook Site, a drop off spot and coordination of a driver. The first markets on the West Coast begin mid-May and the market manager could help to make small farmers in the Alberni Valley aware of the opportunities that exist and pull together the pieces and volunteers needed to get a bulk delivery to the coast on a regular basis. The West Coast markets have indicated that they would be willing to take even small and diverse amounts of food that small backyard farmers could produce.

A limited Regional Farmers' Market Manager would provide a desirable support system and financial assistance to the markets (by way of marketing) and will also help to create a bridge and provide an indirect unity between them. It will assist in public perception and provide a non-threatening method of collaboration and communication between markets.

7. Regional Buy-Local Campaign

Further expansion and development of the ACRD 'What's on Your Fork' logo will raise the profile of local food, food security and the local economy. The distribution of this logo to restaurants will add an educational component and reminder for consumers to consider the origin of their food. The logo provides the title for the ACRD's popular Facebook page and is catchy enough to stick in memory. Furthermore, the initiative would connect the Alberni Valley and West Coast Communities with regional campaign. It would be best run throughout the summer when the critical mass of tourists is at its greatest and local food availability is at its peak.

Cloud City helped produce the logo, and has offered to do a run of t-shirts that would have the 'What's on your Fork' logo on one side and the Cloud City logo on the other side. Cloud City has offered to produce these at cost. They t-shirts could be sold at the Farmers Markets and various events throughout the ACRD the summer to raise money for future initiatives.

Specifically, the branding initiative would involve:

- Production of restaurant door decals, menu stickers, table cards, and general promotional posters
- Developing standards of use policy for farmers, restaurants and retailers
- Set up a permanent display table at local Farmers' Markets with sales of T-Shirts, bags and informational material
- Continue social media presence
- Partnership with Chamber of Commerce, Credit Union, Farmers' Markets

8. Facilitate Workshops, Tours and other Educational Events

Educational events support existing and new farmers to increase skills, locate support and resources and network within the agricultural community. There are a number of funding avenues for these events available and a high interest from the public in participating. They offer a low cost opportunity to the ACRD and will demonstrate governmental support for agriculturally related initiatives on West Coast in particular. The following events and workshops have been identified as priorities. Funding and support for educational workshops and tours should continue. The attendance of the one day workshop that the regional district hosted specifically exemplified this desire and need within the agricultural community. The following topics have generated interest and should be considered:

- 1) Marketing tips and best practices, including social media
- 2) Water-wise agriculture and rainwater harvest and storage
- 3) Aquaponics, permaculture and urban farming (West Coast Communities)
- 4) Farm Start-Up, Accounting and finance for farm operations
- 5) Politicians' tour of local farm operations

9. Encourage and Support of Urban Farming Initiatives

With a trend towards urban population and the increasing need for local food production comes the necessity for an increase in urban agriculture. Urban agriculture has many faces - it can be small backyard market gardens, community gardens, school ground gardens and rooftop gardens. Any of these could either be used as small scale gardens for the gardener and

neighbors or larger scale, even industrial sized, business operations. The Agricultural Plan goal of 40% local food production requires that agriculture is brought to backyards, city streets and public lands throughout the region. Support measures for urban agriculture are as follows;

- Support and promote the City of Port Alberni's new relaxed agricultural bylaws
- Offer financial assistance by eliminating business license requirements for urban market gardens
- Support and encourage community and school gardens within the region
- Support existing programs such as the Alberni Valley Gleaning Program as a way to promote food security by utilizing what goes to waste

10. Investigate Options to Support Agricultural Use of Water Resources

Producers continually pointed to the constraints posed by the limited access to and high cost of water for irrigation. Water availability is critical for agricultural production. Other Regional Districts (Cowichan Valley for example) have been working to create supportive policy to ensure consistent and affordable water for agricultural use. Agricultural Support Workers also heard concerns about water quality and quantity due to logging activity in the Beaufort range in particular. Farmers are very concerned about watershed protection.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed by the ACRD in order to fulfill the mandate of the Agricultural Plan. Study and staff time must be put towards assessing agricultural irrigation demands in the region, investigating options for management and developing a long term plan. The two most widely heard suggestions for irrigation support for producers are as follows:

- Leaving old irrigation lines in place for agricultural use when updating new lines as needed
- Reducing water rates for agricultural use.

Priority 2 – Notable Interest for Further Exploration

1. Development of a Regional Agricultural Center

The Agricultural Support Worker Team recommends that the ACRD continue, in partnership with other agencies and the City of Port Alberni, to develop a comprehensive plan for property use on the 17 acre parcel behind No Frills as per recommendations of the planning charrette. Beyond securing the parcel as a Community Land Trust, work will need to continue with feasibility studies and business plans.

2. Feasibility Study, Barriers to Agriculture on West Coast

The ACRD Agricultural Plan lacks significant reference to Coastal Communities. While some barriers may seem obvious (climate/soils), there exist opportunities for non-traditional agricultural operations such as aquaponics and/or permaculture type operations or greenhouse operations. Coastal Communities may be eligible to receive 'Class E' slaughter licenses, enabling local slaughter of a limited number of animals, including rabbit and poultry. In addition, livestock could be used for land clearing purposes. Barriers and opportunities for ocean based agricultural operations (kelp, shellfish, and fish) also need to be analyzed in greater depth.

There is active and substantial interest in food security and agricultural projects in the coastal zones of the ACRD. Important groups such as Eat West Coast, the Clayoquot Biosphere Project and Tofino Community Food Initiative are all undertaking studies and projects in support of food security and enhancement. Bamfield is reported to have three community gardens and one new small farm providing local produce. In addition, remote First Nation communities are developing Community Gardens, food distribution and educational programs to support their people and the habitat on which they historically depend upon.

The team recommends that funding should be sought for a feasibility study on the West Coast with the goal of providing specific recommendations for agricultural opportunities and improvement to existing operations. In effect, the ACRD needs to conduct further research in order to include the West Coast Communities in the existing Agricultural Plan.

3. Video Promotion of Agricultural Opportunities

Opportunities exist to highlight the spectacular landscapes within the ACRD and the agricultural land available for sale at attractive prices. A promotional video shot from the air, through a drone or small aircraft flying over ACRD in summer could help recruit an influx of new farmers resulting in subsequent increased farming revenue and production. This video piece could be used by realtors, the Chamber of Commerce, Shaw TV and the ACRD itself at events like the Island Agricultural Show and the Alberni Valley Fall Fair. Partnership possibilities exist as does the possibility of in-kind donations to the project.

4. Regional Environmental Standards

The ACRD is a very sheltered geographical region (due to mountain ranges and Pacific Ocean) and there is significant public interest in organic and sustainable production methods in agriculture. GMO technology is widely debated and a strong anti-GMO and pro-GMO labeling voice exists in the public. Regardless of whether the threats of GMO are real or imagined, a regional and workable non-GMO policy is important to establish from a public perception, agricultural branding and economic development point of view. It also offers an opportunity for greater long term profitability and the development of a highly desirable and niche organic, natural and/or pristine market. In addition, the policy is important for both protecting the native ecology from any threat of GMO contamination and keeping local seed sources pristine. This issue is best addressed proactively, before it becomes an environmental issue and while our existing farmers and agricultural system is still relatively pristine.

The local Farmers' Institute has expressed interest in creating regional environmental standards for agricultural production. The ACRD must participate in discussions; assist with facilitation of public awareness campaigns and/or education about the issue, and development of such a policy if requested by the Farmers' Institute.

Other methods for supporting environmental initiatives in agriculture include encouraging farms to develop Environmental Farm Plans and instituting a 'pesticide free' policy, which has been recommended by many members of the Farmers' Institute as well.

5. Develop Regulatory Handbook for Producers and Processors including fish and shellfish

Along with ongoing workshops and educational events, the ACRD can develop an accessible handbook for regional producers and processors. This document would offer general information and address packaging, handling, regulations for sales of produce and other products. It would also offer insights and tips with regards to the perceived barriers to farm gate sales and the corresponding logistics, (ie. Insurance/liability) and therefore continue to encourage the emergence of urban farms. Fact/info sheets for small farm start up, business planning, employee/volunteer requirements and accounting information could be included. This document could be available on the ACRD website as a reference tool for many.

6. Development of a Food buying and selling Co-op

The formation of a food buying and selling co-operative could unite small food producers and backyard gardeners within the ACRD who do not produce enough food to sell at a farmers'

market or direct marketing situation, but are interested in growing and selling food. A co-op would provide opportunity for new farmers to test ideas and provide an outlet for their food growing efforts without adding a large financial and time commitment.

A co-operative could potentially grow into a clearing house for many of the farmers in the ACRD and would be a stepping stone to utilizing a web based platform for sales that would allow restaurants and individuals to pick and choose produce from the co-op in larger quantities than one grower could provide. A co-op could also help promote food security on the west coast as it would serve as a connection between the producers of the Alberni Valley, and the significant demand for good fresh local food in the west coast communities. There is funding from the Co-operative Association of British Columbia to form co-ops, and a number of potential members have already been identified.

7. Assist with development of an online platform for agricultural product marketing and distribution

Coordination of marketing and distribution channels is desirable, particularly as production and markets grow. West Coast communities have indicated an interest in coordinated delivery of local product, as has the restaurant community. A number of local restaurants are already working on developing an association to coordinate purchase of agricultural products. A recently develop web based platform for connecting producers and consumers in Cowichan Valley Regional District could prove an excellent model for a similar operation in the ACRD. Regional interests need to watch the evolution of the 'Cow-Op' and work together to create a similar platform here. The 'Cow-Op' offers a web-based platform for sales of agricultural products, which are delivered, pre-sold, by farmers to a central pick up facility.

8. Establish an Annual 'Feast of Fields and Waters' Event

This event would include a celebration of local shellfish, fish, meat, fruit and, vegetables. It would feature local restaurants and chefs and be inclusive of the entire region. Tasting events, education and information, music and arts activities could be included. The event could rotate between hosting communities within the region annually and including the Alberni Valley, District of Tofino, District of Ucluelet and Bamfield. First Nations communities would feature their traditional foods at all events, including education about their harvesting and gathering methods.

9. Assist with development of a tool and resource collective

As community coordination and collaboration around agriculture and food security grows, the ACRD can assist in facilitating the development of resources and facilities for collective tool sharing and bulk buying of inputs. Tools could include heavy machinery, seed cleaning equipment, refrigeration, power tools and even simply shovels and wheelbarrows for use in community project events. This facility and collection will create and fosters community while supporting food production and new farmers who may be lacking in resources. A generic model could be implemented in each municipality according to their particular needs.

10. Conduct Public Land Survey and GIS Mapping Project

The ACRD is home to many un-or-underutilized parcels of land. A survey can be undertaken to identify those public lands which would be suitable for community agriculture and/or community gardens. That database would then be easily accessible to community groups, businesses' or

individuals who would like to make proposals for their use. The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia recently funded a similar project in the Comox Valley.

A Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping project would also assist with agricultural land use inventories. It would use the application of technology to increase the understanding of farm systems and land use relationships. GIS mapping projects can be funded through the BC Ministry of Agriculture.

Conclusion

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District must capitalize on the momentum gathered throughout the first phase of the project. Significant time and energy has been devoted to gathering feedback and developing an agriculture and food security network over the last 7 months and significant support has been garnered for the project. Farmers, restaurants, farmers' markets, shellfish growers, First Nations and other community stakeholders are seeking opportunities for collaboration and have become increasingly willing to participate in discussions and share perspectives. These community groups have been considering and implementing numerous projects with significant drive and determination.

During the course of the last several months the Agricultural Implementation Team has recognized a shift in perception. Previously, people seemed wary and wondered "what model of governance are you trying to impose on me?" whereas now people are responsive, feeling supported, and engaged in a process. This buy-in from the community, especially from farmers, is very important when trying to leverage the profile of the regional district within the larger agricultural community.

With supportive governmental measures, our community has the potential as well as the physical and environmental assets to become a high level agricultural producer. In 2011, the ACRD began the process with the establishment of the Alberni Agricultural Plan. Further delays in its implementation are counterproductive and will potentially create stumbling blocks for local citizens and groups who are rising up on a swell of interest and energy.

Across the province, policy and programs are being generated which the ACRD can tap into. There are a number of grant options and support programs available for food related community projects. Our communities boast engaged groups such as the Farmers' Institute, Tofino Community Food Initiative, Eat West Coast and Alberni Valley Transition Towns who require general support and a collaborative governmental office in support of their initiatives. Globally, local food movements are changing public perception and attitudes about where our food comes from and within the region the demand for locally grown products is beyond current capacity.

By assisting with the development of community gathering facility, Farmers'/Fish Market, agricultural showcase site and signage, the ACRD will prove its dedication to the economic development of agriculture within the region. By assisting groups to forward their food-related project, it will inspire, excite and energize those community based initiatives. By developing policy, programs, educational opportunities for established and new farmers it will support the backbone and entire foundation for the possibility of increased food production. Finally, by continued engagement, financial support and active promotion of regional agriculture, the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District will join the province-wide trend towards community food security and governmental support of related programs.

The continuation the recommendations in this report are relevant and timely. Moving forward in support of regional agriculture will require flexibility, adaptation and sensitive response to initiatives and opportunities as they are generated. It will also require planned and actively pursued projects in support of food producers, processors, distributors and related community groups. As governmental leader and a pivot point in the region, the ACRD must continue to step forward, support its citizens and work towards the agricultural and food security priorities.

Resources & Bibliography

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- Island Coastal Economic Trust www.islandcoastaltrust.ca
- Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC www.iafbc.ca
- Ministry of Agriculture www.gov.bc.ca/al
- Small Scale Food Processors Association www.ssfpa.net

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http://www.gov.bc.ca/jtst/down/VI_Coast_Ag_Framework_Aug17_2012_FINAL.pdf

**Appendix 1 - A Small Producers Guide to Selling to Restaurants,
Distributors and Retailers**

A Small Producers Guide to Selling to Restaurants, Distributors and Retailers

Heather Shobe

Research has shown that there is high interest from restaurants within the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District in offering local products to consumers on their menus. Regionally produced meats, fruits, vegetables and other products - all are desirable! Farmers though, especially small producers, often don't know how to entice restaurants into going the extra mile it takes to cope with the greater uncertainty and higher expense that may be required in order to follow through with that desire. It takes a dedicated effort, a bit of salesmanship, and clear agreements to achieve what producers, buyers, and consumers all crave-the best quality local food on their tables. Here are some tips to make it happen...

Step 1: Create A Relationship

- Set up the relationship at beginning of season, before everyone is busy.
- Reach out to buyers you are interested in working with-don't expect them to come looking for you!
- Adopt a business philosophy and develop good business practices
- Do the homework on your own business. Write up a history of your farm and another piece highlighting your growing practices and the reasons your products are special. Know the prices you need to receive and quantities you are able to supply.
- Provide this comprehensive information to the buyer including
 - quantities available (min and/or max) per order
 - delivery schedule
 - pricing
 - availability dates if seasonal
 - growing methods, farm description
 - brochures
 - samples if available
 - GST# and Food Safe Certificates where required

Step 2: Keep that Relationship Healthy!

- Be Reliable** - Reliability of supply and delivery is of utmost importance to chefs and restauranteurs. Their business fails if you fail to follow through with your promises.
- Know the customer** - Price is not always the most important factor for those who want to buy local. Find out what drives their buying decisions be it quality, freshness, shelf life, delivery methods, consistency, ethics or the environment.
- Communicate** - Stay in touch but be respectful of a buyers workload, everyone is busy! E-mail is great for some, others prefer to communicate via phone. Some are interested in online ordering platforms and others repelled by the thought! Find a method and keep to it. If using email, check it regularly and consider a scheduled check-in to provide a clear assessment of what is working and what is not.

A Small Producers Guide to Selling to Restaurants, Distributors and Retailers

- **Have a system for dealing with production gaps** - Give the buyer ample notice, at least a few days, if you won't be able to get their product to them due to weather or other production problems. Buyers understand the constraints of farmers but they still have a business to run!
- **Be orderly** - Develop efficient systems for processing orders, invoicing and advising customers of product availability and price changes.
- **Be safe** - Food safety is everyone's concern. Practice safe production, harvest and delivery methods and maintain the ability to trace products from garden right through to the table.
- **Keep a consistent quality** - Buyers need consistent and reliable quality. High quality is one of the predominant reasons they buy locally. Give ample warning about deviations and don't expect to stay on their list for long if product quality varies excessively!
- **Deliver** - If the goods aren't there, the restaurant suffers. Buyers will usually expect delivery to their door and appreciate a set schedule. Living with fluidity doesn't work here—a dinner rush is a dinner rush, and the chef can't stop to check on the tomatoes you are dropping off! Work with your buyer to set a schedule that works for you both and consider a delivery fee if less than minimum order.

Step 3: Grow Your Opportunities

- Develop marketing materials and information. Spread your farm name and a good reputation.
- Be willing to alter production to meet buyer needs.
- Co-operate with other small producers to increase the volume you can offer for sale.
- Investigate the potential of growing specialty items which are not available through distributors.
- Work with clients to sell them on the idea of new products by providing recipe and menu ideas.
- Search out clients willing to buy 'seconds' or lower quality produce to use in soups or preserves.
- Share your successes with other farmers and buyers. Model a great working relationship and offer tips to others in order to further the success of the industry as a whole.

Useful Links and Info

[Guidelines for sale at Temporary Food Markets](#)

The Vancouver Island Health Authority created this document providing recommendations for preparation and display of food intended for sale at temporary food markets including Farmers' Markets and public events. **Talk to the local health authority about selling those foods classed as 'low risk' at retail stores and at farm gate.**

- <http://www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/3DDA888D-939E-4A08-926E-DB679892A952/0/GuidelinesSaleofFoodsatTemporaryFoodMarkets2012FINAL.pdf>

[Wholesale Price List Link](#)

Certified Organic BC maintains this current wholesale price list for reference when setting prices

- <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/prices.html>

A Small Producers Guide to Selling to Restaurants, Distributors and Retailers

Food Labeling and Packaging Requirements

Canadian Food Inspection Agency governs rules for packaging and labeling of food products

• <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/labelling/food-labelling-for-industry/eng/1383607266489/1383607344939>

The following Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District business' have indicated interest in purchasing direct from producers. If you would like your business to be listed here next year, please contact the AV Times.

Ukee Juice	Cody Naples	1627A Peninsula Rd. Ucluelet, British Columbia Canada V0R3A0	P: (250) 726-5068
Sproat Lake Landing	Steve Muise	10695 Lakeshore rd. port Alberni, BC V9Y 8Z8	250)735-1535
Red Can Gourmet	Tim May	700 Industrial Way, po box 251, Tofino, BC V0R 2Z0	250)725- 2525

The Starboard Grill	Brad Declercq	#2-5440 Argyle St., PA, V9Y 1T7	250)720-9100
Swale Rock Café	Lily Diotte	5328 Argyle St. PA V9Y 1T8	250)723-0777
The Wickaninnish Inn	Ike Seaman	Box 250, Tofino, BC V0R 2Z0	250)725-3106
The Schoonner Restaurant	Mare Bruce	311 Campbell St. Tofino	250)725-3444
All Mex'd Up	Judy Walker	#6 5440 Argyle St. PA V9Y 1T7	250)723-8226
Shelter Restaurant	Matty Kane	601 Campbell Street, Box 68 Tofino V0R 2Z0	250)725-3802

Long Beach Lodge Resort	Ian Reddick	1441 Pacific Rim Highway, Tofino BC	725-2442
Riverside Lodge	Matt Dunk	6150 Ferguson Road, Port Alberni BC, V9Y 8L4	723-3474

Swept Away Inn	Daniel and Bouchra	5505, Argyle St. Unit 1, Port Alberni, British Columbia	(250) 918-8298
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Green Soul Organics	Morgan Callisan	Box 833 Tofino, BC, V0R 2Z0	250)725-4202
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Picnic Charcuterie	Tina Windsor	700 Industrial Way, Tofino BC V0R 2Z0	
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A Small Producers Guide to Selling to Restaurants, Distributors and Retailers

Farmer Bills Country Market	Keith Bruner	7666 Pacific Rim Highway, Port Alberni BC	778-421-5566
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Tofino Farmers Market	Anne Weeks	General Delivery, Tofino BC V0R 2Z0	250-266-5006
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Appendix 2 – Grant Opportunities for Agriculture and Food Security

Grant Opportunities for Agriculture and Food Security in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District



Prepared by ACRD Agricultural Support workers Heather Shobe, Connie Kuramoto, and Anna Lewis with input from the community.

April 10, 2015

Rational and Format

The 2011 ACRD Agricultural Plan set a target of 40% food security by the year 2031.

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District is home to many motivated and capable individuals, business' and organizations who are working towards increasing food production and improving distribution in order to achieve this target.

This document sets out to distribute information about the numerous grants, loans and programs available for food security and agricultural initiatives in order to increase their viability and capacity.

Some of the programs are ongoing and others are one time opportunities.

The document is divided into 3 sections- Grants, Loans and Programs.

Grants

ACRD Grant-In-Aid Program

Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District provides Grant-in-Aid assistance to non-profit organizations once a year in order to assist them to provide a benefit to one or more electoral areas in the Region or the entire Regional District.

Application deadline January 31 of each year.

<http://www.acrd.bc.ca/grant-in-aid>

Agricultural Planning Program

Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC

Applications for funding must be submitted by a municipality or regional district or an alliance between a local/regional government and an agricultural organization.

Funding, up to 50% of project costs, may be available to carry out agriculture viability studies, develop agriculture strategies, conduct arability studies and carry out food shed analyses, as well as the implementation of specific activities at a community or regional level.

http://www.iafbc.ca/funding_available/programs/local-govt-ag-planning/ag_planning.htm

Agri-Food Environment Initiative

Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC

Funding is available for projects that deal with a wide range of environmental issues including, but not limited to, projects addressing impacts of agricultural practices on soil, air and water quality, conflicts with wildlife and wildlife habitat, conservation of water resources, agri-food by-product management, and minimizing impacts of pesticides and other production inputs.

Will provide up to 85% of cash costs.

Deadlines: May 1, 2015; July 10, 2015

http://www.iafbc.ca/funding_available/programs/agri-food/default.htm

Grant Opportunities for Agriculture and Food Security in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Agri-Innovation Program

Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC

Funding to support industry, academia, retailers and others in late stage research and pilot projects that lead to the commercialization and/or adoption of innovative products, technologies and practices. Projects may be funded up to 100%

Applications taken on an ongoing basis.

<http://www.iafbc.ca/agri-innovation.htm>

Agri-Spirit Fund

Farm Credit Canada

An organization may qualify for a donation between \$5,000 and \$25,000 if it is raising money for a capital project in a region with less than 150,000 people.

Who's eligible? Registered charities and non-profits working with municipal body or governments and municipal bodies.

Apply on line **only between April 13 and May 18, 2015**

<https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/in-your-community/giving-back/fcc-agrispirit-fund.html>

Alberni Valley Community Foundation

The foundation will consider requests from registered charities for;

Program-related projects (i.e., specific, time-limited activity or a series of activities designed to meet certain goals)

Capital projects, including construction, renovation or equipment purchases.

Grants are usually in the \$500 to \$5,000 range.

Letters of interest must be received by Feb 28th annually.

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

BC Buy Local Program

Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC

This is a 4 million dollar 'matching funds' program (applicants contribute 50% of project costs).

Projects must meet the following objectives:

- Increase use of British Columbia's agriculture, food and seafood sectors in the domestic marketplace; and
- Build consumer preference, demand and sales for BC agrifoods sold within the province.

Open to individuals, non-profits and for-profit business'.

Application deadlines April 10, 2015; May 10, 2015; June 15, 2015; August 3, 2015 (subject to available funds).

http://www.iafbc.ca/funding_available/programs/buylocal/default.htm

BC Agrifood and Seafood Export Programs

Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC

For producers, processors, organizations and marketers. Eligible projects should enable BC's agriculture, food and seafood sectors to increase export sales and expand international market access through participation in international market development activities.

Up to \$50,000 available in matched funds.

<http://www.iafbc.ca/export-market-dev.htm>

Building Healthy Communities

Coastal Community Credit Union

Grants for non-profit organizations. Minimum \$1000 grants to support children/youth, environmental, economic development, or financial literacy. Not for operational cost (wages/ rent etc).

Applications reviewed 3 times annually-Jan 31, 2015; May31, 2015; Sept 30, 2015

<https://www.cccu.ca/Personal/InOurCommunities/CommunityFundingPrograms/BuildingHealthierCommunitiesFund/>

Grant Opportunities for Agriculture and Food Security in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Bullitt Foundation

Grants for ecosystem services; energy, industry and technology; urban ecology; leadership and civic engagement

Eligibility-BC charitable organizations

<http://www.bullitt.org/programs/>

Community Foundation

Canada Post

The Foundation will fund projects that support three primary focus areas—community, education and health.

Funding will be allocated to projects that will generate maximum impact, creating lasting change for children and youth.

Up to \$50,000 available per project

Deadlines: Annual program, for 2015 applications close April 17.

<https://www.canadapost.ca/cpo/mc/aboutus/cpfoundation/grants.jsf>

Community Gaming Grants

Province of BC

Will fund up to 75% of costs, with the remainder being either cash or in-kind contribution. Only for non-profits. Not to be used for core funding but can be used for operational costs (ie wages), vehicles, equipment, buildings. Not for new programs or positions, must be in effect already.

Maximum funding of \$100,000 for local organizations.

<https://www.gaming.gov.bc.ca/grants/community-gaming.htm>

Community Investment Program

City of Port Alberni

Provides assistance to not-for-profit organizations to enhance their ability to provide programs, services or activities that benefit the citizens of Port Alberni in the areas of Community Services, Multiculturalism, and Recreation/Amateur Sport.

Application deadline is October 1st, annually.

<http://www.portalberni.ca/community-investment-program>

Corporate Sponsorship

Coastal Community Credit Union

Grants for business organizations in the minimum amount of \$1000 to support children/youth, environmental, economic development, or financial literacy. Not for operational cost (wages/rent etc).

Applications taken on the 15th of every month.

<https://www.cccu.ca/Personal/InOurCommunities/CommunityFundingPrograms/CorporateSponsorships/>

Development Grants

Social Enterprise Canada

In kind and cash grants up to \$10,000 with matching funds provided by organization. Typically for consultant/professional fees relating to planning or development activity of the social enterprise (For feasibility studies as well)

Must be an incorporated non-profit organization or a qualified donee under CRA regulations (native band, municipality, or registered charity), OR have an agreement to be sponsored by one.

Must attend a full-day ENP Social Enterprise workshop.

Application deadlines June 4, 2015; Nov 5, 2015

<http://www.socialenterprisecanada.ca/en/communities/bc/nav/grants.html>

Emerging Sectors

Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC

The main intent is to enable innovation, collaboration and strategic approaches in emerging sectors to identify opportunities, challenges and priorities.

Eligible projects will address the gaps in applied scientific knowledge, technology adaptation and transfer, pre-commercialization exploration, skills, business development, collaboration and links with potential partners, in order to seize new business opportunities.

http://www.iafbc.ca/funding_available/programs/emerging-sectors/default.htm

Grant Opportunities for Agriculture and Food Security in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Environmental Farm Plan Program

BC Agriculture Council

The Environmental Farm Plan program is confidential, voluntary & no-charge. Funding is available to help eligible farmers improve on-farm environmental sustainability,

<https://www.bcac.bc.ca/ardcorp/program/environmental-farm-plan-program>

Epicure Foundation

A foundation created to support grassroots organizations working to improve food security across Canada. The goal is to ensure that all Canadians have access to resources and education to prepare nourishing meals for themselves and their families.

Program unconfirmed for 2015

Eligibility-Registered Charitable organizations

<https://www.epicureselections.com/en/company/epicure-foundation/grant-program/>

Farm Business Advisory Services

Growing Forward 2

Producers may be eligible for funding toward business consulting services for their operations.

Tier 1-Basic farm financial assessment-100% support up to \$1,900

Tier 2-Specialized business planning (85% support up to \$3,000

Eligibility-new farms within 3 years of start up and established farms with over \$10,000 gross farm income.

http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/busmgmt/FB_Advisory_Services.html

Farm To School

Public Health Association of BC

Farm to School programs bring healthy, local food into schools, and provide students with hands-on learning opportunities that foster food literacy, all while strengthening the local food system and enhancing school and community connectedness.

The first phase of the grant process is a \$500 grant to successful applicants to support program

planning, followed by a \$3500 grant for implementation.

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

Hamber Foundation

The Foundation makes grants for cultural, educational and charitable purposes within the Province of British Columbia. The Foundation prefers to support specific projects rather than contributing to general sustaining assistance or to large capital projects.

Eligibility-Registered Charitable Organizations and Educational Institutions

Deadlines: March 15 and Sept 15 annually

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

Leadership Grants

Leadership Grants Organization

The mission of the Leadership Grants Organization is to provide critical, early-stage resources to small business owners (including farmers) to assist in the development and growth of their enterprise.

Between \$1000 and \$100,000 available. Applications reviewed quarterly.

Eligibility - new business, must provide proof of matching funds and a business plan

http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/busmgmt/FB_Advisory_Services.html

On Farm Food Safety Program

BC Agriculture Council

This program provides education and financial assistance to eligible B.C. farmers and ranchers who would like to become certified by a recognized HACCP based on-farm food safety program (i.e. CanadaGAP, Verified Beef) for the very first time. up to 90% funding available up to \$6000

<https://www.bcac.bc.ca/ardcorp/program/farm-food-safety-program-offs>

Grant Opportunities for Agriculture and Food Security in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Real Estate Foundation of BC

For non-profits, municipalities and other community organizations. Focuses on built environments, freshwater sustainability and sustainable food systems. Will fund up to 50% of costs (or 33% if in kind) for human resources/consultants, workshops, production of educational material.

Application Deadlines: June 3, 2015: Sept 16, 2015

<http://www.refbc.com/grants>

Traceability Adoption Program

BC Agriculture Council

The TAP will assist producers/farmers, food processors and agri-food businesses by assisting with specific costs relating to the purchase and installation of traceability infrastructure, and the training of staff to implement traceability systems for plants, animals and agri-food products.

Up to 75% funding available

<https://www.bcac.bc.ca/ardcorp/program/traceability-adoption-program>

United Way

For charitable non-profits. Funding limit of \$6000 for new applicants. Focus on 'All that kids can be', 'From poverty to possibility', and 'Healthy people, strong communities'.

http://www.uwcnvi.ca/index.php?p=7_88_Grant-Applications

VanCity Foundation

VCF is a public charity created to help gather together community resources, thereby realizing the potential that exists when we invest in the vision of communities. VCF Strategic Programs focus on not-for-profit social enterprise, community owned real estate (including housing), and collaborative approaches toward change. Funding criteria and application processes vary across our granting programs.

<http://vancitycommunityfoundation.ca/s/home.asp>

Grant Opportunities for Agriculture and Food Security

in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Loans

Advance Payments Program

Government of Canada

The Advance Payments Program (APP) is a financial loan guarantee program that gives producers easier access to credit through cash advances. It is delivered via producer organizations across the country.

The maximum cash advance available to each producer is \$400,000. The federal government pays the interest on the first \$100,000 of a cash advance issued to a producer per production period and producers have up until the end of the production period to repay their advance.

<http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/?id=1290176119212>

BC Breeder and Feeder Loans

BCBFA

Loans for bred and feeder cattle.

Up to 100% financing is available with competitive interest rates.

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

Canadian Agricultural Loans

Government of Canada

A loan guarantee program designed to increase the availability of loans to farmers and agricultural co-operatives. Farmers can use these loans to establish, improve, and develop farms, while agricultural co-operatives may also access loans to process, distribute, or market the products of farming.

Up to \$500,000 available.

<http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/?id=1288035482429>

Local Food Micro-Loan Fund

Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC

Interest free loans between \$1,000 and \$10,000 for a 24 month term. Must be used for equipment or materials.

Open to individual business' or non-profit organizations.

<http://www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca/resources/microloan/>

Transition Loans

Farm Credit Canada

Benefits for both the buyer and seller when transitioning farm ownership to the next generation.

Tax advantages and other benefits.

<https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/we-finance/primary-producers/farm-transfers.html>

Young Farmer Loan

Farm Credit Canada

Very competitive interest rates for farmers under age 40.

up to \$500,000 available

<https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/we-finance/young-farmers.html>

Grant Opportunities for Agriculture and Food Security in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Programs

Agri-Invest

Government of Canada

AgriInvest helps farmers manage small income declines. Farmers make annual deposits based on a percentage of Allowable Net Sales and receive matching contributions from federal, provincial, and territorial governments. Accounts are eligible for premium interest rates.

Deposit up to 100% of your Allowable Net Sales annually, with the first 1% matched by governments. The limit on matching government contributions is \$15,000 per year.

Free, with easy enrollment into the program.

<http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/?id=1291828779399>

Agri-Stability

Government of British Columbia

An insurance program which provides support when farmers experience large margin decline.

Government will compensate 70% of shortfall in profits when they are 30% less than a calculated margin.

Baseline margins are determined in advance through 5 year tax returns. Fee applies.

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=C0BD97C41500455CB160BEB4117D899A>

BC Farmer ID Card

BC Agriculture Council

Benefits card for BC farmers.

Benefits include health care plans, health/travel/dental insurance, life and disability insurance, travel plan, estate planning, vehicle rentals and other.

Fee applies

<https://www.bcac.bc.ca/about-farmer-id-card>

Community Futures

Alberni-Clayoquot Branch

Financing, training, and advisory services for small businesses and entrepreneurs in our community.

Loans for business are available at competitive rates as well as advisory services for business planning and financial projections.

A variety of workshops and a lending library are offered on the Alberni campus.

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

Crop Loss and Damage due to Wildlife

Government of BC

Agriculture producers can get compensation due to wildlife damage to some harvested and unharvested crops by enrolling in the Agriculture Wildlife Program. Damage by the following are covered - Bison, bear, cranes, deer, elk, moose, mountain sheep and waterfowl.

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=9FCA695F726F4BB5AF38FBE1EC4EBC72>

Production Insurance

Government of BC

Affordable, flexible and efficient production insurance is available for the following crops-berries, flower bulbs, forage, grain, grapes, tree fruits, and vegetables.

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=3B2C227D4A104DC7A5F52084479DF4C0>