

# COMMUNITY ROOTS

## AN AGRICULTURAL PLAN FOR SOOKE



DECEMBER 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this Agricultural Plan is to:

- ❖ Acknowledge the important role that food production plays in the community;
- ❖ Foster the development of community based agriculture through allotment gardens, backyard gardens, and innovative approaches;
- ❖ Encourage environmentally friendly and sustainable farming ; and
- ❖ Document the location of lands with agricultural potential regardless of whether or not they are in the ALR.

## INTRODUCTION

Agriculture in Canada is going through significant changes. Global competition for markets and increased costs of land, labour and energy affect the viability of local farms. International trade agreements, diversification, niche markets and improved transportation are advantages that local farmers can capitalize on. In the face of these challenges and opportunities, the residents of Sooke are becoming increasingly interested in being able to purchase locally grown food or to grow their own and knowing more about where and how their food is produced.

In support of the Sooke farming community and local food security, there are a number of policies in the District of Sooke's 2010 Official Community Plan, including a recommendation to prepare an Agricultural Plan. This plan, "Community Roots: An Agricultural Plan for Sooke" was started in late 2011 and finished in the summer of 2012.

An early and open public consultation process offered a number of opportunities for members of the community to contribute to the plan by correspondence, speaking directly to staff, attending an Open House or participating in a workshop. The feedback from the public consultation process was integral to the development of this Agricultural Plan.

The first two chapters of this Plan contain the technical background necessary to inform the public consultation process and policy development. Chapter Three explains the public consultation process with the detailed notes on the workshop in the Appendices. Then in Chapter Four, current policies pertaining to agriculture are reviewed and commented on in the context of the public consultation process and background research. The conclusions and action items are summarized in Chapter Five.



### SECTION ONE: THE LANDSCAPE OF SOOKE

The District of Sooke is a thirty-five minute drive west of the City of Victoria. With an area of 56.7 square kilometers, it is bounded to the west and south by the Juan de Fuca Electoral District and by Sooke Harbour on its southern side. Metchosin is adjacent to the eastern boundary. The T'sou-ke First Nation is located on the eastern banks of the Sooke River within the municipal boundaries. In 2011, the population of Sooke and the neighbouring communities was:

Table One: Population of Sooke and Neighbouring Communities, 2011

Sooke	11,435
T'sou-ke Nation	219
Juan de Fuca Electoral Area	4,351
Metchosin	4,803
Total:	20,808

Based on the 2011 census, Sooke's population of 11,435 comprises 3.1 % of the CRD's population. The rate of growth in Sooke from 2006 to 2011 was 17.9 % compared to 4.4 % for the Capital Region overall.

#### **1.1 Geography**

Located at the tip of Vancouver Island on the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Sooke is the southern most community in British Columbia. Sooke benefits from a cool Mediterranean climate attributable to the moderating effect of the ocean and its southerly location. It has ample rainfall with a mean annual rainfall between 800 to 1700 mm. The months of November, December and January tend to have the most rain. On average, Sooke has 200 frost free days a year with a mean annual temperature of 10<sup>0</sup>c.\*

The southern portion of Vancouver Island is separated to some extent from the rest of the Island by mountainous terrain. Areas suitable for agriculture tend to be found close to the coastline in Metchosin, the Happy Valley, Sooke and on the relatively level land of the Saanich Peninsula. Development and terrain limits the amount of land available for agriculture in the City of Victoria, parts of Saanich, Colwood, View Royal and the Highlands.

The topography in Sooke is diverse. Adjacent to the coastline, the waterfront consists of both low and high bank. Rising from the coast are gently sloped areas ringed by mountainous terrain. The Sooke River is the most significant watercourse in the community but many creeks and streams run throughout Sooke.

\* Source: *Environment Canada, Victoria Marine, Lat. 48°*

#### **1.2 Soils**

There are large pockets of rich soils suitable for agriculture within the municipality, many with south facing aspects. There are also rocky and steep areas in the community unsuitable for agriculture.

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The hills encircling Sooke and including Broome Hill are comprised of stony, rocky soils with areas of gravelly, sandy loam and are not suitable for agriculture. The Saseenos area has predominantly well-drained acid soils (*Saanichton*) along with pockets of a fine sandy loam (*Puntledge*) that is moderately well drained. The level lands of Fred Milne Park and Edward Milne Community School and extending north along the Sooke River are comprised of black loamy sand (*Langford*) that is well drained mixed with clay loam that is poorly drained (*Cowichan*). This soil composition is the same type that is found on the western side of the Sooke River Bridge.

Further west, on both sides of Sooke and West Coast Roads including all of Whiffin Spit, the soils are a mix of well-drained black loamy sand (*Langford*) and dark grey gleysols (*Tolmie*) which are poorly drained. This is the same type of soil found across the entrance to Sooke Harbour in much of East Sooke.

In the vicinity of Sooke Municipal Hall, on either side of Otter Point Road, there is a polygon of clay based, dark grey gleysol (*Cowichan*) soil. Much of the rest of the soils along Otter Point Road are brown podzols (*Shawigan*) which are well-drained. North of Helgensen Road, east of Otter Point Road, including the Pascoe Road area, there is a block of fine sandy loams (*Chemanius*) associated with the alluvial areas of DeMamie Creek.

A pocket of fertile soil, a sandy loam (*Cassidy*), is found on the alluvial plains of Sunriver Nature Trail Park.

*Source: Soil Map of Vancouver Island – Victoria-Saanich, Experimental Farm Service, 1958.*

### **1.3 History**

Agriculture, although not the predominant industry in the Sooke, has been part of the local economy and food supply for many years. The First Nations people carried out subsistence farming, or self-sufficiency farming in Sooke, by harvesting berries, camas bulbs and other edible roots along with shellfish harvesting. After contact with Europeans, First Nations people began growing potatoes and cattle feed.

In 1849, Captain Walter Grant sailed from Scotland via Panama to claim 100 acres of land that he had purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company. He selected a site in Sooke between today's Maple Avenue and Gatewood Road\*, and started Sooke's first farm. Captain Grant brought 35 acres into cultivation and built a house he called Achaineach.

Adjacent to Captain Grant's property, in 1851, John and Ann Muir acquired what is now the Woodside farm at 7117 West Coast Road. When Captain Grant returned to Europe in 1853, the Muirs purchased his land to add to their holdings. Grant Road is named in honour of Captain Grant.



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In the 1920's, the Glinz family bought the Woodside farm and operated a guest house specializing in chicken dinners. Later, they began making cheese under the Sooke Brick Cheese name. In 1947, Phil Wilford purchased Woodside and began shipping milk and cream to Victoria. By the 1980's beef, cattle, hogs and chickens were raised on the farm. Still in operation today, Woodside farm is the oldest continuously run farm in BC (1).

Between 1865 and 1870, Michael Muir, a son of the Muirs, built large house at 1890 Maple Road which still stands today and is known as the Burnside B&B. The John Muirs called the farm Springside and provided Sooke and the Victoria area with chickens and milk.

The William Muir House at 6816 West Coast Road was farmed by the Vanreights for daffodils, tulips, cauliflower, potatoes and strawberries for the Victoria market. Nearby, the Locke House at 6830 West Coast Road was the site of another early Sooke Farm. Dairy cattle were raised there until the late 1940's. During the 1950's, the property was owned by the Vantreights who grew bulbs.

Started in 1906, the farm at 2197 Otter Point Road later became the Broome Hill Golf Club. When it was purchased in 1959 for development as a golf course, there were 96 sheep on the farm. A three room house had been built on the farm in 1915. This house was later expanded and converted into the club house that is still there today.

The residence at 1998 Caldwell Road was constructed around 1914. Rhode Island Red chickens were raised on the property. By the 1940's, the farm was shipping dried flowers to outside markets. Soheim, at 6698 Helgesen Road, was built in 1912 as part of a farm established around 1910. When it was bought in 1949, it was an active dairy farm and continued to be operated commercially providing milk to Island Farms Co-op. Sheep were also kept on the farm. The Helgesen-Lunson Barn was used to pen calves.

On the east side of the Sooke River, Fred Milne Park and Edward Milne Community School are on the former site of the Milne Farm. Arriving in 1885, the Milnes raised dairy beef, cattle and sheep. They also grew most of their feed. On the west side of the Sooke River, William Phillips arrived in 1968 and established a farm with a large orchard.

The property at 2182 Church Road was purchased by the Wadams family in 1941 and farmed until recently.

The dairy industry was discontinued in the Sooke Area in the late 1970's with the advent of more stringent government regulations.

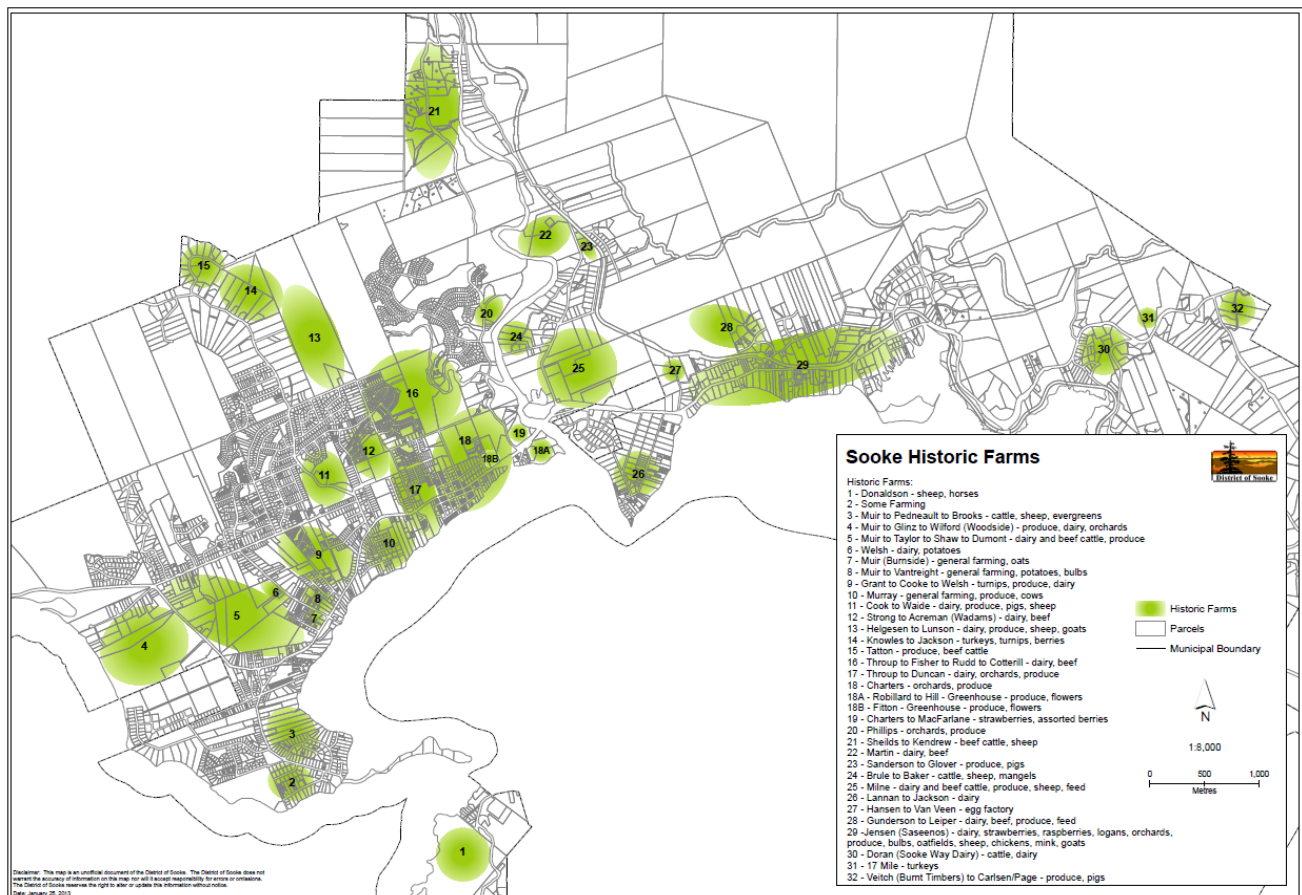
### *Sources:*

- *Life on the Land in Sooke's Midlife from the memoirs of Maywell Wickheim, 2011.*
- *The Sooke Story – The History and the Heartbeat – Sooke Region Museum – 1999.*
- *101 Historical Buildings of the Sooke Region, Sooke Region Historical Society and Sooke Region Historical Book Committee, 1985.*

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MAP ONE: Location of Early Farms in Sooke



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### **1.4 Agricultural Land Base**

As a result of urban sprawl and the lost of valuable farmland in BC and particularly in the Lower Mainland, the Province introduced the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Act and the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) to stop the erosion of the agricultural land base. Implemented in the early 1970's, provincial legislation removed much of the authority from local governments for making land use decisions regarding agricultural lands. The ALC now makes the decisions on land use and subdivision for ALR lands with local governments only able to make recommendations or to refuse to forward exclusion requests. The intent of the provincial legislation is to provide long-term protection of land suitable for agriculture and encourage its use for farming.

The inclusion of land in the ALR is largely determined by its capability for agricultural use in accordance with methodologies established by the Canada Land Inventory. Agricultural capability can be influenced by a number of factors including soils, climate, topography and drainage. Class 1 lands have the best capability with no restrictions to agricultural use. Class 2 and 3 lands also have good capabilities for agriculture. Class 7 is the lowest classification and is given to land with no potential for agricultural use.

There are currently 17,060 hectares of land in the ALR within the CRD. When the ALR was established in 1974, the CRD had 19,595 hectares of land in the ALR. Between 1974 to 2009, 289 hectares have been included and 2824 hectares removed in this region.

*Table Two: Land Excluded from the ALR Since the Incorporation of the District of Sooke.*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Area Excluded</b>
2000	2100 Otter Point Road	6.8 ha
2000	2273 Church Rd –Churchill Meadows	7.9 ha
2000	2209 Townsend Road	6.8 ha
2000	2197 Otter Point Road	13.1 ha
2001	1999 Maple Avenue	.83 ha
2002	Phillips Road (Sun River Estates)	116 ha
2002	1995 Caldwell Road	2.02 ha
2002	6849 Grant Road	2.02 ha
2002	1975/7 Caldwell Road	2.1 ha
2003	1722 Whiffin Spit Road	4.2 ha
2003	2044 Gatewood Road	.83 ha
2003	1673 Whiffin Spit Road	2.2 ha
2004	1692 Whiffin Spit Road	3.6 ha
2005	3031 Phillips Road(Riversedge)	28.2 ha
2005	6829 Grant Road West	2 ha
2005	1856 Connie Road	.778 ha
2006	1686 Whiffin Spit Road	3.4 ha
2006	6510/7059 Grant Road West	1.05 ha
2007	1998 Caldwell Road	0.4 ha





With 531.3 hectares in the ALR, Sooke has roughly 3.1 % of the region's ALR lands. Sooke's total land base is 5,800 hectares, so approximately 9.1% of Sooke is in the ALR.

When the ALR was first introduced, Sooke was not yet incorporated so there are no records of how much ALR land was within the future municipal boundaries. Furthermore, until recently, the ALC only maintained its statistics on a region by region basis. By adding the amount of land excluded from the ALR since Sooke incorporated in 1999 (see Table Two) from the current amount of 533.8 hectares, less the 26.1 hectares of ALR included when Sooke expanded its boundaries to include part of East Sooke, staff estimate that there were approximately 712.4 hectares of land in the ALR at the time of incorporation.

Areas with good capability for agriculture include the area south of Grant Road on the west side of Sooke. Much of the land on both sides of the Sooke River are also Class 2 and 3 improvable to Class 2. Significant portions of these lands are within the ALR.



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Sooke is fortunate enough to have some areas with excellent capabilities for Agriculture. Most the lands adjacent to Highway #14 in Saseenos as far west as Parkland Road are Class 2. Lying to the south of Pascoe Road and east of Otter Point Road, there is a pocket of Class 2 improvable to Class 1.

Broome Hills is a significant area with very limited capability for agriculture. Much of the land on either side of Otter Point Road is rated as Class 5 except for the rich soils in the vicinity of Pascoe Road mentioned above.

Parcel size does not necessarily affect agricultural capability but it can affect types of agricultural uses in terms of economic viability. In Saseenos, there was significant fragmentation of the waterfront land to the south of the highway with many of the subdivisions occurring in the 1920's and further parcelization in the 1950's. Probably due to the small parcel size in the area, many of the properties are not within the ALR.

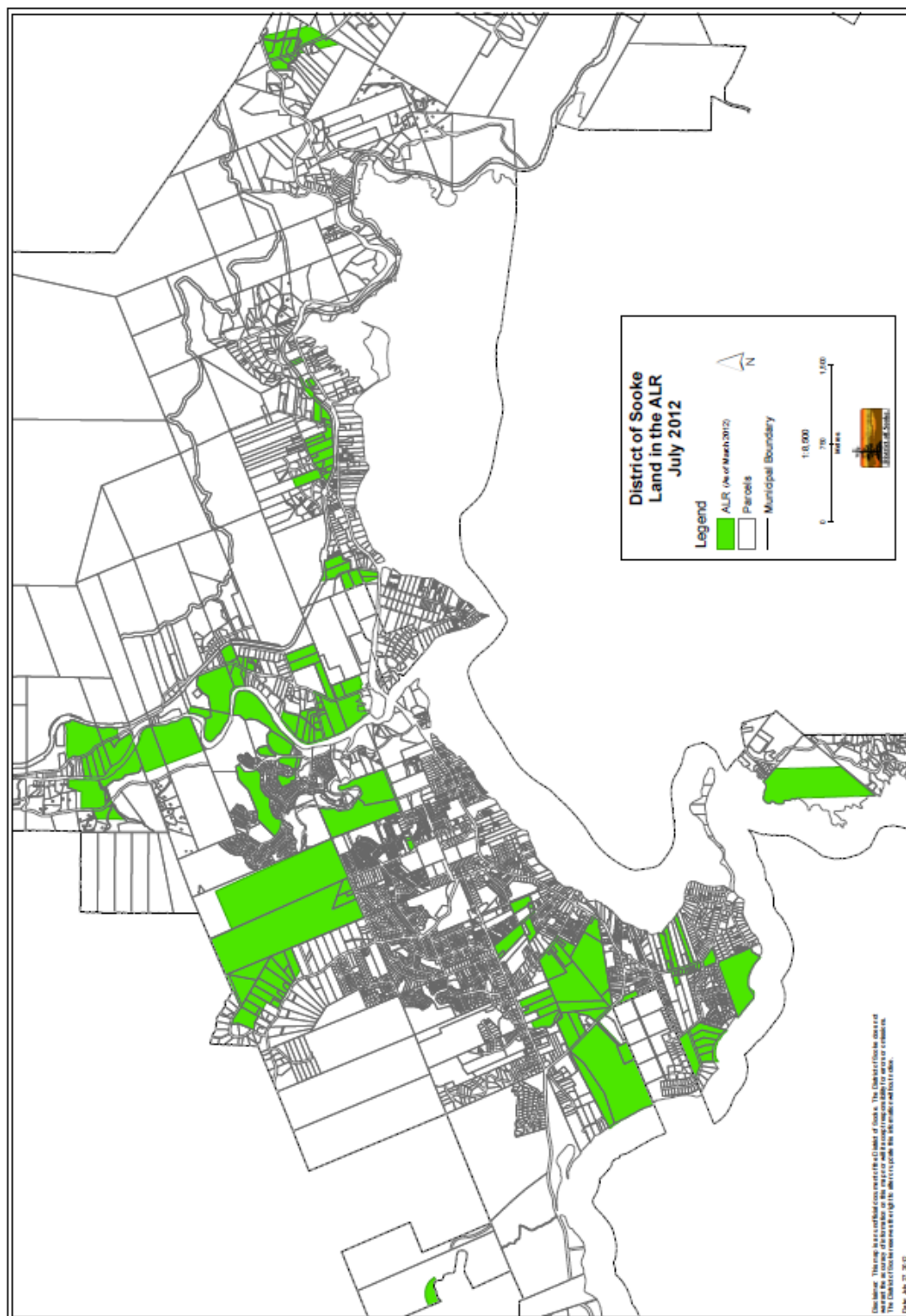






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Map Three: Agricultural Land Reserve





### **1.5 Farms**

It was only after Sooke was incorporated in 1999, that Statistics Canada began keeping data based on the municipality's boundary. Prior to that time, this data was amalgamated with other unincorporated areas throughout the CRD including the Juan de Fuca Electoral District and Salt Spring Island. Due to the large geographical area involved and the number of farms from which data was collected which are not in Sooke, it makes any meaningful comparison of agriculture in Sooke which utilizes data from earlier than 1999 impossible. Although covering only a relatively short period of time, this report relies on data from the 2001 and 2006 census as it is specific to the municipal boundaries of the District of Sooke. (Note: the 2012 data will be included once it becomes available.)

The relatively small number of farm operators in Sooke leads to some gaps in the data base when relying on census data from Statistics Canada. Any data that could possibly identify which specific farm the data is associated with is suppressed. For example, if there is only one berry farm in Sooke, then the number of hectares in production would be for that variable would be suppressed.

From 2001 to 2006, there was a 42% decrease in the number of farms in Sooke as the number dropped from 36 farms to 21. During the same time period, there was only a slight decrease, 4.2%, in the area of land in production. This pattern could be indicative of smaller farms going out of production while larger farms remained or there was a consolidation of holdings.



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*Table Three: Number of Reporting Farms by Type and Area – District of Sooke – 2001 and 2006*

	<b>2001</b>		<b>2006</b>	
	Number of Farms Reporting	Number of Acres	Number of Farms Reporting	Number of Acres
Total Number of Farms	36	885	21	847
Land in Crops	14	360	8	63
Alfalfa and Alfalfa Mixture	1	X	-	-
All other tame hay and fodder crops	6	302	4	55
Vegetables (does not include potatoes)	3	44.2	2	X
Fruits, Nuts & Berries	2	X	4	7
Area Under Glass, Plastic or Other Protection	3	4900	1	X
	Number of Farms Reporting	Number of Animals	Number of Farms Reporting	Number of Animals
Hens and Chickens	19	47,252	10	42,457
Cattle	11	97	7	76
Sheep	8	96	6	75
Pigs	4	18	2	X
Forest Products	1	X	2	X
Certified Organic	-	-	-	-
	Number of Farms Reporting	Dollars (\$)	Number of Farms Reporting	Dollars (\$)
Gross Farm Receipts	36	\$1,209,887	21	\$1,002, 193

*X – suppressed data*

*Source 2006 and 2001, Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada. October 2011*

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The type of crops also changed over the five years. There was the loss of one large greenhouse operation and an increase in both the number of farms and the area in production for fruits, nuts and berries. The 17.8% decrease in farm receipts was off-set by an increase in prices for agricultural products.

### **1.6 The People**

An essential element of farming is the people. In Sooke, as is the trend throughout much of Canada, along with the decrease in the number of farms, is a similar decrease in the number of farm operators. Between 2001 and 2006, there was a 20% drop in the number of farm operators. The average age of the farmers rose from 52 to 57.4 years. See Tables Three and Four below.

The reasons for the decrease in the number of farm operators can be attributed to the high cost of entering farming (land, equipment), the lack of interest by younger people in becoming farmers as farm work is perceived as low paying and hard and the difficulty in obtaining financing to start a farm. The increase in the average age of farm operators also indicates that young people are not entering the industry.

TABLE FOUR: Farm Operators By Age and Size of Operation – District of Sooke -2001

<b>2001</b>	Male	Female	Total	Under 35	35 to 54	55 and Over	Average Age
Number of Farm Operators of Farms with One Operator	10	10	15	5	10	10	53.7
Number of Farm Operators of Farms with Two or more Operators	20	15	40	0	20	10	51.1
Total Number of Operators	30	25	55	5	30	20	52.0

*Source 2001 Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada, Operator Database (100% universe), October 2011.*

Although there may slightly fewer operators according to Statistics Canada, Sooke does have a vibrant and active farming community comprised of people from Sooke as well as the surrounding unincorporated areas. This farming community has a keen interest in local food security, organic farming and small lot agriculture.

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TABLE FIVE: FARM OPERATORS BY AGE AND SIZE OF OPERATION – DISTRICT OF SOOKE - 2006

2006	Male	Female	Total	Under 35	35 to 54	55 and Over	Average Age
Number of Farm Operators of Farms with One Operator	10	0	5	0	5	0	51
Number of Farm Operators of Farms with Two or more Operators	15	10	25	0	5	20	59.5
Total Number of operators	20	20	40	5	15	20	57.4

*Source 2006 Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada, Operator Database (100% universe), October 2011.*

Representative of the long agricultural history of the region, the Sooke Fall Fair, started in 1913, will hold its 97<sup>th</sup> exhibition in 2012. The event takes place at the Sooke Community Hall with displays of produce, poultry, kitchen crafts and artwork.

Incorporated in 2007 as a non-profit society, the Sooke Region Food CHI Society is comprised of residents from Sooke and the surrounding area. The society is very active in the development and implementation of a Food Strategy for the Sooke region. It strongly supports local and affordable options for healthy food. Since 2010, the Society has organized a tour of local farms and “Seedy Saturday”.

During the summer, the “Sooke Country Market”, a farmers market, takes place in Sooke from May to October on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

There are four community gardens in Sooke: (1) The Sunriver Allotment Garden includes a Heritage Fruit Tree and Demonstration Orchard; (2) The Community Association of Social Agencies (CASA) Community Garden was planted in 2005; (3) The Edward Milne Community School Garden; and (4) The Ladybug Garden and Greenhouse, an organic community garden growing fruits, vegetables and medicines run by the T’souke First Nation.

Local farmers are obtaining additional help through the Stewards of Irreplaceable Land (SOIL). A non-profit organization which links Canadian farmers willing to take on and train apprentices with people interested in working on an organic farm using sustainable practices. Established in 1989, its aim is to create apprenticeships to transfer knowledge to both the farmer and the apprentice.

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There are several regional organizations which actively support Sooke's agricultural community.

The Island Organic Producers Association has a mandate to maintain standards for organic farming on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. It assesses compliance of organic producers and awards certified organic status.

Dedicated to strengthening unity among Island Producers, the Island Farmers Alliance focuses on larger industry issues.

FoodRoots is a not-for-profit co-op which distributes local certified organic and naturally grown produce and foods process in this region. FoodRoots gathers local produce from farmers to make it available to the general public at regularly scheduled markets.

Akin to the 100 Mile Diet, the Vancouver Island Diet is concerned with food security and through its website people interested in purchasing island grown food products with local producers: <http://www.vancouverislanddiet.com/index.html>

The Community Food Action Initiatives (CFAI) is a provincial program administered in this region by the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) which funds projects intended to foster local food security. CR-FAIR stands for the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable. Funded by the CFAI and the Community Social Planning Council, its mission is to increase knowledge of and bring positive change to the food and agricultural system in the CRD. It is a coalition of organizations and individuals who want to strengthen regional food security and the local food system. A Capital Region Food Charter was developed in 2008 by CR-Fair and the CRD Roundtable on the Environment. It publishes an electronic newsletter, Making Food Matter, and an annual Capital Region Food Resource Directory.

The CRD Roundtable on the Environment is a community based group that provides advice to the CRD on matters such as non-essential pesticide use, healthy communities and climate change. It has a sub-committee on Food and Agriculture and was involved in the development of the Capital Region Food Charter described above.

The Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association is a non-profit association of growers and producers on southern Vancouver Island who sell their produces directly to consumers. No farms in Sooke were members at the time that this section was being researched.

The Peninsula Agricultural Commission was originally formed to represent the farming interests of Saanich, Central Saanich and North Saanich. However, in recent years, other local governments have become involved with the PAC including Metchosin and the Juan de Fuca Electoral District. The objectives of the PAC are to:



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- Increase public awareness, education and support for a sustainable farm community
- Foster stewardship of farmland which embraces environmental and other community values
- Increase economic returns to farmers
- Secure an adequate supply of water to farms at a competitive cost
- Maintain and enhance the sustainability of agriculture on the Saanich Peninsula

There are a number of challenges for agriculture in southern Vancouver Island. Dairy quotas, no egg grading, and a lack of abattoirs which are discussed in Section Two.

### **1.7 Climate Change**

As concern regarding climate change increases, more study is being done on the potential impact of climate change on a regional basis. In the case of southern Vancouver Island, a temperature increase of 2 to 3 degrees celcius is anticipated along with an increase precipitation of between 5 to 10% from November to May and a 10 to 20% decrease from June to October. Table Five on page 16 outlines the impacts that climate change may have on agriculture in the region.



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TABLE SIX: From Impacts to Adaption: Canada in a Changing Climate 2007

Current and future climate limitations to crop production (Zebarth et al., 1997).				
South coastal region				
<b>Current climate:</b> Mild, wet climate. Mean annual temperature: 10°C. Mean annual precipitation: 800–1700 mm, 70% of which falls between October and March Frost free period: 175–240 days		<b>Future temperature:</b> Projected to increase 2–3°C <b>Future precipitation:</b> Projected to increase from November to May (5–10%) Projected decrease June to October (10–20%)		
Type of agriculture	Current agriculture	Climate limitations	Effects of future temperature change	Effects of future precipitation change
Horticulture	Small fruit: raspberry, strawberry, blueberry  Field vegetables: corn, potato, cabbage family crops, salad crops	Perennials: summer moisture deficits, require some irrigation  Raspberries: winter damage from Arctic outflow  Field vegetables: low temperatures, wet soil conditions in spring	Warmer summer: increased productivity; Warmer winter: longer growing season; increased viability of bell pepper, melon, overwintering cabbage family crops and double cropping; Increased winter precipitation could limit annual crop production in water-logged soils; Decreased summer precipitation could mean that more irrigation is required; Reduction in diseases due to drier conditions could favour berry production	Increased winter precipitation could limit annual crop production in water-logged soils  Decreased summer precipitation could mean that more irrigation is required  Reduction in diseases due to drier conditions could favour berry production
Forage crops	Grass: pasture, hay, silage  Corn: silage	Grasses: winter damage from Arctic outflow; Forage crops: summer moisture deficit, require irrigation on Vancouver Island	Warmer spring: earlier harvest of forages  New, heat tolerant forage species required	Increased spring precipitation could limit harvest and quality of forages Dry, hotter summer could mean that irrigation will be required in Fraser River valley
Greenhouse	Vegetables: cucumber, tomato, bell pepper Ornamentals		Warmer winter: lower heating costs, increase in tropical species; Hotter summer: higher cooling costs	
Other effects			Increased pest pressure: winter survival of pests and diseases, more life cycles	Flooding, soil drainage, soil compaction, increased leaching agricultural chemicals



### SECTION TWO: THE CONTEXT FOR AGRICULTURE IN SOOKE

#### **2.1 International**

International factors can affect agriculture in Canada including the community of Sooke. Improved transportation gives Canadian farmers greater access to markets through out the world. Conversely, farmers face greater competition in the global market place-wide. Trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement affect the ability of Canadian farmers to compete internationally. Food safety concerns and the risk of global transmission of disease impact local farms reliant on export markets.

#### **2.2 National**

The federal Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada leads and coordinates rural-federal policies and programs. Its responsibilities extend from the farmer to the consumer and cover all phases of producing, processing and marketing of agriculture and agri-food products. Its portfolio organizations include the Canadian Dairy Commission, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Canadian Grain Commission, Farm Credit Canada and the Farm Products Council of Canada.

Agriculture and Agri-food Canada's vision statement for agriculture in Canada is: "A profitable and innovative agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products industry that seizes opportunities in responding to market demands and contributes to the health and well-being of Canadians." and leading to the development of the "Growing Forward" program. Through the Growing Forward program, partnerships are developed between the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Growing Forward Framework Agreements are negotiated with each province and territory based on a 60:40 sharing arrangement. Growing Forward 2 is the successor program and will be launched in April 2013.

Pursuant to the Growing Forward program, a bilateral agreement was signed between the Canadian and BC governments in 2009 making \$553 million available over the next five years and offering BC farmers access to over 55 programs and services. More information on these programs can be viewed at: <http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display-afficher.do?id=1204229697539&lang=eng>

Federal inspectors play an important role locally in implementing best practices for the safety of food supply through means such as monitoring food handling and labeling practices. Local inspectors with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency are based in Saanich and are responsible for the Sooke area.

#### **2.3 Provincial**

Management and regulation of agriculture is shared by the provincial and federal governments. As noted above, the federal government provides considerable financial support through its partnership program, Growing Forward. At the provincial level, it is the Ministry of Agriculture which supports the growth of the agriculture, food and bio-product sectors. It assists these sectors in achieving sustainability through the delivery of a number of programs, guidance, support and partnerships.

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The Province supports agriculture through the BC Agricultural Plan which has 23 strategies addressing five main themes:

- Producing local food in a changing world
- Meeting environmental and climate challenges
- Building innovative and profitable family farm businesses
- Building First Nations agricultural capacity
- Bridging the urban/agricultural divide

The programs supported by the BC Agricultural Plan provide funding for a wide range of projects including community based food action initiatives including community gardens, 4-H, school gardens, agricultural fairs and the review and revision of local regulatory structures. Several current initiatives in Sooke are funded through the BC Agricultural Plan. Of interest may be the Small Lot Agricultural program which serves small scale producer with lots less than 10 acres and the Islands Agri-Food Initiative that targets market development and promotion of the agri-food industry. (There is a 50:50 funding requirement for this program.)

Building on the 2008-2011 BC Agricultural Plan, in March of 2012, the Province released, “BC Agrifoods: A Strategy for Growth.”, a five year strategic plan that includes a review of regulatory and taxation levels and expanding international markets for beef, berries, seafood and wine. The Province will promote local food production expand domestic markets through the establishment of Foods BC which is centralized source for up-to-date information on fresh, local foods.

In BC, there are 32 statutes related to the Ministry of Agriculture as well as 73 regulations. A complete list of these regulations is available at: [www.leg.bc.ca/procs/allacts/agric.htm](http://www.leg.bc.ca/procs/allacts/agric.htm)

### **2.4 Representation**

At the provincial level, the BC Agriculture Council represents agricultural producers. Its mission is to continually improve the social, economic and environmental sustainability of BC Agriculture. Twenty-six commodity specific associations and farm organizations are members of the Council including the BC Dairy Association, the Certified Organic Associations of BC, and the BC Chicken Growers Association. Through its subsidiary, BC Agricultural Research & Development Corporation (ARDCorp), the Council offers several programs including Environmental Farm Plan.

### **2.5 BC Marketing Boards and Commissions**

In BC, the Natural Products Marketing Act allows for the creation of marketing boards to control and regulate the production, packing and marketing of certain commodities. By controlling the supply through a system of quotas to match the demand for these perishable commodities, consumers are assured of a stable supply while ensuring the producers of a minimum farm gate price. At present, there are eight marketing boards in the Province:

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### Supply Managed:

- BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission
- BC Chicken Marketing Board
- BC Egg Marketing Board
- BC Milk Marketing Board
- BC Turkey Marketing Board

### Regulated Industries:

- BC Cranberry Marketing Commission
- BC Hog Marketing Commission
- BC Vegetable Marketing Commission

Supply managed marketing boards can permit or prohibit the production of their commodities within BC. Regulated industries may be granted authority to establish quotas and prices and to license producers. The ability of farmers to enter these particular markets is subject to being able to obtain a quota or permission is obtained for small scale poultry production. No quota is required for less than 99 laying hens, 200 broilers and 50 turkeys if they are for personal consumption.

### **2.6 Right to Farm**

Strengthening Farming is an initiative of the BC Ministry of Agriculture that is jointly implemented with the Agricultural Land Commission. The program has two components: Farm Practices Protection and Planning for Agriculture. The *Farm Protection* (Right to Farm) *Act* was introduced in 1995 to better coordinate the relationship between farming and non-farming neighbours and to protect farms from nuisance suits arising from normal farm practices. The legislation exempts farm practices from certain local government bylaws.

### **2.7 Local Government Legislation**

The *Local Government Act* (LGA) is the legislative authority for all local governments in BC with the exception of the City of Vancouver which has its own Charter. The Act sets out the broad powers of governance for municipalities such as Sooke and for regional districts like the Capital Regional District. Sections of the LGA allow local governments to regulate certain aspects of farming through official community plans, zoning, soil deposition and removal, weed and pest control, water, drainage and nuisance regulations. Section 917 of the LGA allows local governments, subject to ministerial approval, to develop bylaws regarding the conduct of farm operations, types of buildings and machinery and the siting of stored materials and waste facilities and prohibiting specified farm operations.

A complementary piece of legislation, and equally important, is the *Community Charter*. Enacted in 2004, certain provisions formerly in the LGA were transposed to the Charter. Most importantly, the Charter spells out the interrelationship between the province and municipalities and provides the

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framework for powers, duties and functions of a Council. During the development of the Agricultural Plan, there are likely to be a number of suggestions that will be outside of the local government's authority.

### **2.8 Taxation**

In BC, properties used for agricultural production are given relief from certain property taxes if they are classed as a farm by BC Assessment Authority. Land in the ALR with no present use can qualify as farm if part of the parcel is farmed. If the property is not in the ALR, unused land can qualify for farm class if the land is not zoned or held for business, commercial or industrial purposes, it meets a highest and best use test; at least 50% of the land outside the ALR is in production or contributes to production; or at least 25% of the land outside the ALR is in production, and the farm meets a higher income requirement.

As of January 2012, the minimum annual income for agricultural production required for farm class was calculated as follows:

- a) \$10,000 on land less than 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> (2 ac);
- b) \$2,500 on land between 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> (2 ac) and 4 ha (10 ac);
- c) on land larger than 4 ha (10 ac), \$2,500 plus five per cent of the actual value of any farm land in excess of 4 ha;
- d) \$10,000, in order to qualify unused land where the area in production makes up at least 25% of the land.

In 2009, the Farm Assessment Review Panel (FARP) released its report reviewing the farm status assessment policy. Some of the recommendations of the Review Panel include being able to use income tax return information for reporting, avoiding split classifications and allow retired farmers to maintain their farm status.

The Province implemented two of the FARP recommendations for the 2010 tax assessment year by clarifying the rules for the split classification of ALR and non-ALR farm properties.

In the fall of 2011, the Province announced that two more of the recommendations of the FARP were being implemented and were intended to encourage more intensive agricultural operations by increasing the tax exemption limit on farm outbuildings and provide tax relief for retiring farm families who wish to remain on their land in the ALR. Two other FARP recommendations, reduction of administrative paperwork and more flexibility in meeting the requirements to maintain farm status, are also being acted upon. All four changes are expected to be in place for the 2013 tax year.

### **2.9 Meat Inspection**

In 2007, the BC Meat Inspection Regulation came into effect requiring by 2010 that all meat for human consumption come from licensed slaughter facilities and meeting much more stringent and costly

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requirements for handling meat and waste. As a result, there are fewer facilities available where meat can be slaughtered and none on southern Vancouver Island.

Amendments in 2010 to the regulation introduced a graduated licensing system that includes two new licenses (Class D and Class E) designed to support local livestock and meat production in B.C.'s more remote and rural communities, however, only Class E licenses are possible in the CRD. The Class E license allows on-farm slaughter of a small number of animals annually (1-10 animal units) for direct sale to consumers. Sales are restricted to the regional district in which the meat was produced, and operators are only permitted to slaughter their own animals.



### **2.10 Regional Government**

Along with the federal and provincial governments, local government can play an important role in supporting agriculture. There are two local government authorities for Sooke: the District of Sooke and the Capital Regional District (CRD). The CRD does not have any direct responsibility for agriculture but can affect agriculture in the course of carrying out its legislated duties one of which is control over regional land use matters which the CRD regulates through its Regional Growth Strategy (RGS).

There are eight strategic initiatives in the RGS with the “Agriculture and Food Security” initiative with several being applicable to agriculture. Lands in the ALR through out the CRD are in the Renewable Resource Lands Policy Area. To prevent urban sprawl into the rural areas, the RGS also establishes a

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Regional and Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area (RUCSPA). Services like water and sewer can not be extended to lands outside of the RUCSPA except for health reasons.

Adoption of an Official Community Plan (OCP) or changes to a community's OCP must be consistent with the CRD regional growth strategy bylaw. An OCP must contain a Regional Context Statement (RCS) that identifies how the plan is consistent with and supports the goals of the regional growth strategy. A subsequent change by a municipality to its RCS requires the approval of the CRD board or, failing that, a resolution of the dispute as set out in the Local Government Act.

In other words, the District of Sooke is bound to comply with the RGS through its RCS. Sooke's RCS deals with Agriculture and Food Security:

*The land use mix, locations, and densification in the OCP support the integrity of Sooke as a primarily rural community but also as a regional centre as noted in the RGS. To this end, over 66% of the District of Sooke is designated as agriculture (i.e. ALR), rural residential, and park and therefore it is not supported under the policies of this OCP to have density increases beyond which currently exists in these areas. Future population and development growth must occur only within the confines of the CGA, primarily the Town Centre and Comprehensive Development Areas. The geography of the District and geotechnical aspects of development in the community make many areas difficult to build on and costly to extend services therefore aiding in the protection of rural areas from development and keeping the urban areas compact. These rural lands also significantly buffer the Capital Green Lands and Renewable Resource Lands from adjacent residential development as the minimum lot size noted in the OCP for these lands is 4ha.*

Sooke's RCS for agriculture is not specific other than the setting of a minimum lot size. However, there are many policies specific to agriculture in its OCP.

The CRD is currently reviewing the RGS in light of new legislation and provincial direction. The document is being transitioned into a Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS) to reflect a greater commitment to sustainability. The eight strategies of the RGS will become five strategic initiatives. For Agriculture, a Foods System Sub-strategy will be prepared building on a policy options paper that established the direction for the region's involvement in food systems serving the region: [http://sustainability.crd.bc.ca/media/1236/food\\_security\\_policy\\_brief\\_small.pdf](http://sustainability.crd.bc.ca/media/1236/food_security_policy_brief_small.pdf) Once the RSS is adopted, Sooke will have two years to amend its RCS and make it consistent with the RSS.

### **2.11 CRD Water**

The CRD operates the water supply system for the Greater Victoria Area. The CRD Integrated Water Services is the bulk water supplier to the Greater Victoria Drinking Water System and the retail water supplier in the West Shore communities and Sooke.



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Sooke's water supply is administered by the Juan de Fuca Water Commission. The other participating members of the Commission are Colwood, Langford, View Royal and Metchosin. Each local government in the participating area must appoint members of its council to the Commission based on the number of Council members it has on the CRD Board.

Municipal water must be used for greenhouse production and horticultural processing. Surface water and collection processes like rainwater barrels can be used for other irrigation purposes but are not always sufficient. In which case, municipal water may need to be relied upon affecting the cost of production.

Costs for water are comprised of a regional bulk rate and a water commission delivery rate. Currently, the CRD bylaw for 2012 establishes a bulk rate of \$0.5699 per cubic metre\* of water for residential uses and a rate of \$0.2105 for agriculture. (\*One cubic meter equals 1000 litres of water.) In 2011, the CRD assigned a definition to "Community Allotment Garden" and established a specific bulk water rate for community allotment gardens which is the same rate charged for agriculture. The reduced rate paid by agricultural users and community allotment gardens is considered to be subsidized.

(As a comparison, the bulk rate for the Greater Vancouver Water District is \$0.4955. In Delta, a rate of \$0.61/m<sup>3</sup> is paid by farmers for the first 8000 m<sup>3</sup> and then \$0.98/m<sup>3</sup> after that.)

After buying the bulk water at the rate set by the CRD, the Juan de Fuca Water Commission then establishes its retail rates based on the combined total of the CRD bulk rate and the Juan de Fuca Water Commission's distribution costs. The 2011 distribution rate was \$0.9859/m<sup>3</sup> and is the same for both Residential and Agricultural Uses.

The water rate charged is based on the type of water meter. In some instances, separate water meters are installed. An Agricultural Only connection provides water an agricultural operation and not to a residential dwelling unit. All water consumption provided through an Agricultural Only connection is charged the Agricultural bulk water rate. Residential Connections are charged the residential rate.

Provision is also made for smaller farms through an Agricultural/Residential Water Connection. The owner of a property classed as Farm by BC Assessment Authority and who has provided proof of the assessment, is charged the Residential rate for the first 455 cubic metres of water. Any water in excess of the 455 cubic metres is charged at the Agricultural rate.

Development Cost Charges for water are the fees collected at the time of development to pay for the capital costs associated with the development. These types of fees do not apply to agricultural land uses but would be charged for newly created commercial uses.



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In 2005, the CRD in conjunction with the Peninsula Agricultural Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (at that time), carried out a study to better understand how water is being used by agriculture throughout the CRD. The CRD Agricultural Water Use and Conservation Study indicated that 35% of the respondent farms used only CRD water. 31% used wells, creeks and/or dugouts and 19% used a combination of CRD water and wells, creeks and dugouts. At 92%, irrigation was the largest consumer of water amongst the respondent farms. Crop washing at 1%, water for livestock at 2% and 4% for domestic consumption accounted for most of the remaining consumption.

One of the strategic objectives of the Peninsula Agricultural Commission is to secure an adequate supply of water to farms at a competitive cost. The PAC has been lobbying the CRD for a number of years to change the rate structure for agricultural users in Saanich and the Saanich Peninsula.

### **2.12 Bylaw No. 400, Sooke Official Community Plan, 2010 (OCP)**

An OCP establishes the policy framework used by local governments to guide its decisions on land use. A local government can not enact a bylaw that is inconsistent with its OCP. The *Local Government Act* (section 875) defines an OCP as: “a statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management.” An OCP may contain policies related to social needs, social well-being and social development. It may also contain policies respecting the maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in a farming area or in an area designated for agricultural use. If the policies are related to a matter which is not within the jurisdiction of the local government, the OCP may only state the broad objectives unless the minister responsible authorizes the policy.

It is important to keep these legislative authorities and limitations in mind when preparing an Agricultural Plan. It can not be expected that all of the recommendations of an Agricultural Plan will be included in an OCP. Some of the recommendations should be added to other local government plans and bylaws such as a Strategic Plan, a servicing bylaw or a zoning bylaw. There will also be some recommendations beyond the legislative authority of local government. With this type of recommendation, it is important that the appropriate government or agency is identified.

Before Sooke was incorporated in 1999, the 1988 OCP for the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area and the 1999 Sooke Local Area Plan were in effect. The agricultural policies in these two plans were identical. For the most part, the policies from these two plans were incorporated into the first OCP prepared by the District of Sooke in 2001. The 2001 OCP remained in effect until 2010 when the current OCP for Sooke was adopted.



The 2010 OCP has policies related to agriculture in two sections. Section 4.5 Agriculture and Food Security has 18 policies related to agriculture and 14 action items. Section 5.7 Land Use Designations - Agriculture has five policies, one of which reinforces support for the policies in section 4.5.3 plus two action items for a total of 23 policies and 16 actions items. These policies and action items can be found in Appendix “A”.

The ALC reviews OCPs to ensure its goals of protecting farmland and supporting agriculture are respected. If the District amends its OCP as a result of the Agricultural Plan, the ALC will first need to review the proposed changes.

Municipalities are allowed to create development permit areas for the protection of farming which can include requirements for screening, landscaping, fencing and siting of buildings to provide buffering or separation of development of development from farming on adjacent lands.

All of the lands designated as Agricultural in the Sooke OCP are in the ALR. There are however, appropriately eleven properties bounded by Maple, Grant and West Coast Roads which are designated as Agricultural but are overlaid with an additional “General Classification” for Technical Industrial. This

additional layer is used by the District to express its future intention for these lands should they be removed from the ALR.

### **2.13 Bylaw No. 500, Sooke Zoning Bylaw, 2011**

The Sooke Zoning Bylaw regulates use of land and the location, use, size and shape of buildings throughout the community. The bylaw is very supportive of local food sufficiency. Section 3.3 (g) of the Zoning Bylaw allows for gardening and the growing of food in any zone. Poultry (both male and female) and livestock can be kept on any property that is 2000 m<sup>2</sup> or larger. Female poultry can be kept on smaller sized parcels with some restrictions.

In terms of commercial agriculture, “Agriculture” land use is defined by two types: Agriculture and Intensive Agriculture. “Agriculture” means the use of land for growing rearing and producing and harvesting of agricultural products or raising livestock. It includes horticulture but specifically excludes intensive agricultural uses and any manufacturing, storage and processing that is not specifically mentioned. “Intensive Agriculture” use includes mushroom growing, feedlots, poultry farms, piggeries and breeding and boarding kennels.

The bylaw has five rural zones, of which four allow Agriculture as a principal use: Watershed, Forest and Agriculture (RU1), Rural (R2), Small Scale Agricultural (RU3) and Rural Residential (RU4). The fifth rural zone, Gateway Residential (RU5) is intended for residential lands and only Horticulture use is permitted.

Both agricultural and intensive agricultural land uses are permitted in RU1 zone as well as the R2 and R3 zones. However, in all three of these zones, the setback requirements for intensive agriculture and aquaculture buildings is increased from 10 metres (32.8 ft) for farm buildings to 30 metres (98.4 ft). Intensive agricultural uses are only permitted on lots that are 2 hectares (4.9 acres) or larger. Lot coverage is 30% but increased to 75% for greenhouses in the RU1, RU2, RU3 and RU4 zones. Agriculture is also allowed in the Public Recreation (P1) zone.

Intended to prevent further fragmentation of agricultural lands, the RU1 zone has a minimum lot size of 10 ha (24.7 acres) for the purposes of subdivision. RU2 and RU3 both have a minimum lot size of 4 ha (9.9 acres).

Being a seaside community, Sooke has a number of aquaculture businesses. Aquaculture is defined as the growing and cultivation of aquatic plants and invertebrates for commercial purposes but excludes the harvesting. “Land-Based Aquaculture” is the cultivation of fin fish on land. Aquaculture Processing Operations means all handling of the harvest of an aquaculture use but excludes manufacture of fish feed and the disposal or storage of fish offal.

Aquaculture is permitted in the RU1, RU2 and RU3 zones. Processing is not permitted in these zones though, only the Aquatic Industrial (M4) and Marine Aquaculture Processing (W7) zones allow aquaculture processing operations. The M4 zone is the only zone that allows land-based aquaculture.

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ALR lands in Sooke are primarily zoned either RU1 or RU3. Two ALR properties located in the Town Centre are zoned R1. Properties such as Journey Middle School and the Demamiel Golf Course are zoned Community Facilities (P2) and P1 respectively. Portions of Sunriver Estates in the ALR are zoned CD2-B which allow agriculture and farm buildings.

As permitted by the ALC, the District's Zoning Bylaw also allows home based-businesses and secondary suites on lands in the ALR. Subject to the provisions of the ALC Act, one additional dwelling for farm employees is allowed on land zoned RU1 and RU3.

Farmers markets are defined as Country Markets by the zoning bylaw and are allowed in the P2, General Commercial (C2), Town Centre Commercial 1 – North and Town Centre Commercial 2 – South zones. Sales on agriculturally zoned properties are limited to products produced on that farm.

### **2.14 Bylaw No. 480, Sooke Sign Regulation, 2011**

In 2011, the District adopted a new sign regulation bylaw. Although the bylaw applies to the whole District, its focus is the commercial businesses in the Town Centre. There is nothing specific regarding farm sales or agricultural operations in the bylaw.

### **2.15 Composting**

Pursuant to section 25 of the *Environmental Management Act*, the CRD has the authority to regulate the recycling of organic waste and composting facilities. Agricultural waste is regulated by the province through the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation. Composting by home growers would be subject to Sooke's Unsightly and Objectionable Situations Bylaw.

### **2.16 Burning**

In 2012, a Burning Regulation Review Committee was established by Council. Based on the Committee's recommendations, changes were made to existing bylaws to allow open air burning on larger sized properties within the Sewer Specified Area (SSA) and all properties outside of the SSA.

### **2.17 Pesticide Use**

The CRD has drafted a model bylaw for controlling pesticide use which has been adopted by four communities in this region. Sooke does not have a pesticide bylaw. It is important to note that the "Right to Farm" legislation would supersede any local bylaws for agricultural lands. The CRD model bylaw specifically exempts lands in the ALR and the non-residential areas of lands assessed as farmland.

### **2.18 Sale of Agricultural Products**

The Town Centre of Sooke is the commercial focal point for the sub-region. There are two grocery stores, bakeries, delicatessens and a wide range of restaurants in close proximity attracting local



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shoppers, travelers and tourists. Many of the events where farmers can market their products like the Fall Fair and the Sooke Rotary Auction are held in the Town Centre.

### **2.19 Wholesale/Retail Market**

Some of the farmers in Sooke sell their produce and eggs directly to the local grocery store as well as to restaurants through out the CRD.

### **2.20 Direct to Consumer Sales**

Also called farm gate sales, one farm in Sooke markets directly to consumers by offering seasonal produce, chicken and eggs, berries and jams for sale. Several of the farms just outside of Sooke also sell directly to the public as well as offering food box programs. Consumers purchase “boxes” of food on a regular basis which are packed with produce that is in season.

### **2.21 Farmers Market**

From mid-May to September, the Sooke Country Market is held every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon in Sooke. This farmers’ market is currently held on an undeveloped and privately owned property adjacent to Otter Point Road. Many of the vendors at the Market bring fresh produce from farms outside Sooke.

There are limitations to the expansion of the Sooke Country Market. If there is interest in increasing the size of the market, issues like parking, access to potable water, covered areas, pedestrian access, washroom facilities should be taken into consideration. Alternative sites might offer some of these amenities.



### **2.22 Marketing and Advertising**

Sooke Region Food and Farm Guide produced by Sooke Food CHI in 2011 is a brochure which provides a comprehensive listing of the farms in Sooke and the surrounding area.

### **2.23 Community Education**

Programs on gardening and horticulture are given by several local agencies such as the Sooke Garden Club, the Sooke Children's Garden Club, the Cooperative Association of Service Agencies and through Edward Milne Community School. Sooke Food CHI has published a book entitled "So You Want to Farm In Sooke" for those interested in starting to farm at any scale. There is also the Sooke Regional New Farmer Mentorship Program and the Farmer 2 Farmer forums.

### **2.24 Keeping of Poultry**

With increased interest in growing food for personal and local consumption, more people want to raise egg-laying chickens on residential properties. In Sooke, the Animal Regulation and Impounding Bylaw regulate the keeping and control of domestic animals. The Zoning Bylaw supplements the Animal Regulation by providing the specifics on the keeping of poultry. At the present time, livestock and male poultry can not be kept on lots smaller than 2000 m<sup>2</sup> in area. If the property is less than 600 m<sup>2</sup>, then no poultry or livestock can be kept. For properties from 600 m<sup>2</sup> up to 2000 m<sup>2</sup>, up to six female poultry may be kept. For the most current information on these bylaws, the District should be consulted.



### SECTION THREE: THE VISION FOR SOOKE

A significant amount of preparatory work has been already been done in laying the groundwork for this Agricultural Plan. In recent years, there have been three major initiatives undertaken by local government and community based organizations related to developing a vision for agriculture in Sooke:

- The Community Food Action Plan;
- The Sustainability Plan; and
- The Farm Forum.

Based on these three major initiatives, Table Nine summarizing the emergent strategic topics was prepared and was integral to the public consultation process.

#### **3.1 Community Food Action Plan**

The Community Food Action Plan was developed from 2008 to 2009 and identified seven key themes:

- Community Education and Awareness
- Food Accessibility
- Regulations and Policy
- Local Production
- Sooke Country Market Revitalization
- Local History, Culture, First Nations and Cuisine
- Diversification and Sustainability

Associated with each of the themes were a number of recommendations and possible next steps, one of which was the development of an agricultural plan.





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### 3.2 The Sustainability Plan

In 2008, the District of Sooke hired HB Lanarc to prepare “A Sustainable Development Strategy for the District of Sooke”. Strategy #8 in the strategy dealt with promoting a healthy, sustainable, local food system. A number of key tasks were identified and have been acted upon. These tasks are itemized in Table Six.

TABLE SEVEN: Strategy No. 8 from A Sustainable Development Strategy for the District of Sooke

KEY TASKS	CATALYST PROJECTS	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS
Strong rural-urban links	Ensure local farmer markets are a permitted use in many areas of Sooke	Bylaws
Urban Agriculture	Promote and provide spaces for urban agriculture. Support home gardening; Communal gardens in multi-family developments; offer incentives for edible landscaping and other forms of urban agriculture in new developments	Bylaws, Incentives, Amenity Contributions, Sustainability Checklist
Local Processing	Promote and provide spaces for local food processing; encourage development of new value-added food industries	Bylaws, Incentives, Partnerships
Agricultural Land Protection	Develop strategy for protecting viable farm land Ensure affordable access to new and existing farmers	Partnership with ALC
Supportive Policy	Ensure policies and bylaws do not limit ability of food producers	Policies, Bylaws
Wild Food Access	Restore, preserve and obtain access to wild food harvesting areas, eg. mushroom collecting, shellfish harvesting	Bylaws; Parks and Trails Master Plan
Educational Campaign	Develop an Educational campaign on benefits of sustainable local food system	Partnerships
Branding Sooke's Assets	Promote community as destination for food, arts and crafts	Partnerships Bylaws
Buy Local Campaign	Develop Buy Local Campaign	Partnerships
Local Skills	Establish apprenticeship program	Partnerships

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### 3.3 The Farm Forum

Also in 2008, there was a comprehensive look at agriculture in Sooke. The Juan de Fuca Economic Commission and the District of Sooke along with the Sooke Region Food CHI hosted the Farm Forum. Public input was solicited to initiate development of an agricultural plan. Approximately 123 people attended the forum. Agricultural strengths and weaknesses were discussed. Ten indicators of success were identified.

The recommended next steps were to create an overall vision statement for agriculture and develop an Agricultural Plan along with an Agricultural Assessment to engage the public and help them better understand the present agricultural conditions. Since the Farm Forum in 2008, a number of the next steps which were identified have either been completed or initiated

TABLE EIGHT: Indicators of Success from the 2008 Farm Forum

SUCCESS INDICATOR	CRITERIA
Cooperative Efforts	Multi-agency, farmer cooperatives, sharing information & inter-agency partnerships
Skilled People	Apprenticeships, skill development opportunities
Community Support	Education, awareness, acceptance and conflict resolution mechanisms
Farm to Market	Competitive pricing, enabling regulations & efficient local processing
Viable Livelihood	Small Farm Viability, debt relief, favourable tax rate
Sustainability Plan	Practical Agricultural Plan & policies, protect land and water
Supportive Regulations	Supportive incentives, appropriate rules and sensitive government
Available Land	Access to capital, lease options, protect what exists, small lots & green houses
Product Diversity	New opportunities, local consumer guide, new methods & public awareness
Consumer Access	Farmer's market, buy local, public awareness

### 3.4 Common Strategies

In reviewing the results from the three initiatives described above, a commonality of themes and strategies was noticed. Table Nine was compiled by listing the results from the Farm Forum in regular font and then adding in italics, the *items from the Sustainability Plan* and the underlined items from the Community Food Action Plan are underlined which were not mentioned at the Farm Forum.

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TABLE NINE: Key Strategic Topics from the Farm Forum, *Sustainability Plan* and *Community Food Action Plan*

INPUTS	
Environmental Capacity	Seasonal crops, indigenous species & climate change impact; <u>diversification and sustainability</u>
Farm Land Availability	Lack of, protecting it and leasing options; <i>Develop strategy for protecting viable farm land; Ensure affordable access to new and existing farmers</i>
Wild Food Access	<i>Restore, preserve and obtain access to wild food harvesting areas</i>
Water Supply	Watershed protection, licensing process & conservation
TRANSFORMATION	
Knowledge Transfer	Data bank, sense of history & research; <u>First Nations culture and cuisine</u>
Innovative Practices	Use of grey water, energy conservation & building code
Farm Sustainability	Succession Planning, start-up costs & farm trust
Skilled Farmers	Apprenticeships, training and mentoring
OUTPUTS	
Community Awareness	100 Mile Diet, K to 12 opportunities & elder/youth connection; <i>Buy Local campaign; Educational campaign on benefits of sustainable local food system</i>
Marketing Efforts	Farmers Co-op, communication vehicles; Branding
Agro Tourism	Sufficient scale, target markets; <i>Destination for Food, arts &amp; Crafts</i>
Consumer Access	Farmers market and farm gate sales; <u>Sooke Country Market Revitalization</u>
<u>Food Accessibility</u>	
GENERAL	
Community Effort	Communication, Annual Forum
Land Use Zoning	Compatibility, land protection & relevant regulations;
<i>Supportive Policy</i>	<i>Ensure policies and bylaws do not limit ability of food producers</i>
Informed Decision Makers	Awareness, consultation and communication
Supportive Tax Structure	Affordability, incentives for farming and start-up assistance



*FIGURE ONE: Public Consultation Process Using the Preparation of the Agricultural Plan*

### **3.5 On-Line Survey**

During the months of March and April 2012, an on-line survey was posted on the District's website and members of the public were invited to participate. Respondents did not necessarily have to be property owners or residents in Sooke.

Over 80% of the respondents said they grow their own food but most of the land being farmed is not in the Agricultural Land Reserve. All of the respondents that grew food give some of the food away to family and friends.

Approximately half of those who responded sell food at the Sooke Country Market with slightly less than that selling commercially. Only 37% of the growers sold at the farm gate. Over half said that the amount of food that they sell does not pay for the expenses of growing it. Only 43% are able to grow enough food to last the year.

Over 90% of the survey respondents purchase food locally and feel that growing food in Sooke is important to the residents. Vegetables are the most often purchased item followed by fruit, eggs and berries. Other products purchased by the respondents include honey and baked goods.

Most food is purchased either at the Sooke Country Market, pre-arranged sales with the farmer or at the farm gate. Support for local farmers was given as the key incentive for buying locally followed by

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## COMMUNITY ROOTS – An Agricultural Plan for Sooke

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the benefits to the environment and freshness. All respondents said that they would buy more food locally if they could and many wanted to see more local products in the Sooke grocery stores.

Strong interest was expressed in improving home gardens and knowing what can successfully be grown in Sooke. Many wanted information on how to access local producers. Other topics of interest include water costs and the use of grey water systems. Respondents want to see more information on Health Canada regulations and how to “deer” proof gardens.

Appendix “D” lists the survey questions along with the tabulated results.



### **3.6 Open House**

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, an Open House was held at the Sooke Community Hall. Members of the public were invited to view displays, talk with District staff and submit comment sheets. During the Open House, an overview of agriculture in Sooke was given by the Municipal Planner. The presentation evolved into a group discussion of the importance of agriculture to the community and the barriers being encountered by local farmers and other food growers.

Table Nine, a summary of the key points from earlier visioning exercises, was displayed in large format at the Open House. Attendees were asked to select their top priorities from the items listed on Table Nine. Based on their responses, the four top priorities for more in-depth discussion were identified:

- Farm Land Availability – Lack of it, protecting it and leasing options; Affordability of it.
- Farm Sustainability – Succession planning, start-up costs, farm trust.
- Consumer Access – Farmers Market and farm Gate sales; Sooke Country Market Revitalization
- Supportive Policy – Ensure policies and bylaws do not limit availability of food producers

Additional priorities identified by the attendees included the cost of water, the need for a cooperative or mobile abattoir and specific suggestions for changes to the current OCP.

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Amongst the ideas and suggestions made at the Open House were for the District of Sooke to take a leadership role in agriculture for the region, to relocate the farmers market to the Community Hall parking lot, support for Food CHI and to include John Phillips Memorial Park in the ALR. The attendees asked if the District of Sooke could advocate for lower water rates for food gardeners, partner with adjacent local governments in order to lobby senior government for changes, and to foster the agricultural use of farmable lands, agri-tourism, local food security and incubator farms. In terms of the OCP, changes to the “no-net loss” policy were recommended such as was adding a policy to support exclusions in exchange for a contribution towards agriculture. The attendees asked that this Agricultural Plan consider the broader context to ensure it is coordinated with other plans and fits into regional efforts.

At the Open House, comments were made that Sooke has a very high rate of ALR exclusions in Sooke: (40%) relative to the provincial rate (17%). *(Staff research indicates that since the inception of the ALR in 1974, the amount of the land in the ALR in the Province has only decreased by 2%. The amount of land excluded has been off-set by inclusions of large areas of land. In that same time period, the amount of ALR land in the CRD has decreased by 17%. Source: ALC Annual Report 2009/10 and 2010/11, June 30, 2011. Table Two lists the amount of land excluded from the ALR since Sooke was incorporated. Staff estimate that there has been a reduction of approximately 28% of the amount of land in the ALR since Sooke was incorporated with most of the exclusions occurring around the time of incorporation.)*

### **3.7 Correspondence**

During the public consultation phase of this plan, some residents wrote directly to the District. One contributor suggested preparing two Agricultural Plans: one for commercial agriculture and one for local food security. Questions were raised about the lack of solutions in the OCP for protection of land being farmed outside of the ALR. The increasing demand for locally raised foods and food security was noted. The need for more information on the impact of climate change, geography and soils was mentioned. Recognizing the social component of the Farmers’ market was also mentioned as being important.

Suggestions for District consideration included allowing sandwich board signs for all growers, reducing thief from road side stands by allowing little stores on farms selling directly to the public and in addition to the sale of food grown on the property, allowing farmers to also sell food grown off-site.

Directed at the provincial government, were recommendations for stronger penalties and better education regarding the feeding of wildlife. It was noted that the Province needs to reconsider its fencing requirements for small scale poultry producers who are trying to gain farm status for taxation purposes.

It was recommended that the Capital Regional District cull deer to stem the destruction of local crops and then have the venison processed.



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Restrictions placed on the disposal of food waste were criticized. Restaurants and stores were once able to give their food waste to farmers for feeding to livestock. This practice is no longer permitted during to the potential spread of zoonotic diseases. As the CRD is planning to eliminate food waste from the Hartland Landfill, the writer felt that if farmers could be permitted once again to feed food waste to their animals it would assist grocery stores and restaurants in handling their waste and avoid increased costs.

Information on the regulatory framework governing the use of gray water on produce was requested. *(In response to this question, municipal water must be used for greenhouse production and horticultural processing. Surface water and collection processes like rainwater barrels can be used for other irrigation. Federal and provincial authorities should be directly contacted for the specific regulations.)*

It was noted that the sale of fish was once a common occurrence in the Sooke Harbor. The discontinuance of this practice is thought to be attributable to changes in the federal licensing requirements.

The historical role that local forested areas have for foraging for mushrooms, berries and healing herbs was pointed out. All levels of government were called upon to respect this practice and provide for its continuance.

### **3.8 Facilitated Workshop**

Attendees at the Open House were encouraged to sign up for a facilitated workshop specific to agricultural policy review and development. They were also asked to invite other interested people. An open invitation was also posted on the District's website.

Twenty-two people participated in the evening workshop. A light dinner was provided by the Culinary Arts Program at Edward Milne Community School. Mayor Wendal Milne welcomed the participants then the workshop facilitator, Kel Kelly of Insight Facilitation, outlined the evening's agenda and led a group review of the existing District policies. After a short break, the group assigned priorities to the Action Items in the OCP pertaining to agriculture. Next, the workshop participants broke into small groups to discuss each of the four priorities identified at the Open House. The evening closed with a short de-briefing.

A record of the large group discussion can be found in Appendix B while the results of the small group discussions are contained in Appendix C. The priority assigned to policies in the Action Items in the current OCP can be found on Figure Two.

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*FIGURE TWO: Priority Assigned to Official Community Plan Action Items at Workshop*

ACTION ITEMS	BY PRIORITY
Create Sooke/ALC Agricultural Land Reserve Committee	<b>3</b>
Create a recurring \$10,000 food security fund to fund community gardens & food security initiatives	<b>4</b>
Discuss farm land classification with BC Assessment Authority	<b>2</b>
Create and implement a food action plan as identified by Food CHI	<b>3</b>
Create an inventory of “at risk” farms in Sooke	-
Consider the acquisition of farmland for community farm activities and agri-tourism pilot projects	<b>5</b>
Designate land for a farmers’ market with consideration for potable water and sewer <u>and electricity</u>	<b>4</b>
Explore possibilities for exclusion/inclusion of land in ALR while maintaining a net zero loss of land	<b>7</b>
Change Zoning Bylaw to require minimum on-site or off-site areas for food growing or community gardens in new multi-family development	<b>1</b>
Inventory small existing parks that could be used for community gardens or included in ALR	<b>7</b>
Create educational material and policy support for yard and garden waste recycling program	<b>6</b>
Encourage the feasibility for heat recovery, especially for green houses	-
Open a “bear smart” Sooke composting facility	-
Provide public educational material on composting, water, soil quality	-
Develop an Agricultural Plan	<b>Underway</b>
Allow agriculture on single family residential lots & ensure the Zoning Bylaw allows for home gardening on single family residential lots	<b>Done</b>

### **3.9 Summary of Public Consultation Process**

The key themes emerged as a result of consultation with the public:

- There are a wide range of issues impacting agriculture including increasing costs, climate change.
- Many levels of government and agencies are involved with agriculture.
- There are too many regulations affecting agriculture and they are too complex.
- There is a need to raise the profile of agriculture in the community, both with the public and the business community.
- There is a need for better education amongst farmers as well as for members of the public.
- Council can play an important role as an advocate for agriculture.
- It was recognized that Sooke acts as the market center for the sub-region. The farmers' market plays an important social and economic role which could be expanded.
- The importance of the agricultural land base, the need to protect it, innovative ways of increasing the access to agricultural land and ways to better utilize lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve were all significant topics.
- The cost of farming is increasing. Some of significant costs are land, water, taxes and compliance with regulations.
- It is important to produce good quality food and have an efficient method of getting it to market. Concerns regarding the ability to grow organic food, avoidance of pesticides and herbicides and genetically modified food were all raised.
- There are a number of issues unique to livestock such as the lack of a local abattoir, the cost of veterinary services and medicine and the declining number of veterinarians whose practice includes livestock.

The results of the public consultation process demonstrated a consistency with the results of other reports and studies in the local perception of the challenges facing agriculture in Sooke and the future of agriculture in Sooke. The concerns raised and discussed during the public consultation process were similar to those raised at the 2008 Farm Forum and during the preparation of the current OCP.

### SECTION FOUR: SOLUTIONS FOR SOOKE

In the District of Sooke's OCP, the vision for agriculture in Sooke is described as:

*Sooke envisions a vibrant sustainable food culture rooted in viable local production, historical and T'Sou-ke Nation's knowledge and environmental stewardship.*

The policies of the OCP are intended to nurture the development of the vision. This chapter compares the solutions and issues identified by the public and staff during the preparation of the Agricultural Plan with the existing policies and action items of the OCP. Solutions and issues not addressed by current policy are discussed in section 4.2 along with recommendations for changes to District policy or reference to the appropriate venue for dealing with the matter.

#### **4.1 A Review of Existing Policies and Comparison with the Results of Public Consultation**

##### **Policies 4.5.3 (a) and 4.5.3 (b)**

These two policies which state that all uses of land within the ALR must be in accordance with the ALC Act and support the objectives of the ALC are both required to be included in the OCP by provincial legislation. It was noted during the public consultation process that changes to the ALC Act may be needed to encourage agricultural use of the ALR land as much of it is not being farmed.

##### **Policy 4.5.3 (c)**

This policy supports the ongoing communication with the ALC on the OCP's proposed ALR land exclusions and inclusions. This policy was noted as a priority by the participants at the facilitated workshop.

At the time when Sooke was incorporated, there was considerable dialogue between the Commission and the District in order to ensure sufficient and appropriate lands for the development of a community with a town centre. In recent years, there have been very few exclusion applications and none for inclusion other than the relocation of the school site in the Sun River development. If, as a result of this Agricultural Plan, some exclusions and inclusions of agricultural lands are recommended, then Council should renew its dialogue with the Commission.

##### **Policy 4.5.3 (d) and Action Item 4.5.4 (g)**

One of the goals of the recently zoning bylaw review was to bring the District's Zoning Bylaw into compliance with the OCP. In recognition of policy statement 4.5.3 (d) and completing action item 4.5.4 (g), section 3.3 of Zoning Bylaw No. 500 clearly states that gardening and the growing of food is permitted in all zones. Backyard produce gardens and home gardening on single family residential lots are openly supported by the District's bylaws.

It was strongly suggested by members of the public that the District's zoning needs to more flexible to accommodate innovative approaches to the non-traditional uses and tenure of agricultural lands on the

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basis that it may be a way to reduce the costs associated with acquiring farmland. The concept of increasing the number of dwelling units in a small portion of a much larger agricultural property was one of the key suggestions. Several families can afford to buy a large property while one or two families can not. Another concept was subdividing large agricultural properties into smaller sized parcels between two to four hectares to reduce the land cost. Covenants could be registered at the time of subdivision requiring the properties be used for agricultural purposes.

Generic changes to the current Zoning Bylaw will not facilitate or generate innovative approaches for improving access to farmland. Instead, site specific zones will need to be drafted in response to comprehensive development proposals. Asking for a rezoning application for each development instead of changing the zoning bylaw in anticipation of proposals, does not indicate a lack of support for innovative approaches, only that detailed and site specific information is needed to assess unique proposals.

### **Policy 4.5.3 (e) and (f)**

These policies statements support the re-establishment of the local shellfish industry by preventing contamination of the Sooke Harbour and Basin and improving the flushing of these water bodies. No members of the aquaculture industry participated in the public consultation process and there are no recommended changes to these two policies.

### **Policy 4.5.3 (g) and Action Item 4.5.4 (h)**

The importance of the Sooke Country Market and the need for a better, and possibly permanent, location was a significant topic of discussion throughout the public consultation process. The Country Market brings people into the Town Centre, including tourists, and reinforces Sooke position as the economic hub for the surrounding area. Other businesses in the Town Centre can derive benefits from the influx in shoppers.

The potential exists for this market to expand and its further development should be encouraged. There are several very successful Farmers Markets in other small communities like Duncan and Ganges. Amenities such as access to potable water, washrooms and parking are needed.

A District staff member could be assigned to work with the stakeholders on preparing a report detailing the role that District can play in supporting the market and suitable sites.

### **Policy 4.5.3 (h)**

Participants at the facilitated workshop noted the importance of this policy supporting the expansion of local food organizations including Sooke Food CHI.

Volunteers involved with these organizations through their donations of time and knowledge can greatly increase the value of any monetary contributions. This type of organization can also tackle some of important aspects of local food security that are outside of the scope and expertise of local governments, for example, educational materials and workshops, advice on marketing, and networking.



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### **Policies 4.5.3 (i), 4.5.3 (k), 5.7.3 (b) and 5.7.3 (e)**

These policy statements encourage “organic intensive agricultural” and other sustainable farming activities on arable lands both in and not within the ALR as well as organic gardening and agriculture. There are no details on how to achieve this objective but in the broader context, all of the action items and policies in section 4.5 and 5.7 of the OCP do support this objective.

### **Policies 4.5.3 (j) and 5.7.3 (d)**

When the District receives rezoning applications adjacent to ALR lands, staff reports have asked for sufficient buffers and based the recommendations on provincial publications such as the “Guide to Edge Planning”. The need for buffers was noted during the public consultation process

### **Policy 4.5.3 (l) and Action 4.5.4 (e)**

This policy and companion action item call upon the District to create, support and implement, where possible, the recommendations contained within the Final Report for Food CHI: A Food Strategy for the Region (2008). This policy was identified as an important priority by the public.

The Food CHI Final Report contains a table of recommendations and next steps. Action items were not assigned to any specific group but some of the recommendations are clearly intended for the District and are listed in Table Ten below. Good progress has been made on all of the action items.

*Table Ten: Status of Recommendations from the Food Strategy for the Region, 2008*

<b>ACTION ITEM FROM THE FOOD STRATEGY FOR THE REGION 2008</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
Support the development of an Agricultural Area Plan	Underway
Work closely with District of Sooke’s Planning Department to ensure no more land is removed from the ALR	No land removed from the ALR since 2006
Work closely to ensure Sooke’s 3 at risk farms are not developed but set-up for production.	District not able to require farms to be in production.
Lobby Sooke district to adopt food security as a key priority for their OCP	Several policies have been included in the 2010 OCP
Partner with JdF Area EDC and District of Sooke to hold a regional agricultural forum	Held in October 2008 with funds from Community Grant
Support development of an Allotment Gardens Program within the District of Sooke	Sun River Allotment Garden approved by District in 2010

### **Policy 4.5.3 (m)**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the District collaborate with farmers’/growers’ associations when creating or amending bylaws affecting farmers. It can be accomplished by referring any bylaws

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affecting farmers to the Agricultural Land Commission, any adjacent farmers and other local farming organizations.

### **Policy 4.5.3 (n)**

Providing support for and encouragement of educational workshops on food production awareness and preservation techniques has been demonstrated in the past by the District's involvement in the 2008 Farm Forum.

### **Policy 4.5.3 (o)**

While supportive of agriculture, this policy is intended to encourage local farming, and investigate economic incentives and diversified use of ALR lands does not offer any specific details on what should be done. Some of the suggestions made during the public participation process and in other OCP policy statements do offer more guidance though.

### **Policy 4.5.3 (p)**

The OCP asks that organic pesticide use for farming, agriculture, animal husbandry and landscaping use within the District of Sooke be encouraged through the use of integrated pest management. In 2006, the District did not endorse adoption of the CRD Model Pesticide Use Control Bylaw and to date; it has not been adopted by the District. A recommendation was made by members of the public that this policy be amended to include a ban on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

### **Policy 4.5.3 (q)**

*“Collaborate with the Provincial Government with regard to reducing and eliminating “red tape” and restrictions on growing local food, raising and slaughtering animals for consumption and the sale of local food products, including animal or meat products. The District of Sooke will not condone current sale of meats or food products that are contrary to the Public Health Act and the Food Safety Act.”* is a broad-brush policy statement in the OCP drawing attention to the complexity of government regulations facing people involved in the production of food for human consumption. Section Two of this report which outlines the numerous agencies and programs regulating food production illustrates this point. The concern about “red tape” was reiterated by members of the farming community during the preparation of this plan. Remedies were suggested for some specific issues but no strategy was identified for the District to act upon.

### **Policy 4.5.3 (r), Action Items 4.5.4 (l) and 5.7.4 (a)**

This policy and two action items all recommend the use of small park areas as community gardens and possible inclusion of these lands into the ALR. During the public consultation process, it was suggested that John Phillips Memorial Park could be included into the ALR. (Based on the CLI soils mapping, it is likely the land does have some capability for farming but does have wet, low-lying areas. The park was once in the ALR before being excluded in 2001. The park is a very popular dog run and trail corridor.)

To-date, space has been available at the existing allotment gardens. As these allotment gardens reach capacity, staff will present Council with possible options for community gardens on lands owned by

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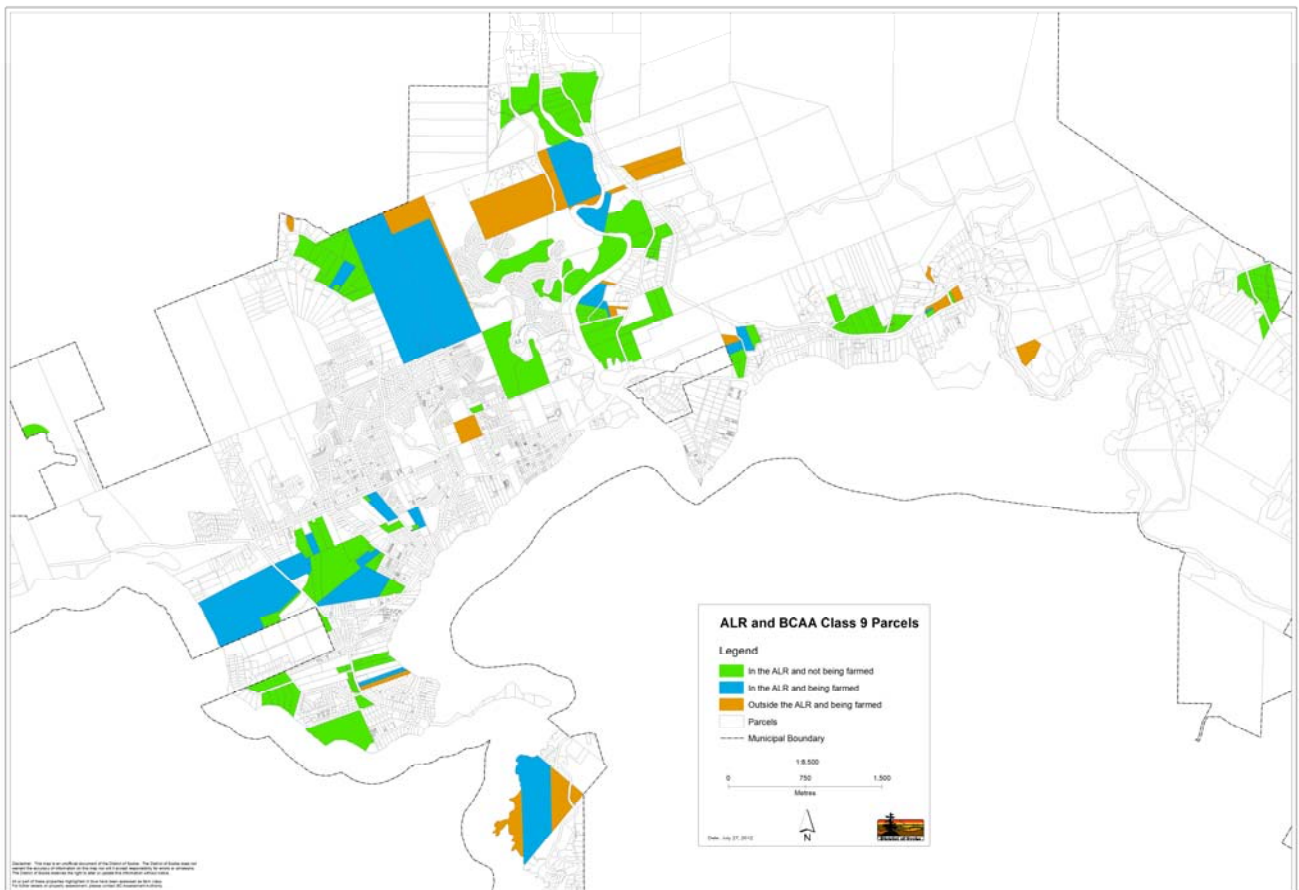
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Sooke including parkland. Fred Milne Park and the land to the west on the other side of the Park are in the ALR. There is other parkland not in the ALR which has been farmed in the past or is suitable for farming.

### **Policy 5.7.3 a**

This policy simply calls for the implementation of other policies in the OCP pertaining to agriculture by stating: “Implement the Agriculture and Food Security section of the OCP on Agriculture designated properties”.

MAP FOUR: Overlay of Properties Assessed as Farmland with Those Lands in the ALR.



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### **Policy 5.7.3 c**

Water costs were identified by the farming community as a significant constraint for agriculture. This policy calls on Council to consider a District controlled water distribution system. Having a District controlled domestic water supply is not realistic. However, there are alternative sources of water for agricultural purposes such as underground cisterns, rain water barrels and for non-edible foods, grey water systems that can be utilized by gardens and farmers to off-set the cost of irrigation. The District can assist by ensuring its bylaws and regulations don't discourage the use alternative water sources for agricultural purposes. Water licensing for the purposes of irrigation is the responsibility of the Province.

### **Action Item 4.5.4 (a)**

This action item in the OCP asks for the Agricultural Plan to provide a detailed review of opportunities and constraints in regard to agricultural lands including lands not in the ALR. To address this requirement, Section Two of this Plan includes detailed information on water rates, taxation, marketing boards, government legislation, and the impact of climate change. Information on the various agencies that support and provide funding for agriculture is also provided.

An analysis of lands that could be included into the ALR was done by overlaying the ALR boundaries with those properties that are assessed as farmland for taxation purposes. See Map Four. It would be up to the owners of those properties to make application for inclusion. *(Please see Action Item 4.5.4 c below for a discussion of excluding lands from the ALR in exchange for including land.)*

### **Action Item 4.5.4 (b)**

The OCP recommends creating an Agricultural Advisory Committee to aid in the implementation of the Sooke Agricultural Plan. There are the costs of staff time to be considered any time a new committee is created. Council will need to consider the benefits of creating an agricultural advisory committee in terms of these costs compared to other possible approaches for implementing the Agricultural Plan.

Suggestions were made during the public consultation process to increase the profile of the agricultural sector by either by creating an Agricultural Advisory Committee, having a representative from agriculture on the Economic Development Commission, assigning an Agricultural Portfolio to one of the council members or having a representative on the Chamber of Commerce.

If Council decides to create an Agricultural Advisory Committee, it will be important to have experienced farmers represented along with "landless" farmers, people who grow food on their residential lots and someone from the Country Market organization.

### **Action Item 4.5.4 (c)**

Action Item 4.5.4 (c) in the OCP states:

*Negotiate and explore all possibilities with the Agricultural Land Commission for the exclusion of land from the ALR which is vital to the strategic development of Sooke (e.g. Technical Industrial overlay designated area; properties located east of Maple Avenue in the block bounded by*

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*Grant, Gateway and West Coast Roads; Sunriver school site location change), which hold negligible farming potential, and possibilities exist to mitigate agricultural losses; and likewise, include land within the ALR, which has farming potential, maintaining a net zero loss of land from the ALR.*

In June 2012, the District was advised that the ALC had refused an application to exclude 16.56 hectares of agricultural land from the ALR: 16.56 hectares which lie within the larger block of land bounded by Grant, Gateway and West Coast Roads as referenced in action item 4.5.4 (c) and delineated on Schedule A of the OCP by a Technical Industrial Overlay.

This particular application was supported by Council on the basis that 11.4 hectares of arable land would be included into the ALR in exchange for the area being removed. Although the land proposed for inclusion was in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area, just outside of Sooke, Council felt that the proposed exclusion/inclusion was consistent with the intent of Action Item 4.5.4 (c) in the OCP that supports exclusions providing there is no “net-loss” of agricultural land.

In its May 14<sup>th</sup> decision on this exclusion application, the ALC clearly stated that it was not prepared to include properties on the basis that it would off-set exclusion of land. The Commission also emphasized that the “Technical Industrial Centre” designation in the OCP is inconsistent with the Commission’s advice to District and it does not support the non-farm development of these properties. Previous applications to exclude these same properties from the ALR had also been refused by the Commission. The Commission also refused an application made in 2011 to exclude other lands along Grant Road in the large block of lands with the Technical Industrial Overlay.

The intent of the Technical Industrial Overlay is to identify an area for the future development of a technology park. However, all applications made by private land owners for exclusion of ALR lands with the Technical Industrial Overlay area have been refused by the Commission. To resolve this situation, there are two options. The Technical Industrial Overlay can be removed from the OCP along with the corresponding references in Action Item 4.5.4 (c). Alternatively, the District can make its own exclusion application to the ALC to have this block of land excluded from the ALR based on a demonstrated need for community development, employment and growth. An application of this nature will require meeting with the ALC and providing strong supporting arguments and rationale.

### **Action Item 4.5.4 (d)**

The methodology used by BC Assessment Authority to assess farmland for taxation purposes continues to be an issue for farmers and growers through out the Province. This action item in the OCP asks Council to enter in to discussions with the BC Assessment Authority regarding the assessment of farmland. Many local governments have noted this same concern and the Province has been responding. As noted in section 2.8, four more of the Farm Assessment Review Panel recommendations will be in place for the 2013 Assessment Roll. The District should continue to be sensitive to concerns about property taxation and participate in efforts to improve how farmland is assessed. Consideration



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may be given to sending a letter to Province applauding the changes made so far and asking for the continued and timely implementation of the Review Panel's recommendations.

### **Action 4.5.4 (f)**

During the public consultation process, there was no interest expressed in inventorying "at-risk" farms. There was interest though in the second part of this action item which is the acquisition of farmland for community farm activities and agri-tourism pilot projects. At the present time, the District is not planning to acquire additional lands for this purpose as it already owns lands suitable for agriculture, some of which are in the ALR. Not all of the existing community gardens are fully subscribed so development of existing District properties for communal gardens is not an immediate concern. In terms of agri-tourism projects, the District can not give an unfair competitive advantage to a business but non-profit groups may wish to approach the District with site specific proposals of this nature.

### **Action Item 4.5.4 (i)**

There has been no action to date in creating a recurring \$10,000 food security reserve fund for community gardens and other high priority food security initiatives. Establishing a reserve fund was raised during the public consultation process and given a moderately high priority. (See Figure Two.) At present, municipal funding for this type of initiative is being accessed through a different route. For the 2012 fiscal year, Council made contributions totaling \$9,600 from its Community Grant Fund to the following groups:

Sooke Food CHI	\$ 3,500
Fall Fair Society	\$ 600
Sooke Slow Food Cycle and Transition Town	\$ 4,500
Ladybug Garden and Greenhouse	\$ 1,000

Council may want to indicate whether it prefers to establish a specific reserve fund or to continue with the current approach of annual requests to the Community Grant Program to allow for more flexibility in budgeting.

### **Action Item 4.5.4 (j)**

This action item recommends having a policy within the Sooke Zoning Bylaw which requires an area for food growing space or community gardens in multi-family housing developments, including condominiums. This concept was considered to be a very high priority during the public consultation process. To some extent, the Zoning Bylaw does address this recommendation by requiring that a certain percentage of outdoor area on each multi-family site be set aside for as an amenity area for the residents. It is up to the discretion of the developer at first, then later the residents of the complex to decide what type of "social, aesthetic, recreational or leisure" uses occur in the amenity area. However, the Zoning Bylaw does require that this amenity area be at least 6 metres in width and have a slope less than 10%. This criterion for an amenity area makes it suitable for growing food in either raised beds or the soil if it is arable.

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### **Action Items 4.5.4 (k) and 5.7.4 (b)**

These action items deal with producing educational material on composting, water use and soil quality and policy support on yard waste recycling. The District has been posting links to the CRD's website which contains information on these topics.

### **Action Item 4.5.4 (m)**

There was no discussion during the public process of heat recovery or for greenhouses and it was not been identified as an immediate priority.

### **Action Item 4.5.4 (n)**

Although there was no discussion during the public consultation process of opening a composting facility, in the past, it has been a strategic priority of Council. Until recently, Woodside Farm was being considered as a possible site for a composting facility but now a report is being prepared on the range of options for composting in Sooke.

## **4.2 Other Solutions Suggested:**

During the public consultation process, several key themes emerged regarding ways in which the District could support agriculture by:

- Advocating with the CRD for a reduction in water rates for growing food or other ways to reduce the cost of municipal water to farmers or small scale market gardens.
- Supporting farmers in their dealings with federal and provincial government agencies.
- Encouraging and supporting farming models that strengthen the connections between growers and the market place.
- Encouraging new and innovative farming models such as cooperatives, incubator farms, allotment gardens and community based farming.

Based on the review in the previous section, it appears that existing District policies, with some improvements, do satisfactorily respond to these key themes. There were however, some gaps between the District's policies and bylaws and the suggestions and recommendations made by the public.

### **4.2.1 Signage**

Changes to the Sign Regulation Bylaw for farms were asked for, in particular, for sandwich board signs. While the current Sign Regulation Bylaw does not mention agriculture, it does fit within the definition of a commercial use for the purposes of the bylaw. Amend the bylaw to state this point would make it clear that farms outside of the Town Centre would be able to have a sandwich board sign to be placed at

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the closest intersection with Highway #14 if there is no existing highway signage. In the Town Centre, business premises can have one sandwich board sign within 3 metres of the business frontage.

### **4.2.2 Abattoir**

The lack of a local abattoir is a challenge for all farmers in the CRD raising livestock and poultry. As discussed in section 2.9, changes to BC Meat Inspection Regulation have led to the closure of most, if not all, local facilities. As the District does not regulate this matter, lobbying the provincial government for changes and supporting any regional initiatives to address this problem are the best advice that can be offered.

### **4.2.3 Sale of Produce on Agricultural Lands**

Questions were raised about only being able to sell produce from the farm on which it is grown. The definition of “Agricultural Use” in the District’s Zoning Bylaw does not allow produce to be sold other than from the property where it is grown; however, this is not necessarily the case on lands in the ALR. The ALC Act Regulations supersede local zoning bylaws and permit as an outright farm use, the sales of off-site produce providing at least 50% of the retail sales area is limited to the sale of farm products produced on the farm on which the retail sales are taking place and the total area, both indoors and outdoors, used for the retail sales of all products does not exceed 300 m<sup>2</sup>. While the sale of off-site produce is restricted by the District’s Zoning Bylaw on lands outside of the ALR, as they are currently written, provincial regulations govern the origin of produce for sale on lands in the ALR.

Concerns were also expressed about theft of produce from road side stands. The recommended solution was to allow small enclosed buildings instead. Providing the type of sales comply with the Zoning Bylaw and the ALC Act, an enclosed accessory building would be permitted although a variance may be required if the building was to be sited in close proximity to property line.

### **4.2.4 Changes to the ALC Act**

Changes to the ALC Act were recommended at the facilitated workshop to increase the affordability of agricultural land. One idea was to allow larger parcels to be subdivided into smaller parcel sizes subject to the registration of covenants restricting the use of land to agricultural. Another idea was to increase in the number of dwelling units permitted on a lot to allow cooperative living and “eco-villages” on larger acreages in the ALR. Along with making the land more affordable, these suggested changes were designed to encourage full utilization of the ALR lands for agricultural purposes.

Provincial legislation would need to be amended in order for the District to be able to changes to its OCP or Zoning Bylaw to facilitate these suggestions. For specific development proposals, applications can be pursuant to the ALC Act for subdivision or non-farm use in the ALR. If the application was approved, then the District could consider a rezoning application for the same proposal.

### **4.2.5 Deer Management**

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of deer in this region and they can significant damage crops. Deer protection measures such as fencing can be expensive and are often ineffective.

The CRD has taken the lead on addressing the problem by establishing an eleven member Deer Advisory Group of which two members must be from the West Shore sub-area and three members must be commercial farmers. The consultative process is under way and public input is being invited at the present time. While most farmers will be staunch supporters of culling deer, there are other members of the public who wish to protect the deer.

Respondents to the District's on-line survey asked for more information on deer-proofing their gardens and crops. A link to the CRD Deer Management webpage could be provided on the District's website.

### **4.2.6 Insurance Rates**

High insurance rates appear to be affecting farmers in a variety of ways. It is recommended that local farmers connect with provincial farming organizations to discuss the matter and lobby the insurance industry for changes.

### **4.2.7 Veterinary Services**

The workshop attendees discussed the cost of medicine and veterinary services as well as the declining number of veterinarians who work with livestock and came up with a number of creative and potential solutions. For example, the group purchase of rarely used but expensive medicines and the training and certification of a local farmer to perform basic veterinary services for other local farmers like administering some medicines. While the District has no role to play in this matter, local farmers are encouraged to continue this dialogue to flesh out and implement viable solutions.

### **4.2.8 Long Term Leases**

Presently, the Province defines any land lease agreement longer than three years in duration as de facto subdivisions so the leases must comply with local zoning bylaws. Furthermore, if the land is in the ALR, permission from the ALC is required first. Without long term tenure, tenant farmers are discouraged from investing in and improving leased lands. The workshop attendees felt that this inability to obtain longer term leases coupled with the large minimum lot size requirements in agricultural zones is causing arable farm land to sit idle or be used for forage crops.

To encourage greater investment in developing the agricultural land base, the District could offer assistance by lobbying the province to increase the length of tenure for leases of farmland without the lease areas having to comply with subdivision regulations





### **4.2.9 Marketing**

A number of recommendations and suggestions were made during the public process regarding marketing. Topics such as branding, advertising and accessing new markets were all mentioned. Marketing of a product is instrumental to its economic success. By improving contacts with the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Committee and other local marketing organizations, local farmers can become more aware and involved with local marketing initiatives. Farmers can also investigate provincial programs that support marketing such as the Islands Agri-Food Initiative described in section 2.3 of this report.

### **4.2.10 Agri-Tourism**

Tourism is part of the local economy. While, there are several agri-tourism operations in the CRD, there are none in Sooke. Changes in 2002 to the ALC Act Regulations designated agri-tourism as a permitted use on ALR lands providing the land is assessed as farmland and the uses are temporary and seasonal. On-site agricultural products must be promoted. These regulations supersede local bylaws.

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Often considered as agri-tourism, bed & breakfast operations are treated differently the ALC Act Regulations in that they are subject to local government bylaws and a limit of 4 bedrooms or less has been applied. The District's Zoning Bylaw is supportive of the ALC Act Regulations by permitting bed and breakfast operations in all of its agricultural zones.

### **4.2.11 Planning for Community Based Agriculture**

An important distinction was made evident during the preparation of this plan. Along with traditional farms, there are a growing number of non-traditional approaches to growing food, sometimes, referred to as "urban agriculture" or "community based agriculture".

In urbanized area, people are increasingly growing food in their backyards, on their balconies and in allotment gardens. They are growing food for personal consumption, to give to family and friends as well as selling it locally. The on-line survey conducted by the District indicated that 100% of the respondents give food to family and friends.

There are a number of barriers to agriculture in urbanized areas. There is no provision for agricultural water rates for these smaller sized parcels as they are not classed as farmland for property taxation purposes. The parcel size sizes are often too small to be able to have gross sales of \$10,000 in order to be assessed as farmland and receive the corresponding tax relief. The proximity of neighbours can lead to nuisance complaints about smells, noise and unsightliness. Land costs are expensive so there is no way to consolidate adjacent properties to increase the area in production.

Specifically mentioning gardening and the growing of food in the Zoning Bylaw as a permitted use anywhere in Sooke indicates strong support by the District for community based agriculture and provides the flexibility needed for the development of less traditional approaches needed to farm in urban areas.

### SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the public consultation process and further research by staff, a list of action items has been developed and sorted by suggested timing for implementation.

#### 5.1 Action Items From Agricultural Plan

##### **SHORT TERM (Less than six months)**

- 5.1.1 Decide which of the two options presented in this report for addressing ALC's comments regarding the Technical Industrial Overlay shown over ALR lands on Schedule "A" of the OCP and the references in Action Item 4.5.4 (c) to the area bounded by Gatewood, Grant and West Coast Road to pursue.
- 5.1.2 Examine ways in which the District can support the Sooke Country Market and capitalize on the social and economic benefits associated with the Market by assigning a staff member to consult with the Sooke Country Market Association and vendors and prepare a report on specific ways that the District can support the Market. Given the tourism and economic benefits of farmers' markets, staff should also consult with the Chamber of Commerce, the District of Sooke Economic Development Commission and Sooke Food-CHI when preparing this report.
- 5.1.3 Provide a link on the District's website to the CRD's webpage containing information on Deer Management.

##### **MEDIUM TERM (Six months to Two Years)**

- 5.1.4 For future budget years, evaluate ways in which the District can provide funding or in-kind support to community gardens and education programs for yard waste.
- 5.1.5 Investigate the merits of establishing of a \$10,000 reserve fund for local food security initiatives as compared to the current approach of funding these types of programs through the Community Grants fund.
- 5.1.6 Change the Sign Regulation Bylaw to clarify how the bylaw applies to agricultural operations and ensuring sandwich board signs are permitted for farm gate sales.
- 5.1.7 Develop a strategy on how to increase the profile of agriculture and food security with Council and its Committees.
- 5.1.8 Consider adopting the CRD's model Pesticide Control Bylaw.

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- 5.1.9 Discuss the creation of an Agricultural Advisory Commission and including consideration of other options for representation and dialogue such as membership on the Peninsula Agricultural Commission.

### **ON-GOING AND LONGER TERM**

- 5.1.10 Continue investigating opportunities for local composting.
- 5.1.11 Lobby senior government for legislative changes to further reduce water costs for agricultural purposes, increasing the length of land leases and improvements to the process for assessing farmland for taxation purposes.
- 5.1.12 Lobby the Juan de Fuca Water Commission and the CRD for reductions in water costs for agricultural purposes including for produce grown on residential lots and in community gardens.
- 5.1.13 Take action on and be receptive to innovative approaches to increasing utilization of farmland for agricultural use.

### **5.2 Conclusions**

A strong foundation for local food security and agriculture has been laid by the policies in the OCP, changes to the zoning bylaw and the dedication and efforts of community members and organizations. One of the most important roles that the District can play in building on these assets is to be receptive to proposals coming forward to advance agriculture in Sooke.

The public's understanding of the farming community and an appreciation of the importance of it to Sooke and local food security can be enhanced by raising the profile of agriculture through representation on committees, education, marketing, holding events and advertising successes. It is important that the District demonstrate leadership and commitment through community-based actions and support of agricultural production.

## **APPENDIX A: Agricultural Policies from the District of Sooke OCP, 2010**

### **Section 4.5 Agriculture and Food Security**

#### **4.5.3 POLICIES**

- a. Support all uses of land within the ALR that are in accordance with the Agricultural Land Commission Act, BC Regulation 171/2002 and Orders of the Agricultural Land Commission.;
- b. Support the objectives of the Agricultural Land Commission and encourage the preservation of lands which have for farming capability and suitability;
- c. Support ongoing communication with the Agricultural Land Commission as to the OCP's proposed ALR land exclusions and inclusions;
- d. Support the provision of allotment gardens and backyard produce gardens; Eliminate contamination of the Sooke Harbour and Basin in order to re-establish the local shellfish industry;
- f. Encourage the re-establishment of a flushing channel through Goodridge Peninsula to aid in the flushing of Coopers Cove;
- g. Support and expand the farmers' market in Sooke;
- h. Support the expansion of local food organizations including the Sooke Food CHI organization and a community focused agricultural forum;
- i. Encourage "organic intensive agricultural" and other sustainable farming activities on arable lands both in and not within the ALR;
- j. Ensure sufficient buffers, including roads and right-of-ways, between agricultural lands and adjacent, non-agricultural properties; use of 'best practices' guides from the ALC should be considered during the planning or development processes, e.g. Ministry of Agriculture and Land's Guide to Edge Planning and Ministry of Agriculture and Land's Guide to Using and Developing Trails in Farm and Ranching Areas;
- k. Support organic gardening and agriculture;
- l. Support and implement, where possible, recommendations contained within Vancouver Island Health Authority's Community Food Action Initiative by Food Community Health Initiative (CHI): A Food Strategy for the Sooke Region;
- m. Collaborate with farmers'/growers' associations when creating or amending bylaws affecting farmers;
- n. Support and encourage educational workshops that provide food production awareness and preservation techniques;
- o. Encourage local farming, and investigate economic incentives and diversified use of ALR lands, while maintaining and protecting the intent of ALR lands;
- p. Encourage organic pesticide use for farming, agriculture, animal husbandry and landscaping use within the District of Sooke by 2011 through the use of integrated pest management;
- q. Collaborate with the Provincial Government with regard to reducing and eliminating "red tape" and restrictions on growing local food, raising and slaughtering animals for consumption and the sale of local food products, including animal or meat products. The District of Sooke will not condone current sale of meats or food products that are contrary to the Public Health Act and the Food Safety Act; and
- r. Where feasible, support transition of pocket parks to community gardens.



### 4.5.4 ACTION ITEMS

- a. Develop a Sooke Agricultural Plan that would provide a detailed review of opportunities and constraints in regards to agriculturally designated lands, farmed but non-designated lands, and which will provide an analysis of all other lands in the District of Sooke for either inclusion or exclusion into/from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR);
- b. Create a Sooke/ALC Agricultural Land Reserve Advisory Committee to aid in the development and implementation of the Sooke Agricultural Plan;
- c. Negotiate and explore all possibilities with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) for the exclusion of land from the ALR which is vital to the strategic development of Sooke (e.g. Technical Industrial overlay designated area; properties located east of Maple Avenue in the block bounded by Grant, Gatewood and West Coast Roads; Sunriver school site location change), which hold negligible farming potential, and possibilities exist to mitigate agricultural losses; and likewise, include land within the ALR, which has farming potential, maintaining a net zero loss of land from the ALR;
- d. Enter into negotiations/discussion with British Columbia Assessment Authority regarding amending the classification system of farm lands and associated taxation;
- e. Create and implement a food action plan as identified through the Food CHI: A Food Strategy for the Region Final Report (July 2008);
- f. Create an inventory of at-risk farms in Sooke and consider the acquisition of farmland for community farm activities and agri-tourism pilot projects;
- g. Allow use of ancillary/accessory agriculture on single family residential lots and ensure the Zoning Bylaw and Sooke/private covenants, allow for home gardening on single family residential lots;
- h. Designate land for the location of a farmers' market, either temporary, seasonal or permanent, for a street farm market with consideration given to the provision of potable water and sewer facilities if there is preparation of food on site;
- i. Create a recurring \$10,000 food security reserve fund to help fund and create community gardens and other food security initiatives;
- j. Consider policy within the Sooke Zoning Bylaw to implement an appropriate minimum on-site or off-site requirement for food growing space or community garden based on proposed gross floor area for condominium development and multi-family projects;
- k. Create educational material and policy support for implementing yard and garden waste recycling program for appropriate land uses and provide educational material for the public regarding composting, water use, soil quality, etc.;
- l. Inventory existing small park areas to verify and target pocket parks as areas in neighbourhoods that could be used for community gardens and incorporated into the ALR if necessary;
- m. Encourage the feasibility for heat recovery, specifically for greenhouses; and
- n. Open a Sooke composting facility making it "bear smart" in its design and function.

### **Section 5.7 Land Use Designations – Agriculture**

#### **5.7.3 POLICIES**

- a. Associate and implement the “Agriculture and Food Security” section of this document on Agriculture designated properties;
- b. Encourage “organic intensive agricultural” and other sustainable farming activities on arable lands both in and not within the ALR;
- c. Consider District controlled water distribution for purposes of food security;
- d. Ensure sufficient buffers, including roads and right-of-ways, between agricultural lands and adjacent, non-agricultural properties; use of ‘best practices’ guides from the ALC should be considered during the planning or development processes, e.g. *Ministry of Agriculture and Land's Guide to Edge Planning* and *Ministry of Agriculture and Land's Guide to Using and Developing Trails in Farm and Ranching Areas*; and
- e. Support organic gardening and agriculture.

#### **5.7.4 ACTION ITEMS**

- a. Inventory existing small park areas to review and target pocket parks as areas in neighbourhoods that could be used for community gardens and discuss with the ALC about incorporating such parks into the ALR is possible; and
- b. Provide educational material for the public regarding composting, water use, soil quality, etc.

## **APPENDIX B: Notes from Large Group Discussion at Facilitated Workshop**

### **Are there any big omissions in the current OCP?**

Lands in ALR are large and not sustainable because of size (fuel, labor). Approach ALC to approve smaller lots for farming, allow more homes like an eco-village on the ALR Lands.

Why is most ALR land is not being farmed? If it is not serving a purpose, then why have ALR status.

Don't see word "commercial" in front of Agriculture. What is the difference between growing personal and commercial? Should there be a policy distinction between growing food for personal and for commercial?

Ban GMO crops. Create a policy supporting non GMO.

Look at how we support Agriculture. We should not support pesticides etc. We should have a strong policy that says Sooke does not support chemicals. Richmond BC's has a policy not supporting pesticide. Pesticides do not benefit the neighbors who may be organic. Buffers are important.

Development in Sooke should provide a % of land to Agriculture. As population increases, agricultural land should also increase.

Have education on agriculture and ALR. Promote agriculture in Sooke to generate more support.

Encourage neighboring communities to enter into a memorandum of understanding.

Food CHI works with everybody because then it could save time instead of going to CRD planners and Sooke planners.

Need more of a food culture in Sooke.

Agricultural land and food security should have more weight and strengthening the commitment when making hard decisions.

District would have a voice to move up in provincial and federal government when communicating with other levels of government.

Many things that affect farmers such as insurance, slaughter laws, and water which all deter farming. The District needs to help sway other organizations to change or help investigate ways to get better or adequate insurance, cheaper water costs in order to make farming more attainable and easier.

Speak to higher levels of government to help reduce costs to farming. Sooke should lobby BC government to update archaic laws.

Need more than one farmers market. Lots of polices say "support" but would like to see land dedicated to a farmers market and an actual plan

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Need more support for co operative farming.

Need a Councilor to be dedicated to agriculture or to be assigned an agricultural portfolio.

Developmental pressures are in Sooke. There needs to be a vehicle to have dialogue between developers and foodies.

Scales of farms are so different and policies should recognize this and that all farms have different needs. Sooke should lobby government to support exemption on size of farms/animals.

Need to be pro-active. It feels like agricultural plans is a back lash action and we are behind of development.

Agriculture should always be a standing item on Councils agenda and be a good practice.

Need a policy on how farmers can make money.

### **Priority of OCP Policies. Which Policies Should Council Focus On?**

An agricultural person needs to be involved in creating policies and should be sitting at the table (ex: Land Use Committee)

Policy 4.5.3(a) Need to lobby at higher levels. Sustainability – land in ALR not being used. ALR rules do not seem to be working and these rules should be changed because times have changed. The District of Sooke should lobby the ALC.

Policy 4.5.3(l) Have a policy first before going to the ALC

Policy 4.5.3(o) 5 people agreed this policy is a priority. It should include different models.

Policy 4.5.3(q) 5 people agreed this policy is a priority

Policy 4.5.3(b) 3 people agreed this policy is a priority

Policy 4.5.3(p) Strengthen and include non GMO in this policy

Policy 4.5.3(c) Priority

Policy 4.5.3(h) 3 people agreed this policy is a priority. Get a big bang for buck when working with Food CHI. Avoid red tape. Put an Agricultural Advisory Committee together after Ag plan is endorsed.

Policy 4.5.3(g) 4 people agreed this policy is important

Policy 4.5.3(m) Ag Advisory Committee. Could be strengthened. Food CHI's study help do this.

## APPENDIX C: Notes from Small Focus Groups at Facilitated Workshop

### SUSTAINABILITY

- Creative zoning to support farmers
- No longer so many traditional family farms, we need to adapt to changing dynamics
- How to pass on value of farm land and the farm business?
- How do farmers get their dollars out?
- Since less family based farms, we need groups /networks to support farmers
- One model is to chop up 100 acre parcels into 5 and 10 acre parcels with a covenant registered on them so the land can only be used for food production (*Dangerous*)
- What about farm coops and farm trusts?
- Sponsor a workshop on succession planning
- Inform wider community of the value of farming
- Supportive farm community but the community as a whole is not supportive of agriculture (*Disagree – the community doesn't know enough about farming. Education of the public is what is needed.*)
- Larger parcels which will work for larger groups, for example, Eco-village. Large parcels are too expensive for one family.
- Incubator farms.
- Is there anyway that you could have private allotment gardens. (You can use my front yard to grow things.)
- Long term leases (issues)
- Cooperative farming
- Farms on municipal land like the one on Haliburton in Saanich although having people live on the farm is ideal. (Use John Phillips Park for a farm and the farmers' market.0
- Alternative models
- Sustain interest in young people
- Farming college – teaching people to farm
- How can farmers make a go of it? (Never)
- Chamber of Commerce interface
- Laws not keeping up with what is happening in farming community
- If you retire, tax exemption should continue
- Cost of food is real cost avoid subsidies
- Local food processing availability is essential to farm economic sustainability
- Need local abattoirs/local food inspector allowing easier access
- Get ride of unnecessary and cumbersome regulations
- Change tax structure around farming
- Agri-farming is shutting out small farms – small farmers should pay less taxes
- Lobby the Province for refundable tax credit for farmers
- Have veterinarian experience available to farmers either through the training of farmers, sharing costs of expensive medicines or have veteraniary technician that can do more (administer shots, etc.) There are problems with no large animal vets locally. There are insurance issues for vets who treat large animals.



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- Farmers need to make a living. There should be a stipend for farmers who grow certain foods. No increase in taxes though as a result of supporting farmers. Change tax laws to accommodate changes.
- Encourage pollination through banning of herbicides and pesticides.
- Can wells be used to off-set water costs? Cisterns.
- In order to sustain farms, we need to make it easier for farmers to sell their products.
- If farmers can make a living at farming then, the children may be more willing to stay in the industry.
- Need to mentor/pass on knowledge.
- Sharing access to commercial kitchen to allow for canning, etc. for sale

### **FARM LAND AVAILABILITY**

- Make possible for groups of people on ALR land to live and farm (Coop is an example.) Special use permit through ALR has to be perpetuating. Section 219 covenant not permitting any use but agriculture. What about cluster housing with an agriculture component? The remainder could be put in the ALR
- Concept of Farmland Trust
- Concern – Is ALR land Open Space?
- In terms of agriculture, allow more flexibility in terms of ALR land use. Live at farm
- Don't think of farm/ALR Land as real estate.
- Managed "Commons". Learn how to act cooperatively to maintain agricultural land, food security, livability
- Don't be afraid of the market.
- Acquire Ag land as a common property resource, e.g. water is a common property resource
- Have farms as teaching, working farms. Incubator farms. Demonstration Farms Farm School internships.
- Adjust the tax base for farmland in production.
- Make lot line adjustments to consolidate farmland easier.
- A lot of farmland is available and can be used. Remove some of the barriers to using it. The land is already there and the OCP allows it to be used. Encourage people to use it.
- Change the culture to education people to go to a food-growing culture from a consumptive culture.
- District to use John Phillips Park as market and working farm. Have a farmer lease it as a working farm.
- Linking land and farmers. Land owner to farmer or farmer to farmer network. Encouraging linking useable lands for farming.
- Teach school students how to grow food; encourage school gardens in all schools. For example, Which School District has the best garden? Contests.
- Re-skilling workshops on how to grow food, prepare it, preserve it.
- Reduce cost of farming land by lowering water rates.
- Allow land owner to have tax credit incentive to permit other to farm their land or a portion.
- Grow food in parks.
- Winter gardens in schools.

### **SUPPORTIVE POLICY**

- Lobby all to reduce ALR lot sizes. Below current minimum lot sizes. (Assumed 40 acres)
- Allow more than two houses on ALR Land
- Stipulate \$ of production that must come off the land to discourage horse hobby farms.
- Create dual water rate – one for agriculture. Review existing policies to create favour to agriculture. Give Agricultural rates to farm-assessed properties.
- Create tax incentives that encourage water collection.
- Make Sooke District a cosmetic herbicide and pesticide free zone. Make violations expensive. Just pesticide, not herbicide, free. Need for definitions of herbicides and pesticides.
- Establish a formula that links development of housing to an area of agricultural production.
- Lobby Province and UBCM to make an exemption for small farms for animal slaughter. Buyer beware as before.
- ~~Create bylaws that encourage individuals to have choice in the products they consume.~~
- Sooke declare itself GMO free.
- Land use committee of the District of Sooke must include agricultural representation.
- Create a Sooke region agriculture committee to advice on creation of all bylaws.
- Allow large land holders outside of ALR, who farm, to make additional income in other creative ways, not currently allowed (parity with ALR)
- Have a District of Sooke specific reduction of taxation on “credible” farms (BC Assessment criteria)
- Policy developer not just providing land for allotment gardens, but be compelled to develop the garden at their expense to defined standards.
- Create a bylaw that compels leaving topsoil on land that is developed.
- Recognize importance of farming and need for farming on non-ALR lands in District documents and policies.
- Create policies that encourage “Group” farming.
- Develop policy that supports long-term leases on agricultural land, ALR & non-ALR. District of Sooke should actively lobby for this.
- Need to review zoning bylaws to confirm they are strong and clear enough to support small scale agriculture. (RU3 zone).
- People who “farm” only horses should not be given farm tax exemption.
- Sooke should promote policies that give Sooke more autonomy.
- In density bonusing situations, the remaining land should be placed in the ALR

### **CONSUMER ACCESS**

#### **FARMERS MARKET**

- Find a more permanent location
- Current location in parking lot by thrift store not adequate
- Limitations to growth of market in current location
- Could have multiple locations at different times of day
- Location of market in the downtown core is vital marriage between Ag & business
- Market must have: washroom w/ running water, parking for vehicles and bikes, electricity, room for growth, storage on site, functioning VIHA approved kitchen
- Market must be accessible to everyone, needs to be highly visible
- It would be nice to have covered areas to work towards an all season farmers market
- Market study on how many people use the market
- Beneficial to sustain market throughout the year (crafts, food etc)
- “St. Lawrence Market” in Toronto is an all year market
- Branding for farmers market. Example: paint sunflowers on the road
- Allow a community table at the market
- Possible locations – Woodside Farm, John Phillips Park (accessible), old Casa Maria property, Community Hall (Agriculture Lane), future downtown of Sooke

Have grocery stores carry more local food. Farmers need to talk to them. Western Foods is interested in selling local. What are grocery store regulations around selling local? There should be flexibility to carry seasonal food. What volume of food does a grocery store require? Grocery stores could promote local food through campaigns such as 1 week of local food in store. Insurance needs to not be a barrier!

#### **PROMOTIONS**

- Create an interactive visual farm website. Could be a directory to buying local food/animals
- Agriculture history in Sooke. Map out the history. Visual promotions. Tool to excite people about farming and to let people know what was farmed on their land.
- Collaboration with the District, the CRD, community groups and electoral groups in promoting agriculture
- Buy local campaign – advertise in local paper
- Promote Sooke as food secure. “Food Secure” may not be the right word for Sooke. Rethink. Branding.
- Make growing food a priority
- Beneficial for the District to promote Sooke as non GMO and chemical free. Goats and sheep can replace chemical use.
- Food Trails – Branding/Promotion. Have same logo as the farmers market logo (ex: sunflower)
- District should coordinate/interface with Chamber of Commerce website
- Promote agri-tourism
- Have an Information Centre, a welcome to Sooke basket that tells you about where to buy local beef, local food.

## APPENDIX D: Tabulation of Results from On-line Survey

1. Do you farm land in Sooke? This includes backyard gardens	Yes 81.3%	No 18.8%
2. Is the land you farm in the ALR?	Yes 13.6%	No 86.4% <sup>19</sup>
3. If you answered 'Yes' to Question 1, do you:		
Grow only food for your own use in and out-of-season	92.3%	
Grow food to give to friends & family	100.0%	
Grow food to sell commercially 44.4%	Sell at the Sooke Farmer's Market 55.6%	
4. Are products you grow/sell available at the farm gate?	Yes 36.8%	No 63.2%
5. If you grow food for your own use is it enough to use/put-up to last the year?	Yes 42.9%	No 57.1%
6. Is the amount of food you sell enough to pay for the expense of growing it?	Yes 45.0%	No 55.0%
7. Do you believe growing food in the District is important to residents of Sooke?	Yes 95.7%	No 4.3%
8. Do you buy food from farms or producers located in Sooke?	Yes 91.3%	No 8.7%
9. Where do you buy local food in Sooke?		
At the farm gate 70.6%	Through a Community Supported Agriculture program	22.2%
At the Sooke Farmer's Market 90.5%	By pre-arranged sale with the farmer	72.2%
10. What kind of food do you buy? Fruit 61.9% Berries 52.4% Vegetables 100.0% Eggs 66.7%		
Milk 19.0% Jam, preserves, etc. 42.9%		
11. Why do you buy food locally? Freshness 81.8% Organically grown 77.3% Know the farmer 72.7%		
Better for the environment 86.4% Nostalgia 13.6%	Support for local farmer/business 95.5%	
12. If you were given the opportunity to buy more food locally would you?	Yes 100.0%	No .0% <sup>0</sup>
13. Would you like to see more local products available in Sooke grocery stores?	Yes 95.7%	No 4.3%
14. Would you like to learn more about: (check as many boxes as you want):		
Growing your own food at home 50.0%	Allotment/community gardens	31.3%
What you can grow in Sooke 62.5%	Buying from local producers	62.5%
Creating a food garden at home 31.3%	Improving your home food garden	68.8%



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