



To: Planning Committee

Date: May 1, 2007

From: Terry Crowe
Manager, Policy Planning

File:

Re: City of Richmond Recommendations to the BC Agriculture Plan

Staff Recommendation

1. That Council adopt the recommendations presented in Attachment 5 to the staff report entitled "City of Richmond Recommendations to the BC Agriculture Plan" dated May 1, 2007 from the Manager of Policy Planning.
2. That Council's adopted recommendations along with the staff report entitled "City of Richmond Recommendations to the BC Agriculture Plan" dated May 1, 2007 from the Manager of Policy Planning, be forwarded to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee and the Greater Vancouver Regional District Agriculture Committee.

Terry Crowe
Manager, Policy Planning

TTC:ke
Att.

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY		
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEWED BY CAO	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Purpose

This report:

- Provides background information to Council on the mandate of the BC Agriculture Planning Committee and preparation of the first BC Agriculture Plan.
- Outlines the approach taken by staff in gathering input and direction from Richmond's Agricultural Advisory Committee.
- Presents a discussion paper entitled "Richmond Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) Submission to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee".
- Makes recommendations, which includes the AAC discussion paper and City staff comments to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee as Richmond's submission.

Origin

In February 2006, the Minister of Agriculture and Lands announced the formation of a Provincial Agriculture Planning Committee comprised of the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture (Val Roddick) along with 5 Members of the Legislative Assembly. The BC Agriculture Planning Committee was charged with conducting province-wide consultation and focussed discussion with British Columbians. The intent of the consultation is to gather input, which will form the basis of a BC Agriculture Plan in order to provide vision and future direction for the agricultural sector.

The BC Agriculture Planning Committee's Terms of Reference are contained in **Attachment 1**. In May 2006, the consultation was initiated and has consisted of a number of public meetings and tours of agricultural areas throughout BC from June through October 2006. Much of the Committee's Public Consultation for the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley occurred in October and November 2006. The BC Agriculture Planning Committee has confirmed that the public consultation and information gathering process will be undertaken until the end of 2006 with the final report scheduled to be submitted to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands by June 2007.

The BC Agriculture Planning Committee presented no specific strategies, initiatives or draft plans during the period of consultation, as the intent was to gather a wide breadth of comments related to agriculture across BC.

Related Policies & Studies

Richmond's Agricultural Viability Strategy (AVS)

The AVS is a policy document adopted by Council in May 2003 and provides the City's long-term direction and commitment to attaining agricultural viability in Richmond. The AVS also contains a city-wide management plan for agriculture arranged around topic-based sections, which contains issues and recommendations on achieving agricultural viability in Richmond.

Copies of Richmond's AVS as well as supporting studies (Richmond Agricultural Profile Report – January 2002) have already been forwarded to the BC Agricultural Planning Committee at their request as background information to the consultation period undertaken throughout 2006.

Agricultural Advisory Committee – Consultation & Input

Discussion regarding input into the BC Agriculture Plan took place during AAC meetings held from September through October 2006. A discussion paper was drafted by staff and based on comments made by AAC members. Copies of the relevant meeting minutes of the AAC are contained in **Attachment 2**. The AAC discussion paper is contained in **Attachment 3**. At the November 9, 2006 meeting of the AAC, the following motion was carried:

- 1. That the draft discussion paper titled "Richmond AAC Submission to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee" be supported and approved by the Agricultural Advisory Committee, subject to staff making the identified revisions;*
- 2. That staff begin preparation of a report to Council in order to submit the draft discussion paper titled "Richmond AAC Submission to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee" for Council consideration in order to facilitate submission to the B.C. Provincial Agriculture Committee.*

A representative from the AAC along with the staff liaison attended a roundtable discussion (October 2006) session with members of the BC Agricultural Planning Committee. A number of agricultural sector representatives were in attendance from across the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley. The purpose of the roundtable discussion was to obtain specific feedback from agricultural representatives and decision-makers in addition to the consultation being undertaken through the public meetings.

Summary of Discussion Paper

AAC Discussion Paper and Recommendations

The discussion paper titled "Richmond AAC Submission to the BC Agricultural Planning Committee" is contained in **Attachment 3**. Six topics are presented in the paper and are organized into "issues" and "recommendations", which form the main comments and submission to the BC Agricultural Planning Committee. Topics addressed are listed as follows:

1. Governance structure.
2. Recognition, promotion and respect towards the agricultural industry and products.
3. Investment in land and water supply.
4. Supporting farmers.
5. Agriculture and infrastructure.
6. Economic growth strategies.

Due to Provincial submission deadlines, the discussion paper titled "Richmond AAC Submission to the BC Agricultural Planning Committee" was forwarded to the Provincial Agricultural Planning Committee on April 3, 2007. The letter noted that Council's approved comments would be submitted shortly. (Refer to **Attachment 3 & 4** for a copy of the cover letter and discussion paper).

Additional City of Richmond Staff Recommendations to the BC Agriculture Plan

Staff support all comments and recommendations highlighted in the discussion paper prepared in coordination with the City's AAC. City staff are including the following additional recommendations for consideration by the Provincial Agricultural Planning Committee:

- Preparation and inclusion of specific economic objectives for agricultural sectors in the Province in order to provide measurable benchmarks and targets for future areas of growth.
- Explore various initiatives and incentives to encourage farming on smaller agricultural lots (e.g., less than 5 acres).
- Emphasize the importance of preparing an implementation strategy in conjunction with the BC Agriculture Plan to establish targets and identify resources (e.g., funding and staffing).

Although these recommendations were not specifically included in the initial AAC submission to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee, City staff felt it important to include these comments, in addition to and support of the AAC's initial recommendations, as a means to provide input to the Province-wide Agriculture Plan in order to help create a viable agriculture sector in BC.


Analysis

As agriculture is important to the Province and Richmond, a Provincial Agriculture Plan is welcomed as such an initiative will promote food security, sustainability and agricultural economic diversification.

The BC Agriculture Planning Committee completed a province-wide consultation throughout 2006 & 2007, engaging in meetings with agricultural sector representatives and BC residents. As a result of the consultation, Richmond's AAC submitted a discussion paper to outline comments and input regarding development of the forthcoming Provincial Agriculture Plan. This has been forwarded to the BC Agricultural Planning Committee. City of Richmond staff support all of the recommendations contained in the AAC submission. As a means to follow-up, a submission is proposed in this report to be forwarded by Richmond City Council, which includes AAC recommendations and additional City of Richmond staff recommendations contained in one consolidated document (**Attachment 5**).

Conclusion

Staff recommend forwarding **Attachment 5** (Consolidated Recommendations by the AAC and City of Richmond Staff to the BC Agricultural Planning Committee) along with the report and related attachments for the purposes of input to the forthcoming BC Agriculture Plan.



Kevin Eng
Planner 1

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Context

In June 2005, the Premier announced that Delta South MLA Valerie Roddick would serve as Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Planning. Today the Minister of Agriculture and Lands announced a Government Caucus Committee chaired by Roddick that will conduct focused discussions with British Columbians to enhance the agriculture industry.

Mandate of the Agriculture Plan:

- Increasing public awareness, understanding and support of the food production system in British Columbia.
- Establish a long term vision for agriculture that will sustain and facilitate the growth and diversification of the agriculture sector.
- Encouraging the active participation of First Nations in the agriculture sector.
- Enhance the contributions agriculture provides to British Columbia's vibrant economy, environment and quality of life.

The Mandate will contribute to the advancement of three of the great goals for the Golden Decade:

- To create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada
- To lead the world in sustainable environmental management
- To lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness

Process:

In development of the Agriculture Plan, the Committee may consider reviewing existing government material and documents and other sources deemed appropriate. The committee may hold consultations and information gathering sessions for agriculture sector stakeholders, local government and other interested members of the general public.

Time Frame:

The committee will provide their final report to the Minister by June 2007.

Excerpt from the AAC November 9, 2007 Meeting Minutes

Re: Provincial Agriculture Strategy – Draft Discussion Paper

Kevin Eng briefly summarized the reasoning behind the preparation of the draft discussion paper. The intent of the draft discussion paper was to form the basis of Richmond's AAC submission to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee for consideration in the development of a BC Agriculture Plan. Staff identified that if the discussion paper is approved by members of the AAC, a report to Council would be prepared in order to obtain Council's comments and ultimate approval of the issues, comments and recommendations outlined in the discussion paper. The final objective is to forward the approved comments and recommendations to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee, with the Richmond AAC and City Council's approval, prior to the end of 2006.

Staff and AAC members reviewed and commented on the various sections of the discussion paper:

Governance and Structure

- It was noted that Richmond's AAC supports the need for the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) to regulate land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), but also recommends a review of the decision making process surrounding land use decisions made by the ALC to examine the pros and cons of the existing "panel" system.

Recognition and Promotion of the Agricultural Industry and Products

- It was clarified amongst members that the "Buy BC" program is still in existence, but has been scaled back dramatically. There was also no ongoing development or expansion of this province-wide initiative.
- Members identified that comments and recommendations needed to be added into this section to address issues around the respect (or lack of) for agricultural areas and problems associated with crop theft, vandalism and trespassing. This was essential as some AAC members noted that this had not been identified in previous discussions with the BC Agriculture Planning Committee.
- Add into the comments section that the general public often perceived agricultural land as being 'green or open' space.
- AAC members identified that various private sector producers (i.e., BC Blueberry Council) devoted significant funds towards the local promotion and marketing of products. It was suggested that the Provincial program be expanded to look at providing funds for the purposes of agricultural sector specific marketing initiatives.

Land as a Resource – Investment in Land

- Kathleen Zimmerman (through emailed comments) suggested that water be incorporated into this section as an invaluable resource.
- AAC members had concerns about identifying the high cost of agricultural land as a direct factor contributing to farming difficulties.
- Artificial controls on the price of agricultural land were not supported by AAC members on the basis that it would be potentially detrimental to the long-term viability of agriculture.
- Members suggested alternatives to direct land ownership for new farmers entering the industry. New forms of land tenure ship should be explored as a more effective means of intensifying the use of land for agricultural purposes. The ability for farm operators to lease land for longer durations (i.e., 10 years) needs to be explored so that investment in infrastructure and land can occur.
- The tax benefits resulting from the active farming of land was highlighted as being extremely beneficial to both farmers who need to lease land for farming and property owners who do not actively farm. The existing tax benefit granted for properties that engage in farming in conjunction with long-term lease options results in a benefit to both parties (i.e., Property owners are encouraged to lease a portion of their land due to the tax incentives, thereby making land available for leasing by farm operators).
- Examples of property owners and farmers benefiting from the existing system of taxation and leasing of land is evident in Richmond and Delta.

People as a resource – Investment in Farmers

- Suggested adding a recommendation for the creation of a low interest rate loan program to assist new farmers.

Economic Growth Strategies

- Members identified that the existing taxation system and resulting benefits granted to property owners who actively engaged (or leased) their land for farm purposes was beneficial to agricultural viability. Members clarified that the comments and recommendations made to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee should reinforce and not attack the existing taxation system of taxing land that is actively being farmed. It was suggested that taxation of agricultural land could further be examined to determine if there were any other options that would benefit agriculture.

General discussion amongst AAC members occurred about the identified revisions. Kevin Eng indicated he would be working with the revisions to incorporate all comments into the draft discussion paper. The revised discussion paper would then be emailed to AAC members for review and concurrence. AAC members introduced the following motion:

That the draft discussion paper titled "Richmond AAC Submission to the B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee" be supported and approved by the Agricultural Advisory Committee, subject to staff making the identified revisions;

That staff begin preparation of a report to Council in order to submit the draft discussion paper titled "Richmond AAC Submission to the B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee" for Council consideration in order to facilitate submission to the B.C. Provincial Agriculture Committee.

Carried

Discussion Paper Richmond AAC Submission to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee

Origin

In February 2006, the Minister of Agriculture and Lands announced the formation of a Provincial Agriculture Planning Committee comprised of the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture (Vai Roddick) along with 5 Members of the Legislative Assembly. The B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee was charged with conducting province-wide consultation and focussed discussion with British Columbian's. The intent of the consultation is to form the basis of a B.C. Agriculture Plan in order to provide vision and future direction for the agricultural sector.

The B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee's Terms of Reference are contained in **Attachment 1**. In May 2006, the consultation was initiated and has consisted of a number of public meetings and tours of agriculture areas throughout B.C. from June through October. Much of the Committee's Public Consultation for the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley occurred in October and November 2006. The B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee has confirmed that the public consultation and information gathering process will be undertaken until the end of 2006 with the final report scheduled to be submitted to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands by June 2007.

No initiatives associated with the forthcoming Provincial Agriculture Strategy nor any specific components of the B.C. Agriculture Plan were presented during the period of public consultation.

Purpose

This discussion paper provides a number of key recommendations and issues that Richmond's Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC) is submitting as comments to the B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee for consideration and incorporation into the B.C. Agriculture Plan.

Agricultural Viability Strategy

Richmond City Council approved the City of Richmond's Agricultural Viability Strategy (AVS) on May 23, 2003. This provides direction and vision towards 2021 in achieving guiding principles, objectives and practical strategies for the future growth and viability of agriculture in Richmond.

There are 64 recommendations contained in the AVS, which are arranged in a City-Wide Management Plan that outlines specific strategies to address the following:

- Agricultural Decision Making.
- Service and Infrastructure.
- City Policies and Bylaws.
- Non-farm Use and Parks and Recreation.
- Agricultural Edge Strategy.
- Strategy for Agriculture with respect to the Environment and Environmentally Sensitive Areas.
- Public Education and Awareness.
- Economic Growth and Diversification.

The AVS is a policy document specific to Richmond. It recognized that many of the recommendations and issues in the AVS are too specific for consideration in the Provincial

Agriculture Strategy. However, Richmond's AVS is relevant in achieving the Province's overall objectives of preparing a B.C. Agriculture Plan that will provide vision and direction to the agricultural sector. Copies of the AVS have been submitted to the Provincial Agriculture Committee. Development of similar municipal strategies and their incorporation into a broader Provincial strategy is key to creating a cohesive vision and direction for agriculture in B.C.

Key Issues and Recommendations

This section outlines six areas, separated into "issues" and "recommendations/comments", identified by Richmond's AAC as essential to achieving and maintaining agricultural viability across B.C. The B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee and forthcoming Provincial Agriculture Strategy are requested to acknowledge these issues in the plan and provide substantive initiatives and recommendations as a response.

1. Governance

Issues

- Richmond supports the need for the ALC to regulate land use in the ALR.
- There are some instances where municipalities have developed plans and policies that have been detrimental to the overall objectives of the ALR and mandate of the ALC.
- Local governments and the ALC face the difficult challenge of upholding and implementing a governance structure at the local, regional and provincial level that achieves a balance between permitting acceptable agricultural uses, while prohibiting uses that are detrimental to farm land.
- Pressures to urbanize and applications to remove land from the ALR have come from both local governments and the private landowners.

Recommendations and Comments

- Provide funding and resources to local governments to implement actions and recommendations already identified through previous municipal studies already completed (i.e., provide a 50% cost sharing mechanism up to \$50,000 in a given time period for municipalities to undertake agricultural planning studies).
- Provide more resources (funding and staffing) to the ALC to ensure that the authority can effectively fulfill its mandate to preserve agricultural land and encourage and enable farm businesses throughout B.C.
- Initiate a review of the decision making process of the ALC to examine the suitability, pros and cons of the current "panel" system on applications to the ALC.

2. Recognition, Promotion and Respect towards the Agricultural Industry and Products

Issues

- There is a growing lack of understanding and support between members of the general public and those involved in the agricultural sector.
- The general public and many public policy documents refer to agricultural areas as "green" or "open" areas, leading to public misconceptions about farmland.
- The lack of respect by the public towards agricultural activities and operators has led to crop loss, product theft, damage to property, unlawful trespassing and vandalism.
- Agricultural producers and sectors are generally responsible for the marketing and promotion of their agricultural product to the public.
- The Province-wide program (Buy B.C.) has been scaled back considerably, which is limiting the ability to promote B.C. grown products.

- Urban/Rural conflicts and complaints continue to be an issue throughout farm areas adjacent to urbanized areas.

Recommendations and Comments

- The forthcoming Provincial Agricultural Strategy should include a component on public education and awareness to help address the disconnect between the general public and agricultural sector. The education and awareness program should:
 - Identify local governments as key stakeholders.
 - Develop educational initiatives to target all age groups and demographics.
 - Raise awareness and respect of agriculture to reduce issues of vandalism, crop theft and trespassing on farmland.
 - Encourage local governments and stakeholders to promote locally grown agricultural products.
 - Develop a province-wide coordinated strategy with municipalities and stakeholders to actively market and promote agricultural products from B.C.
- Provincial funds for marketing be made available to various agricultural sectors that engage in their own marketing and promotion initiatives.

3. Investment in Land and Water Supply

Issues

- Land, water supply and drainage are crucial inputs to the agricultural sector.
- Artificial or legislated price controls over the value of agricultural land can have negative impacts on agricultural viability.
- There is a direct link between active agricultural areas and supporting infrastructure (i.e. drainage, irrigation and adequate access). Underutilized agricultural land is often attributed to a lack of infrastructure.

Recommendations and Comments

- Different forms of land tenure-ship should be explored (i.e. availability of long term leases) so that farmers can implement adequate infrastructure.
- Recognize and support a system of agricultural land tenure-ship that:
 - Allows farm operators to obtain long-term leases;
 - Continues to enable property owners who either lease their land for farming or farm themselves to receive "farm classification" for taxation purposes;
 - Land tenure-ship programs must focus on the objective of land ownership by farmers.
- Develop a central land registry database to assist farm operators in finding available land for lease or sale.
- Where certain locations dictate, encourage the diversification of agricultural activities (i.e. greenhouse activities; agri-industrial operations) in consultation with farm operators needs and the local government to facilitate more intensive use of agricultural land.

4. Supporting Farmers

Issues

- Existing trends suggest a disparity between existing farm operators that are close to retirement and new farm operators entering the business.
- Succession planning is primarily an activity left to the private farm operators.
- A reliable supply of qualified and affordable full-time, part-time and seasonal farm workers is an ongoing challenge across all agricultural sectors.

Recommendations and Comments

- The forthcoming B.C. Agriculture plan must recognize the importance of maintaining and enhancing agricultural viability and the role this plays in attracting new farm operators into the industry.
- Continued support of the B.C. Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program to ensure a supply of farm labour required on a seasonal basis.
- Form partnerships among farm operators, the ALC and local governments to develop criteria and guidelines to permit seasonal housing for temporary labour in such a manner that it does not result in long-term damage to agricultural land.
- Establish low interest loans structured to:
 - Allow for ultimate land ownership by farm operators; and
 - Enable farmers to provide ongoing capital inputs necessary to run a farm (i.e., equipment and machinery).

5. Agriculture and Infrastructure

Issues

- A common barrier prohibiting agriculturally designated land to be farmed is the lack of external infrastructure related to drainage, irrigable water supply and adequate road access.
- The agricultural sector does not have sufficient funds to pay for municipal infrastructure and therefore must rely on municipal capital work programs, which do not always address the needs of the agricultural sector.

Recommendations and Comments

- Examine the feasibility of cost sharing among agricultural stakeholders and various levels of government for capital infrastructure works, identified as enhancing agricultural viability.
- Develop a more inclusive consultative process on major senior government infrastructure projects, which have significant impacts at the local and regional level. Consultation should include local governments and Agricultural Advisory Committees.
- Develop a detailed financing strategy for farmers who need intensive capital inputs. This financing strategy must examine:
 - The initial start up costs of establishing a farm operation (i.e. machinery, farm related works – irrigation, drainage, site preparation).
 - Ongoing capital inputs (i.e. farm maintenance, new machinery and upgrades)

6. Agricultural Sector Growth Strategies

Issues

- Agricultural products and activities are a generator of economic development and multiple spin-offs.
- The existing taxation system of agricultural land is a key component to the success of many farms.

Recommendations

- Incorporate and develop an economic strategy for agriculture component in the B.C. Provincial Agriculture Plan.
 - Review the existing tax system as it pertains to agricultural land in British Columbia to determine if any additional benefits can be achieved for productive agricultural land where ongoing investment is being made.
 - The strategy should include an agricultural data information system containing past, present and future (projected) data on agricultural related statistics.
 - The feasibility of setting specific "benchmarks" based on an examination of each agricultural sector to determine the potential for economic growth or diversification.

Implementation Strategy

A crucial component of the B.C. Provincial Agriculture Plan will be the development of an implementation strategy. The implementation strategy is important to any plan and associated process as it outlines a commitment to act upon the recommendations and direction highlight in the Provincial Agriculture Plan. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that an implementation strategy be developed in accordance with the Provincial Agriculture Plan.



City of Richmond

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April 3, 2007

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Planning and Development Department

Fax: 604-276-4052

B.C. Agriculture Plan
PO Box 9120 Stn Prov Govt
4th Floor, 808 Douglas St
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9B4

Attention: B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee
c/o Val Roddick

Re: Richmond Agricultural Advisory Committee Draft Comments to the B.C. Agriculture Planning Committee

The purpose of this letter is to provide **draft comments** from Richmond's Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) to assist in the preparation of the B.C. Agriculture Plan (AAC comments are contained in **Attachment 1**)

Please note that Richmond City Council has not yet considered Richmond AAC's comments. Staff will be presenting a report, along with the Richmond AAC's comments, for review by Richmond City Council shortly. Council's recommendation will be forwarded to you thereafter.

In addition, it is City staff's observation that a successful Provincial Agriculture Strategy would emphasize economic viability (e.g., similar to the B.C. Port Strategy) as a key component of the B.C. Agricultural Plan.

Yours truly,

Kevin Eng
Planner I
(604) 247-4626
keng@richmond.ca

pc: Joe Erceg, MCIP, General Manager, Planning and Development
Terry Crowe, Manager, Policy Planning
Councillor Harold Steves

Consolidated Recommendations by the Richmond Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and City of Richmond Staff to the BC Agriculture Planning Committee

Origin

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Recommendations

- Provide funding and resources to local governments to implement actions and recommendations already identified through previous municipal studies already completed (e.g., provide 50% cost sharing mechanism up to \$50,000 annually for municipalities to undertake agricultural planning studies).
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- Initiate a review of the decision making process of the ALC to examine the suitability, pros and cons of the current "panel" system on applications to the ALC.

2. Recognition, Promotion and Respect towards the Agricultural Industry and Products

Issues

- There is a growing lack of understanding and support between members of the general public and those involved in the agricultural sector.
- The general public and many public policy documents refer to agricultural areas as "green" or "open" areas, leading to public misconceptions about farmland.
- The lack of respect by the public towards agricultural activities and operators has led to crop loss, product theft, damage to property, unlawful trespassing and vandalism
- Agricultural producers and sectors are generally responsible for the marketing and promotion of their agricultural product to the public

- The Province-wide program (Buy B.C.) has been scaled back considerably, which is limiting the ability to promote B.C. grown products.
- Urban/Rural conflicts and complaints continue to be an issue throughout farm areas adjacent to urbanized areas.

Recommendations

- The forthcoming Provincial Agricultural Strategy should include a component on public education and awareness to help address the disconnect between the general public and agricultural sector. The education and awareness program should:
 - Identify local governments as key stakeholders.
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 - Encourage local governments and stakeholders to promote locally grown agricultural products.
 - Develop a province-wide coordinated strategy with municipalities and stakeholders to actively market and promote agricultural products from B.C.
- Provincial funds for marketing should be made available to various agricultural sectors that engage in their own marketing and promotion initiatives.

3. Investment in Land and Water Supply

Issues

- Land, water supply and drainage are crucial inputs to the agricultural sector.
- Artificial or legislated price controls over the value of agricultural land can have negative impacts on agricultural viability.
- There is a direct link between active agricultural areas and supporting infrastructure (e.g., drainage, irrigation and adequate access). Underutilized agricultural land is often attributed to a lack of infrastructure.

Recommendations

- Different forms of land tenure-ship should be explored (e.g., the availability of long term leases) so that farmers can implement adequate infrastructure.
- Recognize and support a system of agricultural land tenure-ship that:
 - Allows farm operators to obtain long-term leases;
 - Continues to enable property owners who either lease their land for farming or farm themselves to receive "farm classification" for taxation purposes;
 - Land tenure-ship programs must focus on the objective of land ownership by farmers.
- Develop a central land registry database to assist farm operators in finding available land for lease or sale.
- Where certain locations dictate, encourage the diversification of agricultural activities (e.g., greenhouse activities; agri-industrial operations) in consultation with farm operator's needs and the local government to facilitate more intensive use of agricultural land.

4. Supporting Farmers

Issues

- Existing trends suggest a disparity between existing farm operators that are close to retirement and new farm operators entering the business.
- Succession planning is primarily an activity left to the private farm operators.
- A reliable supply of qualified and affordable full-time, part-time and seasonal farm workers is an ongoing challenge across all agricultural sectors.

Recommendations

- The forthcoming B.C. Agriculture plan must recognize the importance of maintaining and enhancing agricultural viability and the role this plays in attracting new farm operators into the industry.
- Continued support should be given to the B.C. Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program to ensure a supply of farm labour required on a seasonal basis.
- Form partnerships among farm operators, the ALC and local governments to develop criteria and guidelines to permit seasonal housing for temporary labour in such a manner that it does not result in long-term damage to agricultural land.
- Establish low interest loans structured to:
 - Allow for ultimate land ownership by farm operators; and
 - Enable farmers to provide ongoing capital inputs necessary to run a farm (i.e., equipment and machinery).

5. Agriculture and Infrastructure

Issues

- A common barrier prohibiting agriculturally designated land to be farmed is the lack of external infrastructure related to drainage, irrigable water supply and adequate road access.
- The agricultural sector does not have sufficient funds to pay for municipal infrastructure and therefore must rely on municipal capital work programs, which do not always address the needs of the agricultural sector.

Recommendations

- Examine the feasibility of cost sharing among agricultural stakeholders and various levels of government for capital infrastructure works, identified as enhancing agricultural viability.
- Develop a more inclusive consultative process on major senior government infrastructure projects, which have significant impacts at the local and regional level. Consultation should include local governments and municipal agricultural advisory committees.
- Develop a detailed financing strategy for farmers who need intensive capital inputs. This financing strategy should examine:
 - The initial start up costs of establishing a farm operation (e.g., machinery, farm related works – irrigation, drainage, site preparation).
 - Ongoing capital inputs (e.g., farm maintenance, new machinery and upgrades)

6. Agricultural Sector Growth Strategies

Issues

- Agricultural products and activities are a generator of economic development and multiple spin-offs.
- The existing taxation system of agricultural land is a key component to the success of many farms.
- **City Staff:** There is no strategy for each agricultural sector (e.g., blueberry, dairy, cattle) to determine benchmarks for growth (e.g., 5-10-20 years) and how to achieve such growth.

Recommendations

- **City Staff:** Incorporate into the Provincial Agriculture Plan, an economic vision, goals, objectives and policies for the agricultural sector.
- **City Staff:** Review the feasibility of setting specific agricultural production "benchmarks" based on an examination of each agricultural sector to achieve the vision and determine the potential for economic growth and diversification.
- **City Staff:** Identify what resources are required to achieve these benchmarks.
- Review the existing tax system as it pertains to agricultural land in British Columbia to determine if any additional benefits can be achieved for productive agricultural land where ongoing investment is being made.
- **City Staff:** Taxes assessed to smaller agricultural lots/holdings should be reviewed so that they adequately support and promote active farming on small lots.
- The plan should include an agricultural data information system containing past, present and future (projected) data on agricultural related statistics.

City Staff: Implementation Strategy

Prepare an implementation strategy for the Provincial Agriculture Plan in order to:

- Outline how the plan will be achieved;
- Identify a work program to achieve the plan;
- Who will lead in the implementation of the Provincial Agriculture Plan;
- How the plan will be paid for and funded; and
- Ensure the formation of partnerships amongst stakeholders to assist in plan implementation.

Prepared by the City of Richmond
Policy Planning Division