

ACRD Agricultural Support Program

- Progress Report 2021 -



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

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

- Vision (Alberni Agriculture Plan, 2011)

“Strategy 1.4: Enhance Agricultural Development”

- ACRD Strategic Plan 2021-2024

An overview of 2021 agri-support activities is indicated in the table below. Moving forward, there remains a need to make progress on the challenges of increasing farm viability (reducing costs/bureaucracy, increasing market opportunities and production), implementing climate mitigation strategies for agriculture, strengthening regional influence in Provincial/Federal policies and programs, and achieving Nuuchalnat food sovereignty. Healthy, local, and culturally-appropriate food resources must be readily available to all local residents and within institutions.

The agri-food industry is an important factor in the local economy, socio-cultural environment, and land/water base. We continue to work towards the goals above, in collaboration with many dedicated food and agricultural organizations and with the support of the resources and programs within the 2021-2024 System Change project.

This work has taken place on the traditional territories of Hupacasath First Nation, Tseshaht First Nation, Hesquiaht First Nation, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, Toquaht Nation, Ahousaht, Yuułu?il?ath, Huu-ay-aht First Nation, Ditidaht, and Uchucklesaht First Nation. We offer gratitude for our uninvited presence here and the Nuuchalnat's stewardship of these lands over time immemorial.

Primary Focus Areas, 2021

Focus Area	Description and Successes
System Change Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied and received \$300,000 from the Vancouver Foundation for the 3 year ‘Test’ project “<i>Expanding the Influence of Regional Agricultural Support</i>” • Distributed funding to and mentored local agri-food organizations: Alberni Farmers’ Institute, Alberni District Fall Fair (ADFF), Alberni Transition Towns Food Hub (AVFH), Eat West Coast (EWC), Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT), and Tofino Community Food Initiative (TCFI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related outcomes included publication of the ‘Guide to Farm Stands in the Alberni Valley’; circulation and distribution of the ‘Our Home, Our Food, Our Resilience’ Photobook; Honoraria for producer participation in meetings; and increases in other organizations’ capacity, programming, skills, and impacts • Sponsored a Grant Writing Workshop with 19 local attendees • Worked with a UBC PhD candidate to plan and undertake a series of interviews about agri-planning perspectives with representatives from 19 Regional Districts across the Province • Outreach and engagement with other Regional Agricultural Support (RAS) initiatives across the Province • Outreach and engagement with Provincial Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries (MAFF) and Ministry of Health
Reconciliation and Indigenous Food Sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally partnered with the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC) to work towards food sovereignty solutions and support the reconnection and stewardship of the land and marine-based food systems • Secured \$23,400 funding from Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) to help bring Indigenous perspective to ACRD agricultural planning programs • Engaged with the NTC’s developing Food and Nutrition Network to facilitate opportunities to learn and hear food perspectives from the 14 Nuu-chah-nulth Nations • Made progress towards distribution of \$20,000 to Nuu-chah-nulth stakeholders in support of these engagements
Meat Inspection Regulations *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial regulations amended in October 2021, allowing producers to apply for on-farm slaughter licenses across the Province • Met with MAFF and Meat Inspection Program staff twice to share perspectives and program feedback, including challenges of securing insurance and the low limits of allowable slaughter for on-farm licenses • Continued to make progress towards initiating local educational opportunities for meat production in partnership with North Island College • Continued to seek out opportunities to support an increase of local slaughter capacity
Support for Agricultural Use of Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched the ACRD Council for Agricultural Water Supply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including outreach with and/or representation from local producers; various Provincial Ministries; Tseshaht First Nation; Hupacasath First Nation; DFO; a professional biologist; Nanaimo Regional District (Drinking Water & Watershed Protection Program) ; Mosaic Forest Management; Climate Action Initiative (CAI); and others • Expanded the Producer-Led Monitoring component, with additional funding from the CAI

<p>Coastal Agricultural Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made progress in strengthening CBT’s role in facilitating the Coastal Agricultural Roundtable • Worked with TCFI to deliver the Growing Resilient Coastal Gardens Project, with funding from CBT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided in-person garden consultations at 7 coastal community gardens • Shared resources and stimulated shared learning via online meetings, social media, and emails with the 11 participating gardens • Participating gardens included those from within 7 Nuu-chah-nulth communities • Delivered 2 live virtual workshops, with recordings posted online • Distributed signage to each garden to create a visual reminder of their shared goals and mutual support • Supported a tandem project to distribute mason bee houses to the 11 gardens • Co-hosted 2 Coastal Agricultural Roundtable meetings with CBT and EWC
<p>Other Partnerships and Collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted the AVFH to apply for a second round of the Food Rx program (distributing local food to vulnerable hospital discharges) • Assisted Shelter Farm and AVFH to successfully apply for a United Way infrastructure grant • Worked with Alberni Valley News to publish the 2021 West Coast Growers’ Guide • Worked with AFI and AVFH to deliver the 2021 Garden Starter Pack program • Assisted the Islands Agriculture Show in planning for a 2022 event • Wrote letters of support for a Tseshaht Food Sovereignty initiative and an Alberni District Fall Fair Covid recovery grant
<p>Agri-Food Skills Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with North Island College, Shelter Farm, and Dock+ Food Processing Hub to initiate and administer a Farm Worker Training Program and a Seafood Processing Training program, which were fully funded for participants
<p>True Armyworm Monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued monitoring of 11 pheromones traps across the Alberni Valley, with support from Ministry of Agriculture and a local youth.
<p>BC Climate Adaptation Initiative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in the Implementation Working Group, assisting to direct \$300,000 in project funding across Vancouver Island • Winter field trials were conducted on an Alberni Valley farm • Additional \$21,000 was secured for the Producer-Led Monitoring component of the ACRD Council for Agricultural Water Supply • Engaged in networking and collaboration with other Vancouver Island producers, organizations, Regional Districts, and the Province
<p>Event Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created a virtual booth as part of the Alberni District Fall Fair • Produced the 2021 Virtual Family Farms Day, adding 4 new videos to an online collection
<p>Networking/ Relationships, Capacity Building, & Event Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranged 2 meetings with MLA Josie Osbourne for members of the ADC, AAC, and AFI • Facilitated 8 ADC meetings and 2 CAR meetings • Updated Terms of References for ADC • Outreach and engagement with various regional and Provincial stakeholders • Fostering collaboration amongst various organizations and projects • Sharing agricultural information and opportunities with public and producers via email, newspaper, and social media channels; responding to public inquiries; ensuring up-to-date info on ACRD website