

Strategic Agricultural Plan



District of
North Cowichan

May, 2001

**NORTH COWICHAN
STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL PLAN
ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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**The District of North Cowichan gratefully acknowledges all who contributed
to the preparation of this Plan**

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STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL PLAN

OVERVIEW/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Farming has been a mainstay of the community and economy in North Cowichan from its settlement in the 1850's. Agriculture continues to make a vital contribution to the employment and economic base, with direct employment (1996) of over 400 directly and generating annual farms sales of approximately \$13 Million. Of the Municipality's 20,400 hectares, over 6,250 hectares are in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and 4,793 ha. are farmed.



However, farmers have encountered growing threats to their economic and social stability characterized by a declining land base, development pressures, burdensome regulations, environmental constraints and competitive disadvantages with their Mainland counterparts.

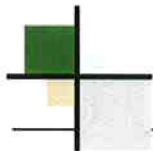
Recognizing that the survival of agriculture depends on developing a more competitive base, and stronger consumer support, farmers in North Cowichan, through the Cowichan Agricultural Society (CAS), in 1998, assisted in launching an initiative to establish the Island Farmers Alliance (IFA), to protect and advance their interests. The plan was prepared through a series of public workshops. Interested parties from throughout the Valley participated in setting the goals and action steps under the guidance of the Steering Committee consultants.

With the launching of the District of North Cowichan's Official Community Plan review, the Municipality decided to include, as a priority, the development of a Strategic Agricultural Plan, recognizing not only the importance of agriculture to the economy but also the vital role of the farming community in its social structure.

The Strategic Agricultural Plan identifies issues that threaten or present obstacles to the future stability of the agricultural industry in the Municipality and the region and opportunities that can help strengthen the agricultural community and economy. It proposes goals, objectives and actions to address these issues and opportunities, and provides direction and co-ordination for actions of the District of North Cowichan, the Agricultural Society and producer and other groups that have activities related to agriculture. The Strategy promotes an entrepreneurial spirit for agriculture, and development of the small farm sector based on local marketing. It has a Vision Statement, 6 main Goals and approximately 60 proposed action steps to achieve them.

The Vision:

The agricultural sector in the Cowichan Valley will be healthy economically, socially and environmentally. It will consist of a medium scale farm component that markets through traditional commodity systems, and a small-scale farm component that markets both basic production and value added products to local and regional markets. The industry will be noted for its diversity and its support for, and from the community.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To Improve the Planning Framework for Agriculture

Good land is essential as a basis for production. For agriculture to be successful in the region, it will be necessary to continue to protect the agricultural land base from subdivision and non-farm development, provide more opportunities for small farms and increase agricultural input on planning decisions.

To Support and Enhance Small Farm Sector

The small farm sector has been largely ignored by most of the programs and agencies that support agriculture. Training, education, research, identification of market opportunities and of local farm and business development opportunities are all needed for the small farm sector to grow. Also, more opportunities to generate income from non-farm activities in the form of home businesses will be needed.

To Expand the Marketing Opportunities

Revitalizing farm sector will mean enhancing regional and provincial marketing opportunities for medium/large scale farms, and enhancing local marketing opportunities for small farms. To support small farms, value added processing of agricultural products, and diversification of economic opportunities through agri-tourism will also be necessary. There may also be opportunities to expand green house production using waste heat from the pulp mill at Crofton, or by using other waste as an energy source.

To Improve Communications With the Community

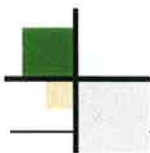
For the other goals to be achieved, the community and local governments and organizations must support the agricultural industry. This will mean increasing political and public awareness of the local agricultural industry and the issues it faces. This can be accomplished through a strong Education in the Classroom Program with School District 79, farm tours and events, and informing rural landowners about farming operations.

To Improve Land and Water Stewardship, Conservation and Management

In addition to good land base, agriculture needs access to water for irrigation. The Strategy proposes to improve access to water and water management. Water is a limited resource and must be used wisely. That means improving information related to soil and water management and farm management skills and practices related to water use and water quality.

To Reduce Costs and Regulatory Barriers

Like any other small business, agriculture is subject to many regulations and requirements that add to the cost of business. Some of these are necessary and appropriate. Others may be unnecessary burdens on the industry. The goal is to reduce or remove burdens.



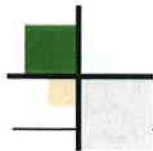
Implementing this Strategy is complicated because the goals are broad, and affect many community and government organizations. The Strategy recommends that the Plan be adopted as part of the Official Community Plan, and that a Committee be established to advocate for implementation of the strategy, coordinate implementation actions, and review progress on the Strategy and report on a regular basis. While the plan was prepared through the auspices of North Cowichan, the goals and objectives are valley wide. Consequently, many of the action steps involve organizations and agencies beyond the municipality. These include:

- BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
- The Land Reserve Commission
- Cowichan Valley Regional District
- The Agricultural Society
- Island Farmers Association
- The Cowichan Valley Smallholders Society
- The Regional Economic Development Commission
- Cowichan Tourism
- S.D. 79
- Community Futures Development Corporation

It is expected that the cooperation of all these agencies will be necessary to see the plan appropriately implemented.

In addition, some of the actions are provincial in scope, and will have to be implemented through support of the Vancouver Island Agri-Food Action Plan and Trust Strategy, and other provincial level initiatives.





North Cowichan Agricultural Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture in North Cowichan is subject to many of the same pressures as agriculture elsewhere in B.C. and across Canada. These pressures include low commodity prices, high input costs, land loss to urban and rural residential development, and global competition in the market encouraged by international trade agreements. While these realities are a matter of local, national and provincial political concern, responsibility for solutions to these challenges rests primarily at the provincial and national level. (See Appendix A)

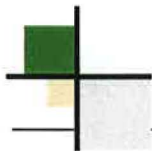
Many issues and concerns of farmers can, however, be addressed through local planning and decision-making as well as by provincial initiatives. These include:

- Land loss and conflict with urban development,
- Access to water for irrigation,
- Adequate surface water drainage and field tile outlet,
- Development and strengthening of agricultural organizations,
- Local marketing, and new initiatives such as combining agriculture and tourism,
- Producer and community education,
- Advocacy for local interests with local, provincial and federal governments on the general "pressures" described above.

At a local level, the community, government and both local and regional farm organizations can address these concerns. The focus of this Strategic Plan for Agriculture in North Cowichan is on those matters that can be addressed locally.

A Strategic Plan represents a commitment for change. It makes choices between a range of possible issues and opportunities, actions that can be taken, and organizations that can take action. For an agricultural strategic plan to be successful, choices have to be agreed upon, the implications have to be understood, and the responsibility for implementation shared between local and regional governments, farm organizations, growers, marketing agencies, retailers, distributors and processors and consumers. The ingredients of an industry leading initiative are present in the District of North Cowichan and the Cowichan Valley. These include: a good resource base, a dynamic agricultural community including several farm and producer organizations, a farmers market, an agricultural awareness initiative, a community land trust and an industry base that includes some leading edge initiatives such as combining grape and wine production with tourism. Also, the commitment by the District of North Cowichan to undertake the development of a strategic agricultural plan provides both a foundation for and a momentum toward future change.





The purpose of this North Cowichan Agricultural Strategy is to focus and co-ordinate decisions and actions of the participating and non-participatory organization(s). The Strategy sets direction for the municipality, the Agricultural Society, key producers and other community groups that can influence the future of agriculture in the District.

This Strategy places most emphasis on taking advantage of opportunities and competitive advantages that exist in the area and on addressing local situations that result in reduced competitiveness relative to other comparable areas. This means that the Strategy does not focus on issues such as tariffs or trade practices that are not under local control and that are difficult to influence through local actions. Although these issues are important to the future of the industry, there are other organizations such as the Island Farmers Alliance and commodity groups that are better positioned to influence senior government decisions and actions. This Strategy therefore focuses on co-operative actions to address general issues, such as land use planning, services and infrastructure, producer training, public education, value added processing and local marketing. All these aspects are under local control or can be addressed or directly influenced by local actions.

Specifically, this Strategy:

- Documents the current status of the agriculture industry, and its resource base in North Cowichan;
- Identifies the constraints and opportunities facing agriculture;
- Identifies potential solutions to the challenges facing agriculture;
- Presents innovative ideas for developing a strong agricultural industry;
- Recommends priorities, actions, and participants to successfully achieve solutions;
- Promotes agriculture
- Establishes a monitoring process that:
 - Measures ongoing progress towards plan implementation; and
 - Maintains an activity inventory of the agricultural sector in the community.
 - Incorporates the farm community and the general public in the planning process.

The Strategy was developed between July 2000 and May 2001 through a process of review of past studies and other related information; consultation with the community through open houses, public meetings and focus group activities; and direct consultation with producers, processors, and agency representatives and circulation of a Draft Strategy to involved organizations and Agencies. A Steering Committee consisting of members of the community, local government and farming associations guided the project (see Appendix A for a complete list of participants). The Steering Committee worked with a consulting team of George Penfold, Westland Resource Group, and Paul Guiton of GroundWorks Strategic Marketing Solutions.

Key to the support for, and success of, the North Cowichan Agricultural Strategy will be the willingness of the District of North Cowichan, the Regional District, local agricultural organizations, other community and government organizations, the farm community and the



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community at large to be involved. They will have to commit their time, energy and resources to implementing the strategies that are outlined in this document.



STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

A general description on the current agricultural industry is attached as Appendix C. A more complete description is available in the publication "District of North Cowichan Agriculture Overview" published by the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. These statistics are based on the 1996 census and give a picture of what agriculture was like at that time. In total, there were 242 census farms, farming 4,793 ha, and generating \$13.09 million in gross sales. Average farm size was 19.8 ha., and 34% were under 4 ha. in size. This "data" does not give a clear picture of the pressures on the industry, how farmers are responding to those pressures, and or where the industry is headed. As part of the process of gathering background information, we reviewed the results of the Agricultural Societies' March 2000 forum, contacted key individuals in the community who represent various sectors or activities related to agriculture, and toured the area with the District Agrologist. In addition, a recent survey of producers in South Cowichan, published by the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries was used to examine regional trends. From those sources and from feedback at the initial public meeting in November 2000, we developed the following "picture" of agriculture in the North Cowichan and the Cowichan Valley. This picture is based on the views expressed by the community at the events and opportunities described above.

A list of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints related to agriculture in North Cowichan was created based on background information and input from the public workshops and focus groups. The following section summarises the major themes identified from this process:

a) Current Strengths of Agriculture in the Cowichan Valley

Product quality and diversity

- North Cowichan farmers offer superior quality products, especially compared to imports from outside Canada.
- There is a wide range of different products. The industry is not dependent on a single commodity and the associated price fluctuations. Also, local producers can supply a variety of local product needs.

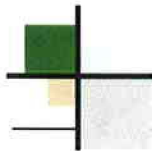
Economic Contribution and Potential

- Agriculture and food production currently makes a substantial contribution to the local economy, both in terms of employment¹ and farm sales.
- A well-developed agriculture sector can offer employment to those displaced (temporarily or permanently) from other resource industries.
- New "rural-lifestyle" farmers are bringing in new capital.

Co-operation and Community Resources

- Local agriculture has already demonstrated a strong sense of co-operation and of community through the Cowichan Agriculture Society.

¹ Agriculture represents 3.4% of workforce in Cowichan Valley, 1996, compared to 4.5% in logging and forestry.



- The Cowichan Valley Smallholders Society operates a successful Farmers' Market, which provides an excellent outlet for local farm products.

Consumer loyalty

- Vancouver Island consumers have stated a willingness to support local producers and buy local products.

Processing

- The area is already seeing the start of a vibrant small scale processing industry (meat, cheese and wine.)

Location

- The District is conveniently located to supply major Vancouver Island markets (Victoria and Nanaimo), and to draw "agri-tourists" from those centres.
- The local agricultural industry is located close to other agricultural areas, so that initiatives and infrastructure can be shared where appropriate.

b) Current Weaknesses of Agriculture in the Cowichan Valley

Lack of community awareness of agriculture

- Local government is not as well informed about the contribution of the agriculture industry and its issues as it could be.
- The general public is not familiar with the contribution of the agriculture industry and its issues.
- Agriculture is not included in economic development planning.

Lack of infrastructure

- There is a shortage of processing resources in the area.
- There are limited local training programs for farmers and prospective employees.

Lack of access to water

- There is a water deficit for production during the summer months. Farmers do not have assured access to water, even though their land is in the ALR.

High input costs

- Most inputs come from the Mainland, incurring additional freight and ferry charges.
- Cost of land in the District is relatively high for those wishing to expand or enter farming.

Production of low value commodities

- Large areas of land are used for hay production as opposed to higher value crops.



Marketing

- The productive capacity of the supply-managed sectors continues to decline as quotas are transferred from Vancouver Island to other parts of the province.
- Most retailers do not support local producers by retailing locally produced commodities.
- There are limited marketing mechanisms available to local producers and producers have limited marketing skills and time to undertake marketing activities
- Agriculture is not included in promotion of local tourist attractions.

Regulation

- Environmental regulations place additional burdens on agriculture.
- Planning regulations and bylaws do not establish sufficient separation between agriculture and new development or incompatible land uses.

c) Opportunities for Agriculture in the Cowichan Valley

Land Utilization

- Land use for agriculture (especially in smallholdings) will become more attractive as opportunities for generating revenue are identified.

Added Value

- Higher value, unique niche market products can be developed. Small operations can be more flexible in adapting to new opportunities.
- The District could focus on high value end products, such as wine and cheese.
- There could be a more integrated industry with production, processing and marketing at the local level.
- Additional processing facilities can provide expanded opportunities for employment, primary production and marketing.

Local Marketing

- Small operations are best suited to meet the needs of local markets.
- Direct marketing (Farm gate and Farmers' Market) increases the margin to producers.
- Agri-tourism and culinary tourism initiatives would offer economic benefits both to the agriculture sector and the community as a whole.

Recycling

- Agriculture can provide opportunities for by-product recycling such as using energy or energy producing by-products from the pulp mill and other industries to heat greenhouses.

d) Constraints to Agriculture in the Cowichan Valley

Loss of the “critical mass” required for viable agriculture production

- If the agriculture industry continues to decline, loss of farming capacity could result in:
- Loss of farms, infrastructure and secondary processing.
- Vancouver Island residents having a greater reliance on externally produced food.



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- Loss of economic activity,
- Loss of green space,
- Taking land out of ALR for purposes other than agriculture,
- Loss of farming skills.

Lack of connection with consumers and community leaders, retailers.

- Low awareness leads to reduced support from local government and community.
- National chains do not need “local” supply – therefore markets will cease to exist.

Cost of production.

- Local farmers will not be able to respond to the pressure of cheap outside food - “Cheap” becomes the only criterion for selecting food.
- The cost of getting feed and supplies to the Island rises more than inflation.

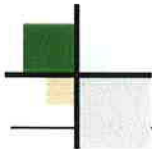
Environment

- Continued conflict between fisheries priorities (Fisheries and Oceans Canada) and agriculture makes it impossible to farm economically.
- Proposed Endangered Species Legislation may have a negative effect on agriculture.

Water supply

- Lack of sufficient quantity for irrigation at critical times reduces crop yields and limits the types of products that can be grown.





A VISION FOR AGRICULTURE

If agriculture is to be successful over the long term in the Cowichan Valley, it must be successful at all levels: the individual farm, commodity sectors and “industry” including processing and sales. From the public consultation, it is clear that there are serious concerns about the future of agriculture in the Cowichan Valley. There are many questions about the future of agriculture in the District such as: What will agriculture look like 20 years from now? What will the key sectors be? Where in the District will it be located? How will production be marketed? .

Although the consultation process did not focus specifically on development of a Vision Statement, the issues that have to be addressed and the opportunities that were identified as priorities create a vision for agriculture. The Steering Committee developed the following statement that was supported at the final public consultation: (the Vision is expressed as a statement of the agricultural sector at a future point in time – in this case, in 15 to 20 years):

The agricultural sector in the Cowichan Valley will be healthy economically, socially and environmentally. It will consist of a medium scale farm component that markets through traditional commodity systems, and a small-scale farm component that markets both basic production and value added products to local and regional markets. The industry will be noted for its quality, diversity and its support for, and from the community.

If this Vision is to be achieved, answers to the questions posed above are necessary, and actions to implement those answers will have to be taken. The following section of this report provides recommendations for actions and responsibility for implementation of them. The Goals, Objectives, Actions and Responsibility that follow form the basis for a long-term strategy to realise the Vision outlined above.



STRATEGIC GOALS

The following Goals were developed based on the input from the public consultation and Steering Committee. They are based on organizing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints analysis into specific themes and translating those points into the Vision Statement and general Goal statements. Specific issues or opportunities are then addressed through Objectives under the respective Goals.

GOAL 1: Improve the Planning Framework for Agriculture

i. Context

Developing a supportive local planning framework is essential if Agriculture is to change and grow stronger over the long term. The current review of the Official Community Plan in North Cowichan provides an excellent opportunity to provide the necessary connections between goals and objectives for agriculture, and the municipalities land use plan. Planning for agriculture in the past has been based on the assumption that the most desirable form of agricultural production is medium to large-scale “commercial” farms that generate enough revenues to support at least the farm operator, if not the entire household. Smaller farms that do not support an individual or a household have been referred to as “hobby farms” and have generally been at best seen as an activity to be accepted to the extent that it already exists, but not to be encouraged. Information such as the Canada Land Inventory, with its emphasis on cereal crops, formal research programs, the agricultural service sector, federal and provincial assistance and advisory programs and provincial and most local plans and policies have focussed on commercial agriculture. That approach is understandable given that the majority, 75% or more, of the general food supply comes from “commercial” farms.

However, the above assumption of what agriculture is, or should be, does not fit well with the reality of North Cowichan or the Cowichan Valley. In the Agricultural Land Reserve within the District, only 243, or 18.4% of the land parcels are 8.0 ha. (20 acres) or larger. Most (843 or 63.6%) of parcels in the ALR are between 0.4 ha. And 8.0 ha. (1 to 20 acres). The remaining 239 parcels (18% of the total) are less than 0.4 ha. (less than 1 acre) and are most likely in residential use¹. The distribution of these parcels within zones of the current Zoning Bylaw is shown in Table I.

¹ ALR Subdivision Application Review (1998 – 2000) District of North Cowichan, Barry E. Smith, BCMAFF and District of North Cowichan, February 2001

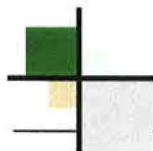


Table 1: Current Zoning of ALR Land by Parcel Size²

SIZE	Current Zoning				Other Non-Ag. Zones (O), and Reserves (R)
	A1	A2	A3 (Restricted)	A4	
8.0 ha. and larger (243 total)	173 (71%)	46 (19%)	7 (3%)	5 (2%)	(O) 8 (3%) (R) 3 (1%)
0.4 to 8.0 ha. (843 total)	215 (26%)	450 (53%)	88 (10%)	3 (0.4%)	(O) 40 (5%) (R) 47 (6%)
Total - 1083	388 (36%)	496 (59%)	95 (11%)	8 (0.7%)	98 (12%)

The A2 and A3 zones permit agriculture, but do not permit “feedlots, fur farms, piggeries, poultry farms, or mushroom farms – Bylaw No. 295012(4)”. The A4 (Rural Resource) Zone does not permit agricultural use, only forestry. (See APPENDIX E)

Most of the consultation discussion focussed on the details of the OCP and Zoning Bylaw that need to be addressed as part of the current review. The objectives protect current “commercial” and small-scale agriculture; encourage new small-scale, value added and sales uses; as well as diversifying the agricultural and economic base in rural areas. Current Official Community Plan (OCP) and Zoning policies include most of the lands that have agricultural potential. Approximately 82% of the larger parcels and 80% of the smaller parcels in the ALR are permitted to have agricultural uses. In addition, all small rural lots should be allowed to have agricultural uses regardless of their ALR status. The type of agriculture permitted on these lots should be compatible with adjacent rural residential and other rural uses. Agricultural lands need to be protected from removal from ALR status. (See Appendix F)

As part of the OCP and Zoning Bylaw review, consideration should be given to including ALR areas that are currently not permitted to have agricultural use, and that are not restricted by adjacent development or other factors, in designations and zones that permit agricultural uses. Larger parcels should be maintained for long-term agricultural use. Creating new lots for relatives should not be permitted. Allow only one house on lots of 4 hectares or less, and require houses to be located near the frontage of the lot rather than in the middle of the lot (“home base” concept.) A second home for farm purposes (e.g., joint farm ownership, farm labour) should be allowed on lots larger than 4 ha. Where several houses are required for a large farming operation, homes could be clustered, communal septic waste treatment used, and titles could be held in strata. In addition, adequate setbacks for new housing adjacent to agricultural areas, and for new agricultural uses adjacent to housing should be required. Setback obligations

² Parcelization - District of North Cowichan, Barry E. Smith, BCMAFF and District of North Cowichan, February 2001



should be shared. Critical urban/agriculture edges should be identified, and buffering techniques used to lessen the potential for land use conflict.

Diversification of agriculture means that some land not suitable for traditional crops could be suitable for other uses such as grapes, or raspberries. For example, there are areas in the District that are not zoned for agricultural use and are not in the ALR that have potential for grapes and berries. These areas may have slope or drainage limitations that result in a low capability rating for field crops, but do have characteristics that give them good potential for uses other than field crops. This land could be an important resource for future agricultural diversification and growth. (See Appendix D)

There may also be rural areas where agricultural and other businesses such as equipment sales, processing, greenhouses, mushroom farming or fish farming could be establish on non-agricultural lands. Business that is related to agriculture, but which is not primary land based production, should be directed to those areas unless they are part of the farm operation. The municipal plan should allow for these uses in the rural area.

Farm and smallholdings should be permitted to support activities that are part of the household. Commercial, trade or other activities that are "home based" business should be supported. Upper limits must be defined after which the business would have to relocate to a commercial area. (e.g., number of employees, building area etc.) Also, the municipal plan should provide for the opportunity for several farmers to combine value added processing and/or marketing on one farm. For example, one farm could have a commercial kitchen that would be used by several farms. A farm with a good "farm gate" location could retail for several farms.

Agriculture needs to be recognized as an important component of the local economy and community, especially when making public decisions. The farm community could support the election of agricultural representation to council, and agricultural representation on advisory committees should be encouraged. Agricultural education and awareness initiatives are also needed to keep council and committees informed about emerging ideas and changes, and problems have to be addressed. For example, the Agricultural Society could have an annual event or tour for council and committees. The Agricultural Society could also have a land use committee in place to monitor significant changes in municipal and provincial policy and make representation to the Regional Board, District Council and/or the province as necessary. The municipality could consider greater focus on agricultural issues through mechanisms such an Agriculture Advisory Committee.



ii. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Protect the Agricultural Land Base

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Remove no more quality land (CLI Classes 1 through 4) out of ALR. No reduction in agriculture land base.	LRC ³ , DNC, CVRD, CAS ⁴	Ongoing ⁵
Identify, and zone to permit agriculture use, productive lands not currently zoned for agricultural use or in the ALR	DNC, CAS, MAFF	Medium
Keep current large agricultural parcels. Restrict subdivision, housing, development on agriculture lands	LRC, DNC	Medium
Identify critical urban/agriculture edges, and use buffering or other techniques to lessen the potential for conflict.	DNC, CVRD, MAFF	Medium
Make better use of existing serviced lands by allowing higher densities for urban development and housing.	DNC, CVRD	Medium

Objective 2: Provide More Opportunities for Small Farms in The OCP, Zoning Bylaw

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Allow appropriate agricultural production and a diversified product base on all rural lands (including non-ALR lands).	DNC, CVRD, CAS	Medium
Have suitable land zoned for value added, processing, marketing facilities.	DNC, CVRD	Medium
Allow opportunities for combined or co-operative on farm processing and sales	DNC, CVRD, LRC	Medium
Allow on farm diversification, both agriculturally related as well as other uses that support household income.	DNC, CVRD, LRC	Medium

Objective 3: Increase Agricultural Input on Planning Decisions

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Improve agricultural awareness among regulators and improve communication with District and Regional Councils.	CAS, CVSS, DNC, CVRD	Medium
Provide agriculture representation on local and regional government APC's and/or other appropriate committees	DNC, CVRD, CAS	Medium
The Agriculture Society should be informed of all major planning issues and with other groups, should provide input to APC's and council.	CAS, CVSS	Ongoing

³ The organization indicated in bold letters should have the primary responsibility for implementation of the action step.

⁴ Land Reserve Commission (LRC), District of North Cowichan (DNC) Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF), Cowichan Valley Smallholders Society (CVSS), Cowichan Agricultural Society (CAS)

⁵ Ongoing (continuous and long term attention), Immediate (1 to 2 years), Medium (2 to 3 years)



GOAL 2: Support and Enhance Small Farm Sector

i. Context

In North Cowichan, the average farm size in 1996 was just less than 50 acres, but one third of all farms were less than 10 acres⁶. As of 1996, the gross sales from farms in North Cowichan (1995 dollars) were:

Table 2: Gross Farm Sales

1996 Census	North Cowichan		Cowichan Valley RD		B.C.	
Gross Farm Sales	No. of Farms	% of N.C. Farms	No. of Farms	% of C.V. Farms	No. of Farms	% of BC Farms
< \$2,500	53	22%	166	21%	3,813	17%
\$2,500 - \$24,999	145	60%	461	60%	11,130	51%
\$25,000 - \$99,999	16	7%	60	8%	3,492	16%
\$100,000 and over	28	11%	85	11%	3,400	16%
Total	242	100%	772	100%	21,835	100%

Source: B.C. Stats

Small farms, in terms of both land and revenue represent a sizeable proportion of North Cowichan's agriculture industry. At the same time, gross revenues (not net income) for 82% of these farmers are less than \$25,000. That means small farms do not generate enough revenue to support a "household" or individual without income from other sources such as off-farm employment, or a second business that is not part of the farming operation. These so called "part-time" farms are part of the structure of agriculture in North Cowichan, and represent a desired lifestyle by many rural residents. Their economic value to the community and to the industry is significant. A recent study of smallholdings (4 ha. or 10 acres or less)⁷ showed that in total, reported sales are approximately half of the value of farms larger than 10 ha. In other words, one third of the value of farm products sold comes from smallholdings. Given the large number of smallholdings and the limited opportunities for agriculture to expand on large holdings, a focus on small farms is both appropriate, and a significant opportunity.

A number of concerns have been expressed about the need to maintain a critical mass of agricultural activity within the District. The main concern is that, if agriculture is permitted to decline in the area, it will reach a point where it becomes even less viable to farm, as a result of increased costs to get farm inputs from non-local sources, and to market to destinations outside of the region or beyond Vancouver Island. The "worst case" scenario is that, in the long run, agriculture may cease to exist as a commercial land use.

Much of the discussion in this planning process has focussed on providing more support for existing small farmers and attracting new (young) farmers into the district. A healthy small-scale farm sector would not only support a desired lifestyle by many rural residents, and create

⁶ District of North Cowichan: Agricultural Overview, Barry E. Smith, BCMAFF, February 2001

⁷ Small Lot Agriculture, Mark Robbins, BCMAF



additional part and full time employment opportunities, but the demand for “inputs” and services would help insure that these services would remain in the region over the long term to serve both small scale and “commercial” scale farms. At present, there is little assistance available to these small farms in terms of research, business and farm management, or marketing. The focus of strategies to help small farms is to address these gaps.

ii. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Revitalize the Small Farm Sector in the District of North Cowichan

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Identify products (including unconventional agricultural products, such as trees, botanical forest products, fish farming, medicinal crops etc.) with substantial market potential that are suitable for local production, based on local soils, climate etc.	REDC, MAFF, External expertise, as required ⁸	Immediate
Examine the possibility of establishing a “land-for lease” registry ⁹	CFDC, REDC, DNC, CVRD, CAS	Medium
Develop extension/training programmes for North Cowichan small farmers, especially: • “Beginners’ guide” • Business opportunities for local small farmers ▪ Small business management ▪ Home-based business management ▪ Direct marketing	IFA, REDC, CAS, MAFF, Malaspina, UBC or other educational institute	Medium
Promote Agriculture as an Economic Development sector	REDC, CoC , CFDC, DNC, CVRD	Ongoing

GOAL 3: Expand Local Marketing Opportunities

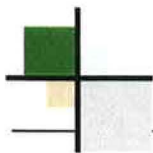
i. Context

One of the greatest challenges facing the agriculture industry is effective marketing. Effective marketing includes, identification of product opportunities, market research, identification of potential outlets, direct marketing and flexibility to market locally within the regulated commodities.

The importance of marketing is endorsed in the literature regarding challenges facing agriculture across North America, provincial and Island Farmers Alliance initiatives, the South Cowichan

⁸ Regional Economic Development Commission (REDC), Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC), Island Farmers’ Alliance (IFA), Malaspina University College (Malaspina), University of British Columbia (UBC), Chamber of Commerce (CoC), Agricultural Awareness Committee (AAC), Cowichan Watershed Council (CWC), School District No. 79 (S.D. 79), B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC), Warmlands Cooperative (WLC).

⁹ This “registry” would allow landowners with land for lease to identify themselves and their property so that farmers looking for land to lease could easily identify what is available.



survey and feedback from the public workshops in North Cowichan. Marketing issues are quite different, depending on the size of operation.

Larger Operations

For the larger operations, key issues have been identified as:

- Quota allocations proportional to demand and consumption on Vancouver Island
- Access to major grocery chains – wholesale and retail
- Access to grading and processing facilities

Smaller Operations

Small farmers often do not own quota that permits them to operate within the Marketing Board system. In addition, they do not have the resources to market their products to larger wholesale and retail chains. Small farmers are faced with:

- Limited capacity to supply
- High per unit cost of shipping
- Limited sales and marketing resources – time and expertise
- Limited sales and marketing budgets
- Limited inspection and/or grading facilities

Based on the results of the South Cowichan study, the preferred method of marketing by small farmers is direct sales to consumers through “farm gate” or off farm sales or farmers markets. Local marketing-related initiatives could be helpful to smaller farmers to increase production and sales volumes and over the long term, to help put unused farmland back into production. Warmlands Cooperative is one local initiative that helps coordinate and facilitate marketing of local production.

If local marketing and value added is to be successful over the long term, quality control, especially with meat products will be necessary. To ensure quality control, either a strong system of local quality standards and inspection, or federal inspection of livestock and poultry processing facilities may be necessary.

Agri-Tourism

The workshops also identified agri-tourism as offering significant potential for the agriculture sector in North Cowichan. While it is important to maintain farming as the primary focus of agricultural activity in the District, there are also a number of benefits to agri-tourism:

- agri-tourism diversifies the farm operation. Adding a new enterprise such as farmer’s market will add another source of income to a farm, and diversification is an ideal risk management strategy.
- agri-tourism attracts customers to farms. If comfortable and interesting attractions are provided, such as a picnic site, playground or a snack bar at a U-pick operation, or providing hay rides to go and cut Christmas trees, will not only draw families to the farm, but they will stay longer.



- agri-tourism contributes to the stability of the agriculture industry.
- agri-tourism is an excellent means of supporting rural communities and businesses. Tourists bring in dollars to local businesses that help keep communities alive and prosperous.
- agri-tourism is an opportunity to increase agricultural awareness and education among the public, and promote agricultural products.¹⁰

Institutions

There appear to be opportunities to tie local agricultural production with food consumption in local institutions, especially School District #79, which offers work experience, meal programs as well as home economics and chef training classes.

ii. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Enhance Marketing Opportunities for Medium/Large Scale Farms

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Lobby for appropriate regional allocation of quota for Vancouver Island Farmers ¹¹	IFA, CAS, Local Marketing Board Reps	Immediate
Participate with IFA Marketing Plans and Programs	CAS, IFA,	Immediate

Objective 2: Enhance Local Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Establish and support permanent location for Farmers' Market	CVSS, CVRD, DNC, City of Duncan, Cowichan Tribes	Medium
Offer extension program in Direct Farm Marketing	MAFF, CAS, IFA, Malaspina, UBC or other educational institute	Medium
Develop appropriate highway signage to local Direct Marketing operations	DNC, BC Ministry of Transportation & Highways	Immediate
Set up a local marketing initiative for local agricultural products selling primarily to local retailers and restaurants	CVSS, CAS, CFDC, HRDC, CoC, WLC	Medium
Set up a system of coordinated distribution for local agricultural products	CAS, CFDC	Medium
Promote local agricultural industry and products to local schools: • Sales of products to breakfast and lunch programmes • Increased awareness in Chef Training program • Increased awareness in Home economics classes • Agriculture in the classroom program	CAS, Marketing Initiative, S.D. 79, SVIDFMA ¹²	Ongoing

¹⁰ Newfoundland and Labrador Agriculture Website, <http://www.gov.nf.ca/agric/Tourism/agristudy.htm>

¹¹ This parallels the Vancouver Island Agri-Food Action Plan and Trust Strategy (IFA, December, 2000)

¹² Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association (SVIDFMA), Cowichan Community Land Trust Society (Land Trust), Cowichan Tourism Association (Cowichan Tourism), Cowichan Tribes (CT)



Objective 3: Establish the Cowichan Valley as a Centre for Value Added Processing of Agricultural Products

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Promote existing wineries and cheese-making	CoC, REDC, CAS, DNC, CVRD	Ongoing
Identify site for potential light industrial park dedicated to small scale food processing	REDC, DNC, CVRD	Medium
Review the need for quality standards and compliance issues, especially for fresh meat,	MAFF, WLC, CAS, CVSS, DNC, Public Health	Medium
Improve methods of by product disposal/ utilization from food processing plants	DNC, CVRD	Medium

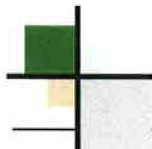
Objective 4: Capitalize on Available Agri-Tourism Opportunities

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Improve co-ordination and promotion of agricultural events/festivals in North Cowichan	Cowichan Tourism , CAS, REDC, Farm Folk, City Folk, WLC	Medium
Co-ordinate agri-tourism with other tourism promotion activities	Cowichan Tourism, CoC, CAS, DNC, CVRD,	Medium
Develop Farmers' Market as a day-trip destination, including agriculture-related activities	CoC, REDC, DNC, CVSS, Cowichan Tourism	Medium
Promote Cowichan Valley as a culinary destination, with regional specialties	Cowichan Tourism, CoC, REDC, CAS, WLC, Chef's Association	Medium
Ensure municipal and provincial regulations facilitate farm-stay accommodations	DNC, CVRD, LRC	Immediate

Objective 5: Expand the Greenhouse Sector Through the Use of Alternative Energy Sources

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Conduct feasibility study on use of by product energy, or energy producing material from mill to heat greenhouses ¹³	REDC, Norske Skog, CFDC, DNC	Medium
Conduct feasibility study on use of other energy sources (e.g., wood by products, coal) to heat greenhouses	REDC, CFDC, DNC	Medium

¹³ Hot water discharge from the mill varies from 0 to 4,000 gallons per hour. This heat could be reclaimed in greenhouse production, but additional supplemental heat will be required and cost feasibility of altering current flow patterns will have to be investigated.



GOAL 4: Improve Communications with the Community

i. Context

Concern about the lack of political and public awareness of the needs of the industry, and the challenges the industry faces was expressed many times by participants in the Strategic Planning process. Increased awareness was viewed as part of the solution to several issues. Part of the importance of increased public and political awareness of agriculture is related to gaining public acceptance and support for changes to government policies, programs and regulations that do not adequately support the industry or the needs of farmers. It is important that changes to local and regional planning and economic development initiatives are supportive of the local industry. For example, agriculture is on the front lines of the environment. If properly managed, it should be considered an environmental asset! In addition, increased public awareness of agriculture is linked to expanded opportunities for local marketing, the ability of the small farm sector to expand, and the opportunity for the "commercial" farm sector to access trained labour and new investment in terms of both capital, as well as new entrants into farming as a career. Tours are an excellent opportunity for small farms and farm gate sales operations to become known in the community and to expand their marketing potential.

"Promoting Agriculture in the Classroom" is one opportunity to inform youth about the farming industry. The School District has not been aware of this program or the resources available. The Agriculture in the Classroom representative has been sent the contact names/numbers for the School District. There is a need for additional sites offering farm visits in the program as only one farm in the region is identified as an Ag. in the Classroom resource.

Youth can also be involved by placing them on the farm for a school project or providing summer employment. In addition, the Agricultural Society should have a youth or 4-H recognition event annually. The farm community should also participate in Career Days and other career events that are hosted by schools and/or the school District.

ii. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Increase General Political and Public Awareness of the Agricultural Industry and Issues

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Coordinate all levels of government and government agencies dealing with agricultural issues.	IFA	Medium
Encourage local grocer store representatives to attend relevant CAS and IFA meetings.	CAS, IFA	Medium
Ensure realtors are aware of potential for farm/residential conflicts	IFA, MAFF, CAS, Real Estate Board	Medium
Make sure that information on local producers is included in brochures that are developed for the region.	Cowichan Tourism, IFA, CAS, CC,	Medium
Make sure homeowners in buffer areas are aware of and respect the fact that they are in an agricultural area.	DNC, IFA, CAS, MAFF, BC Assessment	Immediate



STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL PLAN

Undertake research on, and improve public education and political awareness about the benefits of agriculture vis-à-vis global warming, watershed management, etc.	IFA, CAS, MAFF	Ongoing
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The above five objectives and others referred to the IFA are not unique to the District. A coordinated approach should be developed for Vancouver Island. The municipality, real-estate board, society and other groups can use materials and approaches developed by the IFA and MAFF to inform the local community.

Objective 2: Develop a Strong Education in the Classroom Program with S.D. 79

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Encourage public education (i.e. school work shops, visits). Personal contact.	CAS, DNC, Ag in the Classroom, S.D. 79, CFDC, Junior Achievement	Ongoing
Develop "farm project" opportunities for schools.	MAFF, CAS, AAC, S.D. 79	Medium
Identify farms that will support the Ag. In the Classroom initiative.	CAS, MAFF, AAC, S.D. 79	Immediate

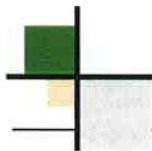
Objective 3: Increase Local Political and Public Awareness of the Agricultural Industry and Issues

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Encourage farm tours- emphasise different groups e.g., Feast of Fields. Use "Tips for Tours" manual.	CVSS, AAC	Ongoing
Provide public education on need for/ pride of food self-sufficiency, self-reliance on the island.	IFA, CAS, AAC	Ongoing
Encourage attendance of local elected officials at Agriculture Society meetings	CAS, DNC, CVRD	Ongoing
Facilitate involvement of young people in agriculture meetings and events.	CAS, AAC, S.D. 79	Ongoing

GOAL 5: Improve Land and Water Stewardship, Conservation and Management

i. Context

Managing soil and water is especially important in this region. Although North Cowichan is located in a relatively high annual rainfall area, summer rainfall during the growing season is limited. Lack of a "natural" water supply is a significant restriction to production. Irrigation, and soil management to retain water is essential to a strong agricultural economy in the region. However, access to water is limited through lack of available licensed capacity in watercourses, cost of accessing aquifers through wells, and lack of storage of winter rainfall.



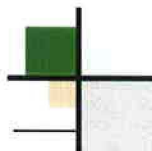
Access to both sufficient quality and quantity of land and water are two fundamental requirements for agriculture. Along with access comes a responsibility to manage those resources wisely, not only to have a successful farming enterprise, but also to leave those resources in the same if not better quality and quantity for future generations. Different areas of the District have better access to quality water for irrigating. There is a need to determine the main areas where water deficiency is a problem and focus on water access in those areas. The best means of doing this is to develop a water management plan for the region. This plan should not be based on the assumption that the municipality should be expected to provide drinking quality water for irrigation. Drinking quality water is not required for toilets, or for irrigation. However, a system of separate grey water discharge would allow grey water to be utilized for irrigation.

Water and land are not exclusive to agriculture. Soil eroding from farmland can severely reduce water quality, and impact other uses such as industry and recreation, and other resources such as fish habitat and productivity. These impacts affect other economic activities in the community. At the same time, there is concern that agriculture is being over regulated and that some ideas e.g., all watercourses should be required to have cattle fencing, are too restrictive. Further research and pilot projects are necessary to find the best management approaches to maintain surface water quantity and quality in agricultural areas.

ii. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Improve Access to Water and Water Management

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Develop water management plan for the region that considers agricultural water needs. Include grey water management and supply on a sub-watershed basis. Co-operation is needed between levels of government and First Nations to address surface water issues (e.g., fisheries management, creek problems.) Increase water access through shared surface water rights access. Increase winter water surplus storage on farms and in general.	DNC, CVRD, CWC, MELP, MAFF, FOC, IFA, CAS, CTC (needs to be a partnership initiative)	Medium
Develop municipal water supply for agriculture from municipal sewage treatment system – independent water supply system specifically for agriculture.	DNC, CAS,	Medium
Ensure storm water management does not adversely affect farming	DNC CAS	Medium



Objective 2: Improve Information Related to Soil and Water Management

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Improve soil assessment for irrigation. Identify areas where substrate does not perk. Identify soils on which increased production can be destructive. Develop a Transferable Soils and Water Data Base.	MAFF, MELP, DNC	Medium
Develop pilot project(s) and/or demonstration areas for riparian area and water management, including manure and leachate management. ¹⁴	MAFF, CAS, FsRBC, MELP, DFO, CWC, DNC	Medium

Objective 3: Improve Farm Management Skills

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Educate farmers about water conservation (e.g., not sprinkling during mid day.)	MAFF, CAS, CWC	Immediate, Ongoing
Increase extension services. Expand Government agriculture extension departments.	MAFF, IFA, CAS	Medium
Improve management of, and education about farm waste management, leachate collection, soil and water conservation, and water-nutrient balance.	MAFF, CWC, CAS	Ongoing

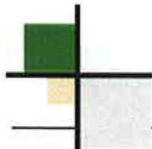
GOAL 6: Reduce Cost and Regulatory Barriers

i. Context

Because farmers are resource users, food producers and users of many different energy and other inputs, they find themselves subject to a wide range of federal, provincial regional and local regulations. These are usually established to protect the land and water resource, to protect the food consumer, or to protect the farmer. Most of these regulations are appropriate and accepted by the agricultural community. However, as society's values change, and new concerns or issues are identified, public and political reaction can often result in requirements that are costly, ineffective and a burden to all farmers. In some cases regulations may be used when education, or incentives could be used with equivalent effect and far less cost to the public and farm community.

Continuous monitoring of emerging legislation, policy and regulation is necessary to identify situations where a more proactive or cooperative approach could be used rather than regulation. This is an onerous task, and for the most part, is well beyond the capacity of the local agricultural

¹⁴ Ideas included zealite pilot-project, Somenos Lake Pumping (being dealt with in Somenos Marsh fish resource review with Watershed Council (CWC), FOC, and Agricultural Society), reverse storm sewer flow, sub-regional waste-water treatment returned to agricultural land for use and further natural treatment/filtration. Require funding for studies and pilot projects.



community and organizations to address. Provincial and federal farm and commodity interest groups are best equipped to take on this challenge.

However, these groups cannot effectively monitor policies or regulations that are brought forward by municipalities. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries generally monitor municipal actions dealing directly with agricultural land use and management under the province's "Right to Farm" (Farm Practices Protection Act) legislation. Even with that legislation, there is a need for local farmers and farm organizations to be aware of the changing regulatory environment at all levels, and especially regionally and locally, to make sure that they have the opportunity to provide alternative approaches when regulation is not an appropriate solution to the issue.

ii. Objectives and Actions

Objective 1: Reduce Regulatory and Related Cost Burden on Agriculture

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
Ensure that municipal costs and charges do not discourage new and innovative agricultural operations or processing facilities. ¹⁵	DNC, CVRD	Medium
Offer co-ordinated assistance and approaches to address regulatory issues	IFA, CAS, MAFF, DNC	Ongoing
When proposed regulations or policy is not appropriate, lobby relevant Federal and Provincial bodies	IFA, CAS, MAFF, DNC	Ongoing
Encourage the provincial government to provide tax relief for farms placing covenants on ALR land for conservation or riparian area protection.	Land Trust, BC Assessment Authority	Immediate

¹⁵ There are no development cost charges that relate to farms unless services are being extended to a farm residence or business. Agricultural businesses would be subject to development cost charges if services are required. Other municipal charges and licence fees should be reviewed with a view to reducing costs to agriculture.



IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

Because this Strategy set out a vision that sees agriculture as being diverse and healthy economically, socially and environmentally, the proposed actions are also diverse and involve over 20 government and other local organizations. Advocating for, and monitoring the implementation of the proposed actions will be necessary if the vision is to be realized. This will require dedicated attention by influential individuals over the time frame proposed for the Strategy. It will also take the dedication of committed individuals and organizations in the community, working together to implement the Strategy.

A first step in this implementation process would be the adoption of the Strategy as part of the Official Community Plan by the District of North Cowichan. This would keep focus on the Strategy as the District address its land use plan and other decisions in the future.

A second step is to provide a structure that will allow organizations to work toward implementation of the Strategy. The key to working together is to keep a Strategy Steering Committee together for the 5-year implementation period. This Committee should be comprised of representatives from key organizations involved in recommended actions. The District of North Cowichan should be the host for and take responsibility in organizing this committee. At a minimum, representation should include:

- The District of North Cowichan
- BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
- The Land Reserve Commission
- Cowichan Valley Regional District
- The Agricultural Society
- Island Farmers Alliance
- The Cowichan Valley Smallholders Society
- The Regional Economic Development Commission
- Cowichan Tourism
- S.D. 79
- Community Futures Development Corporation

This group should meet at a minimum, on an annual basis, and representatives should prepare "updates" on those actions for which they have specific responsibility, and proposed next steps. Any issues related to implementation, or new actions that are needed should also be included in a meeting agenda.

Finally, there are many areas where the proposed actions of this Strategy reflect the recommendations of the Vancouver Island Agri-Food Action Plan and Trust Strategy. If these elements of the North Cowichan Strategy are to be successful, the Vancouver Island Strategy will also have to be successful. The Island Farmers Alliance will need the support of local organizations to implement the Vancouver Island Plan.



MONITORING SCHEDULE

Following are suggested specific indicators for the proposed actions that a Steering Committee could use to assess progress.

GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR AGRICULTURE

Objective 1: Protect the Agricultural Land Base

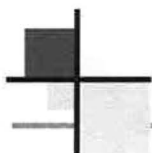
Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
1. No more quality land out of ALR. No reduction in agriculture land base.	LRC	CLI Class 1-4 ALR exclusions
2. Identify, and zone to permit agriculture use, productive lands not currently zoned for agricultural use or in the ALR	DNC	Non-ALR area zoned for Agricultural use
3. Keep current large agricultural parcels. Restrict subdivision, housing, development on agriculture lands	LRC	Subdivision approvals
4. Identify critical urban/agriculture edges, and use buffering or other techniques to lessen the potential for conflict.	DNC	OCP, Zoning Bylaw designations and requirements
5. Make better use of existing serviced lands by allowing higher densities for urban development and housing.	DNC	OCP, Zoning Bylaw designations and requirements

**Objective 2: Provide More Opportunities for Small Farms**

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
6. Allow appropriate agricultural production and a diversified product base on all rural lands (including non-ALR lands).	DNC	OCP, Zoning Bylaw designations and requirements
7. Have suitable land zoned for value added, processing, marketing facilities.	DNC	OCP, Zoning Bylaw designations and requirements
8. Allow opportunities for combined or co-operative on farm processing and sales	DNC	OCP, Zoning Bylaw designations and requirements
9. Allow on farm diversification, both agriculturally related as well as other uses that support household income.	DNC	OCP, Zoning Bylaw designations and requirements

Objective 3: Increase Agricultural Input on Planning Decisions

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
10. Improve agricultural awareness among regulators and improve communication with District and Regional Councils.	CAS	CAS/Council meetings, presentations
11. Provide agriculture representation on local and regional government APC's and/or other appropriate committees	DNC	Committee Membership
12. The Agriculture Society should be informed of all major planning issues and with other groups, provide input to APC's and council.	CAS	CAS Committee Structure

**GOAL 2: SUPPORT AND ENHANCE SMALL FARM SECTOR*****Objective 1: Revitalize the Small Farm Sector in the District of North Cowichan***

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
13. Identify products (including unconventional agricultural products, such as trees, botanical forest products, fish farming, medicinal crops etc.) with substantial market potential that are suitable for local production, based on local soils, climate etc.	MAFF	MAFF Report, Regional Crop production recommendations
14. Examine the possibility of establishing a "land-for lease" registry	CFDC	Registry Operational
15. Develop extension/training programmes for North Cowichan small farmers, especially: • "Beginners Guide" • Business opportunities for local small farmers • Small business management • Home-based business management • Direct marketing	IFA	New courses available
16. Promote Agriculture as an Economic Development sector	REDC	Agricultural component in Economic Development Strategy

**GOAL 3: EXPAND LOCAL MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES*****Objective 1: Enhance Marketing Opportunities for Medium/Large Scale Farms***

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
18. Lobby for appropriate regional allocation of quota for Vancouver Island Farmers	IFA	Increase in quota, quota based production
17. Participate with IFA Marketing Plans and Programs	CAS	

Objective 2: Enhance Local Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
19. Establish and support permanent location for Farmers' Market	CVSS	Permanent Market established
20. Offer extension program in Direct Farm Marketing	MAFF	Training programs available
21. Develop appropriate highway signage to local Direct Marketing operations	DNC	Signage established
22. Set up a local marketing initiative for local agricultural products selling primarily to local retailers and restaurants	CVSS	Marketing initiative in place
23. Set up a system of coordinated distribution for local agricultural products	CAS	Co-op established
24. Promote local agricultural industry and products to local schools: • Sales of products to breakfast and lunch programmes • Increased awareness in Chef Training program • Increased awareness in Home economics classes • Agriculture in the classroom program	CAS	Volume/value of local products consumed Course content

**Objective 3: Establish the Cowichan Valley as a Centre for Value Added Processing of Agricultural Products**

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
25. Promote existing wineries and cheese-making	CoC	Tourism materials
26. Identify site for potential light industrial park dedicated to small scale food processing	REDC, DNC	Zoning Bylaw designations and requirements
27. Review the need for quality standards and compliance issues, especially for fresh meat.	MAFF	Report, local standards, or federal inspection
28. Improve methods of by product disposal/utilization from food processing plants	DNC	Permits for facilities

Objective 4: Capitalize on Available Agri-Tourism Opportunities

Action Steps	Responsibility	Priority
29. Improve co-ordination and promotion of agricultural events/festivals in North Cowichan	Cowichan Tourism	Established committees or other communication
30. Co-ordinate agri-tourism with other tourism promotion activities	Cowichan Tourism	Established committees or other communication
31. Develop Farmers' Market as a day-trip destination, including agriculture-related activities	CoC	Promotional materials, events
32. Promote Cowichan Valley as a culinary destination, with regional specialties	Cowichan Tourism	Promotional materials, events
33. Ensure that municipal and provincial regulations facilitate farm-stay accommodations	DNC	Zoning Bylaw designations and requirements



Objective 5: Expand the Greenhouse Sector Through the Use of Alternative Energy Sources

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
34. Conduct feasibility study on use of by product energy, or energy producing material from mill to heat greenhouses	REDC	Completed Report
35. Conduct feasibility study on use of other energy sources (e.g., wood by products, coal) to heat greenhouses	REDC	Completed Report

**GOAL 4: IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY*****Objective 1: Increase General Political and Public Awareness of the Agricultural Industry and Issues***

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
36. Coordinate all levels of government and government agencies dealing with agricultural issues.	IFA	Actions taken, Ministry or Ombudsman in place
37. Encourage local grocer store representatives to attend relevant CAS and IFA meetings.	CAS	Attendance at meetings, events
38. Ensure realtors are aware of potential for farm/residential conflicts	IFA	Events, educational materials
39. Make sure that information on local producers is included in brochures that are developed for the region.	Cowichan Tourism	Tourism material
40. Make sure homeowners in buffer areas are aware of and respect the fact that they are in an agricultural area.	DNC	Notices, information disseminated
41. Undertake research on, and improve public education and political awareness with respect to benefits of agriculture vis-à-vis global warming, watershed management, etc.	IFA	Ongoing

**Objective 2: Develop a Strong Education in the Classroom Program with School District 79**

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
42. Encourage public education (i.e. school work shops, visits). Personal contact.	CAS	Monitor CAS Activities
43. Develop "farm project" opportunities for schools.	MAFF	Project in place
44. Identify farms that will support the Ag. In the Classroom initiative.	CAS	Number of Host farms

Objective 3: Increase Local Political and Public Awareness of the Agricultural Industry and Issues

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
45. Encourage farm tours- emphasize different groups e.g., Feast of Fields. Use "Tips for Tours" manual.	CVSS	Number of events
46. Public education on need for/ pride of food self-sufficiency, self-reliance on the island.	IFA	Materials, articles, press releases, events
47. Encourage attendance of local elected officials at Agriculture Society meetings	DNC	Attendance, designated representation
48. Facilitate involvement of young people in agriculture meetings and events.	CAS	Attendance, designated events



GOAL 5: IMPROVE LAND AND WATER STEWARDSHIP, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Objective 1: Improve Access to Water and Water Management

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
49. Develop water management plan for the region that considers agricultural water needs. ▪ Include grey water management and supply on a sub-watershed basis. ▪ Co-operation is needed between levels of government and First Nations to address surface water issues (e.g., fisheries management, creek problems.) ▪ Increase water access through shared surface water rights access. ▪ Increase winter water surplus storage on farm and in general.	DNC, CVRD, CWC, MELP, MAFF, FOC, IFA, CAS, CTC (needs to be a partnership initiative)	Meetings, events, participation, Committee established, planning process in place, Report completed, system in place
50. Develop municipal water supply for agriculture from municipal sewage treatment system – independent water supply system specifically for agriculture.	DNC	Change in access, volume
51. Ensure storm water management does not adversely affect farming	DNC	Storage facility, volume change

Objective 2: Improve Information Related to Soil and Water Management

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
52. Improve soil assessment for irrigation. Identify areas where substrate does not perk. Identify soils on which increased production can be destructive. Develop a Transferable Soils and Water Data Base.	MAFF	Revised soils information available
53. Develop pilot project(s) and/or demonstration areas for riparian area and water management, including manure and leachate management.	MAFF	Pilot project underway, results available

**Objective 3: Improve Farm Management Skills**

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
54. Educate farmers about water conservation (e.g., not sprinkle irrigating during mid day.)	MAFF	Information available, events/programs
55. Increase extension services. Expand Government agriculture extension departments.	MAFF	Services and staffing available
56. Improve management of, and education about farm waste management, leachate collection, soil and water conservation, and water-nutrient balance.	MAFF	Information available, events/programs

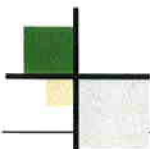
Goal 6: Reduce Cost and Regulatory Barriers**Objective 1: Reduce Regulatory and Related Cost Burden on Agriculture**

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
57. Ensure that municipal costs and charges do not discourage new and innovative agricultural operations or processing facilities.	DNC	Report, bylaw and other requirements
58. Offer co-ordinated assistance and approaches to address regulatory issues.	IFA	Committee, meetings, events
59. When proposed regulations or policy is not appropriate, lobby relevant Federal and Provincial bodies.	IFA	Committee, meetings, events
60. Encourage the provincial government to provide tax relief for farms placing covenants on ALR land for conservation or riparian area protection.	Land Trust	Covenants in place, tax program in place



Implementation

Action Steps	Responsibility	Indicator
61. Adopt the Strategic Agricultural Plan as part of the Official Community Plan.	DNC	Plan Adopted
62. Establish a Review committee to review progress on the Strategy and report on a regular basis.	DNC	Committee in place
63. Support implementation of the Vancouver Island Agri-Food Action Plan and Trust Strategy.	CAS, CVSS	Plan and Strategy recommendations implemented



STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL PLAN

APPENDIX A

NORTH COWICHAN AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY: REGULATORY ISSUES (PAUL GUITON, GROUNDWORKS)

A number of general regulatory issues impact agriculture in general, including:

- Marketing Boards
- International trade
- Agreements affecting input costs
- Food safety regulations
- Environmental regulations

Marketing Boards

Significant livestock commodities within the Valley's agricultural mix are dairy, chicken and egg production. There are also several vegetable, potato and cranberry producers in the area. These commodities are organised in British Columbia under marketing boards. These organizations establish production quotas approximating market demand and establish prices based on cost-of-production formulas.

Marketing Boards have served to maintain orderly markets in British Columbia and across Canada by maintaining set prices to the farmer, allowing reasonable profits and a stable environment for long term planning. However, some aspects of the supply management system are under review by the British Columbia Marketing Board, because:

- The system, while popular with participating producers, is viewed negatively by consumers and retailers as artificially raising prices on staple commodities.
- industry by spending significant amount of capital to buy quota. New entrants may find this cost prohibitive, even when quota is available.
- In some Most production quota has now assumed a value, so that new producers can only enter the commodities, non-conventional producers claim that the Marketing Board system has made it difficult for them to introduce alternative production practices.
- Some individual Boards have experienced management and member support problems in recent years.

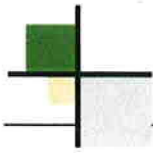
RECOMMENDATION B1 IS FOR A PERMIT PROGRAM FOR EMERGING MARKETS:

That all Commissions develop permit programs that allow producers to supply product to meet emerging markets, encourage growth of new markets and address the varying costs and benefits of the different markets.

That Commissions create programs to issue permits to licensed producers who produce a product that:

1. Is different from the generic regulated product by means of production; or
2. Is an uncommon or distinct grade or class of product; or
3. Is identified by the Commission as a niche or specialty product.

Extract from: Review of the Regulated Marketing System, published in February 1999.



The limitations to the system have also been identified in recent submissions to the BCMB regarding quota allocations.

... there are a number of obvious flaws in the system as it stands today:

- It is vulnerable to challenge under the NAFTA/by the WTO;
- It was designed to protect the farm sector from concentration but has (ironically) allowed concentration generated by the farm sector;
- Its benefits have led to a certain complacency among producers and a tendency to focus more on production issues than on responsiveness to the marketplace; and
- Generally, it is ossified and defensive which, in view of the challenges noted above, seems short-sighted and dangerous for the industry as a whole (we disagree with the argument made in the July 26 Public Hearing that "agriculture is conservative and slow moving" . . . in the context outlined above it cannot afford to be).

Extract from FarmFolk/CityFolk Society Brief to the BC Marketing Board, July 2000.

However, there are no indications that the Provincial government would consider dismantling supply management. The only consideration appears to be whether the system can be made more flexible and inclusive.

Strong support for regulated marketing, including supply management, will continue. Policy changes will be made to ensure that these systems continue to evolve with global trends.

Extract from BC Agriculture Council's Vision for Agriculture, as quoted in the first report of the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries.

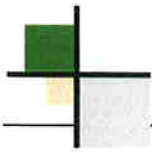
INTERNATIONAL TRADE

At the international level, supply management is under attack, notably by the U.S. and New Zealand. They claim that the quota system – especially for dairy products, unfairly restricts their access to Canadian markets.

Canada's trading partners, for example, have questioned Canadian measures in areas such as patent protection, milk and dairy products pricing, state trading arrangements for dairy and wheat products...

Canada's few but highly restrictive trade measures in agriculture could help to perpetuate some of the distortions in world markets that Canada sought to remove in the Uruguay Round. These restrictions, by effectively shielding key agricultural activities from market opening under the WTO Agreements, also deny opportunities for trade with Canada to more efficient agricultural producers, particularly those not enjoying preferential access. This approach detracts from Canada's otherwise strong support for production based on comparative advantage, a principle that has served Canada well in other areas.

Extract from WTO report on the Agreement on Agriculture



On the other hand, Canada's Minister of Agriculture has consistently supported the supply management concept and, at present, the system has been ruled acceptable for the orderly marketing of domestic products, but may have to be reviewed for export markets.

Initially the WTO ruled that Marketing Boards price setting practices constituted a subsidy to the industry. This initial negative ruling by the WTO Panel was subsequently overturned on appeal.

In addition to the green box policies, other policies need not be included in the Total Aggregate Measurement of Support (Total AMS) reduction commitments. These policies are direct payments under production-limiting programmes..." "

Extract from A Summary of the Final Act of the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations published on the WTO Website

"The WTO Appellate body has confirmed the WTO Panel ruling that some parts of Canada's Special Class system constitute an export subsidy. However, the Appellate body has reversed the WTO Panel decision on the administration of fluid tariff rate quotas. This means that Canada can continue to limit imports of fluid milk to cross-border purchases by Canadian consumers. Thus the Appellate Body findings have no direct impact on supply management for the domestic market, but may restrict the activities of marketing boards in export markets."

Extract from BC Milk Marketing Board. Annual Report 1998-99. Chairman's Report.

However, the US, among others, has vigorously argued that the quota system constitutes a non-tariff barrier to trade, and it can be expected that Canadian supply management of key commodities will continue to come under international pressure.

BC Government Marketing Policy

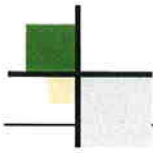
It is not clear how the new BC Government will respond to these pressures. They have not yet established a policy position for agriculture.

On the other hand, they have eliminated government support for the Buy BC Program. That program focussed on labelling and promoting BC products in the marketplace so consumers would have an informed choice of buying locally or import. If the program is dropped, there may be a benefit to the farmers market and on farm sales as they are recognized outlets for locally produced products.

Vancouver Island Quota

Because of the centralized planning process inherent in the supply management system, some Vancouver Island producers feel that current quota allocations do not reflect the needs of the local market, nor the demographic realities of the costs and uncertainties of dependence on ferries for access to major processors.¹

¹ The BC Market for Eggs – Results of Consumer Research, prepared for BC Egg Producers' Association, by Integra.

**BC MARKETING BOARD DECISION AND DIRECTIONS**

Over the past several years, the issue of whether and how regional markets are to be preserved or encouraged has been a concern of the BCMB. This issue has come before us in several appeals in different commodities as well as formed part of a number of supervisory reviews.

Restructuring in the processing and retail sectors is a major issue for producers and marketing boards to address. Consolidation into larger production and processing operations is one of the strategies available to the egg industry to reduce costs and maintain profitability. However, neither the Egg Board nor producers can afford to ignore the impacts to the system if regional production capacity is not maintained. Consolidation of processing in one region and the loss of production capacity in other regions of the Province could undermine the ability of the regulated marketing system to respond to pressures from outside.

Regional processing has proven to be a key component of maintaining a viable regional production sector. The existence of a viable milk processing plant on Vancouver Island is a key factor in maintaining dairy production in this region. The loss of chicken processing capacity on Vancouver Island was in part due to the fact that over time the system did not fully support the regional chicken processor by ensuring that all of the production in the region was available to them.

Extract from Vancouver Island Egg Supply Review– BC Marketing Board, December 21st, 2000.

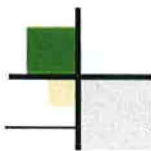
This is particularly an issue for egg production. According to the Island Farmers Alliance, recent quota allocations have fallen short of the appropriate levels to meet local demand. From the focus group comments, it appears that there are two markets for eggs in the Comox Valley. One market is through conventional channels, under the auspices of the BC Egg Marketing Board, as described above. However, there are also direct farm sales to consumers of niche products, such as free range or free run eggs. A 1996 study of consumer egg purchases¹ indicated that, province wide, as much as 10% of eggs are marketed direct outside the Marketing Board system.

Agreements Affecting Input Costs

Between 1941 and 1995, producers in various regions of Canada benefited from a Feed Freight Assistance (FFA) Programme, to offset significant different feed costs in different locations.

This programme was terminated in the 1995 Federal budget, but a transitional Feed Freight Assistance Adjustment Fund (FFAAF) was announced. British Columbia received 32.3% of the national allocation for this fund and the first instalment of several was paid in 1996, including a proportion earmarked for Vancouver Island producers. Apparently, payments from that fund have been made directly to farmers.

The net result is that Vancouver Island livestock producers are experiencing markedly higher feed costs than previously, although, it may be argued that part of the increased cost has been offset by access to the FFAAF Fund.



FOOD SAFETY

Standards

It is generally accepted within the BC agriculture industry that Canadian food safety standards are higher than those in the United States and, especially than those in Mexico or Chile.

This is usually argued in the context of pesticides and other production or processing aids that are permitted in these countries but are not permitted in Canada. We have not seen reliable comparative studies that show the precise balance of permitted and disallowed products between the various countries. However, it appears that BC consumers have not understood or interpreted any differences in standards as reflecting better quality of BC products. In consumer research, conducted for Buy BC in 1996, only one third of the respondents felt that BC products are much better quality than imports.

Industry observers – especially in meat production and processing – feel that media publicity surrounding health concerns of British livestock (Foot and Mouth and “Mad Cow” disease) have heightened consumer awareness and sensitivity to food safety issues in Canada. However, we are not aware of any empirical research to establish this as a fact. Equally, industry observers expect that this sensitivity will abate over time in the absence of further outbreaks.

On the other hand, trends towards organic products do seem to indicate heightened awareness and desire for the highest standards, at least when it comes to the absence of artificial additives and processes.

Inspection

Meat products require federal inspection in order to be shipped outside the local production area. Yet inspection facilities are extremely limited outside the major population areas. The Island Farmers Alliance, along with other producer groups, has identified direct marketing, either at the farm or at farmers’ markets, as a worthwhile strategy to diversify producers’ customer base and to improve margins by simplifying distribution to the consumer.

However, for a number of commodities inspection is required before products can be sold to consumers. Yet inspection facilities are not available to direct farm marketers, which severely limits their ability to develop an attractive range of consumer offerings.

Genetically Modified Foods

Recent developments in biotechnology have led to considerable debate about the health and nutrition implications of genetically modified foods. At present, Canadian legislation does not require identification of genetic modification, but there are strong consumer movements in favour of this step, which has already been adopted by a number of countries worldwide. Retailers are also paying close attention to this issue, with some international companies developing guidelines for the deletion of GMO foods from their listings.

In response to overwhelming customer concern we have eliminated GM ingredients from all our own brand food, pet food and dietary supplements.

This was a considerable task, involving over 4,000 products and was achieved by replacing soya and maize ingredients with alternatives or using validated non-GM sources.

Sainsbury's position on GM in animal feed

Sainsbury's already offers an extensive choice for customers wishing to avoid meat from animals fed a diet which may contain GM crops.

From J. Sainsbury, PLC Website



At present, major Canadian retailers are refusing to accept products labelled "GMO Free" because of uncertainties as to the legal validity of such claims.

The labelling debate, which has been going on since 1992, is one of the most divisive involving genetically modified foods, pitting producers in the U.S. opposed to mandatory labelling against industries in Europe and developing nations that favour it. During this week's Codex negotiations, the U.S. again led opposition to mandatory labelling, insisting there is no need to label modified foods unless they differ significantly from existing foods in composition, nutritional value or intended use.

"There is no reason to put information on a label that could easily be misconstrued," said Michael Phillips of the Biotechnology Industry Organization, a U.S. trade group.

Phillips said there is no difference between genetically altered food and food produced by conventional means.

The EU position, known as Option Two, is that foods should be labelled if they contain protein or DNA resulting from gene technology. That would encompass far more products.

Among countries that have moved to mandatory labelling or plan to do so: Norway, Japan, New Zealand, Korea, India, Brazil and members of the European Union.

During negotiations earlier this year on a biodiversity protocol covering trade in genetically modified food products, the U.S. led a bloc that called labelling requirements too restrictive.

Under the trade protocol adopted in Montreal, exporters are required to apply the label "may contain living modified organisms" to all shipments containing genetically altered commodities. The protocol allows for a revision of that labelling policy after two years.

Extract from News & Analysis @ Food online – May 12, 2000.

The Canadian position represents a more cautious approach, suggesting that labelling may cause more confusion, if not handled appropriately.

The government insists such labelling is only useful if it announces something that can be measured and scientifically proven. It is supporting a study into voluntary labelling and insists that in the meantime, all food is inspected for health and safety before it can be marketed.

"The government is committed to exploring how labelling can best serve the public," agriculture minister Lyle Vanclief said during the debate. "The government is not opposed to labelling, but it has to be credible, meaningful and enforceable. ... If we are going to be fair to the consumer, all those criteria have to be met."

Extract from Western Producer, May 11, 2000

The Federal Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee has recently recommended a series of regulations relating to GM Food, including Draft Recommendation 4:

"CBAC recommends that the federal government put in place mechanism to help Canadians make informed choices about the foods they consume.....The government should also ensure the development of an approach to labelling foods regarding genetic modifications that, combined with the information service, is effective in helping Canadians make informed food choices²."

² "Improving the Regulation of Genetically Modified Foods and other Novel foods in Canada". Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee, August, 2001.



ENVIRONMENT

One of the major challenges facing all Canadian producers is the ever-increasing environmental regulations and guidelines.

The *Choosing our Future* discussion paper distributed by the Minister of Agriculture identifies Environmental Stewardship as a key policy issue. It is claimed that B.C. is a leader in North America in establishing environmental standards to protect air, soil, water, fish and wildlife². The concern expressed by some in the industry is that this high level of regulation is having a negative impact on the agri-food industry's competitiveness.

Issues

Key environmental issues raised in the consultation process are:

- Species at Risk
- Multiple Jurisdiction
- Burning Regulations

Species at Risk

In February, 2001, the Federal Minister of the Environment re-tabled a new Species at Risk Act, designed to protect selected wildlife species. Responsibility for its implementation would rest with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for aquatic species and the Ministry of the Environment for all other species and overall administration of the Act. While there is acknowledgement that the implementation of the Act would impact landowners and land users, Ministries of Agriculture are not specifically named as participating in its administration.

Naturally, farmers (as well as other resource industries) will be most affected by the new Act, which does provide for some compensation. Details of the compensation proposals are being debated at the present time, but can be expected to producers.

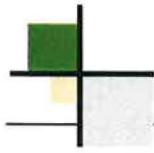
At the same time, some BC producers, including the BC Milk Producers and others are expressing concern at the cost of meeting environmental regulations and are requesting that taxpayers share in these costs. They reason that the environmental standards are set by society and that society should therefore share in the costs of meeting them. The BC Agriculture Council, in its submission to the Select Standing Committee, proposed an incentive based program for environmental stewardship through a program of tax credits and partnership with the various agencies involved.

Multiple Jurisdiction

Another area of concern is that environmental regulations may be set by different levels of government, with conflicting goals and priorities, with the result that farmers may be "caught in the middle", with an ever increasing range of limitations on their activities³. Environmental regulations may be set by federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments.

Within senior levels of government, producers may have to deal with various ministries - agriculture, environment and fisheries. It is pointed out that the Fish Protection Act does not encompass agricultural regulations, but producers have to comply with its requirements. There are various anecdotes of apparently high-handed and impractical determinations by DFO officials.

³ "Choosing our Futures" 1999

**Burning Regulations**

Producers rely on land clearing to develop additional production capacity. An important tool in land clearing has traditionally been the burning of waste wood and other vegetation. New regulations instituted by the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MOELP) appear to limit the potential to clear land using this method.

Of particular concern are tree stumps. While MELP proposes composting as an alternative to burning, they have not been able to confirm whether tree stumps are compostable, or, if so, how long the process would take.

OPEN BURNING RULES IMPROVED

VICTORIA - Where there's fire there's smoke - and with the smoke come fine particles that harm people's health. To reduce the harmful effects of fires from land clearing, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks has made changes to the Waste Management Act and the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation.

Burning small piles of land-clearing debris (less than 10 cubic metres), formerly exempt under the act, will now be covered by the regulation. The change comes into effect Sept. 1 and will affect developers, forestry companies, farmers and anyone else wanting to burn land-clearing debris. It does not apply to people wanting to burn leaves, foliage and weeds in their backyards unless those activities are restricted by local bylaws. However, the ministry promotes composting plant material rather than burning.

A change to the regulation will mean that people wanting to dispose of debris from land clearing by burning it will be able to phone a new regional hotline to find out if they are allowed to burn locally.

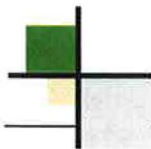
Until now, people or companies were required to pay to phone a 1-900 number to find out if wind and other weather conditions were favorable for burning locally.

That process left room for discretion and led to numerous complaints about burning taking place when the local "airshed" was already full of smoke. In addition, the 1-900 number was not available from all areas of the province. The regional hotlines will eliminate most of these problems, telling each caller whether they can or can't burn, based on the air quality in their area.

Municipalities will also be able to use the new hotlines to get information to form their own backyard burning guidelines. The original regulation allowing burning was developed in 1993 to protect air quality and health and eliminate the need for individual permits for burning debris from land clearing.

Source: Information Bulletin, July 25th, 2000.

The Union of BC Municipalities has attempted to have burning regulations revert to municipal jurisdiction, to provide more flexibility in the application of regulations to local conditions, but without success.



1996 - UBCM RESOLUTIONS AND RESPONSES

RESOLUTION NO: B72, LAND CLEARING

WHEREAS many small municipalities are experiencing growth and need to provide land for their citizens;

AND WHEREAS the present provincial regulations regarding burning of land clearing debris make land clearing prohibitively expensive and decisions on land clearing and burning are greatly influenced by weather, wind and availability of equipment:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that municipalities be allowed to set their own burning and clearing regulations.

RESPONSE OF: MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, LANDS AND PARKS

This resolution is contrary to the Ministry position to reduce smoke emissions in close proximity to populated areas where there may be possible human health impacts. The Provincial Health Officer has identified fine particulates, such as those associated with open burning, as the top air quality health concern in BC. The Ministry has set reasonable minimum standards for open burning and has supported municipal efforts to provide more stringent requirements for open burning (e.g. City of Nanaimo). Municipalities continue to have jurisdiction over the burning of leaves, foliage and weeds commonly referred to as "backyard burning."

Note:

Smoke is a recognized health hazard in many parts of the province. In an effort to reduce the health risk associated with smoke near populated areas, the province initiated a smoke management plan. The plan, developed through consultation with stakeholders, looked at reducing smoke on three fronts. Regulations were developed to reduce smoke from new wood stoves, from beehive burners and from open burning. In many cases, the burning of land clearing debris occurs in close proximity to developed areas and the possible human health impacts must be prevented.

However, exemptions are permitted which might be examined in closer detail by producers wishing to clear land.

2. A person who carries out open burning of debris on a parcel of land is exempt from section 3 (2), (3) and (4) of the Waste Management Act if:
 - (a) the debris is open burned on the parcel of land from which it originated,
 - (b) substances which normally emit dense smoke or noxious odours, and those prohibited materials set out in Schedule A, are not included with debris that is open burned,
 - (c) every reasonable alternative for reducing, reusing or recycling debris has been pursued to minimize the amount of debris to be open burned, etc.

Source: Open Burning and Smoke Control Regulation

At the municipal level, there can also be burning restrictions, but these depend on Provincial regulation.

30. No person shall light, start, burn or maintain any outdoor fire during the fire Season, without first having obtained a Burning Permit.
31. No person shall light, start, burn or maintain any fire for land clearing, land grading or tilling, except in accordance with the Waste Management Act S.B.C. (1982), Ch. 41 as amended.



STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL PLAN

APPENDIX B

STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

The development of the North Cowichan Strategic Agricultural Plan was guided by a Steering Committee consisting of the following individuals:

Chris Hall, Chair	Planner, District of North Cowichan
George Seymour	Councillor, District of North Cowichan
Auke Elzinga	Agricultural Community
Geoff Bruce	Agricultural Community
Ian Woike	Agricultural Community
Erin Kelly	Agricultural Community
Dave Gronlund	Agricultural Community
David Weibe	Agricultural Community
Wayne Haddow	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Barry Smith	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Niels Holbek	Land Reserve Commission
Ruth Hartmann	Community Futures Development Corporation

The Steering Committee worked with a consulting team of:

George Penfold	Westland Resource Group
Paul Guiton	GroundWorks Strategic Marketing Solutions



DISTRICT OF NORTH COWICHAN POPULATION

1971	=	12,170
1981	=	18,210
1991	=	21,397
1996	=	25,305
1999	=	27,346
Urban Population (1996)	=	12,612 (49.8%)
Rural Population (1996)	=	12,693 (50.2%)

Agricultural and related labour force

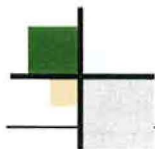
1991	=	310 (3.3%)
1996	=	405 (2.4%)

DISTRICT OF NORTH COWICHAN LAND BASE

Total Area	=	20,433 ha.
Land Area	=	19,244 ha.
Water Area	=	1,189 ha.
ALR area	=	6,250 ha.
Area Farmed	=	4,793 ha.

Cowichan Valley ALR Inclusions, Exclusions

ALR Area 1974	=	21,983.8 ha.
Inclusions (to 1999)	=	260.0 ha.
Exclusions (to 1999)	=	4,553.2 ha.
ALR Area 1999	=	17,601.2 ha.



DISTRICT OF NORTH COWICHAN FARMS (1996)

Number of farms	=	242
Average farm size	=	19.8 ha.
Number under 4 ha	=	81 (34%)
Area cropped, pasture	=	2,457 ha.

Hay	=	1,076 ha.
Tree fruits, berries, grapes	=	156 ha.
Green House	=	0.35 ha.

DISTRICT OF NORTH COWICHAN LIVESTOCK (1996)

Poultry	=	123,879
Cattle and calves	=	4,803
Pigs	=	557
Sheep and Lambs	=	949
Horses and Ponies	=	228
Other	=	162

DISTRICT OF NORTH COWICHAN FARM CAPITAL, INCOME (1996)

Land and Buildings	=	\$121,471,757
Machinery and Equipment	=	\$10,497,508
Livestock and Poultry	=	\$5,407,286
Gross Farm Receipts	=	\$13,089,259
Operating Expenses	=	\$12,121,985

DISTRICT OF NORTH COWICHAN GROSS FARM INCOME (1996)

Less than \$2,500	=	53 farms
\$2,500 - \$24,999	=	145
\$25,000 - \$99,999	=	16
\$100,000 and over	=	28



STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL PLAN

APPENDIX D

NON ALR LANDS WITH AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL IN NORTH COWICHAN (GARY ROLSTON, P.AG)

Issue

There are arable lands, within the District of North Cowichan, that are not in the Agricultural Land Reserve. Generally, these lands fall into two categories:

Soils on south facing slopes (favourable climates) that are potentially suitable for production of vine crops. There are two general areas where there are suitable grape lands: Mt. Prevost and Maple Mountain.

Mt. Prevost: soil capability on these soils is generally 5PT unimprovable, however, there are areas of higher quality soils (improvable to 3TA). A local landowner is currently investing hundreds of thousands of dollars developing a vineyard on one of these sites. Soils have been mapped on about 300 hectares along the south slopes of Mt. Prevost. Of this, a very rough estimate of 20% may have the potential for development into productive agriculture.

Maple Mtn: soil capability is generally 5TA improvable to 5T. Again, there are areas (less than 10% estimated) of soils that are improvable to Class 4 or better. There is a farm with over 10 hectares of productive forage land that is outside the ALR in the Maple Bay area. Aside from this area, the south sloping lands would be difficult to develop to any agricultural use. There are more rocky outcroppings than on Mt. Prevost and layers of shale limit soil drainage. The total area along these slopes is about 400 hectares although there is probably only 10% of that that could be developed to any productive agricultural use.

Soils in the valley bottom, owned primarily by Forest Companies, along Highway 18 to Lake Cowichan. There are large blocks of gently rolling lands in this area with general soil capability of Class 5AP improvable to 90% 5P, 10% 4AP (estimated).

Most of these lands are dry sandy soils. The properties have been clear cut and recently reforested. There is very little organic matter in the soils but if there was forage grass established on these, organic matter would increase fairly quickly and the productivity would improve. One suggestion is to have a community pasture or use these areas for rangeland. Use cows to control the under story and continue to grow trees. The biggest problem with that use is probably going to be rustling. Nevertheless, it would be a good mixed use of the land. There is an example in Sayward of a working community pasture. There are probably some good agro-forestry or botanical forest product potential here as well. The major limitation is that forest companies are generally not experienced or interested for micro management of their lands for uses other than forestry.

Comments

1) Regarding the sloped lands:

There is no doubt that there are arable and potentially productive lands outside of the ALR in the North Cowichan District. However, it would be difficult to recommend a "blanket" land use recommendation for the following reasons:



- These areas provide watershed protection and groundwater recharge/storage functions that would be very difficult to quantify or re-establish. These functions may be of more value to existing ALR lands than any potential agricultural use.
- The slopes also provide green space that would be highly valued by the residents of North Cowichan.

Some of these areas are in the FLR. There could be a consumer/resident backlash against trying to protect these lands for agriculture when the FLR is there already established. Certainly, the current landowners would have some difficulty with it.

Existing ALR land is far from being fully utilized or utilized to its potential.

There is obviously some potential for productive agricultural use of these non-ALR lands. The vineyard that is currently being developed is an excellent example. If it is properly done (as this one appears to be), use of these lands can generate economic activity and agricultural products with minimal impact. The vineyard can take advantage of the favourable climate provided by the south slope and should be able to easily develop water storage and gravity irrigation systems that make the vineyard efficient and profitable with a multi-million dollar view to match – a win-win development.



STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL PLAN

APPENDIX E

NORTH COWICHAN OCP/ZONING BYLAW REVIEW

OCP – BYLAW 2307	COMMENT OR QUESTION
Planning Goals, 3.9: - to preserve and protect agricultural and forestry land resources and to minimise the impact of adjacent urban development.	No reference to agricultural infrastructure, or economy. Are changes needed to ALR boundaries
4.1.11 (Urban) - reduce conflict by road separation or a 15m (50 ft.) buffer	Is 50 ft. adequate?
4.2.3 (Suburban) - no feedlots, fur farms, piggeries, poultry farms, slaughter houses etc.	Not clear what agricultural uses are permitted
4.2.4 (Suburban) - reduce conflict by road separation or a 15m (50 ft.) buffer	Is 50 ft. adequate?
4.3.3. (Rural) - no feedlots, fur farms, piggeries, poultry farms, slaughter houses etc.	Not clear what agricultural uses are permitted. No buffer requirements.
4.4 (Commercial)	No reference to agriculture. Are buffers needed?
4.5 (Industrial)	No reference to agriculture. Are buffers needed?
4.6 (Agriculture) - maintain and support ALR lands for agriculture - land use change on excluded areas by OCP amendment - Layout of adjacent urban areas evaluated to minimise conflict with agriculture: storm water, traffic, crop and livestock protection etc.	What standards are used to evaluate impacts? What is the range of conflicts?
4.8 (Public Use)	No reference to agriculture.



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