

# Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District's (ACRD) System Change Project



*Expanding the Influence of Regional Agricultural Support*

**Year 2 Report** (June 2022 - June 2023)

*What we've learned, what we've done, what's changed, and what's next?*

Project Overview	
<b>Annual Focus</b>	Year 1 - Evaluating the impact of regional agricultural support Year 2 - Supporting producer access to extension services and research support Year 3 - Compiling a comprehensive and accessible database of resources for regions across BC
<b>Annual Activities: Local</b>	Distribution of core funding to local agri-food organizations and governments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberni Farmers' Institute (AFI) - \$4000</li> <li>• Alberni District Fall Fair (ADFF) - \$4000</li> <li>• AVTTS Alberni Valley Food Security Society (AVFSS) - \$7500 (matching Island Health)</li> <li>• Eat West Coast (EWC) - \$7500 (matching Island Health)</li> <li>• Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT) - \$2500 (to administer the Coastal Agricultural Roundtable)</li> <li>• Tofino Community Food Initiative (TCFI) - \$4000</li> <li>• \$20,000 to support Nuu-chah-nulth Food Sovereignty</li> </ul> Mentorship and support to local organizations, to help increase capacity and impact
<b>Annual Activities: Across BC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with a network of other regional agri-food organizations, learning and sharing</li> <li>• BC-wide forums and events, with an annual focus</li> <li>• Research and action to increase regional roles and influence, including within regional government</li> </ul>

## **P** primary outcomes so far, within the ACRD:

- Improved structural connections between local organizations, producers and governments;
- Increased collaboration between our region's agri-food organizations;
- Growth and strengthening of local agri-food organizations;
- Stronger extension supports for individual producers;
- Increased focus on food at community events;
- Stronger linkages with Nuu-chah-nulth communities;
- Increasing collaboration in support of Nuu-chah-nulth food sovereignty
- Increase in food sovereignty initiatives led by Nuu-chah-nulth-aht
- Improved structural connections and engagement with the BC Ministry of Agriculture;
- More public engagement and media coverage about regional food initiatives; and
- Increase in partnerships between producers, local restaurants, and other market channels.

*The ACRD's food system work is based within the traditional territories of Hupacasath First Nation, Tseshahat First Nation, Hesquiaht First Nation, Ahousaht, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, Yuulu?il?ath, Toquaht Nation, Huu-ay-aht First Nation, Uchucklesaht First Nation, and Ditidaht.*

*We offer gratitude for our uninvited presence here and for Nuu-chah-nulth-aht's stewardship of these lands over time immemorial.*



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT  
REGIONAL DISTRICT

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## **P** primary outcomes across the province:

- Development of a BC-wide network of regional agri-food organizations;
- Regional agri-food organizations are learning more about their shared challenges, opportunities, and strengths;
- Increased opportunities for engagement between governments, institutions, producers, and agri-food organizations across BC;
- Regional governments’ perspectives about their role in agri-food planning have been collated and shared Province-wide;
- Regional governments are putting increased resources towards local agri-food activities;
- Academic institutions have had opportunities to connect about supporting agri-food research and extension services;
- Farmers’ Institutes have been highlighted as an avenue for direct producer input into policy and programs;
- New organizations are lobbying specifically for small-scale producer support;
- Industry Associations and regional voices are advocating for some of the same things, such as:
  - *Development of local or regional governance frameworks for watershed security,*
  - *Provision of assistance to keep farmland productive and farming financially feasible,*
  - *Reduced barriers and bureaucracy with funding application process, and*
  - *Recognition of the diversity of BC’s agricultural industry across regions and sectors;*
- Increased cross-Ministry engagement on agriculture and food security issues;
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food is shifting how they approach and engage Farmers’ Institutes;
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food is more engaged with regional groups;
- Regional Agrologists are more directly involved in providing regional extension services; and
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food is expanding their narrative to more strongly include marine foods, food security, and Indigenous food sovereignty.

### **From the Province of BC’s Climate Action Secretariat and Cross-Government Food Security Steering Committee’s [Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Food Security in a Changing Climate](#) (Fall 2022):**

*“The Province has reaffirmed its commitments to Indigenous Peoples through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan, which prioritizes the maintenance of traditional foods and systems over the next five years. The Action Plan highlights the following food security related outcomes the Province is striving towards:*

- *Indigenous food systems are recognized and supported in their foundational and interconnected role in providing cultural, social, environmental and economic well-being; and,*
- *Indigenous Peoples have meaningful and sufficient access to abundant and healthy traditional foods and have peaceful enjoyment of their harvesting rights.”*

## **S**ome next steps for the System Change project:

- Locally:
  - Step back and watch how the system responds to the changes that have been made. Maintain a high-level oversight of the structures that have been created and continue to foster and convene local networking tables. Make improvements where indicated.
  - Determine how to sustain changes (including core funding and honoraria) when project funding ends. What is the minimum that the ACRD must contribute to hold them up?
  - If the changes are deemed impactful and sustainable, consider how to scale up the programs further (within the region, externally, or across to another discipline).
  - Continue to work towards food sovereignty solutions, in partnership with Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and with Nuu-chah-nulth communities as requested.
- Externally:
  - Work with others to compile a comprehensive and accessible database of resources that is of benefit to regional agri-food organizations across BC (the project's 3rd year focus);
  - Determine how to sustain the network of regional agri-food organizations from across BC, if indicated (*consider the BC Food Security Gateway Community of Practice*);
  - Convene a meeting of Farmer's Institute to take a closer look at their role, their shared narratives, and the barriers they'd like to see reduced;
  - Consider outcomes from the year 2 focus on extension and research support:
    - *What extension program is MAF rolling out, and how can it be improved?*
    - *What are some simple avenues for academic involvement and collaboration?*
  - Continue to build structures and relationships that bridge agriculture and health perspectives and increase capacity within regional food systems;
  - Continue to work to ensure that small scale producers are considered and supported in Provincial agri-food policies and programs.
- Overall:
  - Map out BC's system of agri-food support, report, and share stories.

### ***Base assumptions - From previous research and lessons learned in year 1:***

1. CORE funding is needed for organizations supporting agriculture at a regional level
2. BRIDGING ROLES are needed at both the regional and provincial levels
3. REGIONAL AGRI-FOOD SUPPORT helps to:
  - Increase small farm economies/capacities;
  - Increase production and consumption of local foods;
  - Increase equity and access to culturally-appropriate foods;
  - Ensure food harvests are sustainable, regenerative, and adaptive to climate change;
  - Ensure producer voices are included in development of policies and programs.

**R**ead on to learn more about our project activities and results in year 2.

## Primary Activities and Results - Year 2 (June 2022-June 2023)

### **Focus Area: Within Region - Core Funding, Mentorship, and Relationship-Building**

#### *Alberni District Fall Fair (ADFF)*

- Published 2nd edition of [Guide to Farm Stands in the Alberni Valley](#)
- Curated an exhibit of [Our Food, Our Home, Our Resilience](#), an ACRD Photobook
- Worked with Canadian Fairs, Exhibitions and Agricultural Society's (CFEAS) to respond to [proposed amendments to Federal Traceability Regulations](#)
- Enhanced the Fall Fair grounds with "Swoop Flags" so spectators could easily find various Fair components, including agriculture education.

#### *Alberni Farmers' Institute (AFI)*

- Participated in focus group and submitted response to ACRD's proposed bylaw changes
- Celebrated 125 year anniversary with public event
- Secured funding for a farm succession planning workshop in 2023/24
- Distributed \$2100 in honoraria for producer participation in ACRD Committees, at rate of \$50/event
- Designed and adopted an organizational logo; purchased a banner
- Published a *Fire Mitigation and Field Trials* project report
- Expanded [social media presence](#)

#### *Alberni Valley Food Security Society (AVFSS)*

- Transitioned to a formal non-profit society (*Formerly Alberni Valley Food Hub*)
- Launched a new logo, e-newsletter and [website](#)
- Filmed and promoted '[Grow Local' videos series](#) in partnership with Shaw Spotlight
- Secured three grants totalling \$31,000; received increased core funding from Island Health
- Promoted their Edna Cox Social Justice Bursary for high school students with demonstrated interest in community development and local food security
- Hosted a fruit tree pruning workshop; & Eating Cheaper Growing More event (w/ Alberni Climate Action)
- Took over lease and management of [Dry Creek Community Garden](#)
- Published [Impact Report](#); developed Code of Conduct, Gleaning Development Summary, and budgetary sub-committee
- Hired a Communications & Administrative Coordinator
- Participated in City of Port Alberni's Official Community Planning processes
- Hosted [Seedy Saturday event](#) and fundraiser

#### *Tofino Community Food Initiative (TCFI)*

- Hosted [4 seasonal events and 5 workshops](#) (including seedy Saturday, local fruit preservation workshop, edible garden tours)
- Published an [Impact Report](#); developed a Strategic Plan for programming
- Took a [social enterprise \(SE\) training program](#); piloted [new SE project](#) to deliver food gardening education
- Coordinated volunteer events and fundraisers
- Ran [8 school garden programs](#) with over 150 participants
- Included Indigenous learning and language into program, with Indigenous leadership

#### *Eat West Coast / Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (EWC/CBT)*

- Co-hosted (w/ACRD) and facilitated the Coastal Agriculture Roundtable (CAR)
- Distributed \$1200 in honoraria to CAR participants
- Assisted coastal communities and organizations with project plans and grant writing
- Received increased core funding from Island Health
- Connected coastal agriculture interests to other Island communities & Canadian biospheres
- Hired a full time communications person
- Launched campaign to establish a new [Biosphere Centre](#) with a teaching and processing kitchen
- [Published an Annual Report](#)

## Primary Activities and Results - Year 2 (June 2022-June 2023)

### ***Focus Area: Working Towards Nuu-chah-nulth Food Sovereignty (in partnership with NTC)***

- Saw expansion of food sovereignty assets within various Nuu-chah-nulth communities, including:
  - A new traditional foods knowledge keeper position in one community
  - A new community center with commercial kitchen
  - Continued growth of community gardens, including via staffing, greenhouse infrastructure, educational programming, and food distributions
  - Good food box programs
  - Establishment of traditional plant gardens
  - Food preservation skills training workshops; purchase of processing infrastructure
  - Increase in emergency and community-accessible food stores
- [Warriors](#) program expansion and food system activities like: rebuilding clam gardens; trapping course; snorkel pole spearing; archery program; smokehouse construction
- Continuation of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council's (NTC) Food and Nutrition Sovereignty Network
- NTC approval for expenditure of \$20,000 of System Change project funding to host an in-person food and wellness event for all 14 nations; planning commenced, with additional funding pending

### ***Focus Area: Building Capacity within Regional Government***

- Shared a [video summary](#) of preliminary findings from Colin Dring's interviews with staff from 17 Regional Districts across BC at an online public event
- Published Colin Dring's research results by [webpage](#), [infographic](#), [policy brief](#), and [full report](#)
- Met with Squamish-Lillooet Regional District to hear about their funding structure for agri-food programs, via [establishment of a service area](#)
- Engaged UBC student as an intern to review ACRD agri-food programming and develop a [picture of a permanent staff position for agricultural support](#)
- ACRD hired a [new permanent staff position](#) to support agri-food programming (Sustainability Planner)

### ***Focus Area: Engagement with Agri-food Organizations across BC***

- Hosted two online meetings with a 'Core 8' group of Regional Agricultural Support organizations from across BC: (Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society (LAFS), Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiative (CRFAIR), Kootenay-Boundary Farm Advisors (KBFA), Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN), North Okanagan Land 2 Table Network (NOL2T), Kamloops Food Policy Council (KFPC), District A Farmers' Institute (DAFI), Nanaimo Foodshare (NFS)
  - Distributed participation honoraria of \$750 to each Core 8 organization
- Hosted a [public online forum](#) on the topic of *increasing producer access to extension services and research support*
  - 14 participants and 12 organizations represented
- Hosted a public online forum to share results of Regional Government interviews and sharing [results from year 1](#)
  - 20 participants and 17 organizations represented
- Hosted an [in-person event in Abbotsford](#) BC on the topic of *increasing producer access to extension services and research support*
  - 27 participants and 21 organizations represented
- Initiated conversations with various Farmers' Institutes and Ministry of Agriculture and Food about hosting an online event to bring together FIs from across BC
- Participated in 4 online events hosted by other organizations (MAF, ACARN, UBCO) to connect on the topics of agri-extension, research, and regional food system networks

## Primary Activities and Results - Year 2 (June 2022-June 2023)

### ***Focus Area: Engagement w/ Province of BC***

- Met with Finance Ministry at UBCM regarding producer access to insurance (Members of ACRD Board and staff)
- Met online with the Honourable Minister Alexis regarding producer access to insurance (Members of ACRD Board and staff)
- Visits from MAF staff to Alberni Valley: 3 (Regional Agrologist x 2, Coast Team Lead - Regional Development Unit x 1)
- Scheduled meetings with MAF staff (phone or online): 5
- Number of times MAF staff participated in ACRD agri-committee meetings: 8
- Number of emails from MAF Regional Agrologist sharing agri-food resources and opportunities - 30
- Participation in MAF focus group session about their Climate Change and Environment Programs
- MAF participation in ACRD's in-person and online events
- Use of MAF facility for in-person event
- MAF staff visits to at least 6 Alberni Valley farms, for purpose of extension services and support
- Participation in a Modular Abattoir Roundtable discussion hosted by MAF
- Number of times land Health participated in agri-committee meetings: 6
- Increase from 1 to 2 Island Health representatives at Alberni Valley Food Security Society meetings

### ***Focus Area: Other Partnerships and Collaborations***

- Wrote letters of support for: Hupacasath First Nation's grant application for a fish processing line (w/ Canadian Seafood Processing); & AVFSS application to Community Services Recovery Fund
- New ACRD partnership with AVFSS for Family Farms Day and Fall Fair agri-food booth facilitation
- Launch of new [Alberni-Clayoquot School Food Systems Working Group](#), with facilitation and support from Farm 2 School BC; participation of SD70 and many others
- Publication of [2023 West Coast Growers' Guide](#), with Alberni Valley News
- Worked with Community Futures and AVFSS to investigate options for food waste recovery
- Launched a series of 19 Food Skills Workshops in Alberni Valley (AVFSS/ACRD/Dock+/City of Port Alberni/Community Futures)
- A focus on food at Family Literacy Day & Nourish Fair/Coming Together forum (AV Children & Youth Network, AVFSS, Island Health, ACRD + others)
- Hosted a Food Industry Buyer-Supplier Meet Up event (ACRD, Community Futures, Dock+)
- Partnered with North Island College and Dock+ Food Processing Hub for a fully-funded Meat Processing Training Program; finished meat products to be distributed to food insecure residents by AVFSS
- Helped establish a Pathways job training and work placement program at a local farm, with Alberni Valley Employment Center

### ***Focus Area: Other ACRD Agri-planning Activities***

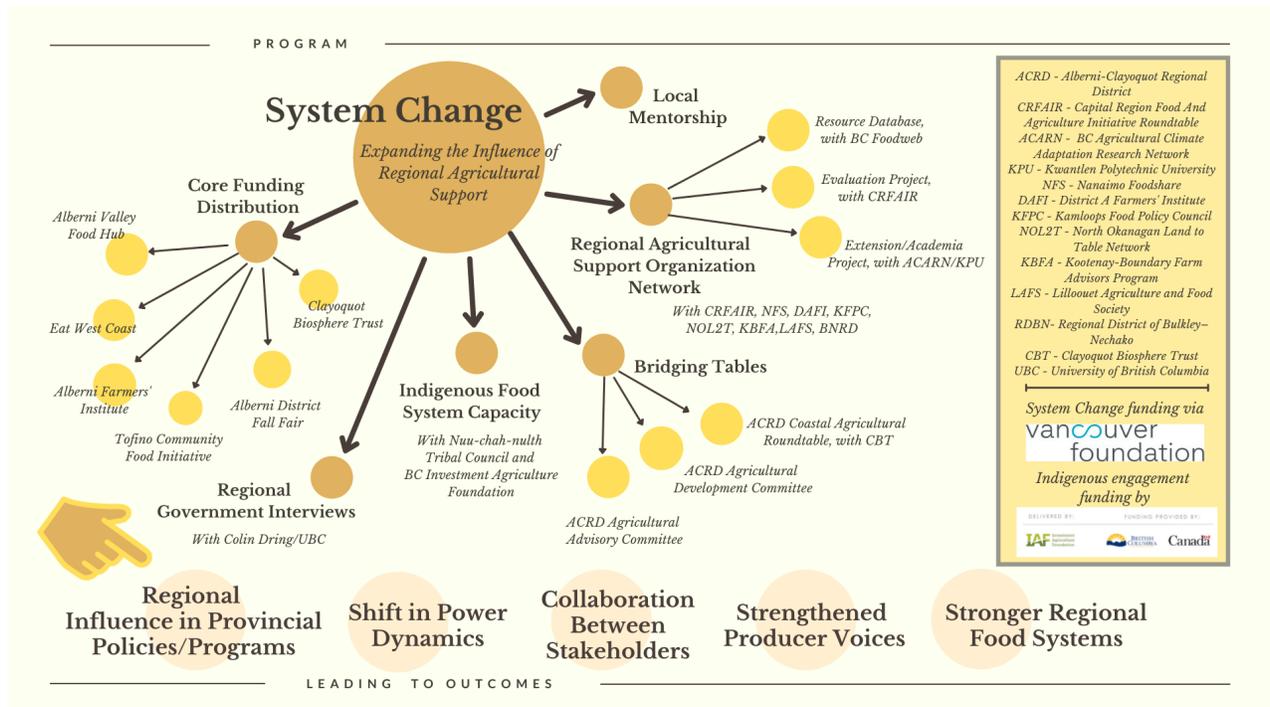
- Permanent establishment of the ACRD Council for Agricultural Water Supply, and:
  - Hosted an Agricultural Water Management Workshop, with AFI, MAF, and Irrigation Industry Association of BC
  - Hosted a well measurement workshop and purchased equipment for community use
  - Published a report including recommendations for industry, the ACRD, and the Province
  - Shared information about agricultural water issues at 1st annual World River's Day event
- Submitted Resolution to UBCM about ensuring small and medium-scale agricultural operations have access to reasonable insurance options (\*see note below)
- Increased the amount of on-farm and farm-specific extension support, including site visits, referrals to resources, and help securing resources

## Primary Activities and Results - Year 2 (June 2022-June 2023)

### Focus Area: Other ACRD Agri-planning Activities (continued)

- Supported Spirit Square Farmers' Market to establish a permanent community agri-food information booth at their Saturday market
- Contributed information about farm statistics to the Vital Signs project, with AVFSS
- Participated in City of Port Alberni's Official Community Planning processes
- Hosted a Fire Smart workshop for agricultural producers (ACRD's Fire Smart Coordinator)
- Encouraged local participation in the [Public Health Association of BC's Community Garden Network](#) (City of Port Alberni, TCFI, EWC)
- Supported the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibition's response to proposed amendments to Federal Health of Animals Regulation
- Continued monitoring for True Armyworm with 11 pheromones traps placed across the Alberni Valley, with support from Ministry of Agriculture
- Hosted the [2022 Family Farms Day event](#), both in-person and with additional video-tours; distributed \$2000 of coupons to purchase farm products during the event
- Hosted a public information booth at Alberni District Fall Fair and Islands Agriculture Show
- Participated in a 20 minute video interview with Nancy Wilmot of Shaw TV "[Up Front - Agriculture in the AV](#)"
- Shared information about grant resources; helped to develop partnership applications
- Shared agricultural information and opportunities with public and producers via [email](#), [website](#), newspaper, and [social media](#) channels; response to inquiries
- Supported information sharing about Avian Flu outbreak, with AFI
- 2 articles ([Sept 2022](#), [Mar 2023](#)) referencing System Change project published in Country Life in BC
- Continued with the [Zoning Bylaw Review project](#), including outreach to agricultural producers and drafting numerous iterations of agriculturally-related content
- Assisted in securing local implementation of the [Farmland Advantage program](#) in 2023/24

\* UBCM Resolution - BE IT RESOLVED that the UBCM call upon the Ministry of Finance to negotiate with insurance providers to arrange group farm insurance rates to address rapidly increasing insurance costs for small and medium-scale agricultural operations



*“The ACRD’s System Change project sets out to test a regional model for food system and agricultural support. Strong regional structures will influence Provincial frameworks and ensure accommodation of the unique contextual realities of BC’s various geographical regions and producer populations.*

*By bridging and supporting local organizations, building a BC-wide network of other regionals-driven organizations, and engaging in targeted education and resource development, we will support change in the way producers, Indigenous stakeholders, and communities are supported within Province-wide agricultural frameworks, ensuring efficacy, long-term sectoral growth, and diverse cultural relevancy.”*

- System Change Project Public Statement (2021)

# Thank YOU!

to the many organizations and individuals involved in this work, including: Ahousesht, Alberni-Clayoquot Health Network; Alberni District Fall Fair; Alberni Farmers’ Institute;

Alberni Valley Food Security Group; Alberni Valley News; BC Agricultural Climate Adaptation Research Network; BC Cooperative Association; BC Dairy; BC Food Web; BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food; BC Ministry of Health; Canadian Seafood Processing; Capital Regional District; Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiative Roundtable; Center for Seafood Innovation; City of Port Alberni; ; Chase and Area Farmers’ Institute; Clayoquot Biosphere Trust; Climate Adaptation Initiative; Colin Dring; Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot; Comox Valley Regional District; Country Life in BC; Danford Consulting Department of Fisheries and Oceans; District A Farmers’ Institute; District of Saanich; District of Tofino; District of Ucluelet; Ditidaht; Dock+ Food Processing Hub; Eat West Coast; Farm 2 School BC; Hesquiaht First Nations; Hupacasath First Nation; Huu-ay-aht First Nation; INEO Employment Services; Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC; Institute of Sustainable Food Systems; Island Health; Kamloops Food Policy Council; Keefer Ecological; Kootenay-Boundary Farm Advisors; Kwantlen Polytechnic University; Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society; Maaqutsiis Hahoulthee Stewardship Society; Ministry of Agriculture and Food; Ministry of Health; Nanaimo Food Share; North Island College; North Okanagan Land to Table Network; Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council; Tseshaht First Nation; Qathet Regional District; Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako; Regional District of Central Okanagan; Regional District of East-Kootenay; Regional District of Nanaimo; Richmond Sharing Farm; Royal Roads University; School District 70; Shaw Spotlight; Shelter Farm; Simon Fraser University; Small Scale Meat Producers’ Association; Spirit Square Farmers’ Market; Squamish-Lillooet Regional District; Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations; Thompson Rivers University; Tofino Community Food Initiative; Tofino-Ucluelet Culinary Guild; Toquaht Nation; Township of Langley; Tropospheric Measurement Systems; Uchucklesaht Tribe Government; Ucluelet Local Food Society; University of British Columbia; University of the Fraser Valley; Vancouver Island University; Young Agrarians; Yuułu?iif?atł; various organizations, governments, and staff from within the ACRD; individual agri-food producers and processors; and others.



**WANT TO GET IN TOUCH?**

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**WANT TO JOIN OUR SYSTEM CHANGE EMAIL LIST ?**