Alberni Valley
Food Security Emergency Plan

2025

ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

upland
agricultural consulting

Land Acknowledgement

Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District serves the communities of the central and west coast of Vancouver Island located on the ḥahahuułi (traditional territories) of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations of Ahousaht, Ditidaht, Hesquiaht, Hupačasath, Huu-ay-aht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Toquaht, c̓išaaʔatḥ (Tseshaht), Uchucklesaht, and Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ. Since time immemorial, Nuu-chah-nulth Peoples have walked gently in these places where we live, work, learn, and play. We are committed to building relationships based on honour and ʔiisaak (respect), and we offer our gratitude.

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Purpose and Methods

The Alberni Valley's geography, characterized by mountainous terrain, coastal inlets, and reliance on a single highway, creates structural vulnerabilities for the agriculture and food sector. Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2023 Cameron Lake wildfire and the 2025 Mount Underwood wildfire highlighted how fragile food supply chains can be, with disruptions leading to shortages, increased costs, and economic losses. Climate change is expected to intensify these risks, underscoring the need for a coordinated framework for food security and emergency management.

To address these challenges, the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD), in collaboration with the City of Port Alberni, Tseshaht First Nation, and Hupačasath First Nation, have developed this Alberni Valley Food Security Emergency Plan (FSEP). Building on previous regional food security initiatives, the FSEP aims to:
- Identify opportunities for the ACRD to support community food security in emergency preparedness and response;
- Determine food security needs and priorities for the Alberni Valley; and
- Develop actionable recommendations to strengthen community food resiliency across the region.

The project took place between the Summer of 2024 and Fall of 2025 and was informed by technical research and extensive engagement. Supporting reports, including a Background Report, a *What We Heard* Engagement Summary Report, and a Livestock Emergency Plan, provided the foundation for the FSEP's recommendations. Engagement activities involved Tseshaht First Nation, Hupačasath First Nation, the agricultural community, businesses, food security organizations, and local government representatives. Through interviews, presentations, workshops, and surveys, the project team gained critical insights into past and current food system challenges, community food assets, and the gaps and opportunities for both short-term emergency response and long-term resilience.

Results and Recommendations

Impacts from Hazards
The Alberni Valley faces multiple hazards that threaten food security, including wildfires, drought, flooding, and supply chain disruptions. Wildfires can cut off Highway 4, disrupt deliveries of food and food products both into and out of the community, damage farmland and water systems, and harm air quality. Droughts risk crop failure, livestock stress, and reduced salmon habitat, with water restrictions compounding feed shortages. Flooding and tsunamis can destroy roads, contaminate farmland, and limit access to seafood harvesting. Each of these hazards can create immediate shortages, damage infrastructure, and trigger long recovery periods before food systems stabilize. In addition to natural hazards, supply chain disruptions from earthquakes, landslides, severe weather, and global pandemics add further risks. Damage to road infrastructure may cut off farms and grocers, preventing food and livestock products from reaching markets. Power outages can cause spoilage, while labour shortages or shifting market demand can destabilize processing and distribution. Global crises can reduce imports and drive up prices, further straining access. Together, these threats highlight the region's dependence on external supply chains and the urgent need for resilient, localized food systems.

<u>Food Self-Sufficiency</u>
The Alberni Valley has rich natural assets, over 7,700 hectares (ha) of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), fisheries access through Barkley Sound, and a tradition of farming and foraging. Yet, only about 1,300 ha of farmland are actively being farmed, and irrigation use is limited. The Alberni Valley possesses a variety of food sources including retail infrastructure, household-level storage, agricultural land, and marine resources. However, its capacity to sustain its population in the event of an extended emergency is likely limited due to challenges with fully activating these resources and storing food products in large quantities, especially during lengthy power outages or road access restrictions. Households, restaurants, and institutions typically hold only a few days' worth of food, and grocery stores rely on rapid restocking cycles. While there are surpluses in specific local products being generated locally, such as cucumbers and dairy, structural, regulatory, and logistical barriers (e.g., centralized processing systems, marketing boards, commercial distribution networks) severely constrain the ability to keep these foods within the community.

At present, only a small portion of the food needs of local residents can be met through local agricultural production and seafood harvests. While the region holds theoretical potential for much greater self-reliance, particularly if farmlands were fully utilized and more seafood stayed in local markets, current land use, infrastructure, and policy frameworks fall short. Becoming more food secure as a region would require investment in agri-food infrastructure, localized processing, expanded land use, and supportive policies that promote a balance between export-oriented production and community-based provisioning.

<u>Recommendations</u>
Given the region's vulnerabilities to hazards, limited food self-sufficiency, and dependence on external supply chains, the following recommendations aim to strengthen resilience and ensure more reliable access to food during emergencies. The FSEP recommendations are grounded in both technical research and extensive community engagement, reflecting the realities of the Alberni Valley food system. They are designed to be practical for regional, local, and First Nation governments to implement within their authority. Each recommendation identifies lead and supporting actors, timelines, resource needs, and priority levels to guide action implementation. To provide clarity, the actions are grouped into three categories: emergency preparedness, long-term food security, and support for Indigenous food sovereignty.

Food Security Emergency Management Planning and Preparedness Actions: These actions focus on emergency preparedness, response planning, and communication to help manage food security during a crisis. Appropriate planning and preparedness ensures a community can respond effectively to food disruptions when they occur.

The actions are:

1. Support funding for backup generators/ secondary power sources for cold storage, emergency reception centre kitchens and other critical food assets.
2. Conduct a post-disaster assessment of impacts to food security.
3. Advocate for more cell service and broad band connectivity throughout the Alberni Valley.
4. Consider if food storage needs and distribution logistics are adequate at Emergency Reception Centres.
5. Create a food distribution strategy between local governments, farmers, food banks, food security organizations, and other actors to activate during an emergency.
6. Provide resources to producers around creating and updating a Farm Emergency Plan for their operation.

7. Support preparedness for livestock evacuations.
8. Advocate for alternative emergency routes into and out of the ACRD.
9. Convene a meeting with large grocer retailers to discuss food distribution challenges during an emergency.
10. Expand the Alberni Valley Gleaning Project to be able to mobilize during an emergency.
11. Collaborate with relevant partners to support agri-food business continuity planning efforts.
12. Update the ACRD Disaster and Emergency Management Plan to reference recent planning documents.

Long-term Food Security Actions for Increased Community Food Resiliency: These actions focus on long-term solutions to reduce food insecurity risks at the community level. They focus on supporting increased resilience of the local food system and supporting organizations and committees working towards enhancing regional food security.

The actions are:

13. Promote increased utilization of publicly-owned land for agriculture and food growing.
14. Promote increased utilization of private agricultural lands for a greater diversity of crop and livestock production.
15. Continue to provide support to organizations working on public education related to food security and advisory committees.
16. Advocate to the province to continue to streamline meat processing permits and regulations, without compromising food safety.
17. Support existing and new food and seafood processing businesses.
18. Support establishment of refrigerated and frozen cold storage space with backup generators outside of the tsunami inundation zone.
19. Allow water use for food production year-round in both urban and rural areas.
20. Increase access to water for agriculture.
21. Continue and expand the municipal waste diversion program to create high quality soil amendments.
22. Explore options for the development of a year-round, permanent centralized farmers market complex.

Actions to Support First Nations' Food Sovereignty and Emergency Food Security: These actions focus on how the ACRD can support First Nations in long-term food sovereignty and shorter-term emergency food security.

The actions are:

23. Explore permanent funding sources for staff positions to increase programming related to food production, preservation and food sovereignty.
24. Pursue grant funding applications to expand infrastructure, equipment and training related to food sovereignty and emergency food security.
25. Continue building partnerships with educational institutions (e.g. North Island College, University of Victoria, Vancouver Island University, KPU) to conduct research on agricultural lands.
26. Explore the potential to include fish waste from processing into the regional three-stream composting program.

Acronyms

ACRD	Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District
AAC	Agricultural Advisory Committee
ADC	Agricultural Development Committee
AF	BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food
AFI	Alberni Farmers' Institute
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
AVFSS	Alberni Valley Food Security Society
AV	Alberni Valley
BCCDC	BC Centre for Disease Control
BMPs	Beneficial Management Practices
CAWS	Council for Agricultural Water Supply
CCWD	Cherry Creek Waterworks District
CPA	City of Port Alberni
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
DEMP	ACRD Disaster and Emergency Management Plan
EA	Electoral Area
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
FSEP	Food Security Emergency Plans
Ha	Hectares
HFN	Hupačasath First Nation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NTC	Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council
OCP	Official Community Plan
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TFN	Tseshaht First Nation

Glossary and Key Concepts

The following are key concepts and definitions important for a reader to understand when discussing food security. This terminology will be used throughout the *Alberni Valley Food Security Emergency Plan.*

Emergency
An emergency is an event that has occurred, is ongoing or appears imminent and is caused by one or more incident of accident, fire, security threat, etc., or by the forces of nature and requires prompt coordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of a person or animals or the safety of property or of objects or sites of heritage value.[1]

Food Assets
Food assets are beneficial components to a food system; they are places and organizations where people can grow, prepare, share, buy, receive or learn about food.[2]

Table 1. Food asset terminology and examples of each.

Food Asset	Examples
Food production, hunting, fishing, foraging	Farmland, community gardens, parks, ocean, lakes, forests.
Food sources	Grocery stores, farmers' markets, restaurants, food banks, food hampers, and meal programs.
Food organizations	Organizations involved in food rescue, recovery, redistribution, food literacy and education, and food advocacy.
Food waste management	Composting and curbside food collection services.
Food processing facilities	Packing houses, community kitchens, cold storage, commissary kitchens, food hubs.
Community food economy and food culture	Harvest/food festivals, food trucks and mobile food markets, farmers markets, agri-tourism.
Community food literacy	School gardens, cooking classes, recipe sharing, food processing classes, seed libraries, food hub and shared kitchens.
Source: Urban Food Strategies, Community Food System Planning Strategies	

Food Literacy
Food literacy is the ability of an individual to understand food in a way that they develop a positive relationship with it, including food skills and practices across their lifespan in order to navigate, engage, and participate within a complex food system. It's the ability to make decisions to support the achievement of personal health and a sustainable food system considering environmental, social, economic, cultural, and political components.[3]

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[1] ACRD. (2024). Disaster and Emergency Management Plan.
[2] K. Romses. (2017). Vancouver Food Asset Map Glossary. Vancouver Coastal Health.
[3] Cullen, T., Janelle Hatch, M.S. Martin, W. Wharf Higgins, J., and Sheppard, R. (2015). Food Literacy: Definition and Framework for Action. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research.* 76(3): 140-145.

Food Security

Food security encompasses many interdependent aspects of society, not only meaning that everyone has equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious and safe; but that everyone has the agency to participate in and influence food systems; and that food systems are resilient, ecologically sustainable, socially just, and honour Indigenous food sovereignty.[4] Food security can be viewed at both a community level and a household level. For this work, the community level is the main focus.

Community Level Food Security
Community food security arises when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.[5]

Household Level Food Security
Household food security reflects the ability of individuals and families to consistently access and utilize adequate, nutritious food that supports health and wellbeing. It is shaped by a combination of external factors—such as income, geography, and policy—and internal factors, including food literacy, budgeting, and coping strategies. Both structural conditions and household-level capacities influence overall food security.

Hazard

Means a circumstance, condition, process, phenomenon, activity or prescribed type of thing, whether natural or human-caused, that may give rise to an emergency.[6]

Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Indigenous food sovereignty refers to the rights of Indigenous peoples to self-define food systems. It encompasses the ability to control and manage food sources, production, and distribution according to cultural traditions, ecological knowledge, and social needs. This concept is deeply rooted in the connection between Indigenous communities and lands, water, and ecosystems, and emphasizes the importance of self-determination and cultural integrity.[7]

Food System

The food system encompasses the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded.[8]

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[4] BC Centre for Disease Control. (2022). Defining Food Security and Food Insecurity in British Columbia.
[5] Hamm, M.; Bellows, A. (2003).Community Food Security and Nutrition Educators. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 35 (1): 37–43.
[6] ACRD. (2024). Disaster and Emergency Management Plan.
[7] Island Indigenous Foods Gathering. (2024). Summary Report from a Multiple-Community Roundtable Discussion.
[8] UN Food and Agriculture Organization. (2018). Sustainable food systems: Concept and Framework.

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1.0 Project Background

In recent years, food security and resiliency have become increasingly urgent concerns in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD). Events such as prolonged drought, wildfires, the temporary, albeit prolonged, closures of Highway 4 and Franklin River Rd (Bamfield Main) have highlighted how quickly food access can be disrupted, threatening not only the health and safety of residents, but also the viability of agricultural production, food distribution systems, and transportation corridors. While the ACRD's geography contributes to its natural beauty, it also creates structural vulnerabilities in the regional food system. Limited road access, the absence of active railways, seismic risks, and mountainous terrain edged by a rugged coastline and river systems all pose challenges to food security and emergency preparedness.

Temporary road closures in recent years have resulted in short-term food shortages for both people and livestock, as well as impacts on the ability to move agricultural products to markets outside of the Alberni Valley. These events offered agricultural producers and Alberni Valley residents firsthand experience of what it means to live in a food-insecure community. With climate change continuing to intensify these risks, and the ongoing threat of earthquakes and tsunamis, there is a growing need to identify the gaps and opportunities that will strengthen local food system resilience.

This *Alberni Valley Food Security Emergency Plan* (FSEP) builds on past efforts by the ACRD and local organizations to support a stronger regional food system. The objectives include:
- Identify opportunities for the ACRD to support community food security in emergency preparedness and response;
- Determine food security needs and priorities for the Alberni Valley; and
- Develop actionable recommendations to strengthen community food resiliency across the region.

This project was led by the ACRD, in collaboration with the City of Port Alberni, Hupačasath First Nation, and ċišaaʔatḥ (Tseshaht) First Nation. These partners helped guide the project to ensure it reflects local priorities and Indigenous perspectives on food sovereignty and emergency preparedness. In parallel with this work, a separate *West Coast Food Security Emergency Plan* was developed to address the distinct geographic, climatic, and cultural considerations of West Coast communities. Together, these plans provide a coordinated framework to enhance food security and emergency readiness across the entire ACRD.

Figure 1. Greenhouse operation in the Alberni Valley.

1.1 Project Timeline and Documents

The project began in the Summer of 2024 and finished in December 2025 (Figure 2).

Project Kick-off
June 2024

Background Research and Report Completion
July – December 2024

Development of Livestock Emergency Plan
January – June 2025

Engagement with Hupačasath & Tseshaht First Nation
September 2024 – August 2025

Engagement with Agriculture & Food Security Communities
September 2024 – June 2025

Development of Alberni Valley FSEP
May – September 2025

Presentations and Final Alberni Valley FSEP Completion
October – December 2025

Figure 2. Timeline of project milestones.

Three accompanying documents were created to inform the final recommendations presented in this report.

1. ACRD Food Security Emergency Planning Background Report

This report provides essential background for the Alberni Valley Food Security Emergency Plan. Building on prior work by the ACRD and community partners, the report includes a review of relevant policy documents, a detailed agricultural sector profile, and an overview of food security infrastructure across the region. The report examines projected climate change impacts, assesses hazards and vulnerabilities and presents a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis for food security in the ACRD.

2. Livestock Emergency Plan for the Alberni Valley

The Livestock Emergency Plan for the Alberni Valley is intended to help livestock operators prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. The plan is organized into three parts - Emergency Mitigation and Preparedness, Emergency Response and Emergency Recovery, each outlining specific responsibilities and recommendations for both livestock operators and local government. The report identifies the types of hazards that pose the greatest risk to livestock and livestock feed in the Alberni Valley. Additionally, the report includes livestock relocation protocols, roles within the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), and conditions under which temporary access to evacuated areas may be granted.

3. What We Heard – Engagement Summary Report

The *What We Heard* report outlines the engagement activities carried out during the project since the project kicked off in 2024. Engagement activities included in-person meetings, interviews, and surveys. Key themes, gaps and opportunities identified through these engagement activities are organized by region, with separate sections for Alberni Valley and West Coast, and specific subsections for each collaborating municipality and First Nation.

Figure 3. Engagement event at Beaver Creek Community Hall.

2.0 Geographic Context

The Alberni Valley is located in the south central area of Vancouver Island and is home to a population of approximately 26,000 residents.[9] It includes four Electoral Areas (B, D, E and F) and the City of Port Alberni and lies within the traditional, unceded territory of the Tseshaht First Nation and Hupačasath First Nation, both having federal reserve lands within the Alberni Valley (Figure 4).
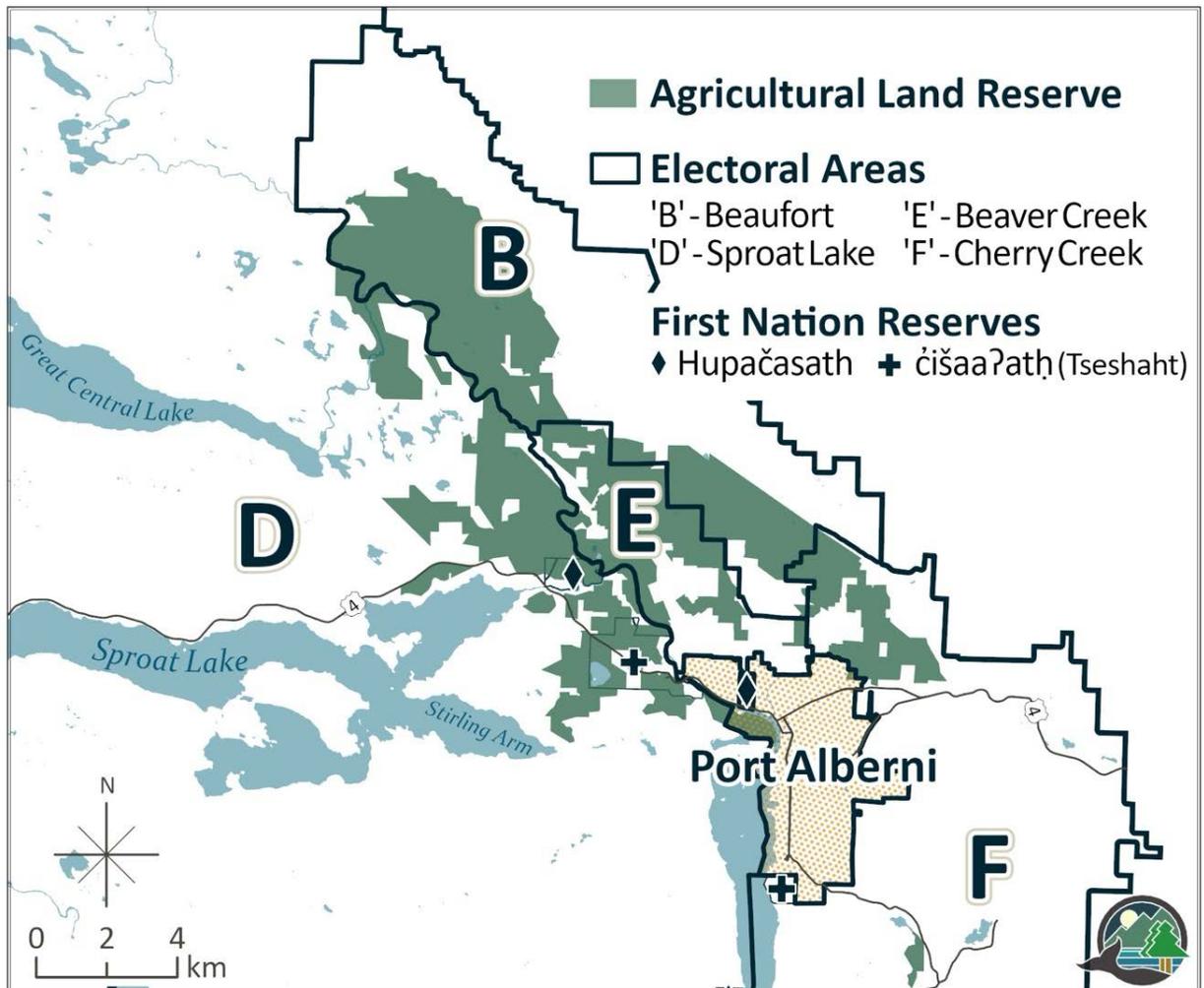
Figure 4. Jurisdictional boundaries and the Agricultural Land Reserve in the Alberni Valley.

The Alberni Valley is home to favourable growing conditions with good soils and climate to produce a variety of crops and raise livestock, containing more than 7,700 hectares (ha) of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) (Table 2). The Alberni Valley is also connected to Barkley Sound via the Alberni Inlet, providing an ocean gateway to a variety of seafood species.

The City of Port Alberni (CPA), situated in the heart of the Alberni Valley, is the service hub of the region with healthcare services, schools, community and government services, grocery stores and industrial areas.

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[9] Statistics Canada. Accessed May 2025. Results for Alberni-Clayoquot, Regional district [Census division], British Columbia

Located northwest of Port Alberni, Electoral Area 'E' - Beaver Creek is a mix of suburban and agricultural land uses with a majority of the land base in the ALR (Figure 5). Electoral Area 'B' – Beaufort is a rural area with a small population and a focus on agriculture and forestry. Electoral Area 'F' - Cherry Creek - is located southeast of the City of Port Alberni and most farms are located north of Highway 4. Cherry Creek is unique in the ACRD in being the only remaining Improvement District that administers both their own water system and volunteer fire department. Electoral Area 'D' - Sproat Lake is located west of the Somass River, and is home to a number of farms along the eastern edge of its boundary.

Table 2. Area of ALR in ACRD Electoral Areas and the City of Port Alberni, inclusive of on-reserve ALR lands.

Jurisdiction	Area of ALR (ha)
Electoral Area B (Beaufort)	3,112
Electoral Area D (Sproat Lake)	2,527
Electoral Area E (Beaver Creek)	1,276
Electoral Area F (Cherry Creek)	774
City of Port Alberni	87

Figure 5. Alberni Valley farm in the Beaver Creek area.

3.0 Potential Hazard Impacts to Food Security in the Alberni Valley

In 2024, the ACRD updated the regional *Disaster and Emergency Management Plan.* The document serves as a critical guide, providing clear direction on how ACRD and relevant partners will work together to respond effectively, manage resources, and support those affected during and after an emergency.[10] This document, the *Alberni Valley Food Security Emergency Plan,* aims to complement the *Disaster and Emergency Management Plan* by focusing on increasing food system and food access resiliency before, during and after an emergency.

Due to the geographic location of the ACRD and the impacts of a changing climate, there are numerous environmental hazards and other events that pose a threat to food security. The scope of this project includes examining the following hazards and disruptions: flooding (including tsunamis), wildfire, drought and supply chain interruptions. Table 3 describes how the hazards may impact the Alberni Valley's community food security. While each event presents unique impacts on food security, all require recovery time, affecting continued access to and affordability of food.

Table 3. Hazards of focus and their potential impact to food security in the Alberni Valley.

Event	Potential Impacts to Food Security
Wildfire *Human or non-human caused fires, typically in forested or grasslands areas*	• Wildfire along Highway 4 may cut off the Alberni Valley from the rest of the Island. This could cause disruptions to supply chains and limit access to food supplies, delaying food transport and deliveries (as seen in the 2023 Cameron Lake wildfire). • Food retailers may face delivery shortages, and increased demand could impact affordability. Wildfires can also cause localized evacuations, which may impact farmers with livestock. • Limited alternative evacuation routes in many communities and the road conditions of the designated evacuation routes may make large-scale evacuation challenging. • Wildfires could damage food system infrastructure such as farms, crops and agricultural lands, food processing facilities, and food storage. • Wildfires may contaminate water sources or destroy water infrastructure, limiting the ability to bring irrigated crops to maturity and process harvested food. • Wildfire has the potential to significantly impact air quality, posing health risks to both humans and animals.
Drought *Prolonged lack of precipitation*	• Droughts in the Alberni Valley have the potential to cause crop failures and livestock stress, especially as most forage crops are not irrigated. This reduces the amount of locally produced livestock feed available. • Severe droughts would likely impact the entire Alberni Valley, leading to additional foods and livestock feed being imported from outside of the region and imposing water restrictions. • Drought may lower the water levels in salmon-bearing rivers below what is needed to sustain fish life and maintain a healthy environment. Precedent in other areas of Vancouver Island has been for the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to temporarily suspend water allocations for irrigating crops in order to maintain river levels, which affects forage yield and livestock feed supply. • Prolonged drought and extreme heat conditions can significantly increase the risk of wildfires and intensify their associated impacts.

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[10] Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. (2024). Disaster and Emergency Management Plan.

Event	Potential Impacts to Food Security
Flooding: *Due to tsunami, overland, riverine, or dam breaches*	• Transportation routes such as Highway 4 could be closed, limiting food access, while prolonged disruptions could impact livestock, water quality, and food processing facilities, leading to both immediate and long-term food security challenges. • Flooding can cause localized damage to food security infrastructure such as food storage and processing facilities, and food distribution centres/organizations. • All flooding events could damage agricultural areas by contaminating soil and water sources with saltwater and debris, damaging crops and negatively impacting future agricultural capability on the land. • Tsunamis, atmospheric rivers and king tides can result in large amounts of debris in the water, preventing access to boats. The ocean is the closest large scale food supply for the ACRD should supply chains be interrupted long term, but harvesters need boats, fuel and safe passage to access harvesting grounds.
Supply Chain Disruption Events: *Due to earthquakes landslides, debris flows, wildfire, flooding, severe weather, pandemics*	• Damage to roads and critical infrastructure can lead to supply chain disruptions. • Grocers may face delays/shortages in food supply, while damage to water systems/infrastructure could also impact local food production and processing and access to livestock feed. • Road closures may also prevent machinery repair and veterinary services from reaching farms and prevent producers from getting livestock processed (as there are no abattoirs within the ACRD) and their products to market (e.g. milk). • Power outages could lead to refrigeration failure and food spoilage. • Crop damage due to extreme temperatures or winds may affect local production, leading to reduced food accessibility. • Global disruptions can reduce food imports, increasing dependency on local food supplies, which may not fully meet demand. • Shortages in essential items and increased prices could reduce food access. • Labour limitations for processing, and transportation as seen during COVID 19 could exacerbate issues, leading to prolonged food and livestock feed supply instability.

3.1 Impacts and Lessons Learned from Recent Emergency Events

Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022), the Cameron Lake wildfire (2023), and the Mount Arrowsmith and Wesley Ridge wildfires (2025) —impacted Alberni Valley residents and threatened regional food security. Their effects and the gaps they revealed offer important learning opportunities and help identify the supports needed to strengthen food security in the region. While the impacts of the Mount Underwood and Wesley Ridge wildfires are still being understood, their effects on regional food security can be used to further inform the implementation of recommendations found in this plan.

Global Pandemic: 2020-2022 COVID-19

From 2020 to 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed many vulnerabilities within critical supply chains, health systems, and business and government operations, and produced significant global challenges. For the agriculture and food sector in the Alberni Valley there were impacts related to reduced labour availability, supply chain disruption, reduced processing capacity, changing market demand, food insecurity and technology gaps.[11] COVID-19 restrictions severely disrupted the availability of national and international labour, which is critical to planting, harvesting, and processing. Reduced workforce availability threatened food production capacity and posed risks to food security. The pandemic exposed

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[11] Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. 2020. Covid Mitigation Action Plan.

vulnerabilities in food supply chains, notably due to temporary closures of processing plants, border disruptions, and transportation challenges, which impacted agricultural producers and delivery of food to retailers (Figure 6). Bottlenecks in meat processing and the handling of perishables were especially pronounced. One of the main gaps was the lack of storage for food, livestock feed, and agricultural supplies. Rapid shifts in consumer demand—from food service to retail—left some farmers with surplus products and no immediate market, as sales at restaurants, farmers' markets and farm gate stands declined rapidly. Many producers lacked the digital infrastructure to adapt to online sales—hindering their ability to adjust. In addition, the economic fallout from COVID-19 increased food insecurity in the Alberni Valley, especially in low-income households and remote communities.

Producers, farmers' markets, and food security organizations (such as food banks) in the Alberni Valley adapted to conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic as best they could. For instance, farmers' markets had modified operations – new layouts, one-way foot traffic, handwashing station and crowd limits to comply with public health orders. A "Grow Local" initiative held a contactless plant sale to encourage people to grow their own food, with pre-orders and drive-by pickup available. The Salvation Army increased its mobile distribution for vulnerable populations. Local producers and food security organizations transitioned to online meetings and some producers increased online presence and ordering options. Overall, there was a surge in support from local consumers wanting to support local and reduce supply chain risk.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted gaps in the regional food system that are ongoing to this day. Opportunities to fill these gaps include:[12]

- Diversifying labour sources (e.g. promoting domestic worker recruitment), and providing financial incentives for automation to reduce labour dependency in the long term.
- Improving food system resilience through decentralized meat processing, enhancing local logistics networks, and investing in cold chain infrastructure.
- Expanding insurance and business risk management tools tailored to pandemics.
- Supporting food banks and non-profits, and ensuring equitable access to nutritious food.
- Accelerating rural broadband deployment and cell service in rural areas.

Wildfire Event: 2023 Cameron Lake Wildfire

In June 2023, a wildfire at Cameron Bluffs, east of Port Alberni, forced the full closure of Highway 4 for two weeks, followed by limited single-lane access for several weeks thereafter. Throughout the summer and fall, daytime midweek closures and intermittent single-lane traffic continued. Although an alternate route was quickly established for essential travel and goods movement, it was significantly longer and relied on logging and secondary roads, which were not suitable for all vehicles or drivers.

The agriculture and food sector experienced immediate disruptions, including increased travel time to get livestock to processing facilities, challenges in getting produce to markets outside the region, inability to bring livestock feed into the Valley, and the dumping of milk until milk trucks could access the area via the detour. Where possible, producers adapted: collaborating to combine shipments, sharing transportation resources, hosting more on-site sales, attending farmers' markets, and using social media to promote products. Food security organizations also pivoted, increasing local sourcing and coordinating with producers to distribute available food.

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[12] Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. (2020). Covid Mitigation Action Plan.

Retailers saw instances of panic buying, leaving some shelves empty until supplies could arrive via the alternate route. The broader economic impacts on the Alberni Valley were significant. The closure severely affected tourism, hospitality, and supply chains, resulting in an estimated $14.9 million in lost revenue for Port Alberni–area businesses.[13] The event emphasized the critical need for infrastructure resilience, highlighting the vulnerability of the region to transportation disruptions and the economic strain on local businesses and residents. The Chamber of Commerce commissioned a report that analyzed the impacts of this event on businesses and identified several solutions and next steps, including:[14]

- Developing alternative business models that reduce the seasonality of local economies, especially in tourism and agriculture to help businesses be less vulnerable to seasonal hazards.
- Expanding emergency detour capacity and strengthening key sections of Highway 4; exploring alternative transportation options like ferry and air services to maintain connectivity during closures.
- Creating/strengthening interagency governance, logistical and communications systems and providing training and contingency planning.
- Establishing financial assistance and recovery programs for affected businesses.
- Improving communication channels among businesses, residents and visitors for timely information dissemination.
- Encouraging business continuity planning to help businesses adapt to disruptions; and
- Securing both short- and long-term funding mechanisms to support economic recovery.

These recommendations—spanning infrastructure, transportation, and emergency planning—aim to enhance regional resilience and maintain supply chain continuity. The Cameron Lake wildfire highlighted the need for ongoing collaboration among agriculture and food organizations, First Nations, chambers of commerce, economic trusts, and all levels of government to ensure long-term economic and food system sustainability in the region.

Figure 6. Empty grocery store shelves during the COVID-19 pandemic.[15]

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[13] Alberni-Clayoquot Chambers of Commerce. (2024). Highway 4 Disruption and Resiliency Solutions.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Photo source: I. Cold Creative Commons License 2.0

4.0 Alberni Valley Food Supply vs Needs Assessment

An examination of the supply of food and water in the Alberni Valley was undertaken to compare what is available to meet residents' needs and to identify potential gaps during an emergency. It also provides an indication of the region's level of self-reliance, the potential contributions of local producers and seafood producers and harvesters, and how long existing supplies could sustain the population in an emergency.

4.1 Estimating Food Availability in the Region

At any given moment, there are several locations where food is available and/or stored in the Alberni Valley, including:

1. Individual households (e.g. backyard gardens, food from hunting, fishing, or foraging, and household pantries, refrigerators, and freezers);
2. On farms (e.g. raw or processed goods such as fruits, vegetables, meat, and associated products such as dairy), which can be obtained through farm stands, at farmers markets, or other means;
3. Retail suppliers such as grocery stores (e.g. Save-On-Foods, Buy-Low Foods, No Frills, Quality Foods, Walmart, and many local markets such as Beaver Creek Market) that carry a wide array of products;
4. Seafood processing and storage facilities;
5. Convenience stores or corner stores that carry a narrower selection and smaller volumes of food (e.g. Dollar Tree, 7-11, Circle K);
6. Commercial kitchens and storage facilities (e.g. Dock+);
7. Food banks and community meal programs; and
8. Schools, hospitals, senior homes, hotels, restaurants and other institutions that may serve food.

> ### Water Needs
> With respect to potable water, the average daily requirements are about 3.7 litres for men and 2.7 litres for women. However, much of that is consumed in fruits, vegetables and other foods. Therefore, approximately 1.5 – 2.6 litres of drinking water per day is recommended per resident (Source: Mayo Clinic, 2022).
>
> For the population of the Alberni Valley (approximately 26,300 residents) this is equivalent to a total of 39,500 – 65,800 litres per day. Water is not something people often store in their houses and while grocery stores have some bottled water in stock, it would only be a small percentage of total water needs of the region. Therefore the population would continue to rely on existing municipal and regional water sources and residential wells.

The amount of food available, and the ability to meet community food demands during an emergency, from each of these food sources is challenging to determine using available data for the following reasons:

- The food stored at a household level may sustain a family in the event of an emergency for less than a day, several days, or several weeks depending on the volumes of stored food available.
- Grocery stores operate on a "just-in-time" inventory system, meaning they carry enough stock for normal daily demand but rely on frequent restocking.
- Corner stores have small volumes of food, and most of the food is not nutrient dense, but these sources could supply some calories to residents in an emergency situation.
- The availability and volume of food from farms and fisheries would depend on the time of year and harvest yields of the year (see section below for an estimate).
- The volumes of food available in commercial kitchens and storage facilities (e.g. Dock+) are challenging to estimate as this would vary depending on product processing and business cycling of products.

- Food banks have some food storage capability that could be accessed during an emergency; however, the users of the food banks would also require continued access.
- Schools, hospitals, senior homes, hotels, restaurants and other institutions likely have a few days supply of food stored on site and that food would be directed to the people using those facilities.
- If large-scale power outages during an emergency cause failure of refrigerator and freezer systems, the amount of useable stored food within the Valley will drop significantly within days due to thawing and spoilage.
- The volume of food available per person from all sources is dependent on the time of year due to the large number of tourists staying in, or moving through, the Alberni Valley during seasonal holidays and summer months.

To better understand how the food being produced (and/or caught and foraged) locally meets the food requirements of the 26,300 residents of the Alberni Valley, several methods can be used. These include:
- Comparing local production levels of land-based crops and agricultural products as published through the Census of Agriculture and comparing these to published baseline levels of average consumption.
- Estimating harvests and catches of recreational and commercial fish and seafood as published by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
- Examining the amount of farmland (both irrigated and non-irrigated) under production and comparing it to published calculations of average land production requirements for self-sufficiency.

None of these methods are perfect, and all include various levels of assumptions. However, they do provide an overall indication of the level of food self-sufficiency and reliance and point to areas that may need further attention in order to improve these numbers.

Each are described in further detail below.

4.1.1 Method 1: Comparison of Local Agricultural Production to Local Consumption Averages

The calculations in Table 4 (next page) estimate the volumes of products produced in the Alberni Valley and compares that to the volume of food typically available and consumed by the average Canadian. However, it is difficult to get a realistic estimate of the volumes of food produced vs. consumed locally due to a lack of detailed data that is publicly available. For example, only the products listed in Table 4 are published by Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture. While there are a diversity of other vegetables and fruits produced locally, less than 1 acre of these crops were reported to the Census of Agriculture in 2021, therefore, the data is suppressed for privacy, and detailed calculations were not possible. Many of the estimates in Table 4 are likely an overestimation or underestimation of self-sufficiency ,as described below.

Overestimating self-sufficiency
While there is a major producer of greenhouse cucumbers in the Alberni Valley, these cucumbers are shipped to Vancouver for aggregation and packing, and only a small portion return to the Alberni Valley for sale in retail grocery stores.[16] Similarly, while it appears that dairy can meet the needs of all Alberni Valley residents (there are three dairy farms and over 240 dairy cows in the area), the fluid milk is collected and trucked out of the community daily to be delivered to processing centres, rather than all of it being made available to the local population. Current regulations do not allow for raw milk products to be sold locally,

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[16] Rages Farm staff, personal communication. (2025).

even during an emergency. For example, during the 2023 Cameron Lake wildfire when Highway 4 was closed for an extended period of time, milk trucks could not reach dairy farms to collect the raw fluid milk for transportation to processing facilities but the producers were not able to distribute the raw milk.

Underestimating self-sufficiency
On the other hand, it is likely that the region is much more than 3% self-sufficient for eggs, as many rural (and even urban) residents may have backyard chickens that are not captured in the Census of Agriculture data. Additionally, backyard fruit is routinely grown in the area and is either used at the household level or otherwise disposed of instead of being sold commercially, and this data is not captured. For example, the gleaning program run by the Alberni Valley Food Security Society (AVFSS) gleaned almost 10,000 lbs of fruit in 2024 and over 15,000 lbs of fruit in 2025 and this represents only a small fraction of what is grown annually in the area.

Nevertheless, the results in Table 4 provide an indication of which products would theoretically be meeting the needs of residents if the food produced locally was fully consumed locally. Details of the calculations are provided in Appendix A.

Table 4. Proportion of food needs that could be met by local production annually.[17]

Product	Total Produced per Year	Annual Average Consumption per person	Theoretical Proportion of Food Needs Met for the Alberni Valley per Year
Cucumbers	1.7 million kg	3.5 kg	2,218 %
Dairy (fluid milk)	1,872,000 L	60.5 L	118%
Goat, Sheep & Lamb	53,000 kg	0.9 kg	23%
Beef	82,480 kg	17.7 kg	17%
Tomatoes	9,300 kg	7.9 kg	5%
Eggs	17,955 dozen	21 dozen	3%
Herbs	217 kg	0.3 kg	3%
Pork	3,000 kg	14.4 kg	<1%
Peppers	660 kg	4.2 kg	<1%

4.1.2 Method 2: Estimating Local Fish and Seafood Volumes and Availability

The Alberni Valley is connected to Barkley Sound through the Alberni Inlet, providing a gateway to a variety of fish and seafood species (e.g. oysters, clams, groundfish, hake, salmon, prawns, crab, halibut, geoduck, urchin, seaweed and kelp).[18] While abundant, harvesting rights, processing, and overall access is regulated by federal, provincial, and First Nations governments.[19] There is no single comprehensive data set that provides volumes of fish and/or seafood caught and harvested within the ACRD and made subsequently available either directly to consumers, in food retail locations, or restaurants. However, a few sources of data were identified and used to provide some insights.

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[17] Statistics Canada (2021) Census of Agriculture - Food Availability Rates and other sources as noted in Appendix A.
[18] Rolston, G. et al. (2011). Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan.
[19] Shobe, H. (2018). Interim Report. Coastal Addendum to the Alberni Agricultural Plan.

Recreational Fish and Seafood Licenses
A variety of fish, prawn, crab, oysters and mussels are available to harvest recreationally for anyone with a recreational license. A thought exercise was completed to imagine the possibility of meeting the protein needs of Alberni Valley residents through fish and seafood:

- Assuming 60 g- 90 g of protein per day is needed[20], each person would need to consume ~10 prawns per day and ~1/4 – 1/3 of a medium sized fish per day.
- This means that approximately ~3,750 prawns and 105 medium fish would be required per person annually.
- The recreational harvesting limits for Area 23 (Barkley Sound) and Area 123 (open waters off of Barkley Sound) allow for 125 prawns per day (no annual limit) and ~7-10 fish per day (of various species such as salmon, lingcod, rockfish, etc.) per person (some species do have an annual limit)[21].
- Based on these allowable licensing limits, theoretically a person could obtain all their required protein by harvesting 30 days' worth of prawn limits (125 prawns per day) and 11-15 days of catching fish at maximum fishing limits. This would also assume that each individual would have the means to harvest, process and store the fish and seafood over the long term.
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada reports recreational catch survey data for the region, including a five year estimated average of all salmon, rockfish, halibut and lingcod. From 2020-2024, an average of 82,500 fish were caught recreationally in Area 23 and Area 123 (no data is available for prawn catch).[22]
- This averages to only 3 fish per person in the Alberni Valley, or the ability to fully cover the protein needs of 700-900 people a year (approximately 2%-3% of the entire Alberni Valley population).
- Due to the fact that this includes residents of the West Coast communities and recreational fishers from outside of the region, in reality the proportion of the Alberni Valley population currently being fed by locally caught fish and seafood is likely less than 2%-3%.

Commercial Fishing
Consolidated commercial fishing data for the ACRD region is difficult to access; however, a study by Kwantlen Polytechnic University estimated that there are over 15,000 tonnes of surplus fresh and frozen fish and seafood caught in the region annually, which is exported. [23] Thus, in theory, commercial fishing could provide the entire ACRD with all its protein needs annually if 25-35% destined for export was redirected to local markets.[24] However, as expanded upon in the Background Report, there are major challenges to keeping the commercial fish and seafood harvest in the region. These include a lack of processing and cold storage facilities and economies of scale. In addition, seafood processors must comply with rigorous safety protocols and reporting standards and small-scale commercial fishers experience challenges in meeting the standards required for retail markets.[25] There are opportunities for fishers to make direct sales from their boats under a Fisher Vendor Licence, which mitigates processing needs and transportation logistics if customers purchase direct from dock.[26] As of June 2025 there were five Fish

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[20] Health Magazine. (Accessed June 2025). How much protein should you eat per meal.
[21]Department of Fisheries and Oceans. (Accessed June 2025). BC tidal areas 23 and 123 - Bamfield, Port Alberni and Ucluelet: Recreational fishing limits, openings and closures.
[22] Department of Fisheries and Oceans. (2024).South Coast Assessment Bulletin, 2024 Creel Survey Update, Recreational Fishery South Coast Tidal Waters 2024.
[23] Kwantlen Polytechnic University data, unpublished.
[24] Assuming 60-90g of protein/day/person and 20% of a fish's weight is protein.
[25] Gunn, R. (2016). Support for Shellfish and Marine Plant Culture in the ACRD.
[26]British Columbia. (Accessed April 2025). Seafood Licensing.

Vendor Licences issued for Port Alberni; however, the volume of fish sold via local markets to local consumers is not reported.[27]

<u>First Nation Fisheries</u>
First Nations within the region have separate licences for fishing. These are fisheries for food, social and ceremonial purposes which are authorized by a Communal Licence issued to individual First Nations organizations by Fisheries and Oceans Canada under the Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licences Regulations.[28] Data related to the volumes of seafood harvested by each Nation and what that means with respect to food security and cultural values for First Nations is not readily available publicly.

4.1.3 Method 3: Examining Productive Farmland Levels and Food Self-Reliance

An additional methodology that was used to estimate the level of food self-reliance in the Alberni Valley was the productive farmland method. In 2006, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food published a report entitled *BC's Food Self-Reliance: Can BC Farmers Feed our Growing Population?,* which compared food consumption rates to food production rates.[29] The authors determined that, based on an average diet (one that includes meat, dairy, and eggs), BC farmers were capable of producing approximately 48% of all foods consumed in BC (56% if only measuring products produced in BC itself) (Table 5).

Table 5. Estimates of food self-reliance in BC in 2006.[30]

Food Group	BC Consumption (millions kgs)	BC Production (millions kgs)	% Self Reliance for BC Population
Dairy	1,080	617	57%
Meat and Alternatives	467	298	64%
Vegetables (grown in BC)	764	331	43%
Fruit (grown in BC)	172	273	159%
Grain for food	315	43	14%
Total (products grown in BC)	**2,798**	**1,562**	**56%**
Fruit (not grown in BC)	*310*	*0*	*0%*
Vegetables (not grown in BC)	*1*	*0*	*0%*
Sugar	*136*	*0*	*0%*
Total (grown in and out of BC)	*3,245*	*1,562*	*48%*
Fish	38	179	471%
Forage and grain for livestock	3,538	3,795	107%

The report noted that the largest self-reliant shortfall in BC is in vegetable production, which needs irrigation in order to produce sufficient volumes to satisfy the BC population under an average diet.

Table 6 (next page) summarizes the land needed to produce a healthy diet for one person using calculations developed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The total area required for an average BC resident is 0.524 ha (0.471 ha unirrigated and 0.053 ha irrigated) and is equivalent to 1.3 acres per person if eating an average omnivorous diet that includes meat, dairy, eggs, vegetables, fruit and grains. The study did not

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[27] BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food. (Accessed June 2025). <u>Provincially Licensed Fish Vendors by location</u>.
[28] Department of Fisheries and Oceans. (Accessed June 2025). <u>First Nations, recreational and commercial salmon licensing</u>.
[29] BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food. (2006). <u>B.C's Food Self-Reliance; Can B.C's farmers feed our growing population?</u>
[30] Ibid.

compare the amount of land in BC required if the population ate less red meat versus more white meat and/or dairy products. However, it is assumed that less area per person would be required to satisfy a vegetarian or vegan diet, due to the reduced area of land needed to grow crops for livestock consumption. For example, a 2016 study in the US found that a vegan diet would require 0.32 acres (0.13 ha) per person and a vegetarian diet (including dairy and eggs) would require 0.35 acres (0.14 ha) per person.[31]

Table 6. Estimates of land required to produce an average diet.[32]

Food Group	Servings / Day	Raw Weight / Day (g)	Raw Weight / Year (L or kg)	Yield / ha / year (L or kg)	Hectares Needed (Irrigated)
Dairy	2.87	718	262 L	13,000 L	0.068 (irrigated)
Meat[33]	2.5	188	68.6 kg		0.394
Grains	8.5	140	51.1 kg	1,750 kg	0.029
Vegetables	3.75	225	82.1 kg	6,600 kg	0.0177 (irrigated)
Fruit	3.75	319	116 kg	9,600 kg	0.0152 (irrigated)
Total					0.524 (0.053 irrigated)

Based on the Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI), which was last conducted in 2016, there was 7,776 ha of land in the ALR in the ACRD but only 1,312 ha (less than 20%) was actively being farmed and only about a third of that land (about 440 ha) had access to irrigation.[34] The vast majority (97%) of land being farmed in the Alberni Valley was being used to produce forage and pasture crops for livestock.

The area of farmland needed to feed the entire Alberni Valley population (26,300 residents) and theoretically what percentage of the population could be fed by the existing agricultural land base was calculated using the rough estimates of land required per diet.

Table 7 (next page) illustrates that, theoretically, if all of the ALR land (7,776 ha) was put into production of a variety crops (fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains some pasture/forage for livestock), and partially irrigated, the land could feed 56% of people on an average omnivorous diet, and more than double the population if a vegetarian or vegan diet was adopted.

If only the portion of land currently under production (1,312 ha) is used in the calculation, this would mean that the food requirements for approximately 10% of residents (if assuming an omnivorous diet) or 35% of residents (if assuming a vegetarian or vegan diet) could be satisfied.

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[31] Peters, C.J. et al.(2016). "Carrying capacity of US agricultural land: Ten diet scenarios."*Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene* 4.

[32] BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food. (2006). B.C's Food Self-Reliance; Can B.C's farmers feed our growing population?

[33] The study did not specify which type of livestock for meat was used to calculate land requirements. The type of livestock raised influences the land required to produce meat. For example beef cattle require much more land compared to poultry. As such, the hectares needed in the table would be lower if only poultry was produced.

[34] BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food. (2016). Agricultural Land Use Inventory Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District.

Table 7. Percent of the population that could be fed using farmland in the Alberni Valley.

Diet	Land Required per person (ha)	Land Required for AV population (ha)	% of population that could be fed using current active agricultural land (1,312 ha)	% of population that could be fed using total ALR land base (7,776 ha)
Omnivorous	0.524	13,781	9.5%	56%
Vegetarian (lacto/ovo)	0.14	3,682	35.6%	211%
Vegan	0.13	3,419	38.4%	227%

4.2 Summary Comments on the Alberni Valley's Food Self-Sufficiency

In summary, while the Alberni Valley possesses a variety of food sources including retail infrastructure, household-level storage, agricultural land, and marine resources, its capacity to sustain its population in the event of an extended emergency is likely limited due to challenges with fully activating these resources and then storing the food products in large quantities, especially during lengthy power outages or road access restrictions. Gains could be achieved if extensive efforts were made to store food in temperature-resistant methods, such as canning or dehydration.

Most households, restaurants, and institutions likely have only several days' to a week's worth of food on hand, and grocery stores operate on rapid re-stocking cycles. While there are surpluses in specific local products being generated locally, such as cucumbers and dairy, structural and logistical barriers (centralized processing systems, commercial distribution networks) severely constrain the ability to keep these foods within the community.

Based on current levels of agricultural land productivity, it is estimated that 9.5% of food needs could theoretically be met through local production, and less than 1% of the population is estimated to be fed by recreational seafood harvests. Although there is theoretical potential for far greater self-reliance, especially if all ALR land were fully utilized for a variety of food crops and seafood systems sold more catch at the local markets, current infrastructure, distribution, and land use patterns fall short of this potential. Ultimately, while the Alberni Valley possesses the natural resources to approach greater food self-reliance, achieving this would require systemic changes in land use and a cultural shift towards infrastructure investment, localized processing, and policy support to move away from export-oriented systems and toward local provisioning.

5.0 Community Perceptions of Food Security

Throughout the project's timeline, numerous engagement activities occurred with the agricultural community, businesses, food security organizations and local government staff and committees. Engagement activities (including interviews, presentations, workshops and a survey) were critical to understand the local context, including the nuances of emergency situations, past and present food system challenges faced during emergencies, potential gaps to emergency preparedness, and response and recovery for the agriculture and food sectors. Engagement provided insights into food security in local communities, local food assets, needs and sources, and challenges and opportunities regarding food security.

Several key themes, gaps and opportunities arose during engagement, as summarized below. A full account of engagement activities and results are provided in the *What We Heard - Engagement Summary Report.* An overview of discussions with Tseshaht First Nation and Hupačasath First Nation are provided in Section 7.0.

Table 8. Engagement results from the Alberni Valley summarized into key themes, gaps and opportunities.

Key themes	Gaps	Opportunities
Food supply during emergencies	• Food sourced external to the region is at risk during road closures due to reliance on one main road (Highway 4) for transportation and lack of large-scale food storage infrastructure. • Several large retailers are co-located within a few blocks are the main sources of food for many residents of the Alberni Valley, highlighting geographic vulnerability. • Informal food distribution is occurring during emergencies.	• Ensure supermarkets can function during power outages and that frozen/cooler products maintained. • Encourage local and household-level food storage & emergency supply planning. • Assess retail food industry behavior during past emergencies (e.g. wildfires) to improve communication / preparedness. • Increase communication between food distributors, organizations and producers during emergencies for efficient food access for the public. • Zone additional areas in the community for commercial food retail.
Meat processing	• Acquiring meat processing licences and building infrastructure is challenging. The renewal process requires almost as much effort as the initial application. • Some producers have experienced inconsistent inspector standards, unclear regulations, and short-notice inspections which cause confusion. • There is a need for stable poultry/ livestock abattoirs and trained workers regionally. • Obtaining insurance is very challenging for establishing on-farm abattoirs due to a lack of insurance providers and prohibitive costs.	• Advocate to the province for the development of a streamlined renewal pathway for meat processing licences that is clearly differentiated from initial applications. • A centralized poultry/rabbit processing facility could incentivize the production of locally raised small livestock. • Increased training support for meat processing and cut and wrap services.

Key themes	Gaps	Opportunities
Food storage and processing infrastructure	• Currently a lack of large scale cold (refrigerated) storage capacity for produce. • Affordability is a key concern; facility rentals must be cost-effective for the producer/processor. • Existing freezer storage at Dock+ does not have generator backup. • Egg grading facility needed for small producers. • Insufficient feed and grain storage for locally produced grain and feed.	• Increased investments in shared food processing and storage facilities like the Dock+, including backup generators to maintain food stores during power outages. • Explore partnerships with FN governments and NGOs to collaborate and expand refrigeration capacity.
Land base and production	• Farm tax status policies do not incentivize small scale production. • Cost of farmland is prohibitive for new entrants. • Lack of regional centralized composting facilities and quality compost access to support increase yields. • Limited use of irrigation due to water storage and access issues.	• Support food production on ALR and non-ALR land through zoning and other local regulations. • Advocate to the province to adjust farm tax status thresholds and land use rules to better incentivize small-scale farming and environmental protection. • Explore insurance options, land matching programs, water storage and licensing applications and funding access for small-scale farmers to help new entrants overcome bureaucratic hurdles. • Expand the compost products created through the Sort 'n Go program to provide local farmers with fertilizer. • Explore opportunities with local seafood businesses to turn byproducts into useable fertilizer/compost. • Consult with the province and IAFBC to determine if Developing Farm Tax Status allows for producers to apply for Environmental Farm Plan/Beneficial Management Practices funding and share information about other new entrants funding, such as the New Entrant Farm Business Accelerator Program
Distribution	• Gleaning programs are underfunded and could be utilized to ensure that healthy food is allocated to low-income residents. • Lack of local food transportation/ distribution networks for those unable to reach markets individually.	• Support existing gleaning programs and incorporate coordination to responding to crop harvesting needs during an emergency. • Some producers have innovative models (e.g. direct-to-consumer sales) that could be scaled or replicated to improve access. • Support a larger, more central farmers' market that will attract more customers and allows vendors to sell their product more efficiently.

Key themes	Gaps	Opportunities
Knowledge and communication	• Lack of awareness from the public of the benefit provided by local agriculture and food production for community level food security and local resilience.	• Teach food security, agriculture, and food production in schools. Advocate to the provincial government to support Farm to School BC. • Provide public education on food security, available resources, and food processing opportunities. • Support local organizations that are already engaged in food security efforts. • Continue facilitating conversations between food system representatives. • Partner with interested First Nations to facilitate elders' teachings for land use, harvesting, foraging and Indigenous food sovereignty and food systems.
Emergency preparedness for livestock	• Clear processes regarding access to livestock operations during emergencies is needed. • Inadequate livestock infrastructure (fencing, transport, holding areas) for large-scale relocations. • There is a lack of local livestock veterinary services. • No formal system exists for buddy farm arrangements or livestock relocation coordination. • ACRD Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) lacks embedded agricultural expertise and representatives. • Not many farmers are registered with the provincial Premises ID program. • Uncertainty around the scope and use of powers granted to government by the *Emergency Disaster and Management Act* (Bill 31) in agricultural contexts.	• Establish dedicated agricultural representatives in EOCs to ensure farms' needs are considered. • Promote the use of buddy farm agreements in advance of emergencies. • Secure grants for fencing at community-level livestock relocation sites. • Strengthen local emergency communication systems for farmers (e.g. Pod System). • Promote Premises ID registration. • Encourage individual farm emergency plans, including buddy farms. • Train farmers on self-sufficiency strategies (e.g. irrigation use during wildfires, backup plans for feed storage) and funding available (e.g. Extreme Weather Preparedness Fund). • Establish emergency livestock access permits for controlled movement during disasters. • Support funding for the AFI to engage in emergency planning and communications.
Feedstock and forage	• Lack of redundancy in feedstock supply chains. • The lack of a feedstock storage facility leads to supply risks during droughts or disasters. Farmers currently rely on out-of-town sources (Duncan, Courtenay) for feed, making supply chains fragile and easily affected by highway closures or transportation issues.	• Create multiple (2-4 per region) decentralized feed storage locations instead of a single regional facility. • Improve coordination of feedstock supply chains to ensure access during shortages. • Explore grant funding for feedstock storage solutions on underutilized lands.

6.0 Alberni Valley Food Security SWOT Assessment

The information gathered during the research and engagement of this project is presented in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Assessment to understand overall community food security in the Alberni Valley.[35] The strengths and weaknesses are internal, regional factors related to food security. The opportunities and threats are external influences that impact food security in the region. The SWOT assessment organizes the information to provide context for understanding current gaps and future opportunities for supporting food security.

Table 9. SWOT assessment for characteristics influencing community food security in the Alberni Valley.

Food System Component	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Emergency Management/ Planning	• Recently updated ACRD Disaster and Emergency Management Plan provides details on roles, responsibilities and protocols during emergencies. • MOU with the Salvation Army to provide emergency food services to individuals affected by an emergency. • A Farm Emergency Plan Template & Guide have been developed for producers in the Alberni Valley. • A Livestock Emergency Management Plan to increase livestock owner resiliency for emergencies is in development.	• Unclear how many farms have completed Farm Emergency Plans. • Still gaps and confusion over communication during emergencies between producers and local authorities in charge. • No organized regional communications plan for food distribution during an emergency. • Region is heavily reliant on food being trucked in through one main route. • Gaps in data for understanding the availability of food in the region at any given time.	• Collaborate with AF and AFI to continue hosting workshops for agricultural emergency planning. • Continue to leverage funding for food system emergency planning projects. • Convene food system actors related to food storage, distribution and access to discuss needs. • Collaborate with other local and First Nations governments to build shared infrastructure, obtain equipment and hold regional emergency and food literacy training. • Educate the public on the importance of household food security.	• Challenging to anticipate the type, timing and magnitude of emergency that may occur. • Little control over how large grocery retailers' emergency response and supply chain decisions. • Little control over emergency preparedness planning undertaken by food businesses. • Heavy reliance on provincial and grant funding sources to effectively maintain and enhance emergency preparedness and planning.

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[35] More information about regional food retail and infrastructure assets and a policy assessment are provided in the Appendix.

Food System Component	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Policies	• Strong policy foundation for supporting agriculture and food security through the Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan and Implementation Project, ACRD Strategic Plan and Systems Change Project. • Nuu-chah-nulth communities have participated in policy recommendations related to food sovereignty (e.g. Island Indigenous Foods Gathering Report, Nuu-chah-nulth Food Sovereignty Learnings of the ACRD Report). • Electoral Area Official Community Plans (OCP)s are supportive of many food security aspects like farm gate sales and agricultural land protection.	• Electoral Area OCPs don't have specific policies supporting food processing, storage, community kitchens and emergency food preparedness. • The ACRD zoning bylaw prevents food processing (e.g. abattoirs, fish processing) and storage in all but a few specific zones. • The City of Port Alberni zoning bylaw specifically prohibits seacans, which are often the most affordable means for food storage at room temperature and refrigerated.	• City of Port Alberni is updating the OCP and may include support for food production, water supply and farmers' markets. • Continue collaboration with Indigenous communities. • Policies could encourage institutions (schools, hospitals) to source local food and maintain reserves of culturally appropriate and shelf-stable foods. • ACRD's updates of all Electoral Area OCPs can include land use designation and policy support for the food system.	• Other policy priorities (e.g. housing, economic development) may reduce government resources and capacity to implement food security emergency planning related actions. • Lack of consistency between local and provincial policies related to various aspects of the food system. • Provincial regulations regarding use of local foods in institutions can be insurmountable for small farms. • Lack of consistency in provincial environmental health officers enforcement of farmers' market food storage requirements.
Environment/ Geography	• Agriculturally capable soils and decent water quality. • Long growing season, one of the highest hardiness zones in Canada, and low number of days below 0 degrees. • Ocean provides for good seafood production. • Forests and lakes, rivers, and salmon-bearing streams provide water and wild food resources.	• Much of the ALR remains forested and has not yet been cleared or is owned by privately. • Some farms are operating outside of the ALR – land is vulnerable to development. • Only one main road (Hwy 4) in and out of the valley, limiting resilience during disruptions	• Climate change is increasing growing degree days and the diversity of what can be grown. • Climate-resilient crops and agricultural practices can be adopted.	• Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires and floods. • Increased flooding, wildfires, drought and extreme weather events. • Invasive species and crop pests/diseases are predicted to increase due to climate change. • Wildlife conflicts (eagles, cougars, elk, bear, etc.).

Food System Component	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Production	• Core base of established multi-generational farmers. • History of farming and homesteading with region-specific growing knowledge. • Indigenous-owned businesses and fisheries provide sustainably sourced seafood. • Many residents source protein through recreational fishing and seafood harvesting. • Continued growing interest in sustainable seafood. • Many backyard fruit trees producing fruit with no effort or inputs.	• Dependent on imported food from outside the region. • Lack of seasonal, skilled labour. • Cleared ALR land is underutilized for food production. • Lack of consistently locally available feed and agricultural inputs. • Aging farming population. • Backyard fruit harvesting is unreliable; high wastage and becomes a bear attractant.	• Skill development resources are available from the provincial government and post-secondary educational institutions (e.g. VIU's micro-credentials). • Diversification into aquaculture and kelp farming. • Forested lands present opportunities for foraging. • Public spaces available for edible landscaping and community gardens. • Compost creation from ACRD curbside composting. • A gleaning program already exists in the Alberni Valley that can take advantage of backyard fruit production.	• Most skill development opportunities are outside the region requiring absences from home/ jobs/farms. • Market forces, water availability, labour are challenges to increasing production. • Many producers must work off-farm. • Rising costs, including farm insurance. • Climate change threatens fish/seafood habitat. • Complex fisheries management policies and licensing systems. • Restricted access to traditional fishing and harvesting areas affects Indigenous sovereignty.
Processing	• Some processing and value-added food and seafood already occurring locally. • Some licenses exist in the region for meat processing. • Several community kitchens in Electoral Areas and Port Alberni that can act as small-scale food hubs. • Dock+ infrastructure is in place and hosting numerous tenants.	• Lack of large scale livestock abattoir due to lack of production capacity / demand. • Limited licensed cut & wrap (butcher) services. • Many residents may not have knowledge in preparing shelf stable foods to have in pantry for emergency use.	• Government funding for food infrastructure. • Support from NGOs. • Expansion of Dock+. • Oyster, seaweed and kelp aquaculture creates opportunities for Nuu-chah-nulth communities. • Food processing education focusing on shelf-stable products not susceptible to power outages.	• Various provincial regulations make it challenging for meat and dairy processing. • Market dynamics and economics of processing make it challenging for businesses to establish. • Larger grants to help establish processing facilities are no longer available.

Food System Component	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Distribution & Storage	• Many farms have individual on-farm storage capacity and have established distribution channels to local consumers. • Established food banks and distribution programs have existing dry storage.	• Lack of coordinated/ shared distribution vehicles and access to larger distributors for local producers. • Lack of local cold or dry storage options. • Lack of generators to support existing storage during power outages. • Reliant on large grocery distribution systems to bring food into the region.	• Investment in additional food hub infrastructure at Dock+. • Partnering with emergency reception centres to establish food storage options. • Room to grow direct sales dockside in community through the Fisher's Vending Licence.	• Hazards can close roads within the communities. • Long distances to travel to bigger sales markets. • Distribution to grocery stores /restaurants best for imported products. • Inability to use quota-controlled commodities like milk locally. • Distribution costs depend on external forces such as BC Ferries. • Extended power outages that threaten frozen food stores.
Retail & Marketing	• Existing support from smaller local retailers for locally produced foods. • Popular farmers' markets. • Nutrition Coupon program. • Producers have established relationships with buyers. • Local CSAs exist with room for expansion. • Some restaurants are sourcing food directly from local growers and livestock producers. • Publications such as the Growers' Guide and events such as Family Farms Day help connect farmers directly to buyers.	• Difficulty in establishing and maintaining relationships with restaurants, grocery stores, wholesale buyers. • Time consuming for producers to focus on marketing products. • Lack of coordination between producers and buyers. • Many small, scattered markets in the Alberni Valley result in low sales and vendor fatigue.	• Provincial trend toward institutional procurement. • Some restaurants are interested in purchasing local ingredients. • Large numbers of tourists. • Continued interest in locally sourced and sustainable seafood. • Growing interest in marketability of sea vegetable products. • Community-supported fisheries foster direct consumer-producer relationships.	• Competitive prices for imported goods. • Competition with well-known brands. • Lack of flexibility by larger retailers around shelf space for small-scale, locally-produced foods. • Purchasing food mainly happens at large stores. • Limited venues for retail and high costs of fresh seafood limit accessibility for local consumers. • Competition from global industrial scale fisheries.

7.0 First Nations Food Sovereignty and Emergency Food Planning Considerations

The ACRD collaborated with Tseshaht First Nation and Hupačasath First Nation to craft recommendations specific to each Nation's goals and challenges. The aim of the collaboration was to:

- Identify opportunities for the ACRD to better support Indigenous food sovereignty in the context of emergency preparedness and response;
- Include Indigenous food sovereignty as a key priority in the Food Security Emergency Plans; and
- Include recommendations that will support community food resiliency across the region.

Collaboration took the form of many in-person meetings, delegations to elected chief and council, phone and virtual calls, and site visits. The following sections outline the gaps, challenges, and opportunities facing Tseshaht First Nation and Hupacasath First Nation when it comes to food security, and recommendations for the ACRD to support Indigenous food sovereignty and emergency food preparedness.

7.1 Tseshaht First Nation

Tseshaht First Nation is one of the 14 Nations that make up the Nuu-chah-nulth people of western Vancouver Island. They are proud of their culture and work as a community to preserve their traditional values and teachings.[36] Tseshaht traditional territory is vast and encompasses the lands surrounding Great Central Lake and Sproat Lake to the City of Port Alberni and large areas around Barkley Sound to the Broken Islands. The majority of community members reside on federal reserve lands located just west of the City of Port Alberni along the Somass River and Highway 4.

The Tseshaht First Nation Land Use Plan identifies economic development, community buildings and spaces, and local food systems as three top priorities. Food is a very important component of cultural and economic well-being. Accessing the ocean and rivers for fishing and harvesting salmon, halibut, lingcod, crab, prawns, oysters, barnacles, kelp, and seaweed are of utmost importance. The Tseshaht vision is to be food sovereign (accessing the food they want when they want) and to have access to healthier foods by increasing the availability of traditional foods and producing more foods on their own. Long-term priorities with respect to food systems include:

1. Ensure adequate facilities exist on-reserve and throughout the Territory for members to process traditional foods (e.g. fish cleaning station).
2. Protect important food sources throughout the Territory (e.g. wild salmon) to ensure their continuous availability.
3. Support nutrition and food literacy amongst members.
4. Complete ongoing agricultural investigations at Old Airport and develop a Business Plan to establish agricultural efforts on that land.
5. Develop the capacity to undertake agricultural opportunities.

The Old Airport is an area that Tseshaht First Nation have identified to explore the development of an agricultural initiative (Figure 7). These lands are part of the ALR, and the intended use for this land is to develop a commercial campground, which is supported by the Agricultural Land Commission. The income generated from the campground is intended to help support the gardens and agricultural development in other parts of the property.[37] There is a well on this property, but further exploration regarding the available

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[36] Tseshaht First Nation. (2023). Land-Use Plan.
[37] Agricultural Land Commission. (2024). Reasons for Decision - ALC Application 65687.

volume of water is needed and whether it is sufficient to grow crops. Crops of interest to the community include traditional medicinal plants (e.g. chestnuts, devils club, lungwort, camas and elderberry), vegetables (e.g. potatoes, onions, cabbage, carrots, lettuce and kale) and potentially livestock or poultry. No development on the site has occurred to date, however the community is actively applying for funding for site preparation and development. Other plans include the construction of a new community and traditional garden, the installation of a greenhouse for year-round production, and supportive infrastructure such as an access road, culvert, gate and water infrastructure.   The benefits of this development will include:

- Improving access to healthy, locally grown food,
- Supporting food programs at Haahuupayak School and the Tseshaht Market,
- Employment and training opportunities for community members in agriculture and food processing,
- Promoting cultural knowledge through traditional food systems, and,
- Building economic resilience and environmental stewardship.
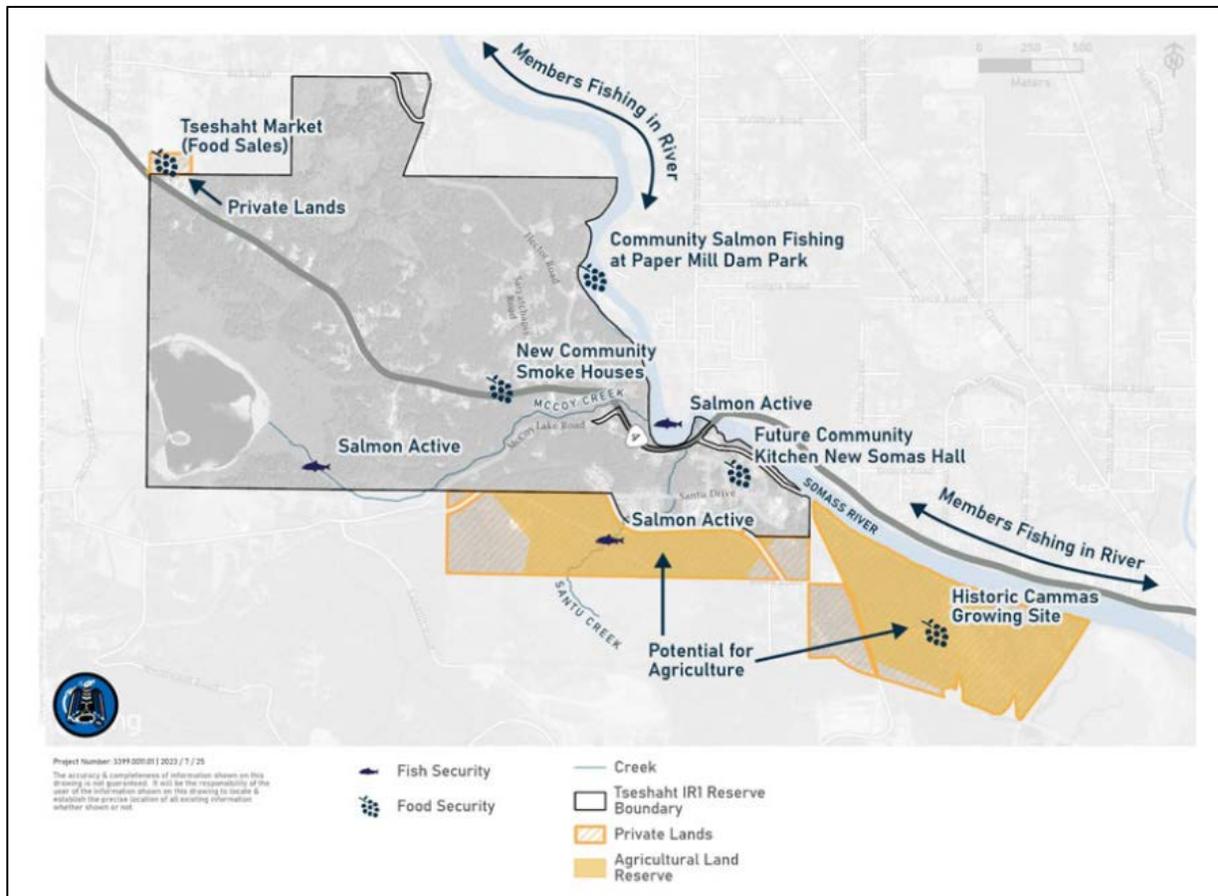
Figure 7. Tseshaht Land Use Plan with areas identified for food sovereignty and agricultural opportunities.

The Tseshaht community has established a range of food sovereignty and food security initiatives, supported by existing food infrastructure. Current programming includes food and medicine harvesting, preservation, distribution, and emergency food storage—largely coordinated by a single dedicated staff member. A community garden and gathering space support local food growing efforts. Looking ahead, Tseshaht First Nation aims to expand food production by developing multiple growing areas in different locations, incorporating bear-safe measures such as electric fencing.

The community already has valuable food infrastructure assets, including freezers, dehydrators, smokehouses, and a small freeze dryer. The newly developed cultural centre, Somass Hall, will further enhance capacity with a commercial kitchen, refrigerators, freezers, and emergency shelter space. It will be equipped with a backup generator capable of powering the facility for up to three days in the event of an outage.

Gaps and Challenges

Through the project's timeline there were several meetings with Tseshaht staff to discuss gaps, challenges and opportunities related to food sovereignty and emergency planning. From these conversations and background research, several key issues were identified. These include:

- Limited staff time and capacity to devote to food sovereignty programs and initiatives; dedicated staff are required to effectively manage food-related programs.
- Reliance on short-term grants makes staffing and expansion of food sovereignty initiatives challenging.
- Additional commercial sized equipment, such as dehydrators and freeze drying, would be required to expand food preservation and storage for emergencies.
- Funding and partner support are required to develop the agricultural land identified in their Land Use Plan.
- A substantial amount of fish waste from processing is available as soil amendment but there is no composting facility or staff to manage a composting program.
- Lack of infrastructure at Tseshaht Paper Mill Dam Park prevents on-site fish cleaning and smoking/preservation for community members.

Opportunities

Several opportunities were identified to enhance food sovereignty and security, including;

- Better monitoring and testing for increased access to seafood harvesting opportunities, like oysters.
- Additional cold storage (both refrigerated and frozen) to allow for larger preservation of seafood harvests, with generator backups in case of power outages.
- Land availability and support from all levels of government to build a fish/seafood processing facility on-reserve, in partnership with other Nations and local governments.
- Nation-to-Nation trade across Canada could improve food security. Trading allows abundant local resources to be exchanged for variety and a better year-round supply.
- Development of the lands identified for agriculture in the land use plan for employment and food sovereignty.

Recommendations

- Explore stable financial sources to support permanent additional staff capacity—both to expand food sovereignty programming and to manage agricultural lands once developed.
- Continue building partnerships with post-secondary institutions (e.g. North Island College, University of Victoria, Vancouver Island University, and Kwantlen Polytechnic University) to support

research and collaboration on agricultural land development. Several institutions have already expressed interest.

- Discuss with the ACRD the potential to include fish waste from processing into the regional three-stream composting program. Finished compost can then be provided back to the community to grow food on agricultural lands.
- Pursue grant funding to expand infrastructure, equipment, and training to support food security and sovereignty—both in emergencies and for long-term resilience. Priority grant focus areas include:
    o Water source assessment for agricultural land, including evaluating the capacity of the well at the Old Airport site.
    o Expansion of the food box program, which supports nutrition and enables wellness check-ins for community members.
    o Water infrastructure and electrical upgrades at Tseshaht Paper Mill Dam Park to enable the construction of smokehouses and enhance fire suppression capacity.
    o Additional cold and freezer storage, located outside the tsunami flood zone and equipped with backup power.
    o Installation of solar panels at Somass Hall, the designated emergency shelter.

7.2 Hupačasath First Nation

Hupačasath First Nation traditional territory stretches approximately 229,000 ha across the Alberni Valley. The boundaries for their territory are the mountain peaks of the Alberni Valley, which start from the north at Mt. Chief Frank, from the south at 5040 Peak and Hannah Mountain, from the east at Mt. Arrowsmith and Mt Spencer, and from the west from Big Interior Mountain.[38] They have two reserves in the Alberni Valley, within and near the City of Port Alberni: Ahahswinis and Klehkoot. A core part of Hupačasath's vision is to ensure access to fish, animals, birds, and plants for food, medicine, and cultural use across their traditional territory, while stewarding a healthy environment and supporting jobs and economic development.[39] Fishing and harvesting from lakes, rivers, and the ocean remain culturally significant and provide important food sources. Their active Fisheries Department supports stewardship, sustainable harvesting, and hosts community events such as "Fish Day," where fish are distributed to members.[40]

Hupačasath have been working on integrating gardening and vegetable farming into their community since the early 2000s. Their 2016-2018 Community Comprehensive Plan had twenty objectives related to the community farm to increase production and provide educational opportunities to the community. Many of these objectives have been completed through funding to hire farm and food security staff; however, additional funding and capacity is required to expand production and learning opportunities. Currently, they have an active farm with two greenhouses, managed by a dedicated farm manager and assistant and further supported by community volunteers and part-time staff (Figure 8). The farm recently hosted a Greenhouse Propagation and Production workshop in partnership with North Island College. Vegetables produced at the farm are distributed to community members. Hupačasath are also the owners of Kleekhoot Gold company which produces big leaf maple syrup; their product won awards for quality in 2018.[41] Future farm plans include expanded production, livestock integration, and additional community workshops.

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[38] Traditional Territory of the Hupacasath. (2021). Hupacasath First Nation.
[39] Mission and Vision. Accessed September 2025. Hupacasath First Nation.
[40] Fisheries. Accessed September 2025. Hupacasath First Nation.
[41] Kleekhoot Gold. Accessed September 2025. Hupacasath First Nation.

Hupačasath are also developing a community space that will include a commercial kitchen, freeze dryers, dehydrators, food processing equipment, and a community pantry.

Figure 8. Hupačasath farm site.

Through the project's timeline, there was a delegation to elected chief and council as well as several meetings with Hupačasath staff to discuss the project and gaps, challenges and opportunities related to food security and emergency planning. In addition, two surveys were distributed to the community: one asking about growing and activities related to the community farm and the other about food sovereignty and food emergency planning[42]. From these surveys, conversations, meetings and background research, the following gaps and challenges, opportunities and recommendations were identified.

Opportunities
Community members who completed the food security survey identified the following top priorities for improving food sovereignty and emergency food security, listed in order of importance.
-   Enhancing Traditional Harvesting Practices: Assistance with acquiring equipment such as freeze dryers, dehydrators, pressure canners, and traditional harvesting tools and funding for critical infrastructure development.
-   Strengthening Cultural Revitalization Efforts: Funding for cultural programs and events, resources for preserving and sharing traditional knowledge, and collaboration with cultural organizations and elders.
-   Empowering Community Education and Training: Resources and funding for developing and delivering culturally relevant training materials, and facilitation of workshops by knowledgeable community members or elders.
-   Promoting Sustainable Resource Management: Resources for emergency planning and response, coordination with emergency management agencies, and capacity-building for community resilience.

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[42] Twenty survey responses were received.

- Advocating for Indigenous Rights and Policies: Assistance with policy analysis and advocacy, representation in decision-making processes, and collaboration with Indigenous rights organizations and legal experts.
- Building Collaborative Partnerships: Assistance with advocacy efforts, representation in policy-making processes, and funding opportunities for collaborative projects and initiatives.

With respect to the community farm, survey respondents expressed strong appreciation for the food it provides to the community. They also identified several opportunities to enhance the garden's impact and success, including:
- Introducing laying hens for egg production and raising meat chickens to provide poultry.
- Adding shelf-stable items to food boxes, such as jams, canned fruits and vegetables, dried teas and herbs, and vacuum-sealed frozen proteins.
- Growing and harvesting traditional foods and medicines, including devil's club, huckleberries, and salmonberry shoots.
- Offering additional workshops and learning opportunities focused on growing food, traditional plants and preserving foods.

Gaps and Challenges
- Additional staff time and capacity would be required to host more events and workshops related to food sovereignty programs and initiatives. Some reliance on short-term grants makes long-term planning for staffing on the farm and expansion of food sovereignty and emergency food security initiatives challenging.
- Some self-identified gaps in community knowledge related to food preservation and processing, which could improve emergency preparedness.
- Additional commercial sized equipment, such a dehydrator and juicing equipment, would be helpful to expand food preservation and storage for emergencies.
- Fish waste from community processing is available as soil amendment but there is no composting facility or staff time to manage a composting program.
- Community farm fencing requires substantial maintenance to protect crops and any future livestock.

Recommendations
- Explore stable financial sources to support permanent additional staff capacity to expand food sovereignty programming, including increased production on the community farm and food preservation workshops. Examples of workshop topics could include:
  o Food preservation using a variety of techniques such as dehydrating, freeze drying and canning.
  o Cooking workshops using produce from the farm.
  o Sharing traditional knowledge related to foods and medicines.
- Pursue grant funding to expand infrastructure, equipment, and training to support food security and sovereignty—both in emergencies and for long-term resilience. Priority grant focus areas could include:
  o Fencing (including electric fencing) the farm perimeter and establishing a dedicated composting structure (e.g. concrete slab with roof).
  o Commercial-grade dehydrators and related food preservation equipment.
- Discuss with the ACRD the potential to include fish waste from processing into the regional three-stream composting program. Finished compost can then be provided back to the community to grow food on agricultural lands.

8.0 Food Security and Emergency Food Planning Recommendations and Implementation Strategy

The 26 recommendations in Table 10 have been crafted based on background research and extensive engagement with the ACRD community. The recommended actions are organized into three categories:

- **Food Security Emergency Management Planning and Preparedness Actions (12 actions)**
  - These actions focus on short-term emergency preparedness, response planning, and communication to help manage food security during a crisis. Appropriate planning and preparedness ensures a community can respond effectively to food disruptions when they occur.
- **Long-term Food Security Actions for Increased Community Food Resiliency (10 actions)**
  - These actions focus on long-term solutions to reduce food insecurity risks at the community level. They focus on supporting increased resilience of the local food system and supporting organizations and committees working towards enhancing regional food security.
- **Actions to Support First Nations' Food Sovereignty and Emergency Food Security (4 actions)**
  - These actions focus on how the ACRD can support First Nations in long-term food sovereignty and shorter-term emergency food security.

The recommendations are tailored to what regional, local and First Nation governments can do within their authority and jurisdiction. As such, the ACRD, CPA, TSH and HFN are identified as lead actors for implementation while other local organizations and institutions are listed as supporting actors.

Because of the FSEP's broad scope, many actions will need additional research, engagement, and planning before implementation. When scoping and carrying out each action, the following principles should be considered:

1. Advance Reconciliation: Seek opportunities to partner with and strengthen relationships with the Tseshaht First Nation and Hupačasath First Nation as part of the implementation phase.

2. Collaborate across sectors and with other levels of government: Bring all interested and affected organizations together to identify collaborative solutions.

3. Use resources effectively: Build on existing initiatives and partnerships for efficiency and impact.

4. Engage producers and food security organizations: Ensure producers and food security organizations are engaged throughout implementation as required.

Table 10 also identifies implementation timelines, estimated resource levels and priority levels for each action.

Timeline for action completion (assumes adequate resources are available):

- **Ongoing:** already underway and will require maintenance over time.
- **Short:** should be initiated within 1-2 years.
- **Medium:** should be initiated within 3-5 years.
- **Long:** should be initiated within 5+ years.

Resource Level:

- **Low:** may be completed within existing staff workplans.
- **Medium (<$50k):** requires addition into staff workplans or annual budget request.
- **High (>$50k):** requires sourcing grants and/or the assistance of a consultant or short-term contractor.

Priority:

- **Low Priority**: Actions that are beneficial but not urgent and can be addressed after higher priorities without significant negative impact.
- **Medium Priority**: Actions that are important to advance food security and emergency preparedness and should be implemented in the near term but can be delayed briefly if higher-priority needs arise.
- **High Priority**: Actions that are critical to achieving food security and emergency preparedness objectives, requiring prompt attention and resource allocation. These actions may also represent those that need to be completed prior to the ability for Medium and/or Low priority actions to commence.

Table 10. Recommendations for improving food security and emergency planning in the Alberni Valley.

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
Food Security Emergency Management Planning and Preparedness Actions							
1	Support funding for backup generators/ secondary power sources for cold storage, emergency reception centre kitchens, and other critical food assets.	Support organizations in applying for grant funding for off-grid (solar) power and/or back-up generators for critical food assets such as cold storage (refrigerated and frozen), community kitchens, community halls, and emergency reception centres. This would allow food storage facilities to have reliable backup power in case of outages.	CPA ACRD	Community hall associations	Ongoing	Low	High
2	Conduct a post-disaster assessment of impacts to food security.	After an emergency has occurred, convene all relevant parties related to agriculture and food security to discuss lessons learned and opportunities to increase resiliency to future emergencies.	ACRD	AFI AVFSS Food access orgs Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing	Medium	High
3	Advocate for more cell service and broad band connectivity throughout the Alberni Valley.	Advocate to the Province and to service providers to increase rural broadband deployment and cell phone connectivity (e.g. communications towers) in rural areas.	ACRD	AFI	Short	Low	High
4	Consider if food storage needs and distribution logistics are adequate at Emergency Reception Centres.	Convene the ACRD Protective Services Department, CPA, Salvation Army and centre owners/managers to discuss organization and logistics of food access at emergency reception centres (e.g. Echo 67' Community Centre, Alberni Athletic Hall, Sproat Lake Community Hall, Beaver Creek Community Hall, Cherry Creek Community Hall), which may include the need for food storage on-site. Consider establishing MOUs with emergency	ACRD CPA	Salvation Army Community hall associations	Short	Medium	High

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
		reception centres to articulate responsibilities. Explore the possibility of using of storage containers to store emergency food and supplies throughout the Alberni Valley.					
5	Create a food distribution strategy between local governments, farmers, food banks, food security organization and other actors to activate during an emergency.	Develop of a comprehensive strategy for the inclusive and effective distribution of food and water during emergencies. This strategy should identify clear locations for distribution or outreach, incorporate safe and accessible distribution techniques, and outline procedures for prioritizing vulnerable populations when resources are limited. Particular attention should be given to ensuring equitable access for marginalized populations, as well as individuals with mobility, health, or transportation challenges. Establishing these guidelines in advance will help ensure that critical resources are distributed fairly, transparently, and in a manner that maintains community trust during times of crisis. Consider including seafood businesses to determine if they could play a role in emergency food distribution to provide local protein sources. Consider conducting "dry-run" or "test" scenarios that mimic an emergency to troubleshoot plan/process. Consider establishing MOUs with organizations as part of this strategy.

Include the need for potable water for drinking, food preparation, and the rehydration of baby formula.

The communications components of the food distribution strategy could involve identifying primary points of contact for each party, communication channels for real-time updates during an emergency, and defining roles, commitments, and expectations related to food access and distribution during emergencies between all involved parties. Refer to the | ACRD | CPA

Salvation Army

AFI

AVFSS

Island Health

Community hall associations

Interested First Nations

Food banks

Others as deemed appropriate | Short | High | Medium |

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
		ACRD Emergency Communication and Public Notification Plan for existing communications protocols and ensure alignment between the two documents.					
6	Provide resources to producers around creating and updating a Farm Emergency Plan for their operation.	Keep links to the resources on the ACRD Agriculture webpage and the Farm Emergency Plan templates updated. Communicate the importance of having an Emergency Plan to producers through social media and workshops/events (e.g. a guided workshop to create/update producers' Plans).	ACRD	AFI	Short	Low	High
7	Support preparedness for livestock evacuations.	Implement the ACRD Livestock Emergency Plan.

Consider adding a policy statement in EA OCPs about supporting the agriculture community in emergencies and referencing implementation support for the ACRD Livestock Emergency Plan. | ACRD | AFI | Medium | Medium - High | High |
| 8 | Advocate for alternative emergency routes into and out of the ACRD. | In alignment with the ACRD 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, advocate to the Province (Ministry of Transportation and Transit) and other relevant authorities on alternative emergency routes including but not limited to Highway 4, marine and air-based travel. | ACRD | CPA

Chamber of Commerce

Interested First Nations | Medium | Low | High |
| 9 | Convene a meeting with large grocery retailers to discuss food distribution challenges during an emergency. | Host a meeting with large grocery retailers to understand the challenges they face in re-stocking and managing sales during an emergency with the aim of increasing food access to residents as much as possible. | ACRD | Grocery Retailers | Medium | Medium | Low |
| 10 | Expand the Alberni Valley Gleaning Project to be able to mobilize during an emergency. | Build up the Gleaning Project such that it can be mobilized in coordination with farmers to harvest and distribute foods during an emergency. | ACRD | AVFSS

AFI | Long | Medium | Medium |

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
11	Collaborate with relevant partners to support agri-food business continuity planning efforts.	Work with the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce and Island Health to understand how local governments could best support the solutions and next steps outlined in the Highway 4 Disruption and Resiliency Solutions Report.	ACRD CPA	Chamber of Commerce Island Health	Long	Low - Medium	Low
12	Update ACRD Disaster and Emergency Management Plan to reference recent planning documents	The *ACRD Disaster and Emergency Management Plan* (DEMP) has recently been updated and provides some mention of food access during emergencies. However, to increase food security and enhance communication with producers during emergencies, it is recommended that when the DEMP is updated in the future to reference this Alberni Valley FSEP and the Livestock Evacuation Plan for the Alberni Valley.	ACRD		Long	Low	Low
Long-term Food Security Actions for Increased Community Food Resiliency							
13	Promote increased utilization of publicly-owned land for agriculture and food growing.	Allow local government land awaiting development to be used for food production (e.g. market gardens). Amend EA OCPs to include wording specific to supporting agriculture on surplus land. Consider including an agricultural land designation in EAs for this type of use. Consider leasing public land to producers when feasible - using affordable, long-term leases to support farm business planning and continuity. Explore a regional foodlands access program (such as the Capital Regional District's Regional Foodlands Access Service Bylaw). Develop guidelines for local government staff to plant food crops within public land and parkland. For example, when planting fruit trees/shrubs in parks consult the Wildsafe BC program/coordinator. Allocate maintenance capacity to care for edible plants in Parks Department budgets and workplans.	ACRD CPA	AFI AVFSS AF	Ongoing	Medium	Medium

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
		Continue to support community gardens with fencing, irrigation and infrastructure. For example, the AVFSS is undertaking an expansion of the Dry Creek Community Garden and support could be in-kind through fencing, tree pruning, etc.					
14	Promote increased utilization of private agricultural lands for a greater diversity of crop and livestock production.	Support the province and other organizations (e.g. AFI) in providing extension services to producers wishing to try new crop varieties, help new entrants gain access to land by connecting entrants with the Young Agrarians organization and direct producers to AF Beneficial Management Practices resources related to crop production. Advocate to the province and other agencies related to challenges producers face such as high land and insurance costs, water licencing delays, regulatory complexities and other issues as identified by regional producers.	ACRD	AFI Young Agrarians AF	Medium	Medium	Medium
15	Continue to provide support to organizations working on public education related to food security and advisory committees.	Provide support (for example, letters of support for grants, funding, advertising, staff time, or in-kind) to organizations hosting workshops, events, etc. related to food security (e.g. food processing, growing their own food and purchasing locally produced foods, and other topics). For example, the AFI, the AVFSS, garden clubs, community associations and others. Support local schools and daycares to integrate gardens and growing into their schoolgrounds and curriculums. Support the continuation of the CAWS, AAC and ADC though facilitation and honorariums that acknowledge the specialized knowledge of local food growers.	ACRD CPA	AFI AVFSS CAWS AAC ADC SD70 and other schools	Ongoing	Medium	High

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
16	Advocate to the province to continue to streamline meat processing permits and regulations, without compromising food safety.	Advocate to the province for the development of a streamlined renewal pathway for meat processing licences that is clearly differentiated from initial applications, as well as creating and communicating clear guidance on inspector standards during inspection.	ACRD	AFI AF	Short	Low	High
17	Support existing and new food and seafood processing businesses.	Provide the following support: • letters of support for grants, • assistance with zoning and permitting processes, • water and electrical hook-ups. This may include support for Dock+ expansions and meat processing. Some priority should be given to processing businesses that also contain cold (refrigerated or frozen) storage with generator backup. Ensure that meat processing (slaughterhouses, abattoirs) is a permitted primary use within industrial zones outside of the ALR and a permitted secondary use on agricultural land in local zoning bylaws.	ACRD CPA	Chamber of Commerce Community Futures Island Health	Ongoing	Low	Medium
18	Support establishment of refrigerated and frozen cold storage space with backup generators outside of the tsunami inundation zone.	Support businesses, NGOs, or other local organizations wishing to establish cold storage (with generator backup) by providing letters of support for grants and help determine appropriate locations based on utilities, services, and zoning/building permits as required. In EA OCPs, consider explicitly supporting food security infrastructure developments (e.g. food processing, community kitchens, food storage) through policy statements. Include publicly accessible cold storage (with generator backup) space in future plans for centralized markets, food banks and/or emergency infrastructure.	CPA ACRD	Chamber of Commerce Fire Halls Community Halls Island Health	Medium	Low	Medium

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
19	Allow water use for food production year-round in both urban and rural areas.	As water restriction phases are enacted during drought conditions, continue to allow irrigation of crops and household gardens as water supplies permit.	ACRD CPA	CCWD	Ongoing	Low	As needed
20	Increase access to water for agricultural irrigation.	Implement the findings of the ACRD Agricultural Water Plan.	ACRD	AFI CPA CCWD	Medium	High	High
21	Continue and expand the municipal waste diversion program to create high quality soil amendments.	Support the ACRD's three-stream organics diversion and production of soil amendments, such as compost. Expand organics diversion within the ACRD to explore the possibility of accepting fish waste. Ensure the finished product is of high quality and that distribution is available to residents.	ACRD CPA		Long	Medium	Low
22	Explore options for the development of a year-round, permanent centralized farmers market complex.	A single high-traffic farmers' market, instead of multiple low-traffic markets could help improve sales for producers and access for residents and tourists. This would involve a feasibility study to determine potential locations, structural requirements and the options to include components of food processing, storage (dry and cold, with backup generator), distribution, production and education, to increase long-term food security and food access during an emergency. Consider if local government zoning bylaws need to be modified to allow for these multiple uses. In the short-term, continue supporting existing markets until feasibility study is completed. Support can include reasonable or exempted lease rates, advertising on social media/websites, etc.	CPA ACRD	ADC Chamber of Commerce Island Health	Long	High	Medium

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
**Actions to Support First Nations' Food Sovereignty and Emergency Food Security**						
23	Explore permanent funding sources for staff positions to increase programming related to food production, preservation and food sovereignty.	Tseshaht First Nation Additional staff/capacity required to increase food sovereignty programming and manage agricultural lands once developed. Hupačasath First Nation Additional staff/capacity required to increase food sovereignty programming such as food preservation workshops and maintain/expand the community farm. ACRD support could include letters of support, assistance with grant writing, or sharing of appropriate funding sources.	TFN HFN	ACRD	Ongoing	Low	High
24	Pursue grant funding applications to expand infrastructure, equipment and training related to food sovereignty and emergency food security.	Tseshaht First Nation Support applying for grants in the following focus areas: o Assess water sources for agricultural land development, including the capacity of the well at the Old Airport site. o Expand the food box program; this program boosts community nutrition and checks in on members physical and mental health. o Water infrastructure upgrades at Tseshaht Paper Mill Dam Park to enable construction of smokehouses. Water source/infrastructure could also be used for fire suppression. o Additional cold storage and freezer storage situated outside the tsunami flood zone and equipped with backup power. o Solar panel installation at Somass Hall. o Any other emerging areas of interest to support both long-term and emergency food security.	TFN HFN	ACRD	Ongoing	Medium	High

Action ID	Action	Description	Lead Actor(s)	Supporting Actors	Timeline	Resource Level	Priority
		Hupačasath First Nation Support applying for grants in the following focus areas: o Fencing (including electric fencing) the farm perimeter and establishing a dedicated composting structure (e.g. concrete slab with roof). o Commercial-grade dehydrators and related food preservation equipment. o Workshops and training related to food preservation using a variety of techniques such as dehydrating, freeze drying and canning, cooking workshops using produce from the farm, and sharing traditional knowledge related to foods and medicines. o Any other emerging areas of interest to support both long-term and emergency food security. ACRD support could include letters of support, assistance with grant writing, or sharing of funding sources.					
25	Continue building partnership with educational institutions (e.g. North Island College, University of Victoria, Vancouver Island University, KPU) to conduct research on agricultural lands.	Tseshaht First Nation There has been interest from several universities and colleges about collaborations regarding the development of the agricultural lands. Continue to facilitate connections through existing relationships with educational institutions. Hupačasath First Nation Continue to support collaboration with educational institutions to provide workshops, courses and micro-credentials on the community farm.	TFN HFN	ACRD Educational Institutions	Ongoing	Low	High
26	Explore the potential to include fish waste from processing into the regional three-stream composting program.	Discuss with the ACRD the feasibility of collecting fish processing wastes. Finished compost can then be provided back to each Nation to grow food on their agricultural lands and community farm respectively.	TFN HFN	ACRD	Medium	Medium	High

9.0 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A monitoring and evaluation framework is helpful in guiding progress of the implementation of actions and in measuring success. Tables 11 and 12 presents descriptions of indicators along with examples of success (what is being measured), evaluation mechanisms (how it is being measured), and data sources for each.

The indicators are presented as "performance" or "process" related:

- "Performance" indicators note the overall success of the plan as actions play out on the ground.

- "Process" indicators signal the overall implementation of specific actions over time.

Table 11. Monitoring and Evaluation: Performance indicators.

Indicator	Measure of Success	Evaluation Mechanism	Data source
1. Increased resilience of the farming community to emergencies	Total number of farms that have undertaken mitigation and/or preparedness steps. Messaging from ACRD about roles and responsibilities is clear.	# farms registered for Premises ID # farms completed Farm and Ranch FireSmart program # farms completed Farm Emergency Plans	Ministry of Agriculture and Food AFI & communication with farmers
2. Increased long-term and short-term (during emergencies) food security for the Alberni Valley	Number of workshops/training courses related to food preservation and emergency preparedness. Increase in food storage facilities within the region. Communication and food distribution plans in place to activate during emergencies.	Outreach to community organizations to confirm participation. Change in number of food storage facilities. Test communication methods/distribution plans using dry-run exercises.	ACRD staff Community organizations
3. Total farmed area and number of farms (on ALR and outside ALR) and public food growing spaces	Increase in food production on parcels available for farming. Increase in food grown on public spaces.	Track the area of farmland under production: - Total area in production - Average # of acres/farm - # of farms year over year Track number of publicly owned parcels where food is grown	Farm classified area from Statistics Canada Census of Agriculture BC Assessment ALUI updates ACRD/CPA parcel data

Table 12. Monitoring and Evaluation: Process indicators.

Indicator	Measure of Success	Evaluation Mechanism	Data source
4. Number of ACRD mitigation and preparedness initiatives underway that support the agricultural community.	Success of grant applications. Number of contracts established. Number of letters of support signed.	Comparison of project numbers annually.	ACRD staff
5. Annual Budget allowance for implementation of the FSEP	Budget allocated each year for implementation.	Track ACRD budget allocations for specific direction/projects related to plan actions.	ACRD Board commitments for budget.
6. Number of FSEP actions completed	Number of actions completed within 5 years of adoption (excluding ongoing actions).	Tracking of actions completed over time.	Updates and amendments to bylaws and other ACRD policies. Any new projects emerging.

Figure 9. Alberni Valley farm in early spring.

Appendix A. Estimates of Locally Produced Foods

Table 13 provides detailed calculations estimating the proportion of the Alberni Valley population that could be fed annually with local production. These numbers come from the 2021 Census of Agriculture. There are other vegetables and fruits produced in the Alberni Valley; however less than 1 acre of these crops were reported to the Census of Agriculture so detailed calculations were not possible.

Table 13. Estimates of the annual theoretical supply of certain locally produced foods to feed the Alberni Valley population, based on 2021 Census of Agriculture data.

	Number of cows	Total Milk Produced per year (L) [43]	Annual Average Milk Consumed per person (L) [44]	Theoretical supply for AV Population (%)
Dairy	240	1,872,000	60.5	117.5
	Production (dozen)	Average Consumption per person (dozen)[45]	Annual AV consumption (dozen)	
Eggs	17,955	21	552,657	3.2
	Number of Animals	Total Weight to Market (kg)	Annual Consumption per person (kg)[46]	
Pork	39	3,000	14.4	0.8
Beef	225	82,480	17.7	17.7
Goat, Sheep & Lamb*	578	5,300	0.9	23
	Total Market Weight (kg)	Annual Consumption per person (kg)[47]		
Broilers, roasters, Cornish	1,950	34.5		0.2
Turkey	494	3.7		0.5
	Growing Area (m2)	Yield Estimate (kg)	Annual Consumption per person [48] (kg/year)	
Cucumbers	31,840	1.7 million	3.5	2,218
Tomatoes	186	9,300	7.9	4.5
Peppers	30	660	4.2	0.6
Herbs	31	217	0.3	2.7

**only an aggregate number was available.

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[43] BC Farm Industry Review Board. (2019). B.C. Milk Industry Snapshot.
[44] Statista. 2020. Consumption of milk per capita in Canada from 2015 to 2021.
[45] Statistics Canada. Accessed May 2025. Food Availability 2023.
[46] Statistics Canada. (2022). Food Availability in Canada.
[47] Statistics Canada. (2022). Food Availability in Canada.
[48] Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. (2020). Statistical Overview of the Canadian Vegetable Industry 2019.

Appendix B. Alberni Valley Food Infrastructure and Retail Assets and Policy Analysis

A scan of food infrastructure and retail assets within the Electoral Areas of the Alberni Valley and the City of Port Alberni was conducted to help provide an understanding of the resources available to community members that can support food security. In addition, an assessment of the Electoral Area OCPs was conducted to identify any gaps with regard to food security and local government policy.

City of Port Alberni

The City of Port Alberni is the primary service centre in the region, as such has many food security infrastructure and retail assets. Examples of these are provided in Table 14.

Table 14. Examples of food retail and infrastructure assets in Port Alberni (not an exhaustive list).

Food Retail and Infrastructure	Examples
Conventional Supermarkets	Walmart, No Frills, Quality Foods, Buy-Low Foods
Specialty Food Stores	Fresh Coast Market, Wesco Foods, The Salty Woodsman Goods
Farm Stores/ Farmers Market	Alberni District's Fall Fair Markets, Naesgaards Farm & Market, Port Alberni Farmers' Market, Spirit Square Farmers' Market
Food Service Businesses	While it's challenging to quantify the number of food businesses in Port Alberni, the Alberni Valley's Chamber of Commerce directory lists a conservative estimate of 30+ restaurants [49] (e.g.. The Clam Bucket, Bucksnorts)
Hospitality Businesses	The Alberni Valley Tourism website lists 21 hotels, B&Bs and inns available for accommodation within the region, primarily located in Port Alberni.[50]
Processing Facilities and Community Kitchens	Dock+, Double R Meats, Pete's Mountain Meats, faith-based community kitchens, etc.

Electoral Area 'B' (Beaufort)

Due to Beaufort's low population density and expansive landscapes, the area has limited commercial infrastructure, including food retailers. Port Alberni is the closest service hub for residents of EA 'B'. This EA has the Beaver Creek Community Hall, which is owned and operated by the Beaver Creek Community Club. The Beaver Creek Community Hall has a fully operating commercial scale kitchen that can be used for food security initiatives. This space hosts some seasonal food and artisanal markets and educational workshops related to food security. There are no known dedicated food storage facilities, such as commercial cold storage units or large-scale food warehouses, within the Beaufort area itself.

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[49] Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce. Accessed May 2025. Food & Beverage.
[50] Alberni Valley Tourism. Accessed May 2025. Accommodations.

Electoral Area 'E' (Beaver Creek)
The Beaver Creek Market is the sole food retailer in Beaver Creek, offering a range of essential items, including groceries, snacks, and household necessities, as well as some agricultural products. However, for a more comprehensive selection of groceries or specialty items, residents travel to larger supermarkets in nearby Port Alberni. Unlike other electoral areas in the ACRD, EA 'E' does not have a designated community centre or secondary school, infrastructure which often contains a large-scale kitchen that can be used for emergency food preparation. There are no known dedicated food storage facilities, such as commercial cold storage units or large-scale food warehouses.

Electoral Area 'F' (Cherry Creek)
Cherry Creek has limited food retail options, with only a weekly farmers' market serving the area. The Port Alberni Farmers Market is a weekly market held year-round in the town of Cherry Creek.[51] Local producers sell seasonal produce, plants, beef & poultry as well as baked goods and prepared meals.[52] This market has 41 registered vendors with around 30 showing up to the market on a weekly basis. For most food needs, residents rely on a short drive into Port Alberni for access to large grocery stores and a wider variety of food retailers.

Cherry Creek Community Hall has a well-equipped kitchen that supports a variety of community events and food-related activities. The hall's kitchen is designed to accommodate large gatherings, with serving capabilities for up to 230 guests. It includes essential appliances such as a large refrigerator, dishwasher, microwave, and stove.[53] The kitchen, shown in Figure 10, is primarily intended for short-term food preparation and service during events so there is no indication of extensive cold or dry storage facilities for long term food storage. The hall is owned by the Cherry Creek Recreation Commission.

Figure 10. Fully equipped kitchen at the Cherry Creek Community Hall.

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[51] Alberni Valley Tourism. Accessed May 2025. Port Alberni Farmers' Markets.
[52] Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. (2023). Growers Guide.
[53] Cherry Creek Hall. Accessed May 2025. Cherry Creek Community Recreation Commission.

Electoral Area 'D' (Sproat Lake)

Sproat Lake Electoral Area has several food retail options for residents and tourists including: Arrowvale farm store, Coleman Meadows farm store, Sproat Lake Landing Resort, Della's Café (Figure 11) and Fish & Duck restaurant. In addition, the Tseshaht Market on Tseshaht First Nation reserve lands in this area sells snacks and café style foods. Sproat Lake Landing Resort has on-site dining amenities, including a restaurant and lounge, indicating a commercial kitchen on site.[54] Additionally, the resort includes a grocery and liquor store that provides essential items and beverages. Della's Café offers a combination of baked goods, grocery essentials, and local products, making it a convenient stop for both residents and visitors. The café primarily carries grab-and-go food products and is centrally located along Hwy 4 on the northeastern side of Sproat Lake. Specific details about the food storage capacity of all food retail locations are not available.

The Sproat Lake Community Centre, managed by the Sproat Lake Community Association, features a fully equipped kitchen that serves as a vital community asset. This kitchen is available for various events and activities, including weddings, parties, meetings, workshops, and other special occasions.[55] The kitchen can be rented in conjunction with the hall or separately but is not typically used as a preparation kitchen for food security initiatives.

Figure 11. Della's Cafe & Gift Shop; One of few food retailers in the Sproat Lake Electoral Area.

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[54] Sproat Lake Landing Resort & Lodge. Accessed May 2025. Drinkwaters Lounge.
[55] Sproat Lake Community Association. Accessed May 2025. Community Hall.

Food Security Policy Analysis

An analysis of the strength of food security policy for the four Alberni Valley electoral areas is outlined. The goal is to identify any gaps within the OCPs with regard to food security and local government policy. An evaluation tool has been developed by the project team. This framework uses a food system lens to ensure comprehensiveness but not necessarily exhaustiveness. The analysis focuses on policy only and does not consider implementation. This framework is based on over 40 years combined experience working in agriculture and food system planning and is informed by the work of Food Secure Canada and BC Centre for Disease Control's (BCCDC) Conceptual Framework for Food Security Indicators (2019).[56] Unfortunately there is no comprehensive policy framework in Canada designed to address food insecurity either federally or at the provincial or territorial level.[57] This lack of existing framework to guide the development of food security indicators is also noted in the 2019 BCCDC report.

The policy assessment tool is aimed at measuring the strength of community food security policy in local government plans and strategies. It should be noted that while having a strong rating on all food security elements could represent a best-case-scenario, it is also recognized that unique attributes of each community may influence this rating in various ways (e.g. limiting urban agriculture due to a desire not to create an attractant for wildlife).
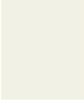
Strong		The policy is comprehensive and integrated, addressing multiple dimensions of community food security.
Medium		The policy has multiple links to food security but may be missing some key dimension of food security.
Light		The policy has few to no strategies that link directly to food security and is missing many key dimensions of food security.
Not present		The policy does not explicitly cover the food security dimension.

Table 15 provides an analysis of the Official Community Plans (OCPs) of Electoral Areas B, D, E and F. The four OCPs are almost identical in nature when assessing the food security dimensions listed in the table. As such, the following analysis is relevant for all four EAs.

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[56] BC Centre for Disease Control, Provincial Health Services Authority. (2019) Conceptual Framework for Food Security Indicators.
[57] University of Toronto. (2019). PROOF: Food Insecurity Policy Research.

Table 15. Assessment of Electoral Area OCPs with respect to food security.

Food Security Dimension	Policy assessment				Potential gap/opportunity	Notes
	Strong	Medium	Light	Not present		
1. Food security in built environment/ & development plans			☐		Consider supporting food security infrastructure developments (e.g. food processing, community kitchens, food storage, food banks).	Support for small-scale food production throughout Plan area mentioned.
2. Agricultural land protection and stewardship	☐				Continue to protect agricultural land and recognize the ecological benefits of farmland.	Highly detailed policy on ALR protection with objectives to: Maintain and foster agricultural use and food production, Promote the diversification of agricultural products, Encourage the protection of clean groundwater for agricultural operations and others.
3. Climate adaptation			☐		Consider supporting climate adaptation strategies for agriculture.	GHG and water conservation/mitigation policies are mentioned but no adaptive actions are detailed.
4. Soil health			☐		Support soil BMPs though ag community applications to funding. Support development of soil amendments through the existing composting program.	Natural resource policies touch on protection of soil integrity and erosion control.
5. Salmon, migratory water bird, habitat protection		☐				Ecological corridors, riparian zones and fish habitat protections acknowledged in OCP.
6. Onsite composting			☐		Consider support for expanding curbside compost program into all EAs, as resources allow.	Composting is mentioned as a conservation action, no programs or infrastructure recommended.

Food Security Dimension	Policy assessment				Potential gap/opportunity	Notes
	Strong	Medium	Light	Not present		
7. On-Site Water Storage					Consider support for agricultural water uses; on-farm water storage or community level.	Rainwater collection and water management policies included.
8. Farmers markets					Consider support for formal market infrastructure and promotion.	Farm-gate sales encouraged; formal farmers' market not outlined.
9. Farm gate stands					Consider keeping the *Cultivating Farmgate Stands* brochure updated and continuing support for the *Growers Guide*.	Farmgate stand sales encouraged under rural and commercial use policies.
10. Emergency preparedness					Consider referencing support for the new Livestock Emergency Plan and Food Security Emergency Plan.	OCP Statements: Minimize danger from natural hazards as objective. Discourage development in hazardous areas.

Appendix C. Actions and Support for Indigenous Food Sovereignty

In March 2024, the Island Indigenous Foods Gathering was hosted by Ahousaht on Tseshaht territory in Port Alberni. This gathering was a significant initiative aimed at creating a comprehensive strategy for food security for Indigenous communities on Vancouver Island. By bringing together representatives from the 14 Nuu-chah-nulth Nations and other communities, the event sought to share knowledge, resources, and develop strategies to strengthen traditional food systems and resilience.[58]

The following were identified as the most important actions and support required.

Enhancing Traditional Harvesting Practices

- Action: Implement integrated harvesting and cultivation strategies to protect, conserve, and regenerate Indigenous land, food systems, and cultures.
- Support Needed: Assistance with acquiring equipment such as freeze dryers, dehydrators, pressure canners, and traditional harvesting tools and funding for critical infrastructure development.

Empowering Community Education and Training

- Action: Provide training programs, workshops, and educational initiatives focused on traditional food practices, culinary skills, and food safety.
- Support Needed: Resources and funding for developing and delivering culturally relevant training materials, and facilitation of workshops by knowledgeable community members or elders.

Strengthening Cultural Revitalization Efforts

- Action: Create or enhance cultural revitalization initiatives like language revitalization programs, cultural ceremonies, and storytelling events, to strengthen connections to traditional foods.
- Support Needed: Funding for cultural programs and events, resources for preserving and sharing traditional knowledge, and collaboration with cultural organizations and elders.

Building Collaborative Partnerships

- Action: Foster partnerships and collaboration with external organizations, government agencies, and academic institutions to address the systemic barriers and policy gaps impacting food sovereignty and emergency food security.
- Support Needed: Assistance with advocacy efforts, representation in policy-making processes, and funding opportunities for collaborative projects and initiatives.

Promoting Sustainable Resource Management

- Action: Implement sustainable management practices and conservation initiatives to protect and preserve traditional food resources for future generations.
- Support Needed: Technical assistance & expertise in habitat restoration, species conservation, and sustainable harvesting techniques. Funding for conservation projects & land stewardship programs.

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[58] Island Indigenous Foods Gathering. March 2024. Summary Report and Conclusions from a Multiple-Community Roundtable Discussion.

Building Community Resilience and Adaptation

- Action: Develop community-based emergency preparedness plans, response strategies, and support networks to address food security challenges during times of crisis.
- Support Needed: Resources for emergency planning and response, coordination with emergency management agencies, and capacity-building for community resilience.

Advocating for Indigenous Rights and Policies

- Action: Advocate for Indigenous rights to access traditional territories, protect food sovereignty, and address food security issues at local, regional, and national levels.
- Support Needed: Assistance with policy analysis and advocacy, representation in decision-making processes, and collaboration with Indigenous rights organizations and legal experts.

These actions identified through the Island Indigenous Foods Gathering reflect real and ongoing needs in First Nations communities. Addressing these needs, such as improved access to equipment, training, infrastructure, and partnerships, can directly strengthen local food systems. Supporting these efforts contributes to broader emergency preparedness by increasing local capacity to produce, preserve, and share food in times of disruption. This plan recognizes that Indigenous communities have an essential role to play in building food resilience in the Alberni Valley, both through traditional knowledge and practical, community-based solutions.

Appendix D. Funding Opportunities

Below is a selection of funding opportunities available to local governments, Indigenous governments, organizations, producers, and businesses. This list is not exhaustive, and funding opportunities on this list may terminate at any time. New opportunities may arise once this list is published. Furthermore, application windows may open and close at different times throughout the year.

General Grants
- Real Estate Foundation of BC
- Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program
- Vancouver Foundation
- ACRD Grant-in-Aid
- Knowledge Transfer and Technology Program
- Co-op Community Spaces
- Agri-Spirit Fund
- Island Coastal Economic Trust
- Youth Employment and Skills Program
- Canada Summer Jobs wage subsidy
- Farm 2 School BC Grants

Agri-Environmental Grants
- Agri-Ecosystem Stewardship Initiative (AESI)
- Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program (AWP) Stream 3: Assessments, Engineering Studies or Plans
- Climate Agri-Solutions Fund (CAF)
- Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)
- Scaling the Implementation of Riparian Restoration (SIRR)
- Investment Agriculture Foundation – various agricultural and environmental grants
- Tree Canada
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- Watershed Security Fund
- Farm Credit Canada Community Grants

Agri-Food Industry Specific
- Livestock Waste Tissue Initiative (LWTI)
- Novel Tools and Technology for HPAI Prevention (NTT): Stream 1: Poultry Producer Novel Tools & Technology Implementation
- Agri-Stability
- B.C. Land Matching Program
- Agriculture Wildlife Program
- Food Storage, Distribution and Retail Program
- Food Processing Growth Fund
- Production Insurance
- Livestock Price Insurance

Emergency Planning and Preparedness& Climate Adaptation

- United Way
- Disaster Financial Assistance
- Indigenous Engagement Requirements Funding Program
- Community Emergency Preparedness Fund
- Disaster Resilience and Innovation Funding program
- Green Municipal Fund
- Union of BC Municipalities

Indigenous Applicants
- New Relationship Trust - Food Sovereignty Fund
- Indigenous People's Resilience Fund
- Telus Indigenous Communities Fund
- Thriving Indigenous Food Systems
- Indigenous Pathfinder Service

Loans
- Community Futures
- Farm Credit Canada BC