



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Planning Committee
From: Barry Konkin
Manager, Policy Planning
Date: December 3, 2018
File: 08-4430-03-10/2018-
Vol 01
Re: **Cannabis Cultivation in the Agricultural Land Reserve - Council Referral Response**

Staff Recommendation

1. That the "Cannabis Cultivation in the Agricultural Land Reserve – Council Referral Response" report dated December 3, 2018 from the Manager, Policy Planning be received for information and endorsed.
2. That this report be forwarded along with Richmond City Council's written request to the Provincial Government that:
 - a. a moratorium on the cultivation of cannabis on farmland be established by the Provincial Government;
 - b. cannabis be eliminated from the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*; and
 - c. local governments be permitted to determine whether or not cannabis should be grown on farmland within the municipality.

Barry Konkin
Manager, Policy Planning

Att. 4

REPORT CONCURRENCE	
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER 	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS:
APPROVED BY CAO 	

Staff Report

Origin

At the November 13, 2018 regular Council meeting, Council received a report on Cannabis related Official Community Plan (OCP) and Zoning Bylaw amendments in response to changes in Provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) Legislation. The following referral was passed:

That the matter be referred back to staff and that staff prepare a report to support a request to the Provincial Government on the following:

- (1) that cannabis be eliminated from the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act;*
- (2) that local governments be permitted to determine whether or not cannabis should be grown on farmland within the municipality as is the case in Washington State; and*
- (3) that a moratorium on the cultivation of cannabis on farmland be established.*

This report responds to the November 13, 2018 referral by providing information to support Council's request to the Provincial Government regarding the significant negative impacts to farmland resulting from the production of cannabis in the ALR.

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #1 A Safe Community:

Maintain emphasis on community safety to ensure Richmond continues to be a safe community.

- 1.1. Policy and service models that reflect Richmond-specific needs.*
- 1.2. Program and service enhancements that improve community safety services in the City.*

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #3 A Well-Planned Community:

Adhere to effective planning and growth management practices to maintain and enhance the livability, sustainability and desirability of our City and its neighbourhoods, and to ensure the results match the intentions of our policies and bylaws.

- 3.1. Growth and development that reflects the OCP, and related policies and bylaws.*

Findings of Fact

Provincial ALR Legislation – Cannabis Production

On July 13, 2018, the *ALR Use Subdivision and Procedure Regulation* was amended to allow for the lawful production of cannabis in the ALR as a farm use if production occurs:

- Outdoors in a field or in a building or structure with a soil base; or
- In an existing building or structure (or under construction) used for the purpose of growing crops.

Although the new regulations enables local governments to prohibit new industrial type purpose build facilities (i.e., buildings with concrete slabs/foundations), they fall well short of protecting the agricultural viability of farmland across the Province. In staff's opinion, these measures still leave ALR land open to substantial risk of development as a direct result of the provincial regulations. These regulations will still allow significant loss of agricultural land by permitting the displacement of food based crops in favor of the production of cannabis on farmland.

Overview of Washington State – Cannabis Production Regulations

At the November 13, 2018 Council meeting, reference was made to the regulation of cannabis in Washington State. City staff researched and reviewed cannabis related regulations at the state, county and local government (i.e., city or town) level in Washington State in response to Council's November 13, 2018 referral. The following is a list of key findings applicable to Washington State:

- In 2012, through "Initiative 502", Washington State legalized cannabis and established a regulatory framework for production, processing and retailing activities.
- Washington State (through the Liquor and Cannabis Board), is responsible for licensing and regulating all cannabis operations (production, processing and retailing).
- A county, city or town may adopt zoning to prohibit or regulate all cannabis related activities. Staff researched various counties across the State and confirm that most counties consider the production of cannabis as an industrial use, and is not considered farming.
- A Washington State issued license for cannabis production, processing or retailing is not exempt from the applicable regulations of the county, city or town. Therefore, a cannabis related operation is subject to regulations implemented by the local government.

Limited Ability for Local Government to Regulate Cannabis on Farmland

The July 2018 amendments to the ALR regulations do not provide sufficient discretionary powers to Local Government regarding the production of cannabis in agricultural areas. The current regulatory regime is based on:

- Federal licenses issued for cultivation/production/processing; and
- Provincial licenses for distribution and retail/storefront activities.

The City's current limit of authority is over retail licensing (city-wide) and cannabis production/cultivation activities occurring outside of the ALR only. Given the scope and scale of issues emerging over all aspects of cannabis legalization, staff are of the opinion that additional regulatory powers should be granted to local governments as demonstrated in the Washington State example provided above.

Since March 2014, OCP regulations have been in place for Richmond that restrict commercial cannabis production facilities and related uses to "Industrial" and "Mixed Employment" areas only, which reflects Richmond City Council's concerns over this activity occurring in the ALR and emphasizes the City's request to have full authority to regulate cannabis on farmland.

Analysis

Importance of Allowing Local Authority to Manage the Production of Cannabis in the ALR

The commercial production of cannabis in the ALR as a farm use can have significant negative impacts to the surrounding area in regards to the generation of significant odors, light pollution/overspill and noise from cultivation activities and accessory uses. The provincial regulations fall short in addressing these issues as they do not provide any supporting rules to properly mitigate these impacts, while at the same time permitting the use outright without any oversight. Enabling local government the ability to have full control and authority to restrict the production of cannabis in the ALR is best means to protect farmland, manage these land use proposals and establish regulations to mitigate negative effects of noise, odor and light.

Negative Impacts to Agricultural Viability from the Production of Cannabis on Farmland

Staff have identified a number of negative impacts on the capacity for farmland to be used for food production, arising from the current regulation that allows the lawful production of cannabis on farmland. This information is being submitted in support of Council's request to the Provincial Government to not allow any form of cannabis cultivation in the ALR, to enable local government control over this land use issue and to establish a moratorium on the cultivation of cannabis on farmland. It is staff's opinion that the amended Provincial ALR regulations, while restricting industrial type cannabis production facilities on agricultural land, does not adequately protect agricultural land for food production, and does not fully address the potential displacement or elimination of viable food production.

The production of cannabis as a permitted farm use under the ALR regulations, either soil based or in existing converted building, would potentially result in the following:

- Loss of arable farmland available for the production of crops to support the local, regional and provincial food system, focused on providing opportunities for local sources of food. The importance of this was highlighted in a Ministry of Agriculture information report published in 2006 titled "BC's Food Self-Reliance" (Attachment 1). The use of agricultural land for non-food crops such as cannabis weakens the resiliency of the local food system and appears to lack the long-term vision and provincial stewardship these lands deserve.
- The ALR regulations allow for the conversion of existing buildings/structures as of July 13, 2018, which were used for the growing crops, to the production of cannabis. Under this potential scenario, existing greenhouse structures that were previously used for the production of food could be converted to the production of cannabis, resulting in decreased capacity to grow food on farmland. An example of this is occurring in the City of Delta where substantial greenhouse complexes and their capacity to produce food are being converted to primarily support the production of cannabis.
- Displaced greenhouse space that has been converted to cannabis production results in these facilities having to relocate on other prime agricultural land. Demands from local, regional and global markets for food production is anticipated to only increase in the future, placing additional greenhouse development pressures on agricultural land and reducing opportunities for soil-based agriculture. The provincial regulations allowing the

conversion of existing greenhouses to cannabis production and provincial regulations that permit greenhouses to be constructed anywhere in the ALR ultimately results in the loss of farmland for soil-based agriculture across the Province.

- The use of ALR land for cannabis production will result in a decrease in the ability of the province to grow and produce food locally, which is contrary to Metro Vancouver's Regional Food System Strategy goal of increasing capacity to produce food close to home and protect agricultural land for food production (Attachment 2 – Metro Vancouver's Regional Food System Action Plan).
- Accessory uses needed to support soil based cannabis production, including but not limited to buildings for processing, storage and administration and driveways/service areas for vehicles and machinery have not been sufficiently detailed in the provincial regulations. This lack of clarity in the provincial regulations would be subject to abuse and potential increase in non-compliant operations that ultimately will result in a negative impact on agriculture and additional loss of farmland.
- The introduction of new land use conflicts related to noise, lighting, odour, security and other operational impacts from cannabis production activities that are not compatible with existing permitted agricultural activities and uses in the ALR. In the opinion of staff, these impacts have not yet been fully examined by the Province and warrants additional consideration and regulation.

Moratorium on the Cultivation of Cannabis in the ALR

The interim report titled "Revitalizing the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Agricultural Land Commission" (released on July 31, 2018) forwarded to the Minister of Agriculture by the BC Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee outlines the Committee's concerns over the size and scale of cannabis production facilities in the ALR. In particular, the Committee report noted "near unanimous support from stakeholder and the public for significant restrictions, including an outright ban, on cannabis production in the ALR". The report also contains supporting recommendations to establish an immediate moratorium on non-soil bound cannabis production, establish rules/criteria for cannabis production and require cannabis production proposals in the ALR to go through an ALC application process (See Attachment 3 for the full report with reference to page 19 and 20 for information on restricting cannabis production in the ALR).

The table contained in Attachment 4 summarizes the disconnect between the recommendations from the BC Minister of Agriculture's Committee and the resulting actions of the Provincial Government in regards to restricting cannabis production in the ALR. The following is a summary of the resulting negative agricultural impacts:

- Continued use and targeting of agricultural land by cannabis producers/industries to establish facilities in the ALR.
- Loss of farmland and reduced capacity to grow food on farmland across the Province.
- Limited rules and criteria from the Province on the production of cannabis in the ALR (i.e., conflicts related to noise, light pollution/overspill, odor and security measures) is subject to potential abuse and arising non-compliant activities – All of which negatively impacts agricultural viability.
- No authority given to local government to manage or restrict the production of cannabis on ALR land within their jurisdictions.

In May 2018, the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) executive supported a moratorium on the production of non-medical cannabis on ALR land until the provincial government undertakes a comprehensive review and broad consultation with local governments. There has been no direct response from the Province to this moratorium request and it is staff's opinion that the July 13, 2018 changes to the Provincial ALR regulations on the production of cannabis on farmland is only a partial response.

On May 28, 2018, Richmond City Council supported the following motion and letters were sent to all individuals identified:

That a letter be sent to the Premier of BC, the BC Minister of Agriculture, and the BC Minister of Finance, with copies to all Richmond Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Leader of the Third Party, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Chair of the BC Agricultural Land Commission requesting that the province impose a temporary moratorium on the use of lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve for cannabis production.

The above referenced recommendations from the BC Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee interim report to the Minister of Agriculture, the position of the UBCM Executive and Richmond Council's previous motion (May 28, 2018) all note significant concerns about the production of cannabis in the ALR. As noted in summary table contained in Attachment 4, there has been no action by the Provincial Government in response to the requested moratoriums tabled by numerous local government's and related organizations across the Province. The lack of response and direct action by the Province on these moratoriums support Council's repeated request and continued pressure on the Province to establish a moratorium on the cultivation of cannabis on farmland.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

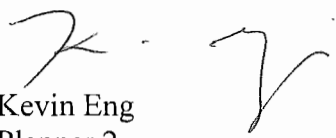
This report provides information in support of Council's November 13, 2018 referral referencing the significant concerns that remain and shortfalls of the current regulatory framework in regards to the Provincial Government continuing to permit the cultivation of cannabis as a farm use in the ALR. The negative impacts to agricultural viability that are expected to result from the current provincial framework include:

- Loss of land with high-quality agricultural soils for food production purposes, which reduces food security provincially and at the regional/local scale.
- Reduced food production capacity from the conversion of greenhouses to cannabis production.
- Displacement of existing greenhouses that have been converted to cannabis production into other land in the ALR, resulting in continued loss of prime arable soils in the ALR.

- In addition, allowing cannabis production in the ALR as a farm use is not consistent with public/stakeholder feedback conducted by the BC Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee and does not respond to the numerous requests submitted province-wide to establish a moratorium on the production of cannabis in the ALR.

On this basis, staff recommend the following:

- That the information contained in this report be received and endorsed; and
- That this report be forwarded along with Richmond City Council's written request to the Provincial Government that:
 - a. a moratorium on the cultivation of cannabis on farmland be established by the Provincial Government;
 - b. cannabis be eliminated from the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*; and
 - c. local governments be permitted to determine whether or not cannabis should be grown on farmland within the municipality.


Kevin Eng
Planner 2

KE:cas

- Att. 1: BC's Food Self-Reliance (Ministry of Agriculture 2006 information report)
- 2: Metro Vancouver's Regional Food System Action Plan
- 3: Revitalizing the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Agricultural Land Commission – Interim Report from the BC Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee
- 4: Summary Table: BC Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee Recommendations and Provincial Government Response

B.C.'s Food Self-Reliance

Can B.C.'s Farmers Feed Our Growing Population ?



Context of Results

The attached report was conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands in 2006.

The goal of the study was to get a perspective on total food production and food self-reliance in the Province of British Columbia. The study used a methodology to estimate food self-reliance using farm gate production rather than wholesale value.

The report is an information piece, and does not necessarily represent current or future policy direction. The statistical data in the report is factual and will be used to develop benchmarks for further research and study by Ministry staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

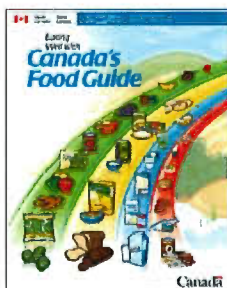
The question of food self-reliance is often raised at sustainable development planning exercises. Previous estimates of food self-reliance in B.C. have compared product flows at the wholesale level. The use of wholesale prices provides some insight into the planner's question, but it does not connect the food productive capacity to the resources in the province or the community that planners can influence. A more useful tool for sustainable development planners would be a link between food self-reliance and the resources they influence - land and water.

The general approach of this study is to estimate the food self-reliance in B.C. at the primary production level, and to use this information to examine the impacts of a change in eating habits and a change in population on the level of food self-reliance in B.C.



Production and consumption information from 2001 is used in the calculations. It is estimated that B.C. farmers produce 48% of **all** foods consumed in B.C. and produce 56% of foods consumed that can be economically grown in B.C. The following table shows the level of self-reliance for the different food groups.

Food Group	B.C. Consumption Million Kg's	B.C. Production Million Kg's	% Self-Reliant
Dairy	1080	617	57%
Meat & Alternatives ¹	467	298	64%
Vegetables - Grown in B.C.	764	331	43%
Fruit - Grown in B.C.	172	273	159%
Grain for Food	315	43	14%
Total - Grown in B.C.	2798	1562	56%
Fruit - Not Grown in B.C.	310		
Vegetables- Not Grown in B.C.	1		
Sugar	136		
Total - B.C.	3245	1562	48%



When comparing current production to recommended consumption by *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*², B.C.'s food self-reliance drops to 34%. This is primarily because a healthy diet recommends a higher level of consumption of fruits and vegetables over actual 2001 consumption levels and fruits and vegetables is a food group in which B.C. is not self-reliant³.

¹ Alternatives includes pulses and nuts.

² Published by Health Canada. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html

³ While B.C. produces and exports a lot of fruit, B.C. still imports 3 times as much fruit as it exports.

Given the production technology available today, over half a hectare of farmland (0.524 ha) is needed to produce the food for one person for one year. This is roughly equivalent to 6 city lots. In order to produce a healthy diet for British Columbians, farmers need 2.15 million hectares of food producing land of which 10% (215,000 hectares) needs to be irrigated. In 2005 the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands estimated that approximately 189,000 hectares of farmland had access to irrigation.

To produce a healthy diet for the projected B.C. population in 2025, farmers will need to have 2.78 million hectares in production of which 281,000 will need access to irrigation. This means that to produce a healthy diet for British Columbians in 2025, given existing production technology, the farmland with access to irrigation will need to increase by 92,000 hectares or 49% over 2005 levels.

To maintain the current level of self-reliance through to the year 2025, farmers will need to increase production by 30% over 2001 levels. The increased production will be concentrated on the land that has access to irrigation – land that is typically near the urban centers.



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1. Background

The question of food self sufficiency is often raised at sustainable development planning exercises. The focus of food self sufficiency can be on a local area, a region or a province. The basic question behind the discussion of food self sufficiency can be framed as follows:

‘What portion of the food consumed in a (local area, region, province) is produced in that area and, as the population grows, what is needed to maintain or expand the portion of food produced in that area?’

The term food self sufficiency can include an element of affordability. The question from the sustainable planning perspective is more related to capacity – what is our capacity to produce our own food? The term self-reliance has been used to better fit the sustainable development planning perspective.

The population in British Columbia is projected to grow by 30% from 2001 to 2025⁴. Over the same period the demand for food will experience a similar 30% increase. Some sustainable development planners are beginning to include food in sustainability considerations. The question they ask is ‘Can our farmers meet the increase in demand for food - can they continue to feed us?’

The answer to this question is complex. It depends on consumer demands, the level of production technology in the farming community, the availability of farmland and water for irrigation, the impact of global markets (imports and exports) and others. The ability to analyze the question is further challenged by the lack of complete and accurate data for all these elements.

Two previous studies on food self-reliance in British Columbia (Markham and Riemann)⁵ looked primarily at the flow of products at the wholesale level. The advantage of this approach is that it captures food at the same point in the marketing channel and data for the main marketing channels is readily available. The disadvantages are:

- it captures a point in time, which can be influenced by large annual swings in production,
- it needs to account for imports and exports which adds an additional level of inaccuracy to the estimates,
- it does not consider yearling cattle produced in B.C. and shipped out of province for finishing,
- it does not account well for farm direct marketed products, and
- it does not consider the forage and grain inputs used for livestock production.

The use of wholesale value provides some insight into the planner’s question, but it does not connect the food productive capacity to the resources in the province or the community where the planners are working. A more useful tool for sustainable development planners would be a link between food self-reliance and the resources the planners influence - land and water.

⁴ Lower Mainland Employment Study; Coriolis Consulting, 1999

⁵ Reference on page 8.

2. Introduction

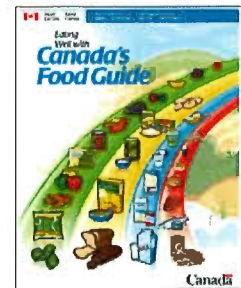
The goal of this study is to develop a methodology to estimate food self-reliance using farm gate production rather than wholesale value. This approach will provide a link between the food productive capacity of the province and the land base, water resources, and changing food needs of the population.

The results of the study will help answer the following questions:

- what is our current level of food self-reliance?
- what impact will a growing population have on our food self-reliance?
- what impact will changing food consumption patterns have on our food self-reliance?

The approach used in this study is different from previous studies in that it:

- examines primary production (farm gate) rather than wholesale value.
- uses land in production and average yields to estimate production rather than the value of production that reaches the wholesale level.
- estimates the amount of land needed for self-reliance now and in the future.
- compares production to both actual consumption and the recommended consumption according to *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*.



Using farm gate production eliminates some of the challenges of the wholesale value approach. Specifically it:



- eliminates the need to address imports and exports as they net out (on a weight basis) in the production approach,
- captures all the direct market sales by capturing the production,
- includes the weight of all yearling calf production in B.C., and
- includes forage and grain production required for livestock feed.

An added benefit of using farm gate production as compared to wholesale value is that food production can be connected to farmland. Connecting food production to the land base provides the opportunity to explore the impacts of changes in population and production technology on the land needs for the future, and enables policy makers to better understand the impacts of land use policy decisions on B.C.'s food self-reliance.

The methodology can examine the impact of production technology (through improved yields), however, that analysis is beyond the scope of this study. For the analysis and discussion of the impacts of population growth in this study, it is assumed that food production technology is held constant.

3. General Approach

The general approach of this study is to estimate the food self-reliance in B.C. at the primary production level. An important consideration was to structure the analysis so that it could be repeated in the future. The majority of the data used is obtained from Statistics Canada. For this report the 2001 census data was used. Specific references are included in the bibliography in Section 9.

A number of data challenges were identified in Sections One and Two. They include: accounting for cross border food product flows, estimating production, accounting for forage and feed grain for livestock production, and considering the responsiveness of food production to market pressures. The following paragraphs outline how these challenges were addressed.



Cross-Border Food Product Flows

Commodities that are produced in B.C. for trade create a challenge when analysing food self-reliance at the wholesale level. For example B.C. produces high quality greenhouse tomatoes that are sold to the U.S while at the same time it imports less expensive field tomatoes from California. Estimating farm gate production directly eliminates the need to use imports and exports to estimate what portion of the wholesale value is produced in B.C. The wholesale value approach will also tend to overestimate B.C. production on a weight basis as B.C. tends to export high value tomatoes and import lower value tomatoes⁶.

B.C. yearling cattle are often sold to Alberta where they are fed for a period of time before slaughter. Some of this meat is shipped back to B.C. for consumption. In this study, for calves finished out of province, the calf to yearling stage of production in B.C. was added to B.C. production.



Estimating Production

Estimating production poses the challenge of capturing the growing farm direct market sales, and adjusting for unusually large or small crops in the study year. These two challenges are addressed by estimating the area of production and multiplying by an average or standard yield. The advantage of this approach is that it smoothes production spikes, includes production for farm direct sales, and better estimates B.C.'s production 'capacity'. It may, however, overestimate production in some areas where farm management practices vary significantly, i.e. forage and pasture management on small acreages.

⁶ This means that \$10 of exports may relate to 5 lbs of tomatoes exported while \$10 of imports may relate to 10 lbs of tomatoes imported.

Inputs for Livestock Production

Forage and grain inputs are required to feed livestock in order to produce meat, eggs and dairy products. B.C.'s ability to meet the feed requirements of these animals is included in the analysis of food self-reliance.

Other Considerations

Agricultural land produces more than just food, and food also comes from B.C.'s ocean and rivers. The focus of this study was to connect the land based food production to the land. The food self-reliance was estimated with and without seafood, and the non-food agriculture production is also estimated.

The soils and climate in B.C. can support the production of many food products, however, some popular foods such as bananas, some vegetables and citrus fruit cannot be produced economically in B.C. Self-reliance is calculated for foods produced in B.C. and also when including foods not normally produced in the province.



4. Other Studies

There has been limited work done on addressing the issue of food self-reliance in a large regional area. Much of the work examining the term 'food self sufficiency' involves providing food to disadvantaged groups, looking at very small regional production areas and including consideration for food prices.

Two studies have looked at food self-reliance in B.C., Markham (1982)⁷ and Riemann (1987)⁸. Van Bers (1991)⁹ did a future estimate of self-reliance in 5 provinces for the year 2031 and Warnock (1982)¹⁰ did a less rigorous estimated of self-reliance in 1982. The results are summarized in Table 1:

⁷ Markham, Roe. *Supply and Demand Balance in the B.C. Food Sector: A Statistical Analysis*. ARDSA Project No. 271304. (1982).

⁸ Riemann, Walter. *The B.C. Food Balance*. B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (1987).

⁹ Van Bers, C. 1991. *Sustainable Agriculture in Canada : a scenario of the future*. M.A. Thesis, University of Waterloo, ON

¹⁰ Unpublished report – no longer available

Table 1 Summary of Self-Reliance Estimates of Previous Studies in BC							
	1975	1978	1980	1982	1984	1985	2031
Markham	51%	53%	56%				
Warnock				47%			
Reimann					69%	73%	
Van Bers							< 50%

Both Markham and Riemann looked at foods produced in B.C. and used the wholesale value of production and consumption. Looking at wholesale value (\$) as compared to quantity (weight) will tend to increase the estimated level of self-reliance because:



- B.C. tends to produce more high value to weight products (e.g. more meats as compared to vegetables), and
- B.C. produces more high value products within commodity groups. For example B.C. produces more greenhouse vegetables relative to field vegetables, and more fluid milk relative to industrial milk.

The main difference between Markham's and Riemann's results are their estimates for red meats – Markham estimated roughly 25% self-reliance while Riemann estimated 49%. The different estimates are primarily the result of Riemann considering the B.C. contribution of yearling cattle to the Alberta feedlots, while Markham did not.

Warnock concluded that BC was 47% self-reliant and that to maintain this level would require a 40-60% increase in production to the year 2000. The complete paper was not available¹¹.

Van Bers (1991) conducted a futuristic estimate of food self-reliance for 5 Canadian provinces in 2031. The study looked at food groups but excluded meat and animal feed. The estimates for B.C. are shown below in Table 2:

Table 2 Van Bers - Self-Reliance Estimates for B.C. - 2031	
Vegetables	23%
Fruit	25%
Grain – Food	86%
Grain – Feed	16%
Forage / Hay	69%

Van Bers estimate suggests a total level of self-reliance at or below the other studies.

¹¹ The author was contacted and indicated it was not a very rigorous study

5. Results

This section summarizes the results of the two approaches taken by this report to estimate food self-reliance in B.C.

Table 3 summarizes the results for the comparison of actual consumption to B.C. production in 2001. Table 4 is a summary of the comparison of consumption as recommended by the *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to B.C. production in 2001.

Production Compared to Actual Consumption

The estimates in Table 3 separate the foods that are grown in B.C. from the foods that are not grown in B.C. Fish is considered separately. Feed and forage needs for the production of meat and dairy are estimated. Both are noted at the bottom of Table 3 for interest.

These results are consistent with previous studies and with the prevailing perceptions in industry and government agencies¹². Self-reliance estimates on a commodity basis are presented in the detailed data sheets in Section 9.

Table 3 Summary of Comparison of Food consumed in B.C. and Food Produced in B.C.			
Food Group	B.C. Consumption Million Kg's	B.C Production Million Kg's	% Self-Reliant
Dairy	1080	617	57%
Meat and Alternatives	467	298	64%
Vegetables - Grown in B.C.	764	331	43%
Fruit - Grown in B.C.	172	273	159%
Grain for Food	315	43	14%
Total - Grown in B.C.	2798	1562	56%
Fruit - Not Grown in B.C.	310		
Vegetables- Not Grown in B.C.	1		
Sugar	136		
Total - B.C.	3245	1562	48%
Fish	38	179	471%
Forage and Feed Grain	3538	3795	107%

If fish is added to the land based production it would raise the self-reliance on products produced in B.C. from 56% to 61% and total food from 48% to 53%

¹² Anecdotal evidence from the author's interactions with other agencies indicates there is a general perception that B.C. is roughly 50% self-reliant in food production

While the level of feed and forage production meets the input needs of the industry on a weight basis, it does not meet the needs on a grain/forage ratio basis. Currently the horse industry uses over 200 million kilograms¹³ of forage per year that is not part of food production and the poultry, dairy and hog sectors use more grain than is produced in B.C.

The dairy sector has recently received a higher relative allocation of the national milk quota so it is likely that self-reliance in dairy food products will be higher in 2006.¹⁴



Production Compared to Consumption Based on Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating makes recommendations in 'servings per day'. For a comparison to actual production, production had to be converted to servings per day. Table 4 shows the actual and recommended consumption in servings per day and compares them to actual production in servings per day.

Table 4 Summary of Food Guide Recommendations with Food Produced in B.C.						
Food Group	Daily Servings (consumption)			Home Grown Production Million Kg's	Home Grown Production as % of Recommended (Food Guide)	Home Grown Production as % of Consumption
	Food Guide	Actual	Actual as % of Food Guide			
Dairy	2.87	2.23	78%	1.28	45%	57%
Meat & Alternatives	2.25	2.37	105%	1.49	66%	64%
Fruits	3.75	.75	20%	1.47	39%	159%
Imports ¹⁵		1.18	31%			
Vegetables	3.75	2.91	78%	1.6	41%	43%
Grain - Food	8.5	9.8	115%	1.3	15%	14%
Total	21.12			7.14	34%	
Fish	.25	.25	100%	1.09	436%	

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends higher consumption of dairy, fruit and vegetables and lower consumption of meat and grains than is currently consumed in B.C.

Imported fruits have been included (tan colour) in the comparison of British Columbians' actual consumption to the recommended consumption. Combining the locally grown fruit (20%) and import fruit (31%) totals actual consumption of 51% of the Food Guide recommendation for fruits.

When looking at the foods we produce, a shift to the recommended healthy diet by all British Columbians would reduce our food self-reliance to 34%.

¹³ Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, *B.C. Horse Industry in the 1990's*. 2000

¹⁴ This may reduce self-reliance in forage production, however, it will depend on how and where the increased production occurs.

¹⁵ This may reduce self-reliance in forage production, however, it will depend on how and where the increased production occurs.

6. Discussion and Implications

6.1 Trends in Food Self-Reliance

While it is difficult to summarize across studies that use different methodologies, the various analysis of B.C.'s food self-reliance indicate B.C. is at best maintaining past levels of self-reliance. Previous studies, most focusing on products B.C. farmers produce, have estimated self-reliance between 47% and 73%. The estimate of 56% in this study is in that range.

Self-reliance in supply managed¹⁶ commodities was limited in the 1980's and 1990's by a national policy of allocating quota on historical population distributions. B.C. producers have recently been given additional quota based on actual population so the level of self-reliance will likely increase in these sectors in 2006 – particularly in dairy.

The population of B.C. has increased 82% from 1971 to 2001. Agriculture (including non-food) output, adjusted for inflation, has gone up 114 %¹⁷ over the same period. Farm output¹⁸ has been able to grow along with an expanding population to meet market demand. How long B.C. farmers can continue to meet this growing demand for food is uncertain.

6.2 Land Needs for Self-Reliance

The methodology used in this study connects the food production to the land base. This provides the opportunity to estimate the land needed to produce food for British Columbians today and in the future.



Table 5 is a summary of the land needed to produce a healthy diet for one person. It is important to recognize that some foods can only be economically produced on land that is irrigated¹⁹. Land that needs to be irrigated is noted in green and includes fruit, vegetable and dairy production.

¹⁶ Production of dairy and poultry products in B.C. are regulated under the Natural Products Marketing Act. The Act limits imports and allocates production (supply) in B.C.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada Census of Agriculture adjusted by the CPI for food.

¹⁸ Farm output includes non-food agriculture such as floriculture and nursery that have shown very high growth over this period.

¹⁹ Farmland can be very broadly divided into land that does not have access to additional water (dry land farming) and land that has access to water for irrigation. Many crops, particularly fruits and vegetables need supplemental water to be economically grown in most of B.C.

Table 5 Hectares Needed to Produce a Healthy Diet for One Person					
	Servings /day	Raw Weight/day	Raw Weight/Year	Yield/Ha/yr²⁰	Hectares Needed (Irrigated)
Dairy	2.87	718 g	262 L	13,000 L	.020
				Grain	.048
Meat	2.5	188 g	68.6 kg		.394
				Range ²¹	
Grains	8.5	140 g	51.1 kg	1,750 kg	.029
Vegetables	3.75	225 g	82.1 kg	6,600 kg	.0177
Fruit	3.75	319 g	116 kg	9,600 kg	.0152
Total					.471
					.053

Combining the 0.471 ha of non-irrigated land with the 0.053 ha of irrigated land adds up to just over one half a hectare(0.524ha) of producing agriculture land is needed to produce a healthy diet for one person for one year. 10% of the land needs to have access to irrigation. In 2001, British Columbians needed 2.15 million hectares of food producing land to meet their food needs. 217,000 hectares of that land needed to be in the fruit, vegetable and dairy producing areas and have access to irrigation. By 2025, with similar production technology, British Columbians will need 2.78 million hectares of food producing land, of which 281,000 hectares would need access to irrigation, to meet their food needs. In 2005 the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands estimated that approximately 189,000 hectares of farmland in B.C. had access to irrigation.



In 2001 farmers in the fruit, vegetable and dairy producing areas reported irrigating 88,000 hectares - approximately 40% of what is needed for self-reliance. Interestingly, the estimated level of self-reliance in the sectors that need irrigation, dairy, fruit and vegetables, was 45%, 39% and 41% respectively – close to the proportion of reported hectares under irrigation²².



6.3 Pressure on Agriculture Land

The study indicates that as population grows and the demand for food grows, major pressure on agriculture land will likely come in the form of:

- the need for more irrigated land in the fruit, vegetable and dairy producing areas, and
- the need for more broadly applied pasture/forage management practices.

²⁰ Farmland can be very broadly divided into land that does not have access to additional water (dry land farming) and land that has access to water for irrigation. Many crops, particularly fruits and vegetables need supplemental water to be economically grown in most of B.C.

²¹ Farmland can be very broadly divided into land that does not have access to additional water (dry land farming) and land that has access to water for irrigation. Many crops, particularly fruits and vegetables need supplemental water to be economically grown in most of B.C.

²² Some irrigated land is for forage production for beef operations and in a few small areas fruits and vegetables can be grown without irrigation

The largest self-reliant shortfall in B.C. is in fruit and vegetable production. To be economically viable, fruit and vegetable production in B.C. needs irrigation. In 2001 farmers located in the main vegetable, fruit and dairy producing regions reported irrigating approximately 40% of the land needed for food self-reliance.

If prices for imported fruits and vegetables begin to rise, there will be significant pressure to bring more irrigated farmland into production to meet local demand.

The estimate for animal feed and forage self-reliance is based on the assumption that all census farms are using good pasture management techniques - achieving average production levels of 75% of those achieved in forage trials. This is not always the case. To continue to achieve self-reliance in animal feed and forage production the management of pasture land, particularly on small parcels around the urban centers, will need to be improved.

6.4 Regional Considerations

Agriculture production in B.C. is regionalized. For example, grains and oilseeds are produced primarily in the north, beef ranching occurs mainly in the Interior, the majority of tree fruits are produced in the Okanagan, dairy is concentrated in the Fraser Valley and north Okanagan, and the major production area for small fruits and vegetables is in the Fraser Valley. These regional differences are primarily driven by climate and soil type. Regional production differences need to be considered when evaluating farmland needed to meet the food needs in B.C. For example for B.C. to expand small fruit and vegetable production it will need access to more farmland with irrigation in the Fraser Valley or Vancouver Island. If B.C. needs to expand tree fruit production it will need access to more farmland (with access to irrigation) in the Okanagan.



6.5 Production from Dry Land Compared to Irrigated Land

The table below further illustrates, in very general terms, the difference in production potential between dry land and irrigated land²³.

	<u>Land Base</u>		<u>Sales</u>	
	('000ha)	%	(\$million)	%
Farmed Land	2,587		2,224	
Dry Land Production	2,476	96%	1,328	60%
Irrigated Land Production	111	4%	896	40%

Commodities that normally use irrigation make up only 4% of the producing land while accounting for 40% of the farm gate receipts.

²³ Irrigated land from Census of Ag 2001. Irrigated land sales included field vegetable, all fruits, grapes, nursery and dairy. Indoor agriculture (poultry, hog, mushroom, greenhouse) that also needs access to water was not included. It appears that the methodology is effective as a broad indicator of the need for irrigation for food production.

6.6 Role of Greenhouses in Food Production

Greenhouse production technology is very efficient at producing certain food crops. For a specific commodity, greenhouse production on a square meter basis can be 20 times higher than field crop production. Currently only 3 major vegetable crops are produced in greenhouses - tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers and the products produced in greenhouses tend to be at the 'premium' end of the price and quality spectrum. Greenhouse production currently meets 48% of tomato consumption, 150% of pepper consumption and 75% of cucumber consumption in B.C.



The limited number of food crops that can be economically grown in greenhouses in B.C. suggests that both greenhouse and field crop production are needed to meet the quantity and diversity of food needs in B.C.



6.7 Non-Food Production on Farmland

In 2001 the non-food sectors used 150,000 hectares of farmland to produce agriculture products. The sod, floriculture and much of the nursery production need access to irrigation.

Commodity	Hectares in Production
Nursery	42,077
Sod	837
Christmas Trees	6,018
Floriculture	3,000
Horses	100,000
Total	151,932

Floriculture greenhouse farms are averaged at 4 hectares in 2001²⁴ and the horse estimate is from the 1998 Horse Industry Survey.

Land in the Okanagan, Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island is capable of producing a wide range of food products, but the actual use of farmland is market driven. If the demand for food increases and production of specific food crops becomes more profitable for food production than non-food production, the land currently used for non-food production may shift from non-food to food crops.

²⁴ The number of floriculture producers was used with an estimate of 4 ha per farm.

7. Data Challenges and Future Considerations

A number of data challenges arose when doing this study. The author chose to use readily available sources so the study could be duplicated in the future. The more significant challenges were in estimating consumption statistics and estimating production yields.

Consumption Statistics

Consumption statistics are currently available on a national basis only. There are differences in food preferences between provinces that may affect the estimated food consumption on a provincial basis. Due to the ethnic make-up of B.C.'s population, certain foods are in higher or lower demand than in other provinces and may differ from the national reported amount. This affects the quality of consumption data for non-staple commodities, such as Chinese cabbage, mushrooms and goat meat.

Yield Estimates

The information used for the average yield estimates are not all from the same source. The method used was to first take the most reliable yield estimate provided by Crop Insurance²⁵, and then to use Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL) planning budgets²⁶ to fill in the blanks. "Crop Insurance" estimates are assumed to be more accurate (updated) as the entity is paying out money based on these estimates. MAL planning budgets are considered a reliable source as the tool is designed by Ministry specialists to help planning initiatives for B.C. farmers. The issue is that some of the stated average yields are from older sources. Therefore, it is uncertain how reliable these estimates are given recent technology changes in the industry. The estimates used from planning budgets are published between 1988 and 2002 (publication dates vary on a commodity basis).

The two sources use different methods, as the yield estimates are used for different purposes. At this point the two sources are the most accurate information available.

Yield estimates are mostly based on production in the Fraser Valley and Okanagan regions. In addition, average yields differ for processing crops as compared to fresh market sales. This data is not available for all processing crops and for consistency purposes is ignored in this study. It should be noted that only a small percentage of B.C.'s crops go for processing.

A complete list of average yields for crops grown in BC would be an asset for future versions of this study. This data should take into account regional growing/management differences and crops for processing, as crops for processing typically have higher yields.

The estimated waste factors applied to food "Disappearance" data in "Food Statistics" are experimental. Likewise, the methods in which these factors are applied to estimated production are experimental.

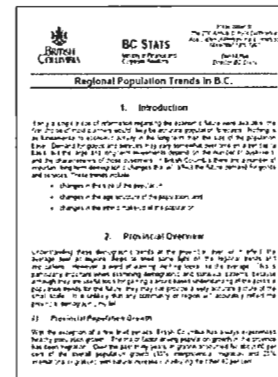
²⁵ The Crop Insurance program is a production insurance program for farmers of specific crops. Farmers pay an annual premium for coverage against crop failure. Payouts are based on 'average yields'.

²⁶ Ministry of Agriculture and Lands did a series of planning budgets (*Planning for Profit*) for different crops and livestock. Part of the planning budget involves estimating production.

The weight per serving for fruits, vegetables and grain products are estimates. The USDA National Nutrient Database is a standard reference; however, matching difficulties between consumption, production, recommended consumption and the database do occur.

“Food statistics”²⁷ were first published in 1976, and similar studies have been done to note changes in consumer behaviour with the release of new health information. Insight could be gained on a provincial basis by comparing changes in BC production, since farmers typically alter production in response to consumer demand. Further analysis could also indicate how fast BC farmers can respond to changes in consumer behaviour.

Taking demographics into consideration in this study offers valuable information now and in the future. In a ten year period B.C. will see a major demographic shift. The major variables of the shift will occur as outlined in *Regional Population Trends in BC*²⁸, are changes in the age structure, size and ethnic make-up of the population. Measuring these changes can help shed light on how B.C.’s food needs shift with demographics.



8. Methodology and Detailed Analysis

8.1 Consumption and Production Data

Per capita “food disappearance” and “actual consumption” is disclosed in Stats Canada’s annual publication, “Food Statistics.” Consumption data for 2001 is used in comparison to production data from the 2001 Census. Total B.C. food consumption is based on the reported population of B.C. for 2001 (3,907,740 persons).

Food Statistics refers to “Food Disappearance” as the amount of food available for consumption. B.C.’s food self-reliance, on a commodity basis, is the ratio of B.C. production to “Food Disappearance” data.

The amount of recommended food intake is the amount of food that is actually consumed rather than the amount of food available for consumption. To determine self-reliance on a food group basis, “Food Disappearance” data and B.C. production estimates are adjusted to account for food wastage. These adjustments produce comparable data to Health Canada’s recommended food consumption. In “Food Statistics” the consumption data adjusted for food wastage is referred to as “Actual Consumption”.

The waste factors used to calculate “Actual Consumption” account for retail, household, cooking and plate loss. The waste factors may vary from year to year. This study used waste factors on a commodity basis for consumption data averaged over three census years, 2001, 1996 and 1991.

²⁷ Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 21-020-XIE

²⁸ A publication of B.C. Stats, <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/apecb97.pdf>

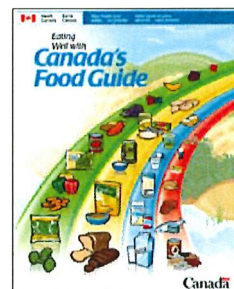
The estimated weight per serving differs on a commodity basis for raw and processed foods. Similarly, for consumption data, processed commodities have different waste factors than fresh products. In order to get production data in the same terms, the percent of production to processing on a commodity basis is estimated. The percent to processed sales for 2001 is applied to estimated production to get the amount of production to processing on a commodity basis. The amount of production that goes to processing is adjusted by a waste factor for comparison to consumption data. The adjustment results in a better estimation of what is actually consumed from what B.C. farmers produce.

B.C. production is estimated by using the reported producing area for 2001 multiplied by the average yields. Average yield estimates are derived from “Crop Insurance” data and Ministry of Agriculture and Lands commodity planning budgets. Yield data from “Crop Insurance” are considered a better estimate and are used when available. Otherwise, the “average” yields from Ministry of Agriculture and Lands planning budgets are used.

Consumption data for fruits and vegetables separates fresh and processed items. To determine BC’s self-reliance on a commodity basis, the processed amounts for fruit and vegetables are converted to its fresh equivalent weight for a fair comparison to production data. This conversion is not necessary for the comparison of recommended consumption and production data as recommended serving sizes differ between fresh and processed goods.

8.2 Food Guide Recommendations

The recommended consumption on a food group basis is from *Health Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. The guide places food into the following four groups: “Grain products”, “Vegetables and fruit”, “Milk products”, and “Meat and alternatives”. Foods that are not included in these groups fall into the “Other” food category. These foods tend to be low in nutritional value and high in fat. Health Canada recommends citizens limit the intake of these foods for obvious health reasons. These items are not included in the approach to self-sufficiency on a food group basis.



The recommended number of servings an individual should consume everyday from the four food groups will vary with his or her activity level, body size, age and gender. For women, it will vary when pregnant or breastfeeding. The recommended daily intake is 5-12 servings of grain products, 5-10 servings of vegetables/fruits and 2-3 servings of Meat and alternative products. For milk products a more personalized recommended number of servings are given. The recommended intake for children 4-9 years of age is 2-3 servings per day. For youth 10-16 years of age the recommended intake is 3-4 servings per day. For adults the recommended intake is 2-4 servings per day, and if breastfeeding or pregnant 3-4 servings per day.

For comparison to production estimates and land needs it is necessary to find an absolute serving size per food group. Health Canada gives a range of servings to indicate to individuals that their consumption levels will vary based on personal characteristics.

BC’s demographics were considered while estimating an absolute recommended number of servings per food group. The main variables taken into consideration are age structure and the gender sex ratio. The 2001 “Average person profile” published by BC Statistics indicates: 25% of the population is less than 20 years of age, 36.3% is 20-44, 25.1% is 45-64, 13.6% is 65 and older, and the mean age is 38.4 years. The population is 51% female and 49% male.

After analysis of demographical information it is concluded that there is not significant evidence to take a number other than the average of the range for the number of recommended servings. The purpose of this estimation is to determine the number of servings that would meet the requirements of the indicated characteristics of the 2001 population.

A weighted average is used to find the average number of servings for milk products. The guide recommends a range of servings for this food group based on age and if pregnant or breastfeeding. The 2001 census profile gives the age distribution. Some age categories are not grouped the same between the food guide and census profile, thus, some estimates were made in the calculations. The 2000/01 birth population is used to give an estimate of the population that is either pregnant or breastfeeding.

For comparative analysis, consumption and production data is converted to servings consumed/produced per day. In order to accomplish this, a weight per serving on a commodity basis is necessary. The Food Guide discloses serving sizes on a weight basis for fluid milk and meat products. For the other groups it is not as clear cut. Refer to “Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating” for serving size descriptions. For instance, the guide indicates that a slice of bread is equal to one grain serving. For conversion purposes, the amount of grain present in a slice of bread is estimated and used as the recommended serving size. The recommended amount for fruits and vegetables is also given as a qualitative description rather than measured by weight. To determine weight per serving on a commodity basis, the USDA National Nutrient Database is used to provide a standard reference. The weight of a recommended serving is estimated based on matching descriptions with the Nutrient database. Refer to the supplement material for more detail on how the tool is applied.



9. Data Tables

BC Food Self Reliance Data Tables

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REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN 2016

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THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGY

The *Regional Food System Strategy (RFSS)* was adopted by Metro Vancouver in 2011, with a vision to create, “a sustainable, resilient and healthy food system that will contribute to the well-being of all residents and the economic prosperity of the region while conserving our ecological legacy.” This food system approach illustrates the multiple ways food reaches our plates and the linkages among agencies, the private sector and communities working on food issues. The RFSS contains five goals and twenty-one strategies (see below) that highlight opportunities for all levels of government, the private sector, and civil society to advance actions that support the vision and public benefits derived from the regional food system.

THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Goals	Strategies
Goal 1: Increased Capacity to Produce Food Close to Home	1.1 Protect agricultural land for food production
	1.2 Restore fish habitat and protect sustainable sources of seafood
	1.3 Enable expansion of agricultural production
	1.4 Invest in a new generation of food producers
	1.5 Expand commercial food production in urban areas
Goal 2: Improve the Financial Viability of the Food Sector	2.1 Increase capacity to process, warehouse and distribute local foods
	2.2 Include local foods in the purchasing policies of large public institutions
	2.3 Increase direct marketing opportunities for local foods
	2.4 Further develop value chains within the food sector
	2.5 Review government policies and programs to ensure they enable the expansion of the local food sector
Goal 3: People Make Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices	3.1 Enable residents to make healthy food choices
	3.2 Communicate how food choices support sustainability
	3.3 Enhance food literacy and skills in school
	3.4 Celebrate the taste of local foods and the diversity of cuisines
Goal 4: Everyone has Access to Healthy, Culturally Diverse and Affordable Food	4.1 Improve access to nutritious food among vulnerable groups
	4.2 Encourage urban agriculture
	4.3 Enable non-profit organizations to recover nutritious food
Goal 5: A Food System Consistent with Ecological Health	5.1 Protect and enhance ecosystem goods and services
	5.2 Reduce waste in the food system
	5.3 Facilitate adoption of environmentally sustainable practices
	5.4 Prepare for the impacts of climate change

THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN

While the broad framework of the RFSS considers the role of stakeholders across the entire food system, the Regional Food System Action Plan (Action Plan) adopts a narrower focus on actions that local governments are planning to undertake in the next 3-5 years that will concretely advance implementation of the RFSS. It also identifies a number of new strategic and collaborative actions that local governments can undertake together to advance efforts toward a resilient and sustainable food system in Metro Vancouver. The Action Plan is set within the context of the dedicated, progressive and innovative work already accomplished or underway by local governments, civil society groups and other food system stakeholders. In addition, this Action Plan is intended as a reference guide for local governments to learn from each other's respective actions and experiences.

Staff from local governments identified the actions in the Action Plan, including the new collaborative initiatives being proposed to respond to gaps and emerging directions. The Action Plan:

- Demonstrates the local government role through ongoing and planned actions;
- Identifies areas of the RFSS where more local government efforts are desirable;
- Recommends opportunities for collaborative local government action;
- Highlights actions that could be expanded across the region; and
- Provides a resource to learn from each other and signals where new partnerships can be pursued to address food system issues.

The Action Plan was developed by Metro Vancouver, member municipalities, the Tsawwassen First Nation and the BC Ministry of Agriculture. Input was also provided by regional and municipal Agricultural Advisory Committees, external stakeholders and a series of three Roundtable events hosted by Metro Vancouver in 2013 and 2014.

Ongoing engagement with stakeholders has resulted in an Action Plan that highlights:

- 160 existing actions planned by local governments to advance RFSS implementation;
- 18 new collaborative local government actions;
- Where local governments are most active in the food system, which is in: protecting agricultural land, supporting direct marketing, aligning policies to food system goals, supporting vulnerable populations' access to nutritious food, and encouraging urban agriculture;
- Areas where local governments are less engaged, including: using farmland for food production, supporting new farmers, facilitating local food processing capacity, increasing awareness of local food, promoting food recovery, and preparing for impacts of climate change;
- Emerging issues that have become more pertinent since the RFSS was adopted in 2011 and that require local government attention, including: food emergency planning; linking poverty, food & health issues; and building local government capacity to work with civil society groups; and
- A collaborative approach to implementation that ensures ongoing coordination among local governments.

Why an Action Plan?

The Action Plan is focused on the actions that local governments are planning to undertake in the next 3-5 years that will concretely advance the region towards a sustainable food system.

By consolidating planned local government activity, the Action Plan achieves more than the sum of its parts, by:

- Enabling knowledge transfer among local governments
- Providing an opportunity to expand best practices across the region
- Identifying opportunities to collaboratively address persistent and cross-jurisdictional regional food system issues

ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM

Food system issues span government, private sector and community organizations, yet necessitate government leadership at all levels. The federal government has authority over national and international issues related to trade, agriculture, fisheries, health, and food safety. The province of British Columbia shares the government mandate for agriculture and health, while also having authority over economic growth, job creation, social welfare, transportation and the environment.

Local governments are more directly connected to communities and therefore are well-positioned to address food system issues related to land use, utilities, community services and to work directly with the civil society groups that are actively engaged in food system issues in their communities. Municipalities can capitalize on strengths to manage growth and development, diversify the economy, educate residents, support vulnerable populations and adapt to a changing environment. The regional district provides regional utility services for water, wastewater and solid waste and undertakes regional planning with an aim to guiding anticipated growth to the right places. This includes supporting the development of complete communities, protecting important lands (including agricultural lands), and enabling the provision efficient infrastructure, including transportation.

In Metro Vancouver, the combined efforts of the regional district, 21 member municipalities and the Tsawwassen First Nation creates an opportunity for a collective approach that can effectively address a wide range of food system issues. There remains a strong reliance on the provincial government to enable the policy, regulatory and fiscal framework. Partnerships with business, community organizations and educational institutions are also essential to advancing innovative solutions to address the challenges in the regional food system.

The Action Plan acknowledges a distinctive role for local governments in the Metro Vancouver region while recognizing that each local government has unique characteristics and circumstances and therefore addresses agriculture and food issues in its own way. For example, municipalities with

Definitions

With many sectors involved, there can be differing assumptions regarding some of the terminology. The following key terms were identified by stakeholders as important to define as used in the context of this Action Plan:

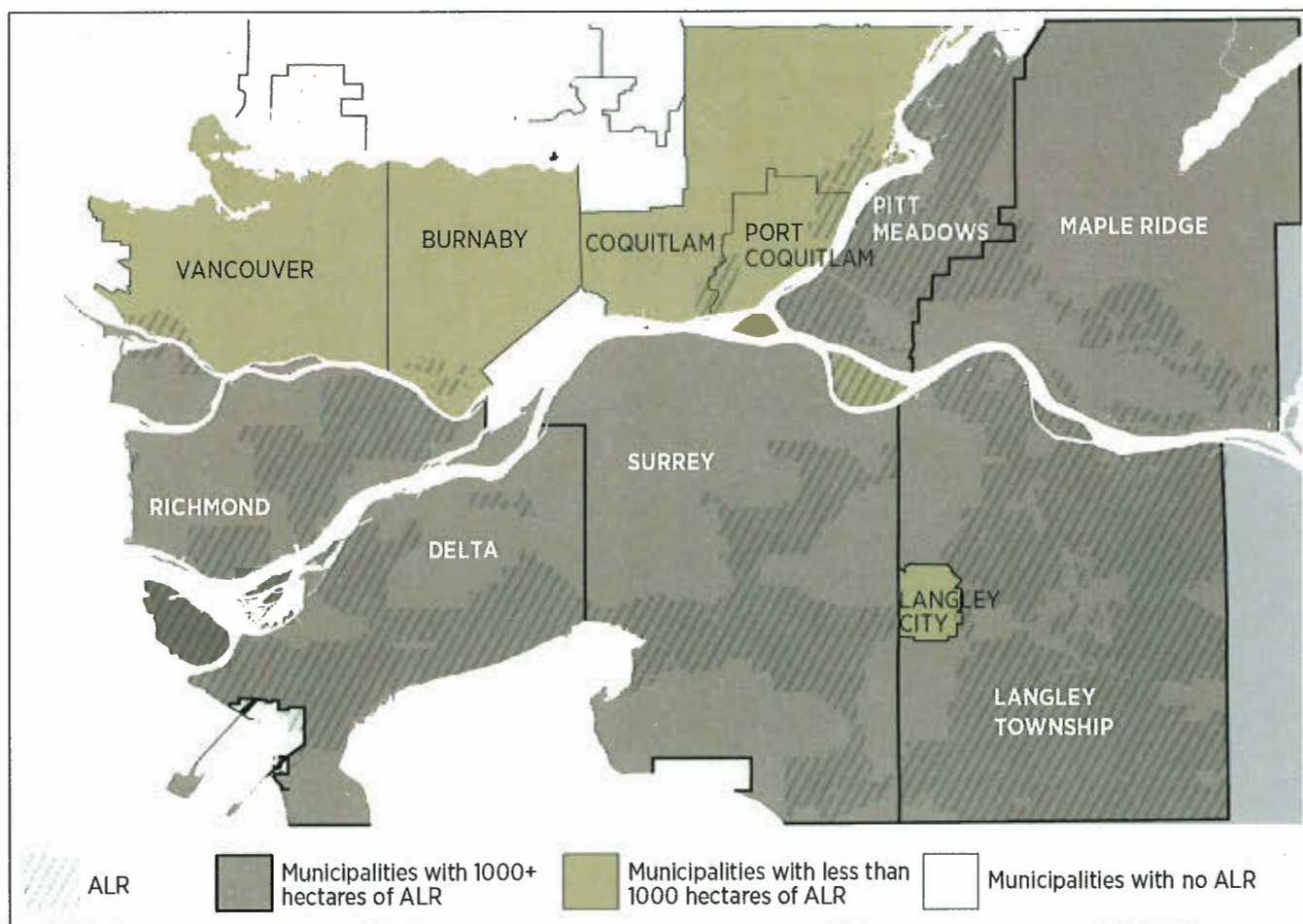
A Sustainable Food System is one that requires protecting and conserving the region's rich ecological legacy while taking actions that provide for ongoing profitability in the food sector, support healthier eating habits and address inequities in food access. A sustainable food system must also be resilient - capable of recovering from unforeseen setbacks and short-term crises. And, a sustainable food system is also a healthy system, one that improves the well-being of individuals and reduces the stress on the health care system through better food choices and eating habits (Metro Vancouver Regional Food System Strategy, 2011).

Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 2001).

Food Insecurity refers to the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so. It is often associated with lack of financial ability to access adequate food. (Health Canada, 1994)

significant agricultural land play a crucial role in protecting farmland and promoting the viability of agriculture. In Metro Vancouver, there are six municipalities that contain 95% of the region's agricultural land (Delta, Langley Township, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Richmond, and Surrey). For the purposes of the Action Plan, these municipalities are referred to as the "Agricultural" municipalities. Although other municipalities are also stewards of the Agricultural Land Reserve, most of the remaining lands are located within the Urban Containment Boundary, as defined by *Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping our Future* (Metro 2040), the regional growth strategy.

THE AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE IN METRO VANCOUVER



CHALLENGES

The challenges identified in the RFSS remain pertinent - supporting healthier diets, reducing the carbon footprint of food, preparing for uncertain global food supplies, ensuring food security and creating opportunities for local food businesses. The ability of government agencies to work across multiple jurisdictions to capture synergies also remains a challenge.

Through the development of the Action Plan, municipalities expressed a strong desire to ensure that nutritious food is available to everyone, local agri-food businesses thrive, agricultural land is protected and associated ecological goods and services are maintained over the long term. Additional challenges faced by local governments in responding to local food issues identified during the development of the Action Plan include:

- local governments having many competing priorities and obligations;
- a lack of adequate resources committed to food and agricultural issues;
- a lack of consistency in terms of where and how agri-food issues are addressed within each municipality, which makes it difficult to coordinate among departments and across the region; and
- the range of levels of political commitment to a food system approach often results in actions being completed when staff time and funding become available, rather than as a strategic priority.

KEY FINDINGS

A number of notable themes emerged through the development of the Action Plan. First, it has become evident that a regional federation of local governments working together on some issues provides an effective way to optimize the building of resilient, sustainable regional food system. The Action Plan's success is reliant on the complementary relationships that allow each community to build on its own strengths and unique circumstances to address food issues, but also to work

together on cross-cutting actions. This Action Plan provides the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others, expand innovative approaches across the region, and embark on new initiatives to address the persistent challenges and emerging regional food system issues.

Next, the importance of the interdependent relationship between the communities that are producing most of our local food, and the communities that are primarily the consumers, cannot be overstated. For example, agricultural municipalities tend to be focused on protecting agricultural land and expanding commercial food production, while the municipalities with less agricultural land can help bring local food awareness and social benefits to residents through activities such as farmers' markets and urban agriculture. Building an awareness and understanding of the respective roles and interdependence of local governments is key to effectively expand local food production.

Efforts to expand the supply and demand for local food also strengthens the call to protect agricultural land by containing growth within the urban containment boundary, as defined in *Metro 2040*. Strong connections between communities can further increase understanding of the issues that will confront the region in the future, especially as climate change and emergency management take a higher priority on all government agendas.

Lastly, there is a wide range of food-related policies, plans and programs being implemented by local governments, yet these initiatives are often not labeled as such. In addition to the agriculture plans, food strategies and food charters prepared by municipalities, actions in support of a food system approach have emerged from a broad range of other policy tools such as Official Community Plans, zoning bylaws and development permit area guidelines. There are also supportive actions embedded in Local Area Plans, Park Plans, Climate Action Plans, Environmental and Social Sustainability Strategies, and Healthy Built Environment initiatives. While municipalities are responding to the growing interest in local food issues by using available tools and resources. A more strategic, integrated long-term approach that includes dedicated staff, funding, and partnerships is needed.

A SPECIAL MENTION – COMMUNITY GROUPS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS & HEALTH AGENCIES

In addition to local governments, key players in the regional food system include non-governmental organizations, community groups, educational institutions and the private sector. Many of these groups are leading actions that support the implementation of the *Regional Food System Strategy*, and are often crucial partners for local governments.

Provincial Health Authorities also take a strong leadership role in putting food on the public agenda, and in providing partnership opportunities that support local government and community groups to better engage with food system challenges.

Most local governments rely on community organizations to be on the front lines for food security issues. With senior governments continuing to reduce support for research and extension¹, agricultural producers are increasingly reliant on educational institutions for job training and skills development. In the Metro Vancouver region, post-secondary institutions have been active in advancing research, as well supporting on the ground initiatives, such as changes in institutional procurement practices to include local foods. The connections between the private sector and local government are becoming more collaborative as businesses recognize social obligations and opportunities to be agents of change, and as food issues become more complex. In addition, food banks, charitable organizations and foundations are providing critical community services and conducting public engagement and education activities.

Civil Society

Civil society groups, non-government organizations and community associations are the true engines of innovation and progress. Although this Action Plan is focused on the role of local government, the ongoing work of civil society groups on the ground is critical in advancing food security issues throughout the region.

WHAT'S IN THE ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan uses the RFSS goals and strategies framework to structure planned and new local government actions. Each of these five Action Plan goals has a chapter that includes:

Local Government Role – describes the current state of RFSS implementation in 2015 and the types of actions that have been completed since the adoption of the RFSS in 2011.

Planned Actions – identifies specific actions local governments are planning to undertake within the next five years. These actions are occurring on an ongoing basis, or are planned for the next 3-5 years. The planned actions were identified by local government staff for their own jurisdictions. *These planned actions have been previously considered and approved by local government decision-makers.* The list of actions represents a 'snapshot' in time, is forward looking and therefore does not include completed actions and may not be fully comprehensive. The Action Plan is intended as a "living resource" that is flexible and adaptable: it will be updated as local governments complete new actions, or choose to submit new planned actions that weren't initially identified. This approach supports regular updates to the Action Plan.

¹ As noted in the RFSS: "Agricultural extension encompasses a wide range of scientific, technical, marketing and other business support for agricultural producers and is usually provided by a government agency or university."

New Collaborative Actions for Local Governments – identifies actions to address the current gaps in RFSS implementation, many which can be achieved by aligning efforts among local governments. These new actions form the basis for collaborative implementation of the Action Plan. *These recommended actions have not yet been endorsed by local government decision-makers.* There are two types of collaborative recommendations:

- New actions that harness the collaborative potential of local government to jointly address the identified gaps in the RFSS; and
- Expansion of practices currently underway in one or more jurisdictions. These are initiatives that have the potential for broader application throughout the region.

Emerging Issues in the Regional Food System

The last section of the Action Plan addresses actions that were not included in the original scope of the RFSS, but that since its adoption, have become more prevalent throughout the region.

What's not in the Action Plan

It is important to acknowledge that local governments have already adopted, funded and implemented many programs and initiatives that support the regional food system. Past actions have contributed to the strength of the regional food system today, and have set the stage for the future actions identified in the Action Plan. As expressed in the figure below, **actions that have been completed since the adoption of the RFSS are not included in the Action Plan.**

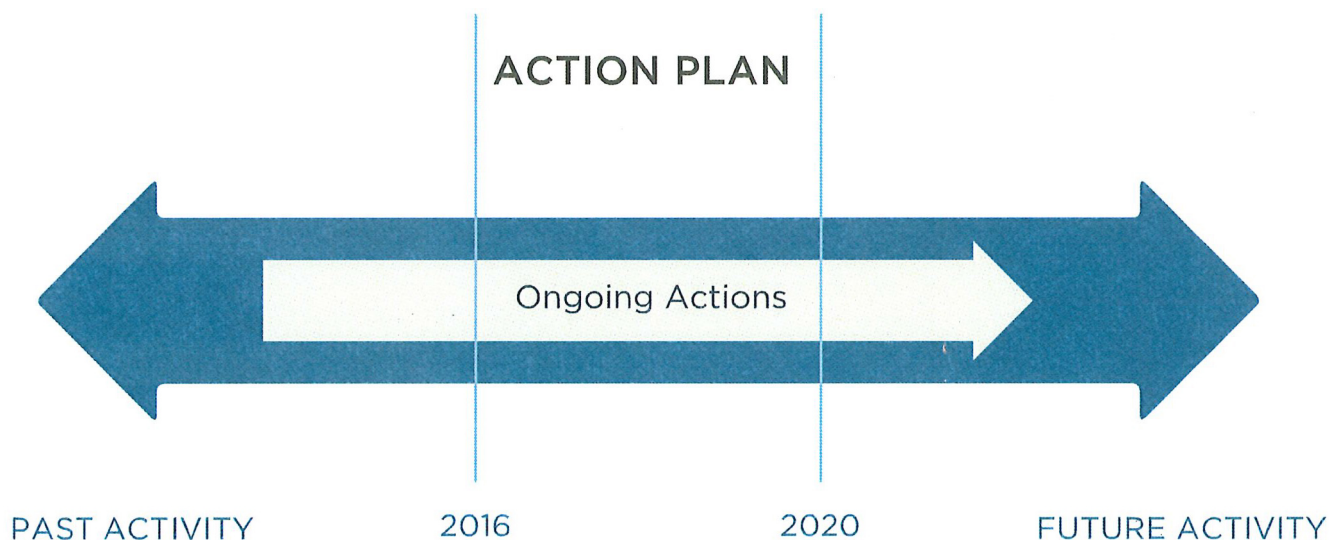


Figure 1. Scope of the Action Plan

GOAL 1

Increase Capacity to Produce Food Close to Home

This RFSS goal aims to expand the amount of food that can be commercially produced in the region. The five strategies under this goal address: agricultural land, fish habitat, avenues to invest in future farmers and the expansion of commercial food production in rural and urban areas. Protecting the agricultural land base is critical, but is only the first step – equally important is enabling farmers to operate a viable business and the use of agricultural lands for food production.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Local governments are strongly engaged in responding to Goal 1 through policy and regulations for managing land use issues within their jurisdictions. Agricultural municipalities and Metro Vancouver support the Agricultural Land Commission by protecting the region's agricultural land base. There are also ongoing efforts to expand the region's food production capacity both in rural and urban areas.

Since the adoption of the RFSS, local governments have undertaken actions such as:

- **protecting** agricultural land through the implementation of *Metro 2040*, including the policy limiting sewer connections on *Metro 2040* Agricultural and Rural designated lands, yet significant effort is spent

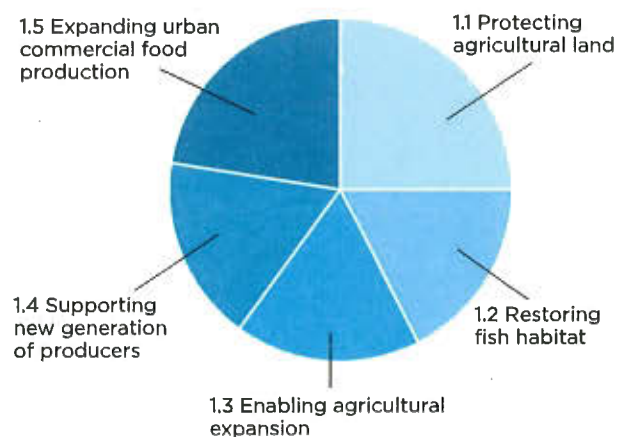
addressing the everyday threats of non-farm use on agricultural lands.

- **adopting** guidelines to restore and enhance fish habitat;
- **investigating** options to increase actively farmed land and discourage non-farm uses in the ALR;
- **continuing** to address the deposition of illegal fill on farmland through municipal bylaws and enforcement activities;
- **investing** in irrigation and drainage infrastructure, at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, to enable farmers to maintain expand food production in the ALR; and
- **continuing** to seek ways to facilitate commercial food production in urban areas.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 40 planned actions for the next five years to advance implementation of Goal 1. These planned actions include a mix of short- and medium-term and ongoing initiatives. The chart below illustrates the distribution of the actions. Due to the combined efforts of the regional district, agricultural and other municipalities, most of the activity is evenly distributed among the five RFSS strategies. The distribution of actions by RFSS strategy is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 1: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



1.1 PROTECT AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

Local governments continue to protect the region's farmland in support of the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Respond to proposed new transportation and other infrastructure to minimize or mitigate the loss of agricultural land or capability	Delta, Richmond, Metro Vancouver	
Ensure zoning and farm bylaws are consistent with the provincial "Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas"	Langley Township, Port Coquitlam, Richmond	
Address truck parking on agricultural land by investigating the feasibility of designated parking areas	Surrey	
Conduct research and implement Farm Home Plate regulations	Surrey	
Advocate for the preservation and enhancement of the ALR for food production	Metro Vancouver, Vancouver	
Reduce and prevent damage or erosion of the ALR by non-farm uses to support production and economic development in the agricultural sector	Burnaby, Richmond, Surrey	
Lead a pilot project to seek preventative solutions to illegal fill deposition on farmland in partnership with municipalities		Metro Vancouver
Partner with the Ministry of Agriculture to update the Regional Agricultural Land Use Inventory with participation from member municipalities	Metro Vancouver	
Represent regional interests in regulatory and policy changes to provincial legislation and federal development proposals impacting agriculture	Metro Vancouver	
Continue to work to minimize and mitigate the recreation / agricultural interface impacts along the Boundary Bay dyke	Delta	

1.2 RESTORE FISH HABITAT AND PROTECT SUSTAINABLE SOURCES OF SEAFOOD

Protecting, restoring and enhancing fish habitat is essential to sustaining commercial fisheries as well as protecting salmon for community and ceremonial use by First Nations. These actions represent only a small component of the broader aim to support sustainable sources of fish and seafood. Most local governments with fish-bearing streams recognize the multiple values associated with protecting fish habitat and are actively involved in streamside enhancement projects.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Restore and enhance riparian and fish habitat, including partnering with community organizations	All local governments	
Host, fund and in-kind support for celebratory and educational public events drawing attention to importance of fish habitat	All local governments	
Implement Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) guidelines and watercourse protection regulations to protect fish bearing streams	Burnaby, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, Port Moody	
Develop new Riparian Area Development permit Guidelines to protect fish bearing streams	Surrey	New Westminster
Maintain fish programs for Capilano smolt trap and truck program to transport salmonid populations around Cleveland Dam	Metro Vancouver	
Establish a fish migration & capture facilities (e.g. at Metro Vancouver new proposed hydroelectric facility at Cleveland Dam; sites in Maple Ridge)		Maple Ridge, Metro Vancouver
Establish, support or maintain fish hatcheries	Maple Ridge, Metro Vancouver, Port Moody, Surrey	

1.3 ENABLE EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Local governments have an interest in expanding commercial food production. Agricultural municipalities continue to invest in irrigation, drainage and other infrastructure projects and advance their agricultural plans, while many urban municipalities are supporting research to expand local food production on small lots.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Support, through financial or other means, the Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Southwest BC Bio-Region Food System Design Project that will explore the economic, environmental stewardship and food self-reliance of a bio-regional food system	Burnaby, Delta, Langley City, Langley Township, Maple Ridge, Metro Vancouver New Westminster, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Tsawwassen First Nation, Vancouver, White Rock	
Continue to improve water infrastructure/drainage upgrades including activities such as dyke and pump upgrades and maintaining ditch conveyance	Burnaby, Delta, Pitt Meadows, Richmond, Surrey	
Implement Farm Protection Development Permit guidelines	Surrey	
Develop road design criteria for farmland		Surrey
Complete and implement Integrated Stormwater Management Plans to minimize any stormwater increases to farmland	Surrey	New Westminster
Advance the Garden City Lands Legacy Landscape Plan that focuses on detailed design and on-site water management to enable farming activity		Richmond
Investigate farm property tax policies to identify options to encourage actively farmed land and discourage non-farm use of the ALR		Metro Vancouver

1.4 INVEST IN A NEW GENERATION OF FOOD PRODUCERS

A major barrier for new producers in starting a farm business is gaining access to agricultural land and capital. Three Agricultural municipalities identified taking a direct role in encouraging new farms by putting resources into establishing incubator farms and supporting business and skills training.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Support the Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation to host workshops to assist new farmers		Langley Township
Advance the Gardens Agricultural Park Plan for incubator farms and community gardens		Richmond
Advance the Garden City Lands Legacy Landscape Plan through the development of the Agricultural Management Strategy using a "one farm, multiple farmers" approach		Richmond
Create a Virtual Incubator Farm Project Online system to connect potential farmers with agri-related resources	Surrey	
Establish Agri-business Financial Literacy Program to provide accredited ag-business financial training for the John Volken Academy BioPod students	Surrey	
Implement the Colebrook Park Master Plan that aims to create a leasing program for incubator farms on the agricultural land		Surrey
Host the Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Farm School initiative		Tsawwassen First Nation

1.5 EXPAND URBAN COMMERCIAL FOOD PRODUCTION IN URBAN AREAS

Most municipalities support increased commercial food production in urban areas.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Zoning and regulatory updates to further encourage agricultural production and allow urban farming		Burnaby, New Westminster, Vancouver
Secure tenure for Loutet Farm in Loutet Park and support the establishment of a new farm in the Sutherland Schoolyard	North Vancouver City	
Establish the Bio-Pod Initiative which is an Agricultural Training and Research Demonstration Greenhouse		Surrey
Support an Ag-Research Program to develop agri-technology and crop science R&D for the commercial greenhouse industry		Surrey
Support research and development into new food production methods / models		Surrey, Vancouver
Establish a Research and demonstration training facility		Surrey
Create policy to enable commercial food production in the City including a farming business license		Vancouver
Increase the number of urban farms in Vancouver from 17 to 35 by the year 2020 (backyard farms to mid-scale operations)		Vancouver
Facilitate development of Klee Wyck commercial food production facility through business licensing and other in-kind support		West Vancouver

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Local government responses to Goal 1 suggest that although there is significant activity across the region to protect agricultural land and expand commercial agricultural production, some gaps exist that can be addressed by increased collaboration among municipalities and Metro Vancouver, including:

- advocating for provincial and federal funding to support irrigation and drainage infrastructure necessary to maintain and expand food production in the Agricultural Land Reserve, especially in the face of climate change; and
- supporting the ability of new farmers to access land and start a farm business.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Collectively advocate to senior governments for funding programs to expand investments in irrigation and drainage infrastructure necessary to adapt to climate change	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	1-3 years
2. Investigate the feasibility and desirability of a regional land trust to increase access to agricultural land	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	1-3 years
3. Expand municipal involvement in programs that enable new farmers to start a business such as Surrey's Virtual Incubator Farm Project Online system	All local governments	1 - 3 years

GOAL 2

Improve the Financial Viability of the Food Sector

The aim of RFSS Goal 2 is to strengthen economic prosperity for farmers and the food industry by creating opportunities to distribute and sell primary and value-added products to residents and institutions. The five strategies under this goal address facilities for processing and distribution, institutional food procurement policies, direct marketing, a collaborative approach to marketing, as well as a review of government policies and programs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Actions to support the financial viability of the agri-food sector often fall beyond the sphere of local government, yet there is a role to enable the expansion of the local food businesses. This is achieved by considering ways to increase private investment and procurement by public institutions, while also ensuring that existing policies, programs and regulations help foster local food activities. Merro Vancouver has less of a direct role in Goal 2, but can promote the agri-food sector's contribution to the regional economy.

Since the adoption of the RFSS, local governments have undertaken actions such as:

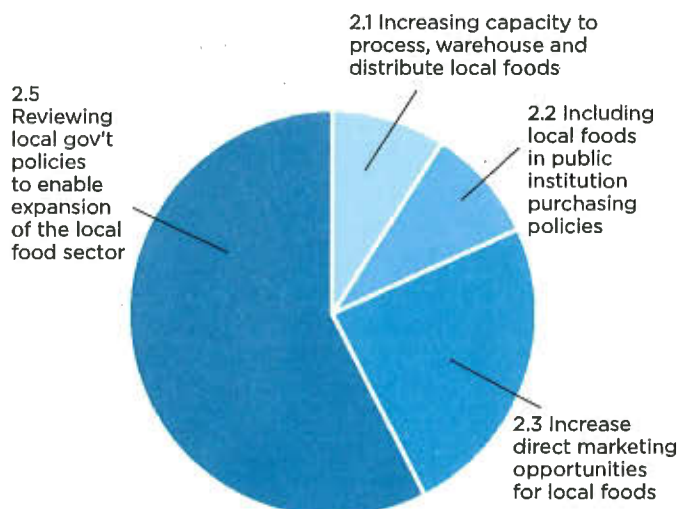
- **reviewing** their procurement policies and investigating ways to include local food in purchasing agreements where appropriate;

- **expanding** efforts to support the direct marketing of local foods by enabling farmers markets through leases on city owned lands, providing access to utilities and municipal services, and improving signage and promotion of farm tours and events; and
- **developing** plans to address food related issues and reviewing regulations, bylaws and policies to remove obstacles and to create a more enabling business environment for local food enterprises.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 33 actions that will be undertaken over the next five years to advance Goal 2 implementation. The most common activities planned are to increase direct marketing opportunities and to review and align government policies and programs. Few local government actions are planned to increase capacity to process and distribute local food or leverage the purchasing policies of public institutions. Creating value chains of collaborative networks among industry stakeholders is not addressed as it is largely outside the scope of local government jurisdiction. The distribution of planned actions by RFSS strategy is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 2: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



* there are no actions currently identified for Strategy 2.4

2.1 INCREASE THE CAPACITY TO PROCESS, WAREHOUSE AND DISTRIBUTE LOCAL FOODS

A few municipalities have identified actions to address the lack of facilities for processing and distributing locally produced food.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Conduct or fund a food hub feasibility study		Langley Township, Richmond, Vancouver
Examine the feasibility of creating farming co-ops and Surrey-based wholesaling		Surrey
Identify opportunities for multi-purpose structures and other infrastructure to be used for farmers markets and other community events		Vancouver

2.2 INCLUDE LOCAL FOODS IN THE PURCHASING POLICIES OF LARGE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

A number of municipalities have adopted a 'buy local' policy to increase the purchasing of local foods by public institutions. However, experience to date suggests there may be challenges to overcome, including the challenge of defining 'local food', and the increase in scope to address nutritious food, sustainability and other considerations as part of the process.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Review purchasing agreements and integrate local food options where appropriate	Burnaby, Pitt Meadows	
Explore opportunities for mobile food business, schools and city facilities to increase local food purchases	Vancouver	
Measure the percentage of local food procured by the city and make recommendations for an appropriate target		Vancouver

2.3 INCREASE DIRECT MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL FOODS

Most municipalities support direct marketing of local foods through farmers' markets, farm tours, tourism, and other education activities within their communities.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Ensure local zoning / regulations align with liquor sale permits at farmers markets		New Westminster, Port Coquitlam
Provide in-kind support or direct incentives for farmers' markets (e.g. space, infrastructure, advertising, discounted leases)	Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, White Rock	
Develop and promote local farm tours and agri-tourism opportunities	Langley Township, Richmond	Burnaby, Surrey
Provide direct and in-kind support to facilitate farm signage on municipal boulevards to inform the public of local farms and food sales	Delta	
Explore local street vending opportunities through an existing pilot program, or by adopting pilot program policy		New Westminster, Richmond
Support alternative food / retail distribution models including Community Supported Agriculture programs and fresh food deliveries to recreation and civic facilities	New Westminster	Surrey, Vancouver
Explore farm gate sales for urban farms		Vancouver
Support day trips to agri-food tourism destinations that encourage the purchase of local food products	White Rock	

2.4 FURTHER DEVELOP VALUE CHAINS WITHIN THE FOOD SECTOR

There is a limited role for local governments in developing connections between food businesses.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
No actions identified by local governments		

2.5 REVIEW GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO ENSURE THEY ENABLE THE EXPANSION OF THE LOCAL FOOD SECTOR

Municipalities across the region are making a concerted effort to review and align policies to be deliberately supportive of businesses producing and distributing local food. Equally important, many municipalities are also developing new environmental, economic and community plans and strategies that incorporate agriculture and food issues, an approach commonly referred to as adding a “food lens”.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Bylaws and regulatory updates:		
Review zoning bylaws to expand support for local food		Anmore, New Westminster, Surrey
Explore regulatory revisions to allow urban agriculture / 'market food gardening' in residential areas		New Westminster
Update regulations to support local craft brewing and distilling		Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody
Amend / promote bylaw changes that support bee keeping in some residential and other zones		Maple Ridge, North Vancouver District, Surrey
Prepare draft Development Permit Application Sustainability Checklist that includes a food sustainability category		New Westminster, North Vancouver City
Review current policies for protecting agricultural lands		North Vancouver District
Amend the Procedure Bylaw to permit staff authority to issue Flood Hazard Lands Development Permits in ALR	Surrey	
Host staff education activities to ensure consistent implementation of agricultural legislation		Surrey
Develop or incorporate food policy into plans:		
Explore developing a community based food strategy		Burnaby, New Westminster
Finalize and approve Environmental Sustainability Strategy which includes a food systems theme		Burnaby
Conduct an Economic Sustainability Strategy that will include promoting Delta's rural character and farmland		Delta
Set short term goals for local food activity in the Urban Agriculture & Food Security Action Plan and revise policies/regulations as needed		North Vancouver City
Provide funds to support development of a business case for integrating local food into municipal plans and policies and develop a food policy		North Vancouver District
Adopt / implement a Food Charter and fund organizations to assist staff to integrate a food lens into municipal policies and processes	North Vancouver City	New Westminster, North Vancouver District
Include policies for new development that encourages on-site green space, community gardens and urban agriculture in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan		Port Moody
Update the Sustainability Charter to guide development and incorporate decisions related to agricultural production and access to food	Surrey	

Prepare the West Clayton and Grandview Neighbourhood Concept Plans to support the protection of agricultural land		Surrey
Update Official Community Plan to include or revise food security and related policies		New Westminster, West Vancouver, White Rock
Apply a 'food systems lens' to planning processes by creating a food system checklist to assist in reviewing development applications, rezoning and/or community plans and a toolkit to help development applicants incorporate food system elements in new developments		Vancouver

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Local government responses to Goal 2 reflect that there is only a minor role in directly supporting value-added processing of primary agricultural products, with the exception of some engagement with implementing provincial regulatory requirements. Other gaps in implementing this goal include:

- Identifying avenues to increase capacity for local food processing/ storage both within the Agricultural Land Reserve and in Urban Centres;
- Increasing effort to share information and lessons learned from existing local food purchasing policies, practices and investigations;
- Increasing effort to explicitly consider impacts on the regional food system when embarking on other local government planning processes (referred to as a *food lens*); and
- Building capacity to take a proactive role in supporting local food availability by advocating to the private sector about the importance of agricultural viability when engaging with businesses on other issues.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Develop policies to expand processing, storage and distribution of local food (e.g. revitalization tax exemptions)	All local governments	1-3 years
2. Share information on the potential opportunities to increase local food purchasing strategies	All local governments	1-3 years
3. Profile and incorporate agri-food business ventures into regional and municipal economic development plans	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	3-5 years
4. Convene bulk food purchasers to explore how to increase local food purchasing	Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments	1-3 years

GOAL 3

People Make Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices

RFSS Goal 3 aims to help citizens build knowledge and skills around local food, healthy eating and the connection to sustainability. Four strategies address supporting healthy food choices, promoting local food, education and celebrating our international cuisines. A key dimension lies in increasing awareness of the opportunities to promote the local food.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Local government has a role in raising awareness about local, nutritious food and why it is important to communities. This role is often delivered through public education and partnerships with civil society groups and health authorities. Municipalities are connecting residents to fresh, locally grown products through, outreach, tourism and other community events. They also facilitate skills development opportunities for residents and for vulnerable populations through social service providers. Metro Vancouver has developed avenues to engage students and youth through curriculum development, fostering experiential learning, and teacher training.

Since the adoption of the RFSS, local governments have undertaken actions such as:

- **ongoing** outreach and educational activities within their communities including hosting annual events;

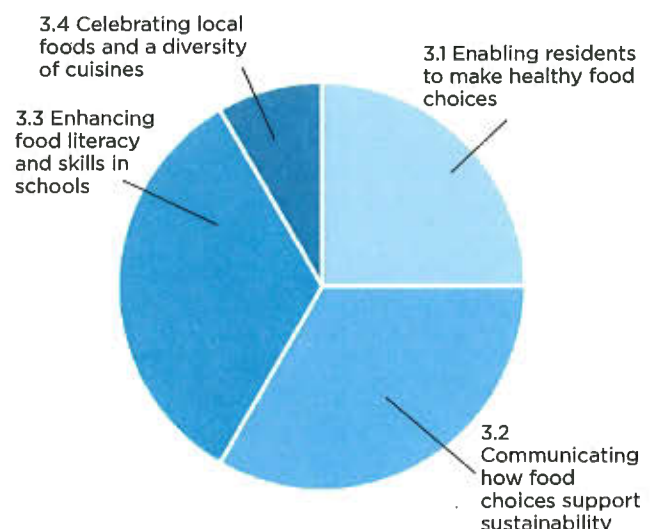
- **initiating** a program to increase student capacity to manage and expand teaching gardens, and supporting agricultural-related content and programming at the local museum; and
- **developing** new curriculum resources to support K-12 teachers and students on integrating 'food systems' thinking into the classroom.

Goal 3 reflects the supportive role local governments often play in funding or supporting non-governmental organizations, community groups, and educational institutions to increase knowledge, build capacity and make the community connections. Health agencies and civil society groups often take the lead on work in this realm. There may be opportunities for collaboration with health agencies to minimize overlap with local government efforts.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 24 actions that will be undertaken over the next five years to advance implementation of Goal 3. The majority of these actions are ongoing. The strategy receiving the most attention for local governments is the celebration of local food, followed by planned actions related to education. The distribution of actions among the four RFSS strategies is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 3: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



3.1 ENABLE RESIDENTS TO MAKE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

Some local governments are educating the public about healthy eating, but for the most part, social service providers and health authorities take on this role, sometimes in partnership with local governments.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Support the Golden Ears Feast that provides cooking education programs for parents of low income families and host an Educational Speakers Series	Maple Ridge	
Continue involvement in Table Matters that provides education, public engagement and community development	North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District	
Support the Tasty Connections Program and cooking classes that helps individuals prepare a diversity of nutritious meals	White Rock	
Develop partnerships with community groups and health authorities to deliver outreach and workshops on healthy eating and growing food	Burnaby, Metro Vancouver, New Westminster, North Vancouver District, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver	
Provide workshops teaching people to grow their own food, reduce their waste and support their local wild edible ecology	Coquitlam, Langley Township, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District,	
Develop an implementation strategy that supports the Blue Dot movement, which includes the right to eat nutritious food		New Westminster, Surrey

3.2 COMMUNICATE HOW FOOD CHOICES SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

Providing information about locally produced food is the most common local government practice to increase awareness about food choices and sustainability.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 years
Implement a communications strategy that explains the connection between sustainability and nourishment, as part of Environmental Sustainability Strategy		Burnaby
Help fund signage on farmland that identifies the crops being produced in the fields	Delta	Surrey
Promote local agriculture on the municipal website with information on local food event and markets	Delta, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver	
Promote the 'True North Fraser' local food brand and agricultural experience	Maple Ridge	
Promote local farm tourism through Circle Farms Tours, a self-guided tour of local farms and food producers	Langley Township	
Prepare Surrey version of the Farm Fresh guide that highlights organic, u-pick and crop information on Surrey farms and support the Food for Thought Program that showcases farm and food producer information	Surrey	
Increase access to multi-lingual food resources, groups and information materials	New Westminster	Vancouver
Develop "School District #40 Healthy School Vision" with one of the pillars being food programs and supports	New Westminster	

3.3 ENHANCE FOOD LITERACY AND SKILLS IN SCHOOLS

There is a strong response to student and youth education from local governments.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
In kind-support to promote the Youth Connection School Learning Gardens Project to increase capacity of students to manage and expand school learning gardens at all 8 secondary schools	Burnaby	
Host and support education programs, including the Barn Kids Program that includes children in gardening and cooking food produced at Hawthorne Grove/Harris Barn	Delta	
Support the Neighbourhood Champions program "More peas please" that teaches children how to grow food	Maple Ridge	
Develop the Green Ambassadors program for high school students to apply what they learn at City events	Richmond	
Host the Stewart Farm Day Camp where children can experience what it's like to be a farmer, "Farmhand Fever"	Surrey	
Update and develop new K-12 resources to support teachers and students to become "Food Systems Thinkers and Leaders"	Metro Vancouver	
Collaborate with K-12 schools and partners to increase food literacy of students and/or parents	Metro Vancouver, New Westminster	
Integrate Food Systems Thinking literacy into Metro Vancouver School & Youth Leadership Programs - in support of actions for sustainable schools	Metro Vancouver	

3.4 CELEBRATE THE TASTE OF LOCAL FOODS AND THE DIVERSITY OF CUISINES

Municipalities plan to continue to host food and agriculture related festivals and events and provide funding to civil society groups to support awareness and community events.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Award agricultural awareness grants to non-profit organizations across the region	Metro Vancouver	
Host or partner on food related events and educational activities that celebrates food:		
Multiple Festivals (including funding)	Burnaby	
Harvest Fall Festival	Delta	
Seedy Saturday	Delta	
Aldergrove Festival Days	Langley Township	
Country Celebration in Campbell Valley Regional Park	Langley Township	
Fort Langley Cranberry Festival	Langley Township	
Country Fest and 4H clubs	Maple Ridge	
Golden Harvest event	Maple Ridge	
Front Yard Food Garden Contest	Maple Ridge	

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Heritage Apple Festival at Derby Reach Regional Park	Metro Vancouver	
Feast of the Fraser	New Westminster	
StrEAT Festival	New Westminster	
Queensborough Urban Fall Fair	New Westminster	
Family Fusion Dinner	New Westminster	
Day of the Honey Bee	North Vancouver City	
Shipyards Friday Night Market	North Vancouver City	
Fingerling Festival	Port Moody	
Chefs to Field	Richmond	
Garlic Festival	Richmond	
Cloverdale Rodeo	Surrey	
Surrey Ag-Info Week	Surrey	
Party for the Planet on Earth Day	Surrey	
Olde Harvest Festival at Stewart Farm	Surrey	
Harvest Fall Festival	Surrey	
Surrey Salmon Run	Surrey	
Taste White Rock	White Rock	

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Local government responses to Goal 3 indicate that there are opportunities to more effectively:

- communicate the connection between food choices and sustainability; and
- coordinate consistent messaging and activities about the importance of local food to sustainability.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Develop a communication strategy with common messaging for local governments to educate residents about the connection between farmland, food security, climate change and sustainability	Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments	1-3 years
2. Collaborate with non-profit organizations, build on existing multi-lingual initiatives to develop and distribute information on sustainable and local food programs to new immigrants	Surrey to share resources with other local governments	1-3 years

GOAL 4

Everyone Has Access to
Healthy, Culturally Diverse
& Affordable Food

The aim of RFSS Goal 4 is to address some of the challenges of food insecurity, given that some residents do not have reliable access to sufficient quantities of nutritious, culturally appropriate food. Barriers to food access can be rooted in physical, social or economic inequities; with ongoing growth pressures and future impacts from climate change, access to food may become more challenging, and not just for vulnerable populations. This goal encompasses some of the broader dimensions of an equitable food system, including working to increase the availability of healthy and nutritious food, as well as access to this food for all residents. It also addresses some of the indirect social benefits (e.g. health, place-making, education, community-building) that accompany the more direct economic and nutrition dividends of urban agriculture. The three strategies target access for those most vulnerable to food insecurity, urban agriculture and the necessity to recover nutritious food.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Local governments are taking a strong leadership role in ensuring equitable access to nutritious food by delivering programs, financing assets, and supporting outreach to vulnerable populations. Much has been achieved by working closely with community organizations, funding initiatives and by helping these groups navigate regulatory processes. Of all the RFSS goals, Goal 4 has the strongest local government response in terms of planned actions.

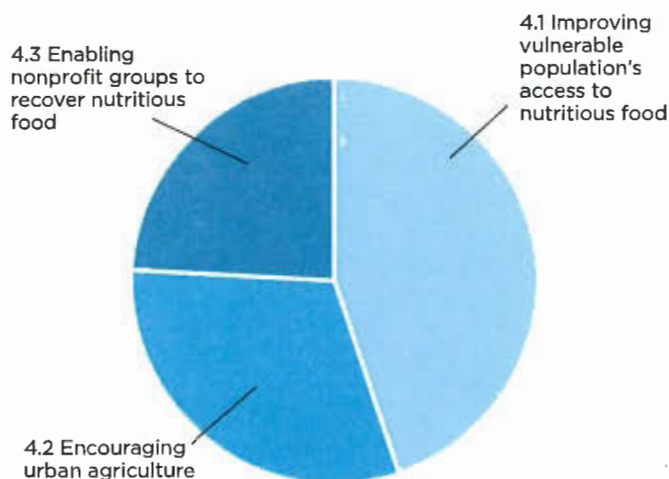
Examples of actions completed since the adoption of the RFSS include:

- **initiating** pilot projects to allow residential bee keeping (apiculture) and urban chickens in selected areas and under specific circumstances;
- **completing** research on how to improve food security in social housing sites;
- **supporting** programs to facilitate food access for vulnerable populations; and
- **creating** community gardens for residents, with plans for continuing to add new gardens.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 29 planned actions to be undertaken over the next five years to advance Goal 4 implementation. Although the majority of these actions focus on urban agriculture, more than a third seek to improve vulnerable populations' access to food. The distribution of actions by RFSS strategy is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 4: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



4.1 IMPROVE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD AMONG VULNERABLE GROUPS

Many municipalities have existing programs or partnerships with community associations to provide food access to vulnerable populations, by helping overcome physical (e.g. location), socio-cultural (e.g. culturally appropriate or acceptable food) or economic (e.g. financial capacity) barriers.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Support hosting of the bi-annual Empty Bowls Fundraising Gala to raise money for food programs	Burnaby	
Support education, skill building and cooking activities for people most vulnerable to food insecurity	Burnaby, Langley Township, New Westminster, Richmond	Surrey
Offer discounted nutritious meals for seniors, immigrant or refugee families	Burnaby, Langley City, Langley Township, New Westminster, Richmond, Surrey, White Rock	
Provide grants to social service agencies to help increase the nutritional quality of meals served	Burnaby, Langley Township, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Port Coquitlam, Richmond, Surrey	
Investigate options for increasing access to nutritious food through mobile produce stands or food hubs with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society		Burnaby, New Westminster
Support trips to local farms for refugee families to enable direct access to fresh, local food and compile information on low cost sources of food	Surrey	
Improve access to information on participating in community gardens for under-represented ethno-cultural groups	Vancouver	
Analyze current opportunities and challenges facing community kitchens and compile an inventory of under-utilized kitchens		Vancouver
Increase the number of community food markets in Vancouver from 4 to 15 by 2020		Vancouver
Offer grocery shopping support programs for seniors and persons with disabilities	Burnaby, New Westminster	
Encourage integration of community food markets into community and non-profit organization's programming as part of nutritious food options for youth and families	Vancouver	
Update Community Poverty Reduction Strategy to include policies related to poverty reduction and food security		New Westminster
Develop an interactive asset map in the most commonly spoken languages, which includes information on food security and meal programs		New Westminster

4.2 ENCOURAGE URBAN AGRICULTURE

Urban agriculture is being pursued by municipalities across the region. While a substantial amount of municipal effort goes toward improving the availability of community gardens for residents, or adding new gardens, there is a wide array of other activities planned to encourage urban agriculture and connect residents with the social benefits of local food.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Encourage, via in-kind support, backyard sharing programs that match homeowners with residents looking for gardening space	Burnaby, North Vancouver City	New Westminster
Continue outreach and launch pilot projects to test the feasibility of permitting new types of urban agriculture (e.g. bee keeping, backyard chickens, container gardening, fruit bearing trees on public land)	Port Moody, Vancouver	New Westminster, Surrey
Review development applications for opportunities to incorporate urban agriculture activities	Burnaby, New Westminster, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Port Moody, Vancouver	
Host annual programs celebrating gardening and urban agriculture	Delta, Maple Ridge	
Establish a new Langley Urban Agriculture Demonstration Project		Langley City
Support the Maple Ridge Garden Club	Maple Ridge	
Community gardens:		
• Review and improve the approval process for community gardens		New Westminster, Surrey
• Fund, support or maintain residents' access to community gardens	All local governments	
• Establish new community gardens, and in some circumstances with an intent to improve physical access (e.g. through universal design)		New Westminster, North Vancouver District, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, West Vancouver

4.3 ENABLE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO RECOVER NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Food recovery efforts are being led by urban municipalities and Metro Vancouver, although much of the future work requires better coordination among all levels of government, health agencies and civil society groups.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Continue to support the "Food Runners" pilot project at two selected sites, and investigate opportunities for pilot project expansion	Burnaby	
Fund the "Scaling Up Food Rescue Project" that encourages partnerships between potential donors and recipients (social agencies)		North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District
Explore pilot food recovery programs and initiatives to channel surplus nutritious food to people		New Westminster, Vancouver
Participate in promotion of food recovery guidelines with the BC Centre for Disease Control		Metro Vancouver
Explore tax incentives to support food recovery		Metro Vancouver
Educate the public on how to reduce unnecessary discards of edible food		Metro Vancouver
Form partnership with the Local Health Authority, School District, Tsleil-Waututh Nation and community groups to explore ways to feed hungry children at school with recovered food donated by food retailers		North Vancouver District

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

While there is some activity underway across the region, specific aspects of food insecurity require further attention from local governments. Gaps in implementing this goal include:

- a lack of coordination among all levels of government, the private sector and civil society groups to respond to poverty and increasing numbers of residents that are reliant on food banks and social services for nutritious food; and
- actions in response to opportunities for the recovery of nutritious and edible food.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps identified are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Promote the Food Donation Guidelines (developed by BC Centre for Disease Control and other partners), for instance, to food distribution and food service sectors through municipal and regional business correspondence and events	All local governments	1-3 years
2. Draw from Surrey's experience to create and share information on culturally relevant local food availability for refugee and new immigrants	All local governments	1-3 years
3. Draw from Vancouver's study on community kitchens to identify opportunities and challenges for expanding food preparation and processing in under-utilized kitchens	All local governments	1-3 years

GOAL 5

A Food System Consistent with Ecological Health

RFSS Goal 5 focuses on actions that contribute to sustaining our natural systems and resources and encouraging better land stewardship. The four strategies in this goal address ecosystem goods and services, food and packaging waste, best management practices and adaptation to climate change. A systems approach ensures environmental impacts are minimized across all functions of the regional food system from production to distribution, consumption and waste management.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Local governments are responding to this goal through programs and projects aimed at protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat, pollination, and soil quality, while concurrently reducing impacts from waste, pesticides, and water and air contaminants. Unlike other goals, most actions are being undertaken directly by local governments with less involvement of community organizations and other groups. Municipalities are vigilant in protecting ecological assets and the Agricultural municipalities have shown leadership by promoting best management practices on agricultural land. Metro Vancouver has a leadership role in addressing food waste across the region.

Since the adoption of the RFSS, local governments have undertaken actions such as:

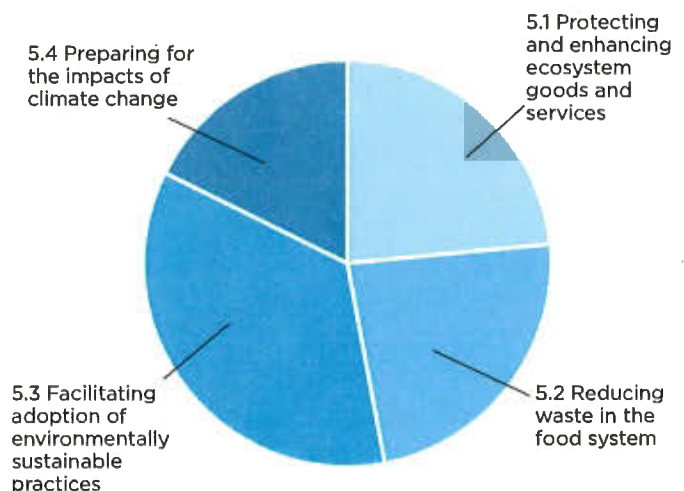
- **supporting** pollinator species by encouraging habitat enhancement projects;

- **developing** Integrated Stormwater Management Plans to manage water flowing from urban areas and the impact on aquatic and terrestrial species, vegetation manage, and groundwater recharge;
- **educating** residents and businesses about the disposal ban on food wastes through media campaigns and advising on ways reduce organics and food waste as part of the regional Organic Waste Ban;
- **launching** initiatives in support of Best Management Practices for stream crossings, and land management for horse and small-lot owners; and
- **developing** climate change adaptation strategies that considers impacts on local food production.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 34 planned actions to be undertaken over the next five years to advance implementation of Goal 5. Half of the actions are evenly split among protecting ecosystems and reducing waste, and approximately a third of all actions are focused on minimizing the environmental impacts of development and business activities. The distribution of actions by RFSS strategy is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 5: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



5.1 PROTECT AND ENHANCE ECOSYSTEM GOODS AND SERVICES

Local governments continue to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, undertake flood protection, and support pollination and other ecological services.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Continue significant dyke upgrades by maintaining flood protection through pump stations, flood boxes, river and shoreline dykes	Burnaby, New Westminster	
New policies, plans and programs to protect eco-system health including investigating avenues for connecting existing high value habitat areas with habitat corridors		Burnaby, New Westminster
Support the Day at the Farm event hosted by the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust, an organization that promotes the protection of migratory bird habitat through soil conservation and farm practices	Delta	
Implement a pilot Ecological Services Initiative for three years		Langley Township
Create and enhance pollinator habitat through research, new policies and on-the ground projects		Metro Vancouver, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Richmond, Surrey
Implement the Winter Crop Cover Program as part of the snow geese management program	Richmond	
Engage agriculture representatives in the Biodiversity Farm Trust regarding dykes and waterways		Surrey
Adopt an Urban Forest Management Strategy with a focus on food systems		New Westminster

5.2 REDUCE WASTE IN THE FOOD SYSTEM

As waste management is part of Metro Vancouver's mandate, the regional district has a leading role in directing research, education and awareness on food waste, as well as developing initiatives to support municipal efforts in reducing organic waste and food packaging in their communities.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Develop a position statement on residential & commercial garburators including commercial digesters and macerators		Metro Vancouver
Develop a new bylaw for fermentation operations (grains/fruits, breweries, wineries and distilleries) discharging to the sewer system		Metro Vancouver
Promote the use of available commercial programs, to enable restaurants to measure, and then reduce food waste by improving food purchasing, storage and preparation methods		Metro Vancouver
Develop outreach programs for residential and commercial operations to keep grease out of the sewer		Metro Vancouver
Participate in the National Zero Waste Council's food working group in revising food labelling (best before/use buy/sell by dates)		Metro Vancouver
Implement a 3-year "Love Food Hate Waste" campaign to help residents reduce food waste through menu planning, buying local and seasonal foods		Metro Vancouver
Provide equipment and/or programming support for residents and schools to support organics collection and composting	Langley Township, New Westminster, North Vancouver District	
Support community composting education programs PLN - 203	Langley Township, New Westminster	

5.3 FACILITATE ADOPTION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Local governments are integrating best management practices into their plans and policies and are educating the public on ways to reduce water consumption, and air and other contaminants in the environment.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Minimize environmental impacts from pesticides through Integrated Pest Management educational programs	Burnaby, Richmond	Surrey, Metro Vancouver
Provide workshops for residents on natural pest control and composting	Burnaby, Delta, Langley Township, Richmond	
Develop a Stream Crossing Guide and promote a Land Management Guide for agricultural landowners demonstrating best management practices		Langley Township
Promote Environmental Farm Plan Workshops organized by community associations to increase awareness of the Environmental Farm Plan program	Langley Township	
Identify opportunities through community energy planning to address transportation emissions from imported food		North Vancouver District
Explore parks programming around native plant foraging for edible and medicinal plants		North Vancouver District
Identify opportunities for recycling greywater and reducing water use for parks, gardens and farms	North Vancouver District	Pitt Meadows
Promote the Council resolution to ban genetically modified crops	Richmond	
Promote the Seed Sale and Exchange to increase plantings of heritage vegetable, flower and herb seeds, fruit trees and nursery plants	Surrey	
Create healthy soil guidelines for urban farms		Vancouver
Determine whether to exempt pest management from the proposed outdoor burning regulation		Metro Vancouver
Conduct outreach to small & medium size enterprises to reduce energy and GHG emissions from food processors, wholesalers, and retailers		Metro Vancouver

5.4 PREPARE FOR THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Agriculture is at the forefront of experiencing impacts from climate change and therefore there are many direct actions to better understand and mitigate the risks to the region's food producing lands and the agricultural sector.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Develop climate change adaptation strategies for the agricultural community, share results of an agro-economic flood study, support a flood preparedness toolkit and research into drainage and salinity implications for soil-based farms		Delta
Complete an agricultural communication strategy that will raise awareness of the changing climate and local food production		Delta
Include urban agriculture considerations as part of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy		New Westminster, North Vancouver District
Refurbish old pump stations to increase capacity, improve the electrical system, and adding new pump stations		Pitt Meadows
Plan to accommodate up to 1metre of sea level rise by 2100	Richmond	
Continue to implement the Serpentine and Nicomekl Lowland Flood Control Strategy	Surrey	

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Local government responses to Goal 5 reveal that the region is starting to formally recognize the ecological services that agricultural lands provide, in addition to the ecological benefits derived from the natural environment. Gaps identified in responding to Goal 5 include:

- recognition of the range of benefits provided by ecological goods and services (such as water, purification, climate regulation and nutrient cycling); and
- awareness and actions to prepare for the impacts of climate change on local food production and ecosystem services in urban environments.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Collaborate with provincial agencies to prepare a regional agriculture climate adaptation strategy for the Metro Vancouver region	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	3-5 years

IMPLEMENTATION

EMERGING ISSUES IN THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM

The planned actions identified by local governments demonstrate how each of the RFSS goals is being addressed and where further action is warranted. However, in developing the Action Plan, new food system issues emerged that, although not part of the RFSS, are becoming increasingly important for local governments.

1. Food access in emergency planning

Local government is responding to legislative requirements to undertake emergency management planning. These efforts help address and mitigate some of the risks associated with natural disasters or the impacts of climate change. In many cases, emergency plans lack process and protocols to address food related issues such as the availability of food in an emergency and food safety risks. This disconnect appears to be more pronounced in non-agricultural municipalities, although agricultural municipalities also have an opportunity to broaden the focus of emergency planning to more explicitly consider food insecurity implications (e.g. access to food, transportation and supply chain disruptions, etc.) in emergency plans and procedures.

New Action	Agency	Timeline
1. Identify how food security and emergency food issues are being addressed in each local government's emergency management plans and processes	All local governments	1-3 years

2. Recognizing the linkages among poverty, health and food

The RFSS recognizes some aspects of food insecurity by focusing on improved access to food for vulnerable populations, and on supporting community groups to recover nutritious food. Since RFSS adoption in 2011, and with input from health authorities and municipal social planners, a better understanding of food insecurity has emerged. In recognition of the key role that income plays on food insecurity and health outcomes, there is a need to build understanding of, and advocate for, more supportive policies to address the interconnection of social planning and food system planning throughout the region.

New Action	Agency	Timeline
2. Recommend policies and programs to address health outcomes of poverty and food insecurity to senior governments	All local governments	1-3 years

3. Food safety and training

The RFSS discusses the importance of food safety, and although it acknowledges the value of further investment in skills and competency in this area, it does not identify actions to address the issue. Improved knowledge of food safety among participants is critical to ensuring consumer assurance that local foods -whether from community initiatives or commercial producers- are safe. While provincial and federal agencies generally maintain responsibility for food safety, local governments have an opportunity to work with stakeholders to ensure appropriate food safety considerations underpin the ongoing growth of community and commercial food production.

New Action	Agency	Timeline
3. Work with Health Authorities, industry and appropriate agencies to ensure food safety is considered in commercial and community food production.	All local governments	1-3 years

FACILITATING ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Action Plan is intended to be a resource for local governments to work more effectively on regional food system issues by: offering a consolidation of 160 planned local government actions to advance a sustainable and resilient regional food system; and identifying 18 new collaborative actions for local governments to leverage partnerships and resources across the region.

As such, the Action Plan provides information and best practices for local governments as a means of information sharing and collaborative learning across municipal boundaries. The Action Plan takes a broad view of the food system, from growing food all the way through managing food waste, and it is intended to complement and strengthen other local government agricultural programs and plans. Although the Action Plan is focused on local governments, other food system stakeholders may find it a useful resource for identifying initiatives being advanced in different parts of the region and to take advantage of lessons learned.

Challenges can be magnified when coordinating actions among multiple jurisdictions. Implementation will require ongoing commitment by all local governments, and in particular will rely on:

- **Dedicated resources** – Local governments have varying levels of engagement with the regional food system. To build capacity to better address food sector challenges, local governments need to ensure resources are dedicated to carrying out the planned actions within their jurisdictions, and consider how to best enable staff to participate in relevant collaborative actions.
- **A forum for collaboration** – Participants in the Action Plan process expressed a strong interest in convening a forum for staff from across the region to continue to meet, discuss challenges, share lessons learned, and undertake the new collaborative actions identified in the Action Plan.
- **Flexibility** – To ensure ongoing relevance, the Action Plan needs to remain flexible and adaptable to accommodate new actions as opportunities arise.
- **Shared resources** – The activity undertaken by local governments in the region represents a large community of practice, and also presents the potential for local governments to share best practices and find further opportunities to pool resources to jointly address shared issues or joint initiatives.
- **Working with partners** – Building local government capacity to develop effective partnerships and to work more effectively with civil society groups will directly support the successful implementation of the Action Plan.

As a result, participants in the development of the Action Plan noted the need for two additional actions to address both resourcing and capacity building:

- Assign staff to address food system issues.
- Build capacity to work with civil society.

1. ASSIGN STAFF TO ADDRESS FOOD SYSTEMS ISSUES

To ensure the Action Plan advances in alignment with the above noted needs, and to pursue the most efficient approach to the actions identified in the plan, **the strongest mechanism for implementation is for each local government to assign a staff person for food system issues to coordinate local government participation in advancing the Action Plan.**

New Action	Agency	Timeline
1. Assign a staff member to advance local government efforts on food system issues and to participate in semi-annual working group meetings	All local governments	1-3 years

Participants in the development of the Action Plan voiced strong support for establishing a collaborative working group. Although participation would be voluntary, the working group would be intended to meet semi-annually to:

- foster a network of municipal and regional representatives engaged in food and agricultural issues;
- facilitate knowledge transfer, and share successes/challenges, best practices and resources;
- identify opportunities to advance collaborative and new planned actions;
- create a forum to engage with civil society groups, industry and other stakeholders; and,
- review Action Plan progress.

The working group would meet to monitor progress and help coordinate efforts to ensure an effective approach to the new collaborative actions described in the Action Plan. Members of the working group would also adjust meeting frequency to best meet interests and capacity.

2. BUILD CAPACITY TO WORK WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

The RFSS acknowledges the valuable role of civil society groups in addressing food system issues, and local government representatives have acknowledged they are not always well equipped to leverage the efforts and expertise of these groups and to work effectively in partnership with them. Work is already underway to help civil society groups better understand and be able to navigate local government programs and processes. However, **although linkages between local governments and civil society groups are strong, there is still room, and need for improvement.**

New Action	Agency	Timeline
2. Strengthen the linkages and understanding between local governments and civil society groups in relation to advancing food system issues	All local governments	1-3 years

Participants in the development of the Action Plan recognized the value of enhancing the effectiveness of local government relationships with civil society groups. Examples of specific actions to advance this broader objective include:

- convene a forum for local governments to explore how to build capacity to strategically support the work of civil society groups;
- local governments to share best practices for fostering working relationships with civil society groups; and,
- support civil society groups in learning about local government processes and policies.

SUMMARY OF NEW COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Member municipalities and the region are implementing their own planned actions. The proposed working group would provide assistance in this regard (for instance, through sharing of best practices or experiences addressing similar issues in their respective communities), but the primary role of the working group would be to advance the new collaborative actions identified in the Action Plan. The 18 new collaborative actions are summarized below.

New Collaborative Actions	Agency	Timeline
Goal 1		
1. Collectively advocate to senior governments for funding programs to expand investments in irrigation and drainage infrastructure necessary to adapt to climate change	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	1-3 years
2. Investigate the feasibility and desirability of a regional land trust to increase access to agricultural land	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	1-3 years
3. Expand municipal involvement in programs that enable new farmers to start a business such as Surrey's Virtual Incubator Farm Project Online system	All local governments	1-3 years
Goal 2		
4. Develop policies to expand processing, storage and distribution of local food (e.g. revitalization tax exemptions)	All local governments	1-3 years
5. Share information on the potential opportunities to increase local food purchasing strategies	All local governments	1-3 years
6. Profile and incorporate agri-food business ventures into regional and municipal economic development plans	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	3-5 years
7. Convene bulk food purchasers to explore how to increase local food purchasing	Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments	1-3 years
Goal 3		
8. Develop a communication strategy with common messaging for local governments to educate residents about the connection between farmland, food security, climate change and sustainability	Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments	1-3 years
9. Collaborate with non-profit organizations, build on existing multi-lingual initiatives to develop and distribute information on sustainable and local food programs to new immigrants	Surrey to share resources with other local governments	1-3 years

New Collaborative Actions	Agency	Timeline
Goal 4		
10. Promote the Food Donation Guidelines (developed by BC Centre for Disease Control and other partners) to food distribution and food service sectors through municipal and regional business correspondence and events	All local governments	1-3 years
11. Draw from Surrey's experience to create and share information on culturally relevant local food availability for refugee and new immigrants	All local governments	1-3 years
12. Draw from Vancouver's study on community kitchens to identify opportunities and challenges for expanding food preparation and processing in under-utilized kitchens	All local governments	1-3 years
Goal 5		
13. Collaborate with provincial agencies to prepare a regional agriculture climate adaptation strategy for the Metro Vancouver region	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	3-5 years
Emerging Issues		
14. Work with Health Authorities, industry and appropriate agencies to ensure food safety is considered in commercial and community food production	All local governments	1-3 years
15. Identify how food security and emergency food issues are being addressed in each local government's emergency management plans and processes	All local governments	1-3 years
16. Recommend policies and programs to address health outcomes of poverty and food insecurity to senior governments	All local governments	1-3 years
Facilitating Implementation		
17. Assign a staff member to advance local government food system issues and to participate in semi-annual working group meetings	All local governments	1-3 years
18. Strengthen the linkages and understanding between local governments and civil society groups in relation to advancing food system issues	All local governments	1-3 years

Review of progress on the Action Plan will be an iterative and ongoing process. The Action Plan is intended as a “living resource” that is flexible and adaptable. It will be updated as local governments complete actions, or choose to submit new planned actions. This approach supports annual reporting of progress updates to respective regional and municipal decision-makers, and ensures local governments have the capacity to contribute to the ongoing implementation in a manner that best reflects their interests and capacity.

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN 2016

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Revitalizing the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Agricultural Land Commission

Interim Committee Report to the
Minister of Agriculture

Prepared by
B.C. Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee for
Revitalizing the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Agricultural Land Commission

July 31, 2018

Acknowledgements

The Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee for Revitalizing the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Agricultural Land Commission (the Committee) includes the following members:

- Vicki Huntington (Chair);
- Irmi Critcher;
- Arzeena Hamir;
- Chris Kloot;
- Chief Byron Louis;
- Lenore Newman;
- Shaundehl Runka; and
- Brian Underhill.

Ministry of Agriculture staff serves as the Committee's Secretariat: Martha Anslow and Britney Irvine. Agricultural Land Commission staff serves as advisors to the Committee: Kim Grout, Liz Sarioglu and Lindsay McCoubrey. The Committee is grateful for the high value these staffs bring to the Committee's work.

The Committee wishes to thank the many individuals and organizations, too numerous to name, who provided input, expert advice and support in the development of the Committee's Interim Report. The report could not have been completed without their significant contribution, and the Committee wishes to express its gratitude.

The Committee would like to especially recognize the efforts of the current ALC Chair and former Chair of the Committee, Jennifer Dyson, whose dedication and vision set the path for much of the Committee's work.

Finally, the Committee wishes to thank the Honourable Lana Popham, BC Minister of Agriculture, for the opportunity to lead this important initiative and to be able to bring forward this Interim Committee Report.

Executive Summary

On January 4, 2018, the Honourable Lana Popham, B.C. Minister of Agriculture, appointed an independent Advisory Committee (hereafter “the Committee”; see Appendix A Terms of Reference) to lead stakeholder and public engagement and to deliver to the Province interim and final recommendations for legislative, regulatory and/or administrative changes that would revitalize the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) now and for the future benefit of all British Columbians.

This interim report has been prepared to support the development of a bill for legislative change needed to address province-wide risks to the ALR and the work of the ALC. Additional recommendations will be made as part of the Committee’s final report later this fall.

This report focuses on three sets of recommendations for immediate action:

- Changes to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* to address key impediments to a strong ALR and ALC;
- Provincial actions to ensure that the federal legalization of cannabis does not have an irrevocable impact on the value and integrity of the ALR; and
- Development of a strategy for the Northeast to promote responsible resource extraction while protecting the ALR and providing support for a strong farming sector.

In developing this report, the Committee considered the results of its nine community stakeholder meetings and other public engagement, including a survey of more than 2,300 online respondents, over 275 written submissions, and numerous expert presentations and reports.

This input led to the Committee’s identification of two critical concerns they considered core to the development of recommendations to strengthen and revitalize the ALR:

The urgent need for province-wide shift to an ‘agriculture-first’ focus in the ALR

- The Committee’s interim recommendations reflect the pressing need for strong provincial leadership and a government wide shift to an ‘agriculture-first’ policy approach to all government actions and decision-making in the ALR. It is the Committee’s considered opinion that unless the provincial government raises the profile of agriculture across all provincial ministries/agencies, the erosion of the ALR and the decline of British Columbia’s (B.C.’s) agricultural industry is a certainty.

The urgent need to curb speculation in the ALR

- As urban land prices increase and population grows, the pressure to develop agricultural land continues to build and prime agricultural land is being taken out of production by investors and speculators or converted to support non-farm uses.
- The Committee believes speculation on agricultural land must be curtailed if the long term viability of agriculture in B.C. is to be realized.

The recommendations contained in this report are organized into three parts:

Part I: Recommendations for Immediate Legislative and Regulatory Change

The need for immediate legislative and regulatory change is focused on four targeted areas:

- i. Protecting the ALR land base into the future;
- ii. Preserving the productive capacity of the ALR;
- iii. Improving governance of the ALR; and
- iv. Supporting farmers and ranchers in the ALR.

Part II: Recommendations for Immediate Action to Protect the ALR

Mitigating the impacts of oil and gas activity in the ALR:

The Committee is recommending the immediate establishment of a Deputy Minister level taskforce with internal and external agriculture partners and stakeholders from the natural resource sector. The Committee recommends that the taskforce be directed to develop a strategy to address the significant resource extraction issues impacting the ALR and its farmers and ranchers in B.C.'s Peace River region.

The development of the important and expanding provincial oil and gas resources in the North has exceeded the capacity of the current regulatory environment to protect farmland. The Committee believes there is a policy imbalance so acute that the productive agricultural land base of the area is threatened.

Restricting cannabis production in the ALR:¹

The Committee has significant concerns about the future regulation and production of cannabis in the ALR and is recommending actions be taken to better protect the ALR. The Committee did not seek specific comments from stakeholders and the public on cannabis; however the issue was a common and urgent concern heard throughout the engagement process. The Committee notes that the Minister of Agriculture recused herself from provincial cannabis-related decisions but was committed to bringing this key ALR-related concern to the Province's attention.

Part III: Key Issues Under Consideration for Final Report

As stated earlier, this report summarizes interim findings only and the Committee continues to examine issues that are important to stakeholders. This report should not be considered a complete list of recommendations put forward by the Committee, especially given the Committee has not yet had the opportunity to review the Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation. As such, Part III presents other issues that are still to be considered for the final report.

¹ Although the Minister of Agriculture recused herself from cannabis-related decisions, the Committee has made recommendations on cannabis production in the ALR for forwarding to the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, who has assumed the Minister's role in cannabis-related decisions.

Some of the issues that the Committee continues to examine fall into themes that are interconnected with the recommendations set out in Parts I and II of this report. These recommendations are viewed also as potential policy actions that will support and complement the purposes of the ALR and work of the ALC. These include:

- Regulatory changes needed to preserve the productive capacity of the ALR;
- The encouragement of farming and ranching in the ALR; and
- Administrative and program changes.

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Interim Report

Introduction

The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) were put in place in the early 1970's to preserve the limited agricultural land resource in British Columbia (B.C.) at a time when urban development was starting to have a serious negative impact. The legislation is unique and viewed around the world as visionary.

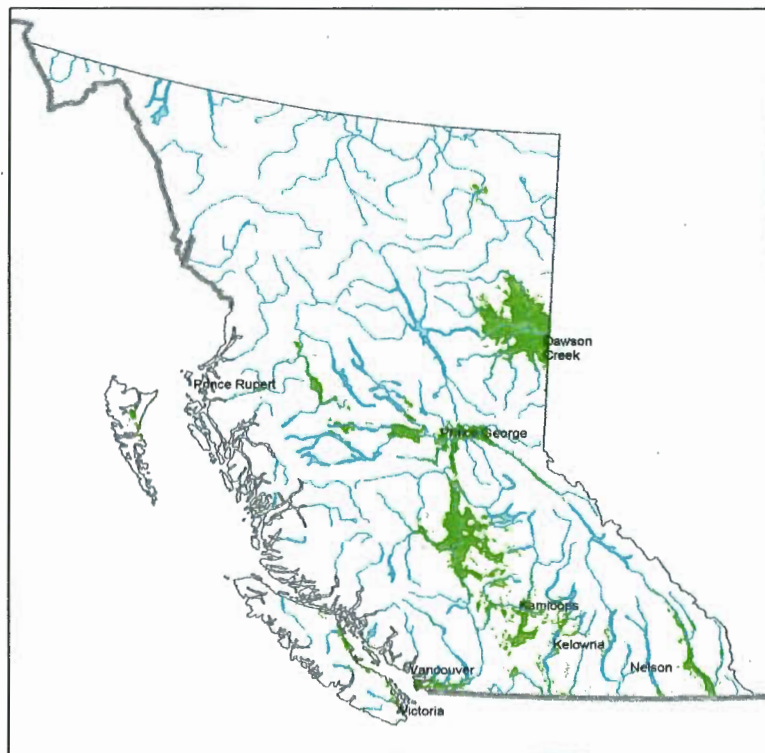
The ALR is a provincial zone in which agriculture is recognized as the priority use, farming is encouraged and non-agricultural uses are restricted. The ALR comprises just five per cent of B.C.'s total land base and is the area with the greatest agricultural capacity.

The ALR is a working landscape where the business of agriculture takes place and upon which farmers and ranchers rely to make a living and grow food for both local consumption and export. More than 17,500 farms operate within the ALR, employing more than 44,500 workers and producing more than 200 different agricultural products. Total farm capital in B.C. in 2016 was more than \$37.5 billion.

Agriculture is a strong component of the B.C. economy and a stable industry in many parts of the province. In 2016, B.C. agriculture generated \$2.5 billion in exports and \$1.3 billion in GDP.²

The work of the Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee (the Committee) is

Agricultural Land Reserve in BC



² Statistics were drawn from the "Sector Snapshot 2016: B.C. Agriculture", Ministry of Agriculture, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/industry-and-sector-profiles/sector-snapshots/bc_agriculture_sector_snapshot_2016.pdf, August, 2017 and from "Agriculture in Brief", Ministry of Agriculture, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/census/census-2016/aginbrief_2016_all_province_region_regional_districts.pdf, 2016

centered on the revitalization of the ALC and the ALR. The objective is not just about agricultural land and the people today, but is meant to be forward looking, resilient and poised for the future.

The Committee recognizes that the ALC needs to be innovative and flexible to adjust, while keeping the mandate as its compass and agriculture as its priority.

The ALR is based on the biophysical capacity of the soil and climate to produce agricultural products. Agricultural soils can be used again and again; however, agricultural land is an irreplaceable, non-renewable resource. Since its inception in 1973, the ALC has considered over 45,000 ALR land use applications.

The pressures on the ALR are significant and inevitably lead to a reduction in the amount of existing, agriculturally capable land within the ALR. They threaten the physical capacity and availability of ALR land to adequately support B.C. farmers and ranchers now and in the future. They impact B.C.'s option to grow its own food. They include:

- Natural limitations: portions of the ALR are covered by lakes, wetlands, waterways and other natural obstructions that impact agricultural production;
- Infrastructure and jurisdictional limits: portions of the ALR include or are impacted by roads, railways, rights of way, and other built or jurisdictional impediments (i.e. federally regulated lands), which impact the potential for agricultural production;
- Intensive non-farm use: land owner activities that do not support agriculture include large scale residential development, commercial activities and resource extraction. All impact the productive capacity of ALR parcels;
- Increasing agricultural land prices that arise from speculation and non-farm use impacts both the ability of existing farmers to expand their farm businesses, and for new entrant farmers to purchase farmland;
- Extensive operations that may or may not be ancillary to agriculture 'pave over' large sections of ALR parcels, rendering them un-farmable and thereby undermining the purpose and intent of the ALR;
- Proliferation of unauthorized and illegal activity, including the illegal dumping of fill and urban waste disposal, severely impacts the agricultural capacity of the soil; and
- Uses permitted in the regulation are being conducted with little or no connection to on-farm agricultural production.

The ALC works with local governments at the municipal and regional level to ensure that an agriculture lens is presented and that land use planning is consistent and supportive of the ALR. The ALC also works with provincial government agencies and ministries to ensure agricultural land is a priority and the function of the ALC is understood by a wide array of stakeholders.

Despite the success of the ALR, the nature of pressures has been changing and remains significant and relentless. Many of the pressures have little to do with the business of agriculture but everything to do with urban expansion. The pressure threatens the physical capacity and availability of ALR land to adequately support B.C. farmers and ranchers now and in the future.

The Committee's Interim Report addresses many of these pressures through recommendations to better protect and revitalize the ALR, to reduce physical impacts to the ALR's productive capacity, and to ensure strong governance of the ALR well into the future. It is the hope of the Committee that the recommendations for legislative and regulatory changes will not only inform and support the Minister as

she proceeds with the revitalization of the ALR and ALC, but will also set the stage for effective, final recommendations from the Committee.

ALR and ALC Revitalization Objectives

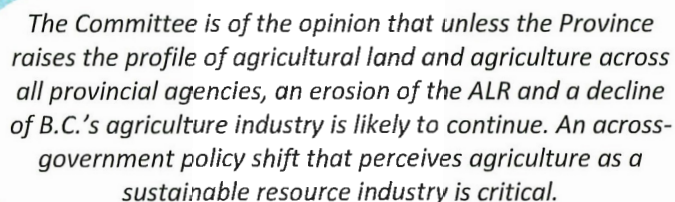
To better understand ALR pressures and opportunities, the Committee undertook stakeholder and public engagement from February 5 to April 30, 2018, and prepared a [Discussion Paper](#) focused on ten common ALR and ALC themes and three broad revitalization objectives:

1. Preserve the productive capacity of land in the ALR;
2. Encourage farming of land in the ALR for uses related to agriculture and food production; and
3. Strengthen the administration and governance of the ALR and ALC to both increase public confidence and to ensure that land use regulation and land use decisions are about preserving agricultural land and encouraging farming and ranching in the ALR.

Over the course of its nine-community stakeholder consultations, broad online public engagement, and research and reporting from sector experts, it became clear to the Committee that these objectives are also fundamental principles for effective revitalization and that they have broad and deep public support. They have guided the Committee's work, and the resulting principle and objectives-based approach to revitalization is reflected in the Committee's interim recommendations. They will also be integral to the Committee's final report.

Urgent Need for a Province-wide Shift to an 'Agriculture-first' Priority Focus in the ALR

The Committee's interim recommendations reflect the pressing need for an 'agriculture-first' policy shift based on strong provincial leadership and a commitment not only to preserve and protect farmland, but also to support farming and ranching in B.C.



The Committee is of the opinion that unless the Province raises the profile of agricultural land and agriculture across all provincial agencies, an erosion of the ALR and a decline of B.C.'s agriculture industry is likely to continue. An across-government policy shift that perceives agriculture as a sustainable resource industry is critical.

Indeed, throughout the Committee's stakeholder and public engagement, the need for an 'agriculture-first' priority approach was a key message of farmers, ranchers, local governments, agricultural organizations, partner organizations, and experts across the agricultural spectrum. This message has guided the development of the Committee's Interim Report. It is the Committee's strong opinion that an 'agriculture-first' approach to all government actions and decision-making in the ALR is necessary going forward.

Urgent Need to Curb Speculation in the ALR

As urban land prices increase and population grows, the pressure to develop agricultural land continues to build. Agricultural land is being taken out of production and investors and speculators are being allowed to exploit tax system incentives intended only for those who farm.

The permissive nature of the ALC Act and regulations, that include very few, if any, limits on the size and scale of permitted farm and non-farm uses, including both mega-homes, and regulations that allow anyone to apply to remove land or develop non-farm uses in the ALR regardless of how long they have owned a property or farmed it, contributes to the perception that the ALR is “open for development”.

The Committee believes speculation on agricultural land must be curtailed if the long term viability of agriculture in B.C. is to be realized. The ALC was intended to protect and encourage the agricultural use of land. It was not intended to be a rationing board tasked with regulating the slow release of agricultural land from the reserve or the conversion of the land base to support non-farm uses.

Committee Engagement and Research

Throughout the development of the interim recommendations, the Committee considered previous analyses of the ALR and ALC; the current and past authority and functions of the ALC; farmland protection in other jurisdictions; and the results of stakeholder meetings and public responses. The Committee reviewed and considered all written submissions, a significant body of research, expert presentations, and advice from recognized industry, academic and other agriculture sector leaders. Please see the Appendix 2 Bibliography for more information.

The Committee’s consultation process took place from February 5 to April 30, 2018, and included stakeholder meetings in nine communities, public engagement via an online survey, and mail and email responses. More than 2,300 British Columbians responded to the online survey, including more than 750 farmers; 115 agriculture specialists; and more than 1,400 responses from the general public. There were also 240 responses from people representing an agricultural industry or interest group. South Coast residents completed 900 surveys, while submissions topped 800 from the Island, 200 from the Okanagan, and more than 100 from each of the North, Kootenay and Interior regions. Over 270 direct email and regular mail submissions were also received by the Committee.

Part I: Recommendations for Immediate Legislative and Regulatory Change

The Committee's interim recommendations include changes to the legislative and regulatory framework under the authority of the Minister of Agriculture.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen the Act to prioritize agriculture by better defining the ALR, including the purposes of the ALR, and establishing 'agriculture-first' criteria for consideration in all ALC decisions

Issue/Rationale:

The ALC Act (the Act) currently includes the purposes of the ALC, but does not include the purpose of the ALR. Putting renewed emphasis on the nature and longevity of the land reserve itself and committing to actions that effectively preserve it for farming now and into the future is the single-most important action the Province can take to revitalize B.C.'s ALR and instill additional meaning into its administrative structure.

The existing purposes of the ALC are often interpreted differently (and at times incorrectly) by local governments, ALR landowners and other stakeholders and, sometimes unwittingly, result in an attempt to use the ALR for non-agricultural purposes. Given the significant challenges and pressures impacting the ALR at this time, it is critical to focus ALC decision-making on protections that sustain the scope, scale and productive capacity of B.C.'s agricultural land and uses that are strongly connected to agriculture and supportive of farming.

The Committee heard from stakeholders throughout the province that revitalization of the ALR and ALC is not possible without strong, stated provincial government leadership. Despite the important role of the ALC, agricultural land continues to be targeted for uses other than farming, and farmers receive increasingly fewer supports and incentives to actively farm. Clear statutory direction/authority for the ALC to consider priority factors and considerations that ensure a farmable, sustainable ALR is essential. Stakeholders emphasized the need to focus on agricultural land preservation and protection in the interest of farming and farmers.

Acting upon this recommendation will build greater clarity, enhanced transparency, and improved consistency of ALC decision-making. These changes will require the ALC and Ministry of Agriculture to not only take leadership in shifting provincial agencies to an 'agriculture-first' model, but will also require an on-going public education program to solidify support for the ALR.

Recommendation 2: Increase the autonomy, independence and effectiveness of the ALC by ensuring that merit based Commission appointments are made in consultation with the Chair and by increasing the oversight role of the Chair in the selection of both Commission members and the CEO

Issue/Rationale:

Strong, stable governance is critical to the long-term success of ALC revitalization. The ALR must be preserved and positioned to support and sustain agricultural production into the future—across the province. To do this, the ALC must be an independent, administrative tribunal able to make strong, sound and final decisions on agricultural land use within the ALR.

Previous policy decisions to move away from merit-based Commission appointments, and remove active Chair participation in the selection of Commissioners and the ALC Chief Executive Officer, have eroded the ALC's credibility and its capacity to reflect agriculture sector interests and effectively lead and guide

appropriate ALC decisions, programs and services. At times, government interference in the appointment process and in ALC governance, contributed to an erosion of public trust.

ALC Commissioners should be appointed as set out in the *Administrative Tribunals Act* and with the same rigour as other administrative tribunals in B.C. The Committee heard strong support for ALC independence; merit-based Commission appointments; well-managed and timely decision-making structures and processes; and responsive programs and services.

Recommendation 3: Ensure province-wide decision making that is consistent and fair with an ALC governance structure that is flexible, locally-informed, regionally-representative, and puts 'agriculture-first'

Issue/Rationale:

Based on the need for strong, stable governance and a provincial-level understanding and approach to ALR decision making, the Committee considered whether the current panel structure supports the revitalization of a strong and defensible ALR and ALC into the future. It is the Committee's opinion that:

- The current structure of one Chair, six Vice Chairs and 12 Commissioners (for a total of 19 Commission members), operating in six statutorily-prescribed regional panels with an Executive Committee reviewing decisions, is costly in many ways;
- While the panels provide for regional views, panel decisions have been overturned by the Executive Committee because of issues and inconsistencies respecting Commission purposes and ALC policies;
- The prescribed regional panel structure and function do not support an over-arching provincial vision and approach to protection of the provincial ALR. The existing governance structure has what amounts to six 'regional commissions'—with little evidence the panels can maintain a provincial ALR focus. A lack of provincial perspective (particularly at the local government level) was one of the primary reasons for creating a provincial body in the first place. The issue remains just as important and relevant today; and
- The existing structure provides limited opportunity for the training and education of the Commissioners so they better understand the provincial focus, let alone other regions of the province.

It is the Committee's view that the existing statutorily-prescribed regional panel structure makes what should be provincial-scale values and decision-making vulnerable to local perspectives and influence. A flexible, locally informed, regionally representative and 'agriculture-first' ALC structure allows for the ALC to determine how best to deploy its government-appointed Commissioners to meet the Commission's operational and legislative requirements. Operational flexibility is an important component of managing the Commission workload, utilizing the expertise of individual Commissioners and maintaining a provincial perspective during the consideration of regional interests.

The Committee heard arguments both for, and against, the current panel structure from stakeholders and members of the public across the province. Most stakeholders supported some form of regional representation. Many stakeholders were frustrated with the current process for panel decisions; with review by the ALC Executive Committee; and with the added time required for the full review process to be complete. Other stakeholders were concerned about the integrity of the ALR given the inherent potential for disparate views and approaches to decision-making in the ALR by six separate three-

member panels. There was also concern expressed that panel members could, unwittingly or otherwise, make locally-biased and/or expedient decisions.

Recommendation 4: Safeguard agricultural values across the province by reinstating a one-zone ALR decision-making model across B.C.

Issue/Rationale:

The Committee heard strong support from stakeholders and the public for the removal of the artificial distinction between ALR land in Zones 1 and 2. The majority of respondents strongly felt that the objective of allowing other economic activities and non-farm considerations to be on par with—and in some cases, to supersede—agriculture in Zone 2, weakened the Act and created expectations that the ALR was open for non-farm development.

It is important to emphasize that lands in Zone 2 are some of the best agriculturally capable soil in the province, and large areas that may be viewed as lower quality are the best lands for extensive ranching activities. Currently, Zone 1 comprises 353,000 hectares of Agricultural Capability Class 1-4 land, while Zone 2 comprises 2,072,000 hectares of Class 1-4 land.

The majority of stakeholders felt the two-zone ALR was unfair, and undermined the concept of a province-wide ALR, with the same law and regulation. The Committee believes a two zone ALR system weakens the purposes of the ALC to preserve agricultural land and to encourage farming across the province and diminishes the priority of agriculture in 90 per cent of the ALR for no discernible benefit. Zone 2 appears to have been established solely to support economic development and other community interests in the ALR and impacts the credibility and stability of decision-making across the ALR.

Reinstating a single zone will provide a strong, stable and consistent legislative and administrative framework for governance across the ALR at a time of significant and rapidly growing pressures and challenges. It will support more consistent and equitable agricultural land use, and ensure agriculture remains the central focus of decision-making in the ALR.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen ALC compliance and enforcement tools, and capacity, to better protect the ALR

Issue/Rationale:

Stakeholders and the public are very supportive of stronger ALC compliance and enforcement tools, particularly for obvious instances of non-compliance such as unauthorized uses, non-farm uses, and mega-home residential development.

ALC compliance and enforcement efforts struggle to be effective due to both the vastness of the ALR across the province and the lack of legislative authority for low and mid-level penalties that would support and enforce compliance. The ALC advises that its compliance and enforcement must be enhanced by increasing Commission resources, and by developing the capacity to effectively use additional legislative tools and instruments.

Smaller scale, immediate enforcement options, on a par with other provincial enforcement officers and mechanisms, would enable the ALC to appropriately address minor non-compliance issues. These enforcement options would also help develop greater public awareness of inappropriate activity on the ALR. Consistency between the Act and other legislation in the arena of enforcement would enable the ALC to properly exercise its responsibility to decrease the incidence of unauthorized uses in the ALR. Over three-quarters of stakeholders (78 per cent) surveyed in the ALC's 2018 Local Government

Engagement Survey indicated that more enforcement from the ALC would be an effective strategy to reduce non-compliant activity in the ALR.

Recommendation 6: Protect the ALR from residential speculation by establishing a maximum total floor area for all primary residences in the ALR (e.g. Minister's Bylaw Standards) and providing local government flexibility to zone below the maximum. Enable new regulations for residential siting, secondary dwellings, and home plate size.

Issue/Rationale:

The Committee heard unanimous support across the province for prohibiting 'estate-style homes' in the ALR and for restricting residences over an established size. The promotion and building of large homes for non-farmers in the ALR is a serious speculation issue in parts of the ALR. Purchase of ALR land by non-farmers, coupled with no provincial limits on the scale and size of residential development, is pushing the cost of land out of the reach of farmers. These property owners are also able to take advantage of lower tax rates on ALR land. This supports neither provincial ALR objectives nor consistency with the Act.

'Estate-style homes' directly impact the land base due to size and required infrastructure. There can be significant impacts where siting choices place homes in the middle of a parcel. Often owners choose not to farm the remainder of the parcel or make it available for other farmers to lease. Estate owners who lease their land to farmers are able to exploit tax advantages meant exclusively for those who farm. Additionally, rural/urban issues tend to increase.

During stakeholder and public engagement, the Committee heard the following:

- Speculation associated with large homes significantly overvalues farmland, restricts new entrants, and undermines the value and viability of farming across B.C.;
- Local governments are struggling to establish bylaws and are looking for clear provincial rules around house size limits in the ALR;
- There is a perception and reality of unfairness and inconsistency in the way different local governments/communities zone and manage residential size in the ALR;
- As farms are bought and converted by non-farmers to support large residential and estate development, the remaining productive farmland is becoming smaller and less usable, and short-term leases are increasingly the only option;
- Lease arrangements provide very limited security for lessees and do not support the long-term viability of farming in B.C.; and
- The regulation of housing in the ALR is currently a local government authority. Local governments across the province appear pressured to allow large-scale residential development in the ALR and the Committee heard from over 40 local governments about the need for clear provincial rules in the ALR—including the need for rules on maximum house size.

To promote consistency, fairness and an 'agriculture-first' lens in the ALR, the Committee recommends the total area for all primary residences be based on the Minister of Agriculture's Bylaw Standards.

The Ministry consulted extensively with local governments in the development of the standards, which assist local governments in developing bylaws supportive of agriculture in farming areas. Local governments are encouraged but not required to adopt the Minister's Bylaw Standards, unless they are

a 'regulated community'. A number of local governments have successfully passed bylaws modeled on the standards, while some have found it difficult to implement them. Others do not have zoning bylaws.

The Committee is of the opinion that provincial rules on house size and the home plate in the ALR are necessary. Local governments surveyed in 2018 by the ALC considered 'additional dwellings necessary for farm help' the most difficult permitted use to regulate: over half of the local governments surveyed (56 per cent) identified it as a challenge, and one-third (30 per cent) ranked it as their top challenge.

Recommendation 7: End the impact of illegal fill on the agricultural capability of the ALR by redefining and restricting fill throughout the ALR

Issue/Rationale:

The placement of fill is a non-farm use that is allowed in the ALR as it is specifically provided for in the Act and the *Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation* (the Regulation). Illegal fill—fill that is not allowed under the Act and the Regulation, or approved by the ALC—is a substantial issue in the ALR. Each year broken glass, drywall, asphalt, concrete, boulders, and many other types of construction and demolition waste are dumped in the ALR, often in a paid arrangement with a landowner. Fill is defined in the Act as "any material brought on land in an agricultural land reserve other than materials exempted by regulation." The rules surrounding fill are confusing, which makes enforcement a challenge.

The concern over illegal fill in the ALR is two-fold:

1. Land owners who state fill is necessary for their farm operations are not required to seek approval from the ALC (as outlined in the Regulation). The volumes then brought onsite frequently exceed, to a significant extent, what would be an acceptable amount under normal farm practice; and
2. If a land owner does get approval from the ALC through a non-farm use application, the amount actually brought on typically exceeds the approved volume, sometimes significantly.

Fill often affects large tracts of land and seriously degrades the capability and utility of the land. The land lost to fill is considerable and rarely results in any practical benefit to the agricultural land base. Fill placement in excess of what might be needed for farming in most cases is financially motivated, and can be a lucrative business for ALR landowners. In the South Coast Region, for example, landowners are paid \$50 to \$200 per truck load to take fill. According to the ALC, *the average volume of fill deposited onto a property in the ALR is 43,000 m³ (equivalent to 6,000 truckloads), generating anywhere from \$300,000 to \$1,200,000 in revenue for an ALR landowner.*

An ALC review of the issue notes that illegal fill represents approximately 42 per cent of all ALC compliance and enforcement case files.

Fill was raised as an important concern throughout the Committee's stakeholder consultation and prohibiting fill in the ALR was a common suggestion for revitalization. Defining the type and volume of fill legitimately required by farmers for agricultural activities is a critical issue. Left unchecked, the current dumping practice in the ALR will render significant portions of farmland unproductive and will permanently change the soil quality and capability.

Defining thresholds for fill will protect ALR capability and will support local governments who are trying to deal with fill issues via local bylaws. It will provide needed clarity and support improved consistency

of application of fill rules across the ALR. The Committee will provide recommendations on fill thresholds in the final report to the Minister.

Recommendation 8: Address speculation through better land use planning by only considering exclusion of ALR land through a joint local government-ALC land use planning process

Issue/Rationale:

The current ability for ALR landowners to apply to exclude (permanently remove) land from the ALR is likely a significant contributor to speculation and the increasing cost of land in the ALR. Land is purchased or optioned for residential, port, industrial, and other uses unrelated to agriculture, with the idea that it might eventually be excluded. The resulting land values are placing agricultural land well beyond the reach of farmers.

Although applications for exclusion by individual landowners represent a smaller portion of applications received by the ALC when compared to subdivision and non-farm use applications, the perception that the ALR is open to individual, one-off exclusions has an incalculable impact on the long-term resilience of the ALR.

A landowner may currently apply to have land excluded from the ALR as soon as it is purchased. Individual landowners often make the case that parts of their land are not capable of growing an agricultural product and should be excluded. However, during the initial establishment of the ALR, smaller areas of lower capability land were intentionally included within the ALR boundaries to support compatible uses, reduce potential conflicts with adjacent land, and to ensure a contiguous ALR.

In many instances today, applications for exclusion are not about the quality of the land but about the financial benefits of converting ALR land to a more lucrative use. This was not the intention of the application process and is the antithesis of the ALC mandate. Internationally, successful agricultural land preservation regimes are planned by government, and the ones that last do not include individual exclusion routes.

Collaboration on land use planning processes between local governments and the ALC have been successful in the past in identifying lands for future exclusion based on a regional planning perspective and quantifiable need by the local government. Focusing on this more proactive approach is necessary to ensure that the haphazard development associated with individual landowner exclusions no longer negatively impacts the ALR. Directing exclusions through a joint local government-ALC planning process will also:

- Help eliminate speculative purchasing and holding of ALR land for uses other than agriculture;
- Help maintain a contiguous ALR within the boundaries to avoid infiltration of non-agricultural uses that conflict with the surrounding agricultural landscape;
- Reduce the potential of impacting the ALR via 'death by a thousand cuts'; and
- Create a defensible and rationalized ALR boundary with a long-term land use planning lens.

Recommendation 9: Make the ALR application review process more efficient by prescribing acceptable non-farm use and subdivision applications

Issue/Rationale:

Approximately 80 per cent of applications to the ALC are for subdivision and non-farm uses, *and the vast majority of the applications are not from farmers or ranchers*. These types of applications are for uses

where the land remains in the ALR but is used for non-agricultural purposes. Significant ALC resources are spent processing these applications that often have nothing to do with farming in the ALR.

This high volume and application-heavy focus limits the ALC time and resources needed to focus on other key aspects of its mandate, including collaboration with both other governments and government entities to encourage farming in B.C. The ability of landowners to apply for such a wide range of activities, which ALC has experienced as quite literally any type of land use activity, further drives speculation and land costs based on the perception of what is possible in the ALR.

The intent of non-farm use applications was for the ALC to exercise discretion related to uses that were not permitted in the Regulation but might still be compatible with agriculture. The primary purpose of subdivision applications, however, is to create a new lot for residential purposes. The impacts and conflicts that arise from adding strictly residential uses in the ALR can negatively impact agricultural land and businesses. The cumulative nature of ALC decisions for subdivision and non-farm uses is significant.

Opportunities for narrowing the range of applications to the ALC to uses complimentary, compatible and/or supportive of agriculture include:

- Creating an application framework that considers proposals compatible with the ALR;
- Ensuring the ALC, and not local government or the approving officer, is the decision-maker for all non-farm uses in the ALR;
- Eliminating the speculative nature of purchasing or holding agricultural land in hopes of using it for something other than agriculture; and
- Instilling an 'agriculture-first' lens to applications and potential changes to land use.

Recommendation 10: Improve clarity around the two ALC reconsideration processes

Issue/Rationale:

Reconsideration of ALC application decisions consists of two distinct processes, a decision reconsideration requested by an applicant and a decision reconsideration requested by the Chair, which can be confusing to the public and take up considerable ALC resources. ALC decision-making will be improved by ensuring the two reconsideration processes are clearer, less cumbersome, and less confusing.

Reconsideration of a decision requested by an applicant:

Regardless of whether an application is refused or approved, an applicant may ask that a decision be reconsidered. The purpose of this reconsideration is to allow the Commission to revisit decisions if they were fundamentally flawed due to consideration of incorrect information or, if subsequent to a decision, compelling information is provided that would have significantly contributed to the Commission's understanding of the facts at the time of its original deliberation. A request for reconsideration is not intended to provide an applicant with an opportunity to periodically revisit the Commission's decision in perpetuity. However, at times this is how it has been interpreted and used by applicants.

The Regulation does not define a length of time a reconsideration request must be submitted within, define how many requests can be submitted per application decision, or outline what can be submitted in a reconsideration request as 'evidence'.

In 2017/18, the ALC received 78 requests to reconsider applications. Of those, only 18 were referred for reconsideration and of those only three were reversed.

The Committee recommends improving the criteria for reconsideration requests by:

- Establishing submission timeframes;
- Putting limits on the number of requests that can be made per decision; and
- Providing clarity with respect to the expected substance of a request.

These improvements will reduce the number of unsubstantiated requests that require a considerable amount of ALC resources. This would bring the ALC in line with other B.C. laws that define specific criteria for reconsideration.

Reconsideration of a decision as directed by the Chair of the ALC

Regardless of whether an application is refused or approved, the ALC Chair has the authority to direct the Executive Committee to reconsider an application decision made by a regional panel that the Chair considers may not fulfill the mandate of the Commission or adequately consider Zone 2 criteria. The purpose of this authority is to provide the Chair with oversight to ensure consistency of decision considerations according to the Act.

The Committee heard from stakeholders and the public that the Chair-directed reconsideration process is not clear. Local government representatives spoke about concern and frustration raised by the public regarding the fairness of decisions and the perception of unfairness when decisions are provided to applicants, but then some time later they receive a notice of a Chair-directed reconsideration.

In 2017/18, the Chair directed the Executive Committee to review 19 of the 391 decisions made.

A review of the current legal process of Chair-directed reconsiderations is needed such that the Chair retains the important ability to review and direct decisions for review to ensure consistency with the ALC mandate, but there is a reduction in the uncertainty of a decision for the applicant and local government.

Recommendation 11: Ensure a province-wide agricultural perspective by removing the ALC's capacity to delegate subdivision and non-farm use decision-making authority to local governments

Issue/Rationale:

Section 26 of the Act enables the ALC to enter into an agreement with a local government to delegate the ALC's decision-making authority for subdivision and for non-farm use. Under a delegated agreement, local government elected officials take on the decision-making role of the ALC. The provision for the ALC to enter into voluntary delegation agreements with local governments was established in 1994. The intention was to enable sharing of the ALC's application processing workload and to bring more local community planning knowledge and responsibility into the decision making process. In the early 2000's, government direction was to promote delegation agreements to local governments; however, most local governments were not interested in taking on this responsibility.

Delegating decision-making to a local government creates significant potential for inconsistency in application processing, decision consideration, and decision rationale around the province. To assess the delegated decision process and decisions, the ALC must audit decisions made by delegated local governments. Managing an agreement with local government requires ongoing audits of the decisions being made, administrative law training for the delegated decision makers and local government staff, and other decision making training specific to the ALC mandate. This has created additional work for the ALC and for local governments. There is also an increased potential for bias for delegated decision-

makers, as they fill both the role of an elected local government representative and that of an ALC decision maker.

In total, only three delegation agreements were established with the ALC, of which only one is active (with the Regional District of Fraser Fort George, established in 2001). According to the ALC, the Regional District of Fraser Fort George has made an average of 10 delegated decisions per year since 2002. Given the number of delegated decisions being made, the ALC's review of agreement decisions, and the recommendation in the Auditor General's 2010 "Audit of the Agricultural Land Commission", the Committee believes that the ALC should be the independent body that considers and decides applications submitted under the Act.

Removing the ability for delegation to local government ensures: arms-length, independent decision-making with an 'agriculture-first' focus; province-wide consistency of decision making; adherence to administrative law; and review with a provincial perspective. Since 2002, there has been very limited interest across the province in taking on the added responsibilities of a delegation agreement.

The Committee believes that maintaining a resource-heavy program for minimal delegations is not an effective use of the ALC's resources. The ALC would be better suited to achieve its mandate to concentrate its resources that are currently required to manage a local government delegation agreement on other more proactive aspects of working with local governments.

Recommendation 12: Build better planning and land use decisions for agriculture by requiring all local government bylaws that affects the ALR to be endorsed by ALC resolution

Issue/Rationale:

The ALC is charged with exercising a variety of duties under the Act. These duties include: planning; boundary reviews; compliance and enforcement; applications; delegation agreements; and policy development. The planning function includes review and comment on the development, amendment or repeal of an official community plan that might affect the ALR. It also involves ensuring that local government bylaws are consistent with the Act, the Regulation and the orders of the ALC.

Local governments and their planning documents are often the first and only place the public, land owners, developers and real estate agents look to for land use information, including information on the ALR. Bylaws that do not accurately reflect the permitted uses in the ALR misinform the public, create expectations and misperceptions, and impact the ability for the ALC to conduct compliance and enforcement.

It is currently the responsibility of local governments to ensure that their zoning bylaws, regional growth strategies, official community plans, and official development plans are consistent with the Act. If they are not consistent with the Act, they are considered to have no force or effect. Legally, local governments only have to refer official community plans to the ALC after first reading if the plan might affect land in the ALR.

The strength of local legislative frameworks for farmland protection can vary considerably across the approximately 150 local governments with land in the ALR, from very strong to very weak. In some areas of the province there are no zoning bylaws or there are dated bylaws that are inconsistent with the current Act and Regulation. Most ALC challenges are with the interpretation of the Act and the Regulation through zoning and building permit plan review. Bylaws inconsistent with the Act have no force and effect, but when used to allow for a land use inconsistent with the Act and the Regulation, the negative impact on the land base has already occurred. The ALC works to communicate with local governments regarding inconsistent bylaws and policies that are not supportive of agriculture under its

mandate to encourage consistency. However, in the absence of having the legislative authority to comment and/or approve of zoning that effects the ALR, it is an incremental, reactive and relatively ineffective way to try and ensure consistency.

It is essential that the ALC be involved officially and earlier in bylaw review and land use processes in order to ensure consistency with the Act and to maximize public clarity as to what is permitted in the ALR. Local governments are currently under no obligation to have the ALC confirm that non-statutory plans and bylaws are consistent with the Act and the Regulation.

Going forward, annual long term ALC resources towards improved education and communication are essential. This includes increasing efforts with local governments after municipal elections to ensure that zoning bylaws are consistent with the Act and the Regulation, similar to the structure and approach used for regional growth strategies.

Recommendation 13: Strengthen ALC administration by clarifying and updating the Act and Regulation to improve ALC's daily operation

Issue/Rationale:

The ALC occupies a distinctive role within the Canadian legal system. While it is part of “government” as broadly defined, it is a quasi-judicial body and is not part of any government Ministry. The ALC is instead part of the Canadian community of independent administrative tribunals, vested with important statutory powers, whose members are obliged to exercise those statutory powers in accordance with the law.

Over the last decade, the ALC has not been involved in the changes to the Act that have resulted in ALC operational challenges. This has rendered portions of the Act redundant or not clear, making day-to-day operations cumbersome. The result is that the Act is missing clarifying definitions and operational provisions that would greatly assist with implementation of the legislation. The ALC has identified a list of minor legislative amendments. The government is encouraged to work closely with the ALC to include these changes.

Part II: Recommendations for Immediate Action to Protect the ALR

Mitigating the Impacts of Oil and Gas Activity in the ALR

The Committee recognizes that the energy sector is vitally important to the British Columbian economy. But so too is the extraordinary soil capability and micro-climate of the Northeast of the province, both of which support a robust and large-scale agricultural industry.

The Committee has previously noted that it is imperative there be a government-wide policy shift in identifying agricultural land and industry as a resource equivalent to other resources, and oil and gas is no exception. It is essential an 'agriculture-first' approach be applied to the ALR in the Northeast.

The development of the energy sector has exceeded the capacity of the current regulatory environment to protect farmland. The impacts of oil and gas extraction on agricultural land and farm businesses in Northeast B.C. have reached a breaking point. Cumulative impacts over the last decade from accelerating oil and gas development have rendered portions of agricultural lands unusable and others difficult to farm. With continued changes in extraction and processing methods along with the pace and scale of development, these activities that were once considered temporary are no longer. Instead they are permanent industrial sites built on farmland and next to farm communities.

Responsible oil and gas development, as with all resource sector activities, is important to the preservation of agricultural land. The Committee encourages the government to ensure that the extraction of subsurface resources does not continue to permanently damage some of the best agricultural soils in the province and take precedence over farming, farm businesses, ranching and the agricultural industry. The ALR, and the farmers who make a living on it, should be treated equally and with respect in order for both activities to co-exist and benefit all British Columbians.

In an effort to strike a balance between the needs of the agricultural sector and the energy sector, the Committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Immediately form a senior executive led (Deputy Minister-level) multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional taskforce to develop a strategy focused on how a balance can be achieved between agriculture and oil and gas extraction.

The Committee is recommending the immediate establishment of a Deputy Minister-level taskforce with internal and external agriculture partners and stakeholders from the natural resource sector. The Committee recommends that the taskforce be directed to develop a strategy to address the significant resource extraction issues impacting the ALR and its farmers and ranchers in B.C.'s Peace River region.

The Committee recommends the taskforce review, among other considerations, the following issues:

- How to balance surface rights of the farmer/rancher with sub-surface rights of the extractor;
- How the farmer/rancher will be given authority to influence negotiations on the farm and location of oil and gas facilities and infrastructure;
- How the comments made to this taskforce by the farmers/ranchers will be accommodated in a balanced process;
- Determine whether the delegation agreement between the ALC and the B.C. Oil and Gas Commission is the correct approach or if there is an alternative approach that would better protect agricultural interests and restore confidence in the regulatory system over the long term;

- Complete a fulsome impact assessment of oil and gas activity within the ALR;
- Build a memorandum of understanding and operational agreement between the ALC and the B.C. Oil and Gas Commission for sharing impact assessments and other information so they can work more effectively together; and
- Determine how farmers can access ongoing professional, independent support.

Recommendation 2: Establish an increased ALC presence in the North.

- There is a need for a made-in-the-North approach to ensure solutions/responses are created in and benefit the North.
- The ALC needs to be given resources to increase its presence in the Northeast of B.C.

Issue/Rationale:

There is a growing incompatibility of agriculture and extraction activities due to the growth in the size and number of surface activities that are required to support subsurface extraction; the industrial creep into the ALR is increasingly noticeable.

Much of the oil and gas activity in Northeast B.C. is on actively farmed land in the ALR. ALR land in this area is some of the best in the province and supports large scale agriculture. For this reason, a stronger agricultural lens needs to be included in the extraction sectors' planning and decision making process and more resources need to be provided to the ALC and the land owner/farmer to help preserve and utilize as much of the farmland as possible.

With extensive legislative, regulatory, administrative and expert support and capital for oil and gas development, the energy sector is positioned to be successful. It is important to note that there is no institution or agency that singularly represents farmers and ranchers as they struggle to maintain their agricultural businesses in the face of a rapidly growing energy sector. Agriculture businesses are on their own. Unintended consequences of deregulation, including the delegation agreement between the ALC and the B.C. Oil and Gas Commission, and the extent and speed of development have outstripped the ability of regulation to ensure damage to the land base is not permanent.

The Committee heard clearly from stakeholders and the public that supports in place for oil and gas development do not exist for agriculture businesses or agricultural land protection. And where there are mechanisms and processes in place, they are difficult to access, cumbersome, time-consuming, and often do not result in a balanced approach.

Why is oil and gas development in the Northeast of B.C. such a significant concern in the ALR?

- Key impacts to agriculture include the nature of subsurface rights (oil and gas access to land is 'guaranteed'), changing technology, costs and profitability of the energy sector, and the exponent erosion of agriculture surface rights due to the increase in the scale and number of oil and gas activities;
- The shift from a single well lift system to multi-pad well sites; exponential growth in numbers and increased physical impact on the land base;
- The increase in permanent, industrial infrastructure due to additional on-site processes;
- Well sites are no longer being reclaimed and put back into agricultural production. Wells are often abandoned, inactive or suspended for long periods of time meaning the land cannot be farmed;
- Due to the imbalance between subsurface and surface rights, and the compulsory aspect of the entry to the land, landowners have very little power to minimize the agricultural impact on their property when development occurs; and
- Signing a surface rights lease agreement enters the landowner into a contractual agreement with the operating company; conditions to minimize the surface or operational impacts can be put in this agreement; however compliance with these conditions lies with the willingness of the operating company. Further, the enforcement of these conditions is often too cumbersome, time consuming and costly for the landowner to pursue.

Northeast B.C.: The ALR and Montney Gas Basin

The Montney Gas Basin is a major shale gas formation extending from Northeast B.C. to Northwest Alberta. As is shown in Figure 1, there is a high degree of overlap between the ALR and areas of possible resource extraction. It is the source of much of the current oil and gas exploration, development, and production in B.C.'s Peace River Region. The neighborhood of Farmington, as shown in Figure 2, is a prime example of an area that is significantly impacted by oil and gas activity. Presently, there are 559 active wells within 15 kilometers of Farmington, with an additional 88 in development and 291 authorized, on approximately 150 well pads. In addition to these active wells, there are 73 facilities in the area. Thirty-eight (38) applications to develop additional wells are being processed, 32 of which are on private land, four on Crown land, and two on both Crown and private land. Of these applications, 30 belong to Encana, four to Arc Resources, three to Tormaline, and one to Plateau.

Within the Farmington neighbourhood, there are also 575 residences, of which approximately 50 are within 500 meters of an active well or facility site.³

Figure 1: Montney Gas Basin and the Agricultural Land Reserve

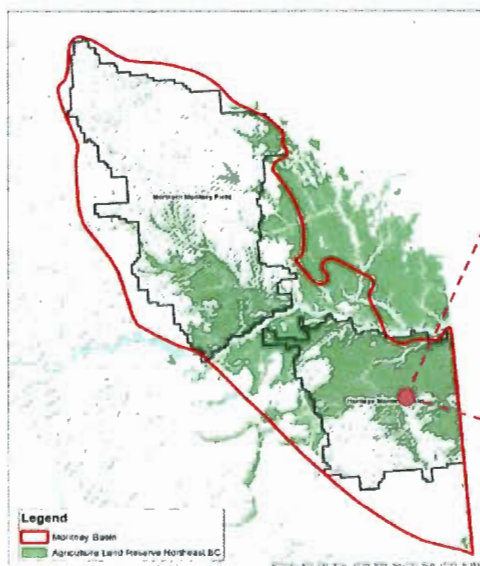
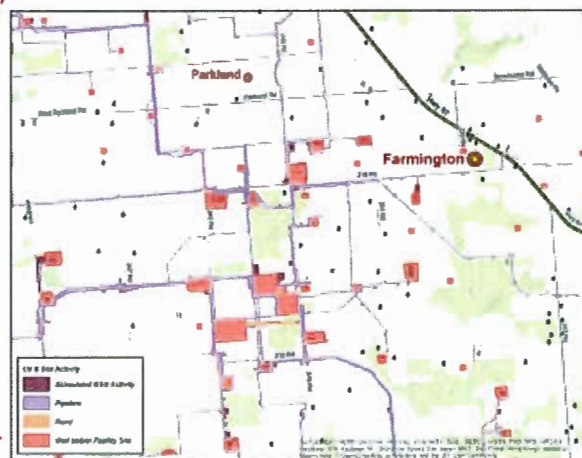


Figure 2: Farmington Oil and Gas Activity



³ Figures and statistics were drawn from the "Presentation to the PRRD," Paul Jeakins, BC Oil and Gas Commission, http://prrd.bc.ca/board/agendas/2018/2018-15-669138994/pages/documents/4.2BCOGC_000.pdf, May 23, 2018.

Restricting Cannabis Production in the ALR

The Committee's cannabis recommendations reflect significant concerns and recommend steps in the regulation of cannabis production in the ALR. The Committee did not seek specific comments from stakeholders and the public on cannabis, but the issue was a common and urgent concern throughout engagement. (The Committee notes the Minister of Agriculture recused herself from provincial cannabis-related decisions but was committed to bringing this key ALR-related concern to the Province's attention.)

Recommendation 1: Establish an immediate moratorium on all non-soil bound cannabis production and facilities in the ALR pending provincial-level analysis of impacts

Recommendation 2: Following a provincial level analysis, enable the ALC to establish rules/criteria for cannabis production throughout the ALR; permit cannabis production in the ALR only through application to the ALC

Issue/Rationale:

Federal legalization of non-medical cannabis will lead to land use issues not previously contemplated by the B.C. government and its agencies, including the ALC. The potential impacts to the ALR will likely be significant and are not yet fully understood. Advertisements for sale of ALR land and information provided to local governments across B.C. suggest there is currently significant promotion/speculation for cannabis production in the ALR. In early July 2018, the Union of B.C. Municipalities asked the provincial government to put a moratorium on the use of agricultural land to grow cannabis. They have asked that this moratorium remain in place until there is a comprehensive review and consultation with local governments.

The size and scale of cannabis facilities in the ALR is a growing concern across B.C. In Central Saanich on Vancouver Island, a proposal to build 21 greenhouses in the ALR for cannabis production resulted in a 1400-signature petition to the B.C. Legislature in March 2018. The petition requested a prohibition on cannabis production in the ALR. Several B.C. local governments have passed motions asking the Province to place a moratorium on cannabis production in the ALR.

The Committee did not include cannabis as a theme in its Discussion Paper, yet cannabis in the ALR was a commonly-raised concern of stakeholders and the public. The Committee is aware the public wants to provide the Province with feedback on where cannabis production should be allowed in B.C. This was not a question put to the public in B.C.'s 2017 engagement on cannabis. Regardless, the Committee heard near unanimous support from stakeholders and the public for significant restrictions, including an outright ban, on cannabis production in the ALR.

Why is cannabis production in the ALR such a significant concern?

- The ALR is a limited land resource and B.C. has limited prime agricultural land (agricultural land capability classes 1-4); many cannabis production facilities are expected to be both non-soil bound (i.e. cement-bottomed) and to cover large tracts of arable land—including some of the highest capability lands. The anticipated scale of these structures will damage the land base and permanently alienate large tracts of land from agricultural use.
- ALR land is cheaper and more expansive than industrial land. Competition for land for cannabis production is already impacting the ALR and compounding other speculative factors that are driving up the price of farmland in B.C. ALR land is being purchased and existing

greenhouses are being converted for cannabis production. Agriculture stakeholders are concerned about large cannabis operators with substantial financial resources squeezing out local farmers.

- Food production in the ALR is a key public interest. Displacement of vegetable crops for cannabis (conversion of greenhouses) is viewed by many as impacting B.C. food choice and security.
- Incompatibility of cannabis with other agricultural uses, including competition for resources (e.g. significant water requirements for cannabis production) is a key concern in many parts of the province.
- The business risk of large scale cannabis production has not been assessed, including the potential for cannabis enterprises to go bankrupt and leave abandoned structures on the ALR. Reclamation of greenhouse structures is a key concern.
- The extent of nuisance and non-compliance impacts from cannabis production in the ALR has not been assessed by the Province with either the ALC or local governments.
- Local governments are very concerned about cannabis production in the ALR. The Union of B.C. Municipalities asked the Committee to carefully examine the means of production of recreational cannabis to determine if the expected industrial-style production is the best use of B.C.'s limited agricultural land. Cannabis production is resource-intensive and local governments want the ability to manage where cannabis facilities can be built. Local government would prefer cannabis greenhouse production to be outside the ALR and in industrial and light industrial areas where municipal services already exist.
- Other impacts to the agricultural land base are unknown, including the interface with neighbouring farms, processing requirements, and commercial traffic in farm areas.
- Odour issues from cannabis production facilities are a key concern. Unlike livestock farmers who fertilize their land during certain times of the year, cannabis odour is pungent and intrusive and continuously creates a negative effect to those residing in the vicinity.

Part III: Key Issues under Consideration for Final Report

As has been pointed out, this report constitutes interim findings and will be followed in the fall by a second, final report to the Minister. There is still a great deal of ongoing work being done, particularly in the area of potential regulatory change.

At the centre of all future recommendations is the need for a broad government-wide recognition of agriculture as a key natural resource sector—and economic generator—in this province.

The Committee is intending to provide recommendations to the Minister that will further ensure the revitalization of both the ALR and of the ALC, and that will assist the Province in developing an “agriculture-first” mind-set throughout B.C. Many of these matters are regulatory in nature; some are policy oriented; and some involve new programs that will ensure the long term viability of the ALR.

Issues under further discussion and analysis generally fall into the following categories, but are not limited to:

Regulatory changes needed to preserve the productive capacity of the ALR

- Fill regulations on ALR
- Farm home plate
- Diversified Farm Use Area
- Greenhouse considerations
- Commercial composting

The Encouragement of farming and ranching in the ALR

- Government support for farmers and ranchers:
 - Access to credit;
 - Access to programs; and
 - Support for new entrants
- Access to land
- Agriculture extension services
- Examine the farm income threshold for farm property tax class
- The need for a provincial agriculture advisory council

Administrative and Program changes

- ALC outreach and education:
 - Province-wide communication plan;
 - Memorandum of understanding development with ministries and agencies; and
 - Real estate industry education outreach (regulations surrounding advertising in ALR and licensing course on ALR purpose and regulations)
- Ministry of Agriculture programming:
 - Cumulative impact assessments (e.g. Agricultural Land Use Inventories);
 - Agricultural impact assessments;

- Impact of climate change on productivity in ALR; and
 - Farm succession planning
- Memoranda of understanding to cover the working relationship between the ALC and the Ministry of Agriculture
- Funding and resource issues

This is not a complete list of current and future considerations by the Committee; the Committee continues to move forward on a number of important issues, in different sectors and regions. The Committee will also use results and analyses from public consultation, including the Committee's 'What We Heard Report,' to inform potential areas for recommendations in its final report.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee - Terms of Reference

Purpose:

The Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee for the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) (Advisory Committee) will provide strategic advice and policy guidance to the Minister, and will be responsible for delivering recommendations on how to best achieve the mandate commitment of "Revitalizing the ALR and ALC" based on the outcome of a broad engagement process with stakeholders across the province.

Outcomes:

The Advisory Committee will provide recommendations to the Minister on matters related to revitalization of ALR and ALC; specifically, to inform potential changes to the current legislative, regulatory, and administrative framework. The Advisory Committee is not a decision-making body, all decisions rest with the Minister and the government.

Principles:

To ensure a focused review, the following principles provide additional parameters:

- Work will be forward looking, and focus on the future of the ALR and ALC;
- Recommendations will work towards improving the purposes of the ALR and ALC;
- Establish fair and unbiased evaluations of policy issues that are challenging the purposes of the ALR and ALC and also evaluate what is working well;
- Recommendations will come with clear identification of the problem, goals (desired end state), objectives (end-results that contribute to goals, rationale and a proposed solution or strategy (how to achieve and objective).
- Where possible, data/information to validate magnitude and the impacts (both positive and negative) will be included with recommendations.
- Recommendations need to be legally sound, and achievable.

Membership and Governance:

The Advisory Committee will report directly to the Minister and will have an appointed Chair to provide neutral and unencumbered leadership.

Membership is determined by the Minister, and includes representatives from across the province that has knowledge and experience of the ALR and understands the ALC.

Deliverables:

- Detailed work plan, budget and engagement plan to be approved by Minister;
- Monthly reports on progress to implement work plan and achievement of expected deliverables;
- Provide input on a discussion paper to be used to guide broad public engagement;
- Conduct regional engagement in seven communities across the province;

- Early recommendation report on proposed legislative amendments to be considered by the Minister based on consultations and research findings (due in April 2018); and,
- Final recommendation report.

Term:

Advisory Committee members are requested to commit for a one year term from the date of the initiation meeting.

Confidentiality:

The Advisory Committee members are expected to hold their conversations in confidence. Members must not discuss or disclose the nature or content of these conversations with the public or the media as Cabinet confidentiality applies to advice and recommendations to be considered by a Minister or by the Executive Council (Cabinet). Similarly, written submissions and background materials prepared to inform discussions must not be disclosed publically, without prior permission. All deliverables must be submitted to the Minister for approval on a schedule of check-in points up to the final deliverable due dates.

Meetings:

The Advisory Committee is expected to meet at least once per month, and organize face to face meetings to coincide with engagement face to face sessions in seven communities across the province.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Chair

- Responsible for ensuring all deliverables are fully completed on time and presented to the Minister according to the timelines.
- Responsible for ensuring that all deliverables are: of good quality, clear, based on verified information, unbiased and address the purpose of the Advisory Committee.
- Sets agenda for meetings and ensures meetings achieve their purposes.
- Makes decisions on allocating specific work to the members.
- Requests advice from Ministry staff on aspects of the work that relate to government processes to ensure that recommendations can be implemented.
- Attends and participates in meetings.
- Provides policy and strategic advice to guide the initiative.
- Participate and/or lead regional engagement sessions.
- Contribute to the development of early and final recommendations for the Minister.
- Identifies issues or conflicts as they arise for the Minister.
- Works with the ministry staff to support coordination of the overall initiative.

Members

- Attend and participates in meetings.
- Provides policy and strategic advice to guide the initiative.

- Participate in regional engagement sessions.
- Contribute to the development of early and final recommendations for the Minister.

Remuneration:

Members will volunteer their time, and be reimbursed travel expenses as per the provincial government guidelines for public servant travel.

Secretariat Support:

The Advisory Committee will be supported by ministry staff, which will be responsible for secretariat support.

Ministry Involvement:

The Ministry will be responsible for, and will need input from the Advisory Committee on the following items:

- Creating the final, overall engagement strategy and plan.
- The discussion paper for January 2018 that will launch engagement.
- Conducting targeted stakeholder and the online portions of the engagement process.
- Preparing any documents related to legislative changes, program changes or policy changes.

The Ministry may also provide a representative to accompany the Advisory Committee at the regional meetings as needed.

Appendix 2: Bibliography

Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee for ALR and ALC Revitalization Interim Report to Minister – Bibliography – July 2018

Throughout the development of these recommendations, the Committee considered previous analyses of the ALR and ALC, the current and past authority and functions of the ALC, farmland protection in other jurisdictions, and the results of stakeholder meetings and public responses along with expert reports and other government reference documents. The following documents, reports and submissions were received and reviewed by the Committee:

Note: *** denotes where a report is available in hard copy form only.

Key Readings and Background Documents:

The Committee reviewed the following documents as background prior to embarking on its consultation process.

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Regulation:

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ALC Policies:

This links to the ALC website pages that lists all ALC policies including the Governance Policy:
<https://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alc/content/legislation-regulation/alc-policies>

ALC/ALR History, Studies and Other Information:

"Agriculture Capability and the ALR Fact Sheet", ALC website,
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ATTACHMENT 4

Summary Table: BC Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee Recommendations and Provincial Government Response

Recommended Action/Highlighted Issues from the BC Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee	Provincial Government Response	Resulting Impact in the ALR
Recommendation – Establish an immediate moratorium on all non-soil bound cannabis production and facilities in the ALR pending provincial-level analysis of impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No moratorium in place. • Under the changes to the Provincial ALR regulations (July 2018), cannabis production is a permitted farm use. • No indication or announcement from the Province on additional examination of impacts on cannabis production in the ALR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued use and targeting of agricultural land by cannabis producers/industries to establish facilities in the ALR. • Loss of farmland and reduced capacity to grow food on farmland across the Province.
Recommendation – Following a provincial level analysis, enable the ALC to establish rules/criteria for cannabis production throughout the ALR; permit cannabis production in the ALR only through application to the ALC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indication or announcement from the Province on additional examination of impacts on cannabis production in the ALR. • Under the changes to the Provincial ALR regulations (July 2018), cannabis production is a permitted farm use. • Rules/criteria from the Province are limited and contained only the ALR regulations identifying production and cultivation of cannabis as a farm use. • Cannabis production as a farm use is permitted outright by the Province and requires no application to the ALC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued use and targeting of agricultural land by cannabis producers/industries to establish facilities in the ALR. • Loss of farmland and reduced capacity to grow food on farmland across the Province. • Limited rules and criteria from the Province on the production of cannabis in the ALR is subject to potential abuse and arising non-compliant activities – All of which negatively impacts agricultural viability. • No authority given to local government to manage or restrict the production of cannabis on ALR land within their jurisdictions.
Highlighted the issue of a number of moratorium requests coming from various local governments across the Province to stop the production of cannabis in the ALR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response from the Province on the numerous moratorium requests forwarded from local governments from across the Province (including Richmond) and the UBCM executive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued use and targeting of agricultural land by cannabis producers/industries to establish facilities in the ALR. • Loss of farmland and reduced capacity to grow food on farmland across the Province.
Based on the committee's public consultation, highlighted unanimous support from stakeholders and the public for significant restrictions, including an outright ban, on cannabis production in the ALR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The production of cannabis in the ALR remains a permitted farm use under the regulations. • No action from the Provincial Government to ban the production of cannabis in the ALR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued use and targeting of agricultural land by cannabis producers/industries to establish facilities in the ALR. • Loss of farmland and reduced capacity to grow food on farmland across the Province.