



North Saanich

DRAFT AGRICULTURE PLAN

January 2010

Prepared by:  **MASSELINK**
ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Masselink Environmental Design (MED) facilitated the development of the North Saanich Agriculture Plan under the direction of the North Saanich AAC.

The Agriculture Plan was written by:

Derek Masselink, MED (*Lead Author*)
Kristina Bouris, MED
Sandra van Vliet, MED
Jim MacPherson, Calibre Strategic Services Inc.

Facilitation of the Community Dialogues and open houses was provided by MED with support from students of the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning. The facilitators were:

Kristina Bouris, MED (Public Process Design and Coordination Lead)
Erica Crawford Boettcher Nancy Hofer, UBC
Chani Joseph, UBC Vanessa Kay, UBC
Asrai Ord, UBC Lucia Scodanibbio, UBC
Christine Wenman, UBC

The District of North Saanich Agriculture Advisory Commission (AAC) was responsible for guiding the Agriculture Plan process. Participating members of the AAC included:

Barbara Brennan, Chair Hamish Crawford, Vice-chair
Brian Hughes Brian Dunic
Bernadette Greene Normand Schafer
Jock Von Kaldenberg
Anny Scoones, North Saanich Councillor Peter Chandler, North Saanich
Councillor
Ted Izard, North Saanich Advisory Planning Commission Liaison
Jack Thornburgh, North Saanich Environmental Advisory Commission Liaison
Rob Kline, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

Project management and support was provided by the following District staff:

Tracy Olsen, Director of Planning and Development Services
Curt Kingsley, Municipal Clerk
Lisa Coburn, Administration Secretary
Jackie Gretchen, Development and Community Services Clerk

Additional support and assistance was provided by:

Corrine Roesler, Jim LeMaistre and Laura Munroe, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Ian Faris, Capital Regional District
Shaundeh Runka and Roger Cheetham, BC Agricultural Land Commission

Development of the Agriculture Plan would not have been possible without the participation and input received from farming and non-farming members of the North Saanich and Peninsula community. This plan is reflection of all your ideas, support and efforts.

The project was funded in part by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food program. District of North Saanich, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and the Capital Regional District provided additional funding and support.

Funding provided by:



Agriculture and Agri - Food Canada (AAFC), the BC Ministry of Agriculture (BCMA) and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAF), are pleased to participate in the production of this publication. We are committed to working with our industry partners and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC to increase public awareness of the importance of the agriculture and agri - food industry to Canada. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily IAF, BCMAL or AAFC.

“North Saanich is sustained by a diverse, productive and vibrant agricultural economy that ensures the long-term health and vitality of our community and the neighbouring First Nation and municipal communities of the Saanich Peninsula.

We actively demonstrate our support for our agricultural heritage and economy through our involvement in and responsibility for the ownership and stewardship of our productive lands, the growing production of a diversity of high quality local foods and farm products, and by our care and support for those who do this work.

In so doing we have created a diverse and exemplary network of positive and supportive economic, social and ecological relationships and interconnections that sustain, strengthen and define our vibrant rural community and its agricultural enterprises.”

- North Saanich’s Agricultural Vision

DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The central purpose of the North Saanich Agriculture Plan is to establish a framework that guides the long-term viability of the District's significant and valued agricultural activities. The Plan describes current food and agricultural issues, explores opportunities, and recommends strategic approaches that support local agriculture and ensure its future.

The District established four key goals for the Agriculture Plan process:

1. Develop, in consultation with the public and interested stakeholders, a plan that provides a comprehensive set of actions that support agriculture and ensure that it remains an important and viable social, cultural and economic part of the community;
2. Determine the potential to increase local agricultural activities and improve agriculture's long-term health and viability;
3. Address policy and planning issues for agricultural land; and
4. Encourage environmentally beneficial farming practices.

Elements of the North Saanich Agriculture Plan process included the:

- Collection and analysis of background information;
- Identification of issues and opportunities for agriculture;
- Articulation of a future vision for food and agriculture;
- Review of the community's existing land use bylaws and policies;
- Development of action oriented strategies;
- Identification of implementation procedures and responsibilities; and the
- Meaningful involvement of the community throughout the planning process.

Public Input

Community involvement was a critical aspect of the North Saanich Agriculture Plan process. Early on in the planning process community input was recognized as an important and necessary part for the development of a plan that is understood and supported by the community.

During the planning process public involvement and input was achieved through:

- The participation of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC);
- An on-line survey;
- Two Community Dialogue sessions; and
- Interviews with key North Saanich agricultural producers and other stakeholders.

The Draft Agriculture Plan will be presented to the public for their feedback in February 2010. This feedback will be considered by the Planning Team, which consists of members of the AAC, District staff and the consultants, and be used to guide the development of a Final Draft plan. The Final Draft Plan will be presented to District Council for their review and input in March 2010. If necessary, adjustments will be made and the completed final Agricultural Plan will be submitted to Council.

Supporting Information and Research

Agricultural information from a Land Use Inventory conducted by the Ministry of Agricultural and Lands in 2005 and updated in 2009, and a limited data set from Statistics Canada,

consisting of data from the 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Census of Agriculture, established a basic understanding of the state of agriculture in North Saanich. This information was augmented by information from referenced sources and results of input received from AAC members, Community Dialogue participants, local producers, other stakeholders, District staff and members of Council.

Key Challenges

Five key challenges confront agriculture in North Saanich. These include:

- Economic Viability;
- Leadership and Governance;
- Protection and Stewardship;
- Education and Training; and
- Community Health.

The long-term economic viability of local agriculture is a central concern for those in the agricultural community. There is a general recognition that if farming does not remain economically viable in North Saanich and on the Saanich Peninsula, it will continue to decline. There is also a realization that economic viability is dependent on multiple factors, including: the support, participation and leadership by the District and members of the local agricultural community; access to a protected and properly managed land base; the use of environmentally considerate and sustainable land practices; and relevant educational and training opportunities for farmers as well as residents and visitors. It is anticipated that global challenges such as climate change and rising non-renewable energy costs will increase local interest in and pressure on local agriculture and food production as they become recognized as important contributors to the overall health and resiliency of the community.

Guiding Vision

In response to these challenges and opportunities, and with considerable input from the community, the following agricultural vision for North Saanich is proposed:

North Saanich is sustained by a diverse, productive and vibrant agricultural economy that ensures the long-term health and vitality of our community and the neighbouring First Nation and municipal communities of the Saanich Peninsula.

We actively demonstrate our support for our agricultural heritage and economy through our involvement in and responsibility for the ownership and stewardship of our productive lands, the growing production of a diversity of high quality local foods and farm products, and by our care and support for those who do this work.

In so doing we have created a diverse and exemplary network of positive and supportive economic, social and ecological relationships and interconnections that sustain, strengthen and define our vibrant rural community and its agricultural enterprises.

Key Strategies

The following four strategies have been identified as critical first steps for the District of North Saanich, represented by the Mayor and Council, to achieve the proposed agricultural vision:

ECONOMIC VIABILITY

1. Encourage coordinated and cooperative approaches that benefit local agriculture.
 - *Encourage the establishment of an independent local agriculture organization*, which can effectively represent the District’s considerable and diverse agricultural interests.
2. Develop a detailed local economic development strategy for agriculture.
 - *Undertake an Agricultural Economic Development Plan* that considers individual farm opportunities as well as larger, longer-term approaches.
3. Reinforce North Saanich’s agricultural identity.
 - *Pursue an agricultural branding strategy* or coordinated marketing approach that establishes a common identity or brand for North Saanich agriculture and agricultural products.
 - *Establish a supportive roadside signage program.*
4. Support the establishment of facilities and infrastructure that stimulate the growth and diversification of local agriculture.
 - *Encourage the growth of farmers markets*, including smaller “pocket” markets, in appropriate locations throughout the District.
 - *Consider the establishment of a local abattoir* that could service Peninsula and Gulf Island producers.
 - *Support the considered development of additional agricultural infrastructure* (e.g. community kitchens; cold storage, processing and composting facilities).

Additional Strategies

The following nineteen additional strategies will help the District of North Saanich achieve its proposed agricultural vision:

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

5. Protect local agricultural interests.
 - *Maintain supportive policies and bylaws.*
6. Influence regional and provincial food and agriculture policy decision-making.
 - *Represent local agricultural interests.*
 - *Support the establishment and maintenance of effective regional food and agriculture committees.*
 - *Advocate for local agriculture.*
7. Maintain and track local agricultural information.
 - *Maintain and improve the existing agricultural information base.*
 - *Monitor changes to North Saanich’s agricultural sector.*

8. Provide knowledgeable agricultural services.
 - *Provide quality services.*
 - *Establish an agricultural extension position.*
9. Address local shortages of farm labour and on-farm working housing.
 - *Work to establish a local agricultural labour pool.*
 - *Examine opportunities to address the shortage of on-farm worker housing.*
10. Develop additional strategies and policies that benefit farming.
 - *Support direct farm marketing and value-added initiatives.*
 - *Establish local agritourism guidelines.*
 - *Implement a local/ethical food procurement policy.*

PROTECTION AND STEWARDSHIP

11. Actively protect farmland.
 - *Support establishment of a farmland trust.*
12. Pursue strategies that increase land available for farming.
 - *Identify alternative models and methods that support farming.*
 - *Link farmland with future farmers.*
 - *Provide farm succession support.*
13. Increase agricultural awareness and appreciation of new and future residents.
 - *Establish an agriculture webpage.*
 - *Provide agricultural information to new residents.*
14. Encourage the use of ecological farming practices.
 - *Support the implementation of beneficial farm management practices.*
 - *Encourage farm practices that protect the natural environment.*
15. Participate in programs that reward farmers for the environmental services they provide.
 - *Encourage participation in environmental incentive programs.*
16. Support farmers dealing with environmental issues.
 - *Address problem wildlife issues.*
 - *Maintain access to adequate and affordable water.*
 - *Assist with climate adaptation.*
17. Work with local agencies and jurisdictions to maintain the agronomic capability of their agricultural lands.
 - *Encourage local agencies to maintain the agricultural productivity of their agricultural land holdings.*

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

18. Improve local understanding and appreciation of agriculture.
 - *Celebrate agriculture!*
 - *Host agricultural dialogues.*
19. Encourage youth-focused agricultural learning opportunities.
 - *Support child and youth-based agricultural education initiatives.*
 - *Encourage the development of agricultural teaching facilities.*
20. Increase local agricultural training and mentoring opportunities for existing and new farmers.
 - *Encourage increased training opportunities.*
 - *Encourage mentorship opportunities.*

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

21. Grow North Saanich's local food system.
 - *Undertake an assessment of the District's food system.*
 - *Increase resiliency of the District's food system.*
 - *Increase number of food gardens and farms.*
22. Encourage healthy local food choices.
 - *Start a local, healthy food initiative.*
 - *Participate in regional food initiatives.*
23. Increase support services for farmers and their families.
 - *Encourage the provision of supportive services for the farming community.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	9
1.1	Purpose	9
1.2	Planning Process and Sources of Information and Research	9
1.3	Organization of the Plan	11
2	CONTEXT	13
2.1	The District of North Saanich	13
2.2	Climate	13
2.3	Soils and Native Vegetation	14
2.4	Water	14
2.5	Agricultural History	15
2.6	North Saanich’s Current Agricultural Situation	17
2.7	Governance	19
2.8	Community Involvement	23
3	ESTABLISHING AN AGRICULTURAL VISION.....	27
3.1	The Vision	27
3.2	Challenges and Goals.....	28
4	ISSUES IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS	29
4.1	Economic Viability	29
4.2	Leadership and Governance	33
4.3	Protection and Stewardship of Agricultural Land	38
4.4	Education and Training.....	43
4.5	Community Health and Sustainability.....	46
5	STRATEGIES	51
5.1	Key Strategies	51
5.2	Additional Strategies	55
6	IMPLEMENTATION	67
6.1	Implementation Tables.....	67
6.2	Ensuring Success	73
6.3	Conclusion	75
	ABBREVIATIONS.....	77
	GLOSSARY.....	77
	APPENDIX A - AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS.....	79
	APPENDIX B - NORTH SAANICH FOOD CHARTER	81

1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade the British Columbia government has encouraged communities with significant agricultural land holdings and activities to develop Agricultural Plans. The purpose of an Agricultural Plan is to provide a community with the opportunity to look ahead and consider their agricultural situation in order to identify practical solutions to current issues, identify opportunities to strengthen farming and contribute to the long-term sustainability of agriculture.

The North Saanich Agriculture Plan is one of the key products of the agricultural planning process initiated by the District of North Saanich, in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and with financial assistance from the District and Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia.

1.1 Purpose

The central purpose of the North Saanich Agriculture Plan is to ensure the long-term viability of the District's significant and valued agricultural activities.

The District established the following four objectives for the Agriculture Plan process:

1. Develop, in consultation with the public and interested stakeholders, a plan that provides a comprehensive set of actions that support agriculture and ensure that it remains an important and viable social, cultural and economic part of the community;
2. Determine the potential to increase local agricultural activities and improve agriculture's long-term health and viability;
3. Address policy and planning issues for agricultural land; and
4. Encourage environmentally beneficial farming practices.

Community participation is a critical aspect of the Agriculture Plan process.

At the end of the Agriculture Plan process, the community of North Saanich will have participated in the creation of a plan that describes current food and agricultural issues, explores opportunities, and recommends beneficial policy and strategic approaches that support local agriculture and ensure the long-term viability of local agriculture.

1.2 Planning Process and Sources of Information and Research

The North Saanich Agriculture Plan process was as follows:

- Collection and analysis of background information;
- Identification of issues affecting or influencing agriculture;
- Identification of opportunities for agriculture;
- Articulation of a future vision for food and agriculture;
- Review of the community's existing land use bylaws and policies;
- Development of action oriented strategies and recommendations;
- Identification of implementation procedures and responsibilities; and
- Meaningful engagement of the public throughout the process.

1.2.1 Public Input

Meaningful community involvement was a critical aspect of the North Saanich Agriculture Plan process. It is understood to be a necessary to the development a plan that is understood and supported by the community. This understanding and support is necessary for the successful implementation of the Plan's strategies and actions.

Public involvement has been achieved through:

- Participation and guidance provided by the Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC);
- An on-line survey;
- 2 Community Dialogue sessions; and
- Interviews with key producers and stakeholders.

The Draft Plan will be presented to the public for their feedback in February 2010. This feedback will be considered by the Planning Team, which consists of members of the AAC, District staff and the consultants, and used to guide the development of the final Draft Plan. The final Draft Plan will be presented to District Council for their review and input. If necessary, adjustments will be made and the completed Agricultural Plan will be presented to Council for their approval.

Agricultural Advisory Commission

The North Saanich AAC, along with District Staff, is responsible for guiding the planning process and the development of the Agriculture Plan. The planning process was officially started at the beginning of April 2009 with a workshop that involved a short presentation detailing what an agricultural plan is and the proposed planning process for North Saanich. The presentation was followed with a discussion on a series of questions designed to begin to identify:

- The community's agricultural issues and assets;
- The Commissioner's hopes for the plan; and
- A future agricultural vision for North Saanich.

The results of this workshop were used to guide the development of the first Community Dialogue Backgrounder.

The AAC provided input and support to both of the Community Dialogues. They assisted with the design of the public survey, identified issues with the District's current OCP and Zoning Bylaw, and guided the development and review of the Draft Plan.

Community Dialogues

Community participation and input was a critical aspect of the planning process. Two Community Dialogues held were held early on in the process on the evenings of Wednesday May 27, and Thursday June 11, 2009, at the Mary Winspear Centre in Sidney BC. The purpose of these dialogue sessions was to bring interested and affected members of the community to talk about the future of food and agriculture in North Saanich. During facilitated discussions, participants were asked to discuss the opportunities and challenges for agriculture in North Saanich and identify potential strategies that would help to achieve the goals of the Agriculture Plan process.

Local individuals and groups with an interest in the future of food and agriculture in North Saanich were invited to participate. Over 100 people attended the two sessions. They included farmers, food processors, retailers, environmentalists, restaurateurs, tourism operators, farmers' market customers, and satisfied eaters.

The Dialogues were interactive, reflective sessions where community members were asked to discuss agriculture and food-related issues together. Each meeting consisted of a brief presentation followed by focused small-group discussions, led by a skilled facilitator. A background document was distributed prior to each meeting allowing participants to prepare in advance for the meetings. Within days after each session, participants were provided with outcome summaries from each discussion group.

The results of the Community Dialogues were used to inform the development of this document and the associated draft recommendations. Details on the Community Dialogue process and material generated by each session will be captured in a separate document.

On-line Survey

Input received during the two Community Dialogues was supplemented by an on-line survey conducted from May 1 to July 31, 2009. The survey consisted of 22 questions which were designed to provide a better understanding of participants involvement in agriculture, their opinions on future agriculture and food trends, North Saanich's agriculture situation, key issues facing local food and agriculture, what they would do to help food and agriculture locally, and their vision for agriculture in North Saanich. The survey concluded with a number of questions designed to develop a better demographic understanding of survey participants. The survey was promoted through the District's website, as well as throughout the Community Dialogue process. A link to the survey was provided on the District's website. Hard copies of the survey were also made available at the Municipal Hall and at the Community Dialogues. These were entered into the online survey by the consultant.

Stakeholder Interviews

At the request of the AAC, informal interviews were conducted with a number of key producers during the month August 2009. This was done to provide producers with an opportunity to share concerns or ideas that were overlooked during the Community Dialogue sessions.

1.2.2 Supporting Information and Research

Agricultural information from a Land Use Inventory, initially conducted by the Ministry of Agricultural and Lands in 2005 and updated in 2009¹, and a limited data set from Statistics Canada consisting mostly of data from the 2006 Census (Appendix A), provided the base understanding of the state of agriculture including the nature of agricultural activities in North Saanich. This information was augmented by information gleaned from referenced sources and anecdotal information and ideas provided by AAC members, the Community Dialogue sessions, and discussions with local farmers, community members, staff and members of Council.

1.3 Organization of the Plan

The remaining chapters of the Plan are organized as follows:

Chapter 2 establishes the biophysical, economic, and social context for and extent of agriculture in North Saanich.

Chapter 3 articulates the proposed vision for agriculture in response to the recognized challenges and guided by a core set of goals

¹ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 2009. *DRAFT North Saanich Land Use Inventory Version 5.0 - December 2009*. Victoria, BC.

Chapter 4 provides the analysis that was used to identify and develop the Plan’s strategies and actions.

Chapter 5 is a listing of the Plan’s strategies and associated actions. Four key strategies are identified to help the District achieve its agricultural vision.

Chapter 6 is focused on the successful implementation of the Plan. It identifies the key players, anticipated resource requirements and potential funding sources, relative priority and timing for each action item. It also identifies critical next steps and an evaluation process that can be used to measure the effectiveness of the Plan.

Appendices include: a listing of abbreviations used in the document; a glossary of important terms; a table of agricultural statistics for the community; and a copy of North Saanich’s Food Charter.

2 CONTEXT

The following chapter summarizes the biophysical, economic, and social situation or context for agriculture in North Saanich. This information is the foundation of the North Saanich Agriculture Plan. It was used to help with the development of the community’s agricultural vision. It also helped the community identify the key challenges and the associated assets and issues for local agriculture, the analysis of which, guided the development of appropriate goals, strategies and actions designed to help North Saanich achieve its agricultural vision.

2.1 The District of North Saanich

The District of North Saanich is a rural community with a residential population of approximately 10,823.² It is situated at the northern tip of Vancouver Island’s Saanich Peninsula, about 25 kilometres north of Victoria. The District has a land base of 46.9 km³ surrounded on three sides by marine waters with 40km of shoreline.⁴ The main economic activities in North Saanich include transportation services, institutional based industry, tourism, farming, and some commercial and industrial activity. The Victoria International Airport and the BC Ferry Terminal at Swartz Bay are major transportation hubs located within North Saanich. The Patricia Bay Highway (Highway 17) is the major transportation corridor running through the District.

2.2 Climate^{5,6}

North Saanich has a cool Mediterranean climate, characterized by mild wet winters and dry summers. Mild temperatures throughout the year, ranging from a mean monthly temperature of 3.8 °C in January to 16.4 °C in July and August (Figure 1) make this area suitable for growing a wide range of crops. The average annual precipitation is 883 mm. Most of the precipitation (~84 % of the average annual precipitation) as shown in Figure 2 occurs between

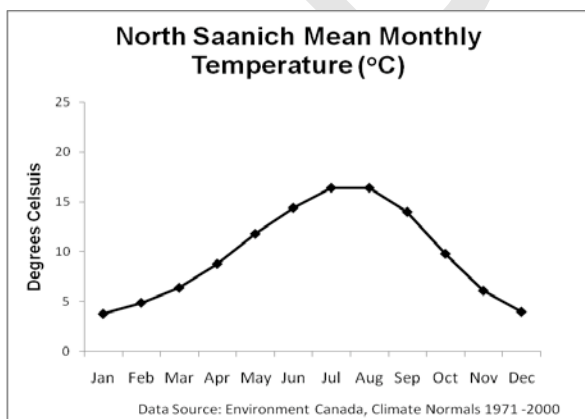


Figure 1. Average Monthly Temperature (°C) at Victoria International Airport

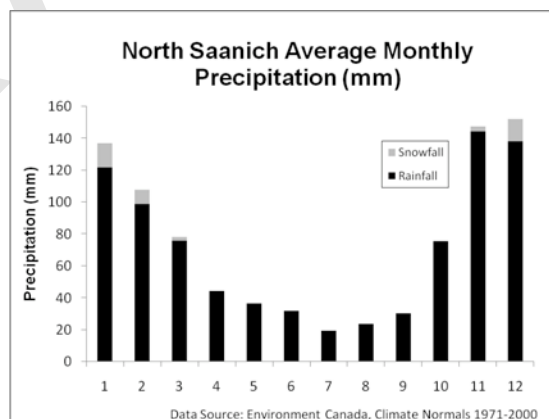


Figure 2. Average Monthly Precipitation (mm) at Victoria International Airport

² Statistics Canada. 2006. Canada Census, Community Profiles.

³ BC Ministry of Community Development, Local Government Statistics, 2008. www.cd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/infra/library/regional_stats_08_summary.pdf.

⁴ District of North Saanich. *About North Saanich*. www.northsaanich.ca/Visitors/About_North_Saanich.htm.

⁵ Environment Canada. Climate Normals 1971-2000. www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/climate_normals/index_e.html.

⁶ Ministry of Environment, 1981. Climatic Capability Classification for Agriculture in British Columbia, Victoria, BC.

October and April, averaging 741 mm. This is in contrast to summer (May to Sept) when an average of 142 mm or 16% of the average annual precipitation occurs.

North Saanich has a 226 day frost free period and 957 effective growing degree days⁷ above 5 °C, indicating that the climate in this area is suitable for a wide range of crops such as tree fruits, berries, vegetables, bulbs, nuts, cereal grains and forage crops. However, during the summer there is a climatic moisture deficit of 202 mm, which limits agricultural capability on non-irrigated land. Cool season crops such as lettuce, peas, cabbage and some forage crops are well suited for non-irrigated agricultural land.

2.3 Soils and Native Vegetation^{8,9,10}

Between 10,000 and 15,000 years ago, after the last ice age (the Frasier glaciation), glacial ice gradually retreated and the land along eastern Vancouver Island rebounded, exposing the Nanaimo Group sedimentary rock, made up of sandstone and conglomerate.

The majority of North Saanich soils below 100 metres in elevation developed from deep silty or clayey marine deposits that accumulated on top of the exposed sedimentary rock by the washing action of waves. Soils along the shoreline at the north end of the Saanich Peninsula have developed on shallow, sandy, gravelly marine deposits. At elevations above 100 meters the soils developed from colluvial (due to gravity) and morainal (glacial till) deposits.

The land ranges in elevation from sea level to approximately 300 metres. Soils with a good capability for agriculture are generally found at elevations below 100 meters, with a topography that is predominantly level to gently sloping (slope 0-15%). In North Saanich these types of soil landscapes are generally found in the airport area, Deep Cove, Pat Bay, Ardmore, Coles Bay and Bazan Bay.

The main soil limitation to agriculture is poor drainage in low-lying areas with higher clay content. Many farms have installed drainage tiles to address this problem. There are some areas with elevation >100 metres, such as Dean Park, Horth Hill, and some coastal points that are hilly and steep (slope 15 -60+%) with patches of rock outcrops. These areas are not well suited for agriculture because of shallow soils and steep topography.

North Saanich is located in the Coastal Grand Fir-Western Red Cedar Forest Zone. Oak-grass vegetation occurs in patches throughout the district. Coastal Douglas fir is the predominant species found on most sites. Arbutus, Garry Oak and Big Leaf Maple trees are also commonly found in this vegetation zone.

2.4 Water

The average annual precipitation for North Saanich is 883 mm. Most of the precipitation (~84% of the average annual precipitation) occurs between October and April, averaging 741 mm - in contrast to summer (May to September) when an average of 142 mm occurs.¹¹

⁷ Growing Degree Days (GGD) are calculated by taking the average of the daily maximum and minimum temperatures compared to a base temperature (in this case 5 °C). They are a measure of heat accumulation used to predict the date that a crop will reach maturity.

⁸ Jungen, J.R., 1985. *Soils of Southern Vancouver Island*. BC Soil Survey, BC Ministry of Environment, Victoria BC.

⁹ Environment Canada, 1972. *Canada Land Inventory: Soil Capability Classification for Agriculture*.

¹⁰ Kenny, Sylvia, 2004. *Aquifers of the Capital Region District*. www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan_protect_sustain/groundwater/aquifers/aquifers_crd/pdfs/aquif_crd.pdf.

¹¹ Environment Canada. *Climate Normals 1971-2000*. www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/climate_normals/index_e.html.

In North Saanich, Seasonal Potential Evapotranspiration¹² is estimated to be 342 mm. As a consequence, there is an average climatic moisture deficient of 202 mm during the growing season from May to September and irrigation is required for most summer crops, especially fruit trees, grapes, and late season vegetables.¹³

In 2006, 636 acres of agricultural land was irrigated in the District: 45% of this land was used for hay and pasture; 38% for field crops; 10% for fruit; 4% for other irrigated areas (nursery, sod, etc.); and 3% for vegetables.¹⁴

The major watersheds in North Saanich are the Chalet Creek, Benes Creek Catchment, Blue Heron Creek, Wsikum Creek, Reay Creek, Ten-Ten Creek, Hagan Creek, and north tip of the Tetayut Creek watershed. There are four aquifers in North Saanich that yield water to wells and springs, of these, Lands End and North-Central Saanich are bedrock aquifers, Littlewood and Bazan Bay are unconsolidated aquifers.¹⁵

In 2004, the total number of wells in North Saanich reported in the Provincial WELL database was 1,394.¹⁶ Today, a number of these wells are no longer in use.¹⁷ Many farms use well water and/or municipal water for irrigation. Municipal water is provided to properties classified as farms by BC Assessment at agricultural rates, which are lower than residential water rates. Some farms have reservoirs or irrigation dugouts, which are used during the dry summer months. Water licences are held for the tributaries of Chalet Creek and Reay Creek primarily for irrigation and storage.¹⁸

2.5 Agricultural History^{19,20,21}

The District of North Saanich is part of the traditional territory of the Wsanec (Saanich) First Nations. Aboriginal activities on the Saanich Peninsula date back thousands of years. Foods were harvested, gathered, cultivated and preserved in quantities that sustained their communities and met their spiritual, ceremonial, social, and trade requirements.

Governor James Douglas purchased the land on the Saanich Peninsula from the Saanich First Nations in 1852. He realized the need to expand agriculture to support Victoria's increasing population and encouraged settlement. In the 1860s, early pioneers began to clear land to build homesteads and grow food and forage crops to support themselves and their livestock.²²

Grain was the first crop to be grown on a large scale; the raising of dairy cows, sheep, poultry and hogs followed shortly after. The Brackman-Ker flourmill was started in 1878 by Henry Brackman at Shoal Harbour where a variety of locally-grown grains, particularly oats, were

-
- ¹² Potential Evapotranspiration (PET) is defined as the amount of evaporation that would occur if a sufficient water source were available. An arid place is where annual potential evaporation exceeds annual precipitation.
- ¹³ Ministry of Environment, 1981. *Climatic Capability Classification for Agriculture in British Columbia*. Victoria, BC.
- ¹⁴ Statistics Canada. 2006. *2006 Census of Agriculture*. www26.statcan.ca:8080/AgrProfiles.
- ¹⁵ CRD Natural Atlas Map. www.crd.bc.ca/maps/natural/atlas.htm.
- ¹⁶ BC WELLS - Groundwater Water Wells and Aquifer Database. www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/data_searches/wells/index.html.
- ¹⁷ Kenny, Sylvia, 2004. *Aquifers of the Capital Region District*. www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan_protect_sustain/groundwater/aquifers/aquifers_crd/pdfs/aquif_crd.pdf.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Horth, N. 1988. *North Saanich, Memories and Pioneers*. Porthole Press Ltd. Sidney, BC.
- ²⁰ Sidney Archives. Newspaper articles.
- ²¹ Virgin, Victor E. 1978. *History of North and South Saanich Pioneers and District*.
- ²² Saanich Pioneer Society.

ground. This steam gristmill eventually moved to Victoria because of a water shortage in North Saanich. Another local businessman, Sydney Kelly, opened a grain and feed store in the 1910s on what is now First Street in Sidney.

In the 1860s, Towner and Cloake partnered to establish a hop-growing industry. Hop kilns were built throughout the District and the industry thrived for a couple of decades until an infestation of weevils and increased competition from the Fraser Valley made it unprofitable. The early farmers tried other specialty crops like grapes, nursery products, and seed production during the 1870s.

In 1867, a group of farmers decided to form the North and South Saanich Agricultural Society. They organized the first Saanich Fair, held in 1868 at Robert Brown's property on McTavish Road. The fair is held every year at its present location on Stelly's Cross Road and remains the oldest continuous fair west of the Great Lakes to this day.

In the early 1900s, fruit trees, apples, pears, plums, sour cherries and loganberries were planted. Much of the fruit was processed at the Saanich Cannery in Sidney. The cannery operated from 1905 until 1942 when it closed due to World War II and the increasing amount of berries being processed for wine.

The Centre for Plant Health on East Saanich Road was established in 1912 as a Dominion Experimental Farm. The land was purchased from the BC Electric Company, which ran the streetcar system in Victoria and was constructing the Interurban Line up the Saanich Peninsula. The farm's main purpose was to conduct research that would improve agricultural production methods on Vancouver Island. Researchers experimented with crop rotations, early sowing, variety and seed selection, and fertilizers. Extension agents passed on their research results and other practical information to local farmers. In 1965, the golden nematode was discovered in local potato fields and, since then, the Experimental Farm has provided quarantine services. It has been renamed the Centre for Plant Health and is presently run by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Currently, the primary focus of the work done at the Centre is to exclude from Canada virus diseases affecting tree fruit, grape vines, small fruit and woody ornamentals. In 2001, one of four national Molecular Analysis and Testing units was established to provide expertise and support for testing new products of biotechnology.

After the Royal Canadian Air Force Base was built in 1939 on land where the Victoria International Airport now stands, the number of dairy farms in North Saanich declined. Following World War II, the agriculture sector in North Saanich gradually shrank because of the rising costs of production and increased competition from other agricultural areas in the province, in Canada and the United States.

Over the past few decades, local producers have continually adapted to changing market conditions. Some farms have grown in size to take advantage of economies of scale, while smaller scale farms have specialized in high value fruit and vegetable crops and other horticultural products, marketed directly from the farm gate, direct to restaurants or sold locally at farmers' markets. The number of organic farms has grown over the decades. Value added products and agritourism activities have also been developed to increase the profitability of farming.

2.6 North Saanich's Current Agricultural Situation

2.6.1 Agricultural Land Base^{23, 24}

- In 2009, 1,407 ha (approximately 30%) of North Saanich's total area and 35% of its inland area was in the ALR.
- This total includes 196.1 ha of Crown administered land, of which 124.2 ha is part of the Victoria International Airport, 49.1 ha are covered by designated right-of-ways, and 25.7 ha found within First Nations reserve land.
- Only 1,324 ha of ALR land is located within parcels or properties considered to be within the ALR.
- According to MAL, 1,055 ha of these ALR lands have the potential for agriculture as a primary use.²⁵
- In 2009 307 parcels were located within the ALR.
- The total area of land where agriculture is the primary land use is 714 ha, 689 ha of which are located with the ALR.
- A total of 1,210 ha of land have some type of agricultural land use, of which, 924 ha are located within the ALR.
- The dominant agricultural land cover is forage crops with 638 ha of available ALR land in forage and pasture.

2.6.2 Agricultural Activities

A wide variety of agricultural activities carried out in the District at the time of the 2006 Census of Agriculture (Figure 3).

According to more recent information provided by the 2009 North Saanich Land Use Inventory, primary agricultural activities were as follows: 41.6% of the total agricultural land was used for forage/pasture; 10.1% for dairy farming; 6.8% for horses and equestrian facilities; 1.8% for nurseries and greenhouses 1.4% for field vegetables; 1.3% for beef/cattle; and 0.9% for specialty crops. The remaining 36.1% of North Saanich's agricultural land base supported a variety of farming activities ranging from the production of sheep and goats to nuts and flowers.

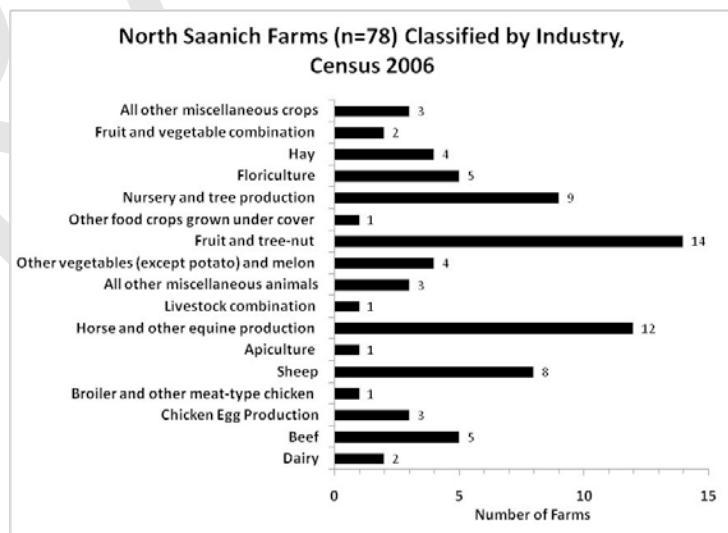


Figure 3. North Saanich Farms classified by industry using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)

²³ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 2009. *DRAFT North Saanich Land Use Inventory Version 5.0 - December 2009*. Victoria, BC.

²⁴ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 2006, *District of North Saanich Agricultural Overview*. Victoria, BC.

²⁵ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 2009. *DRAFT North Saanich Land Use Inventory Version 5.0 - December 2009*. Victoria, BC.

North Saanich has the second largest winery on the Saanich Peninsula, the most extensive organic blueberry farm on the Island, the principal organic salad green producer on the Island, two of the three dairy farms on the Peninsula, a significant poultry operation, a prestigious horse breeding farm, 16 greenhouse/nursery operations, the largest integrated grain farm and flour milling operation on the Island and the largest private forestry seedling nursery on the Island.²⁶ It is notable that only 12 farms reported vegetable production on a total of 7 ha of land and only 2 farms raised sheep and lambs.

Figure 3 classifies the 78 farms in North Saanich by industry and shows that there is a wide range of crops grown in the district. Some agricultural industries not represented in North Saanich are hogs and pigs, poultry, corn, other grains, mushrooms, and potatoes. It appears that an increasing amount of land is being used for non-food production such as nursery and greenhouse crops and horses. Food production appears to be concentrating on fruit, berries and nuts.

There are 37 direct farm markets on the Saanich Peninsula, of which North Saanich has approximately 5. All are seasonal markets with the exception of the Roost Bakery and adjacent Roost Garden Centre, which operate year-round. This equates to an approximate ratio of 16 producing farms for every direct farm market in the municipality - which is a significant increase from the ration of 28 producing farms for every direct farm market reported in 2004.²⁷

2.6.3 Farm Size and Nature of Farmers²⁸

- In 2006 the average farm size in North Saanich is was 15.7 ha (39.5 acres). The average farm size in North Saanich has gradually increased since 1991.
- According to the 2009 Land Use Inventory, most parcels in the ALR tend to be small with 43% of all parcels under 2 ha and 78% under 4 ha.
- Only 6% of parcels (18) are greater than 16% in size.
- In 2006 there were 115 farm operators with a total of 78 farms, fewer than in 2001 when there were 125 farm operators and 84 farms.
- 57% of farmers were male and 43% were female.
- The average age of farmers in North Saanich appears to be steadily increasing. In 2006, the average age was 55.4 years, up from 52.8 years recorded during the 2001 Census.

2.6.4 Economic Situation

According to the 2006 Canadian Census of Agriculture:

- 78 farms, with an estimated total farm capital value of \$113,234,538 - a 116% increase from the 1996 census; land and buildings account for 95% of the value in 2006.
- Total annual reported gross farm receipts were down in 2006, \$9,334,553 as compared to \$10,469,668 reported in the 2001 Census.

²⁶ North Saanich Agricultural Task Force. Final Report. March 2007.

²⁷ North Saanich Economic Planning Sub-Committee Report. Agricultural Lands. March 2004.

²⁸ Statistics Canada. 2006 Census of Agriculture. www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm.

- The average gross farm receipts in 2005 of a North Saanich farm was approximately \$119,674.
- 63% of the farms reporting had total gross farm receipts less than \$10,000.
- Total farm expenses for North Saanich farms were \$8,899,299.
- The total annual income for all North Saanich farms in 2006 was \$435,254.
- Only five North Saanich farms reported gross receipts exceeding \$500,000.
- The average annual income per farm was \$5,580.

These statistics suggest that most farms in North Saanich are not economically viable and only provide a small percentage of the farmer's total income. This further suggests that most farmers rely on off-farm sources of employment and/or income.

2.6.5 Farming and the Environment

The 2006 Canada Census of Agriculture reported that:

- 55% of North Saanich farms reported using or producing manure. Most farms used composted manure or incorporated manure into the soil; both of these practices reduce odour and nutrient runoff problems.
- 35% of farms used commercial fertilizer on 31% of the total farmland.
- 9% of the total farmland had herbicide applications, 7% had insecticide applications, and less than 1% had fungicide applications.²⁹

2.7 Governance

In British Columbia, the responsibility for governing the practice of agriculture is shared by several levels of government. As a result, agriculture in North Saanich is subject to municipal, provincial and federal government policies. Agriculture is also governed by national and international trade agreements, the effects of which can have significant impact on the composition and viability of local agriculture.

2.7.1 Authority and Legislation

District of North Saanich (DNS) and District of North Saanich Council (DNSC)

First established in 1965.³⁰ Today, North Saanich is a thriving rural community with a population of approximately 11,000. North Saanich's local government consists of the mayor and six councillors elected by the community every three years. Under the *Local Government Act* and *Community Charter* the DNSC is responsible for the development and application of official community plans, land use zoning and other land use bylaws. The *Local Government Act*, *Community Charter* and *Agricultural Land Commission Act* allow the DNSC to make certain decisions involving agricultural land use activities where agriculture is seen as benefiting from their involvement. These include the establishment of bylaws and land use policies that:

- Reduce conflicts between agricultural and other land uses;
- Protect the health of the community and natural environment; and

²⁹ Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Agriculture. www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm.

³⁰ An earlier incorporation in July 1905 (that included the town of Sidney) was dissolved in 1911 because of a lack of population and adequate tax base. www.northsaanich.ca/Visitors/About_North_Saanich/History.htm.

- Maintain certain form and character aspects important to the local community.

Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC)

In 2007, the DNSC established an AAC to provide advice and recommendations to Council on District agricultural issues. The AAC consists of 9 voting members: 7 appointed members from the North Saanich agricultural community; and one member from the District's Advisory Planning Commission and Environmental Advisory Commission.³¹ There are 4 non-voting members: one Council liaison; one District staff member; a BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL) staff member; and a recording secretary provided by the District. The role of the AAC is strictly advisory, and its recommendations are not binding upon the DNSC.³²

Peninsula Agriculture Commission (PAC)

Established in 1998, PAC's mandate is to advise four Saanich Peninsula municipalities, including the District of North Saanich, and the District of Metchosin on agricultural issues and facilitate the development of programs that local support agriculture. PAC consists of 10 voting members who are local farmers, plus non-voting members including representatives from the five municipal councils, MAL and the Agriculture Land Commission.³³

Capital Regional District (CRD)

The District of North Saanich is located within the CRD, a federation of thirteen municipalities and three electoral areas. The CRD provides regional governance and services for the entire Capital Region, including regional parks, regional planning, solid waste management including recycling) and emergency response services.³⁴

Agriculture Land Commission (ALC)³⁵

The ALC is an independent provincial agency responsible for administering the Province's agricultural land use zone or Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in favour of agriculture and according to the *Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Act*. The ALC consists of six regional panels that carry out the duties of the Commission and represent the Commission in different areas of BC. The District of North Saanich is located within the ALC's Island Panel Region.³⁶ Members of each panel are appointed from the region for which they are responsible and are selected via a process under the direction of the BC Government's Board Resourcing and Development Office.³⁷

The ALC is responsible for the administration of the *Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Act*. The *ALC Act* requires that agricultural land within the ALR not be used for non-farm uses unless specifically permitted by the Act or its associated regulations. The *ALC Act* takes precedent over, but does not replace, other provincial legislation and local bylaws and policies. And while the *ALC Act* supersedes the zoning powers administered by the District of North Saanich, according to the *Local Government Act* the District can act as the agent for the ALC in land use matters related to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

³¹ District of North Saanich. Agricultural Advisory Commission. www.northsaanich.ca/Municipal_Hall/Municipal_Hall_Meetings/Committees_and_Commissions/Agricultural_Advisory_Commission.htm.

³² *ibid.*

³³ Peninsula Agricultural Commission. www.gov.saanich.bc.ca/municipal/clerks/boards/pac.html.

³⁴ Capital Regional District. www.crd.bc.ca/about/index.htm.

³⁵ BC Agricultural Land Commission. www.alc.gov.bc.ca.

³⁶ BC Agricultural Land Commission Regions. www.alc.gov.bc.ca/contacts/regions.htm.

³⁷ The Board Resourcing and Development Office of BC. www.lcs.gov.bc.ca/BRDO/.

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL)³⁸

Responsible for the administration of a wide variety of legislation that involves or affects agricultural land and activities including the *Agricultural Produce Grading, Animal Disease Control, BC Wine, Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm), Fisheries, Game Farm, Land, Local Government (Sections 916-919), Plant Protection, and Weed Control Acts*.³⁹ Under the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* MAL, with assistance from the Farm Industry Review Board, is responsible for protecting “normal” farm practices occurring on properties within the ALR, where farming is a permitted activity or in areas licensed or zoned for agriculture.⁴⁰

BC Assessment⁴¹

A provincial Crown Corporation responsible for the classification of properties as farms under B.C. Regulation 411/95 of the *Assessment Act* for property assessment and tax purposes. Farm classification is a voluntary program that provides the benefit of a low tax rate for assessed properties.⁴² BC Assessment is currently reviewing the status of farm properties located on non-ALR farmland in the Capital Regional District.

In 2009, the Farm Assessment Review Panel provided a report to the Provincial Government recommending a number of changes to the farm assessment process and Regulation 411/95.⁴³ A few of the Panel’s recommendations have been incorporated into Regulation 411/95 for the 2010 assessment roll. However, significant recommendations, such as the elimination of the split classification of farmland and a standard \$3,500 annual production threshold for qualifying farms, have not yet been implemented.⁴⁴

Farm Industry Review Board (FIRB)⁴⁵

Responsible for administering the *Farm Practices Protection Act*: legislation designed to protect normal farming practices. Unless farm practices contravene existing provincial or federal legislation, they are considered to be “normal farm practices” and there is really no way to restrict them other than through the application of a local Farm Bylaw.

BC Ministry of Environment (MOE)

Responsible for a wide variety of legislation that involves or affects agricultural land and associated activities including the *Drainage, Ditch and Dike, Environmental Assessment, Environmental Management, Fish Protection, Park, Integrated Pest Management, Water, Water Protection, and Wildlife Acts*.⁴⁶

BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport (MHLS)⁴⁷

³⁸ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. www.gov.bc.ca/al/.

³⁹ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. *Legislative Summaries*. www.al.gov.bc.ca/ministry/legsum/legsum_index_mal.stm.

⁴⁰ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands - Farm Practices Protection. www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/farmpp/index.htm.

⁴¹ BC Assessment. www.bcassessment.bc.ca/process/agricultural_forestry/index.asp.

⁴² BC Assessment. 2007. *Farm Classification in British Columbia*. www.bcassessment.bc.ca/pdf/process/agri_forest/farm_brochure.pdf.

⁴³ BC Farm Assessment Review Panel. 2009 *Report*. www.farmassessmentreview.ca/FARP_Report_July_31_2009.pdf.

⁴⁴ Gilbert, L. February 2, 2009. Senior Appraiser, BC Assessment. *pers. comm.*

⁴⁵ BC Farm Industry Review Board. www.firb.gov.bc.ca/.

⁴⁶ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. *Legislative Summaries*. www.al.gov.bc.ca/ministry/legsum/legsum_index_fed.stm.

⁴⁷ BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport. *Food Safety*. www.hls.gov.bc.ca/protect/ehp_foodsafety.html.

Administers the *Public Health and Food Safety Acts* and establishes standards and procedures aimed at protecting public health. Local health boards and inspection agencies are responsible for the inspection and enforcement of these regulations. The *Food Safety Act* was established in 2002 to consolidate food safety aspects of the *Milk Industry, Meat Inspection, and Health Acts* under one statute administered by the Minister of Health. The controversial Meat Regulation is part of this Act. The Food Premises Regulation is part of the *Public Health Act*.

Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA)

VIHA is responsible for the inspection and enforcement of food safety regulations. Specifically it is responsible for licensing, inspecting and responding to complaints regarding food facilities within North Saanich. As the local health authority VIHA administers the *Food Premises Regulation*⁴⁸ in North Saanich and the FOODSAFE education program and more recently the Food Security Program, which aims to improve the health of residents and reduce health inequities.⁴⁹

BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)⁵⁰

The BCCDC Food Protection Services division under the **Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)** is the organization, which addresses public health concerns regarding food and food protection by providing scientific expertise to the Health Authorities like VIHA and to the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport. They are responsible for the inspection and licensing of provincial dairies and abattoirs. They also provide food safety guidelines, training and information and provide laboratory-testing services to Public Health Inspectors.

Additional Authorities

In addition to these local and provincial government agricultural regulations and policies, there are a number of federal acts and regulations administered by **Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Health Canada, and Transportation Canada**.⁵¹

2.7.2 Municipal Government Bylaws

North Saanich Official Community Plan (OCP) - Bylaw 1130⁵²

The purpose of an OCP is to guide and direct land use and development decision-making within a municipality. It also clearly states the community's values and goals. North Saanich's current OCP was adopted in 2007. The OCP establishes clear objectives to "retain the present rural, agricultural and marine character of the community." It also outlines objectives for the preservation and protection of the ALR and the initiatives of the ALC to assist the economical viability of farming.

⁴⁸ The *Food Premises Regulation* outlines public health requirements for BC businesses, which supply and serve food to the public.

⁴⁹ Vancouver Island Health Authority - Food Programs. www.viha.ca/mho/food/.

⁵⁰ BC Centre for Disease Control. *Food and Your Health*. www.bccdc.ca/foodhealth/default.htm.

⁵¹ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands - Legislative Summaries. www.al.gov.bc.ca/ministry/legsum/legsum_index_fed.stm.

⁵² District of North Saanich. 2007. *North Saanich Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1130*. www.northsaanich.ca/Municipal_Hall/Reports_and_Publications/Official_Community_Plan.htm.

North Saanich Zoning Bylaw - Bylaw 750⁵³

The purpose of a zoning bylaw is to regulate develop and land use activities within a municipality. North Saanich's Zoning Bylaw was last adopted in 1993. The Zoning Bylaw contains a number of regulations that deal with agricultural land and associated activities.

2.8 Community Involvement

North Saanich has a number of organizations working to improve the wider community's and region's understanding and appreciation of agriculture. The following section describes key agricultural events, organizations and businesses. Several events, such as the Saanich Fair and the North Saanich Flavour Trail (organized by members of the Agricultural Advisory Commission) celebrate and raise the profile of local food and agriculture. In addition, agriculture and food issues are being integrated into the curricula in a number of North Saanich schools through workshops, field trips and school gardens.

2.8.1 Marketing and Promotion

Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association

The Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association, a non-profit organization, publishes the 'Farm Fresh' farm guide. This annual guide connects consumers to local producers and processors offering farm gate sales. Nine North Saanich farms were included in the 2009-10 guide.⁵⁴

North Saanich Flavour Trail

An annual event organized by members of the Agricultural Advisory Commission that showcases farms, wineries, markets and restaurants and their products through public tours of North Saanich farms. This event has been held on an August weekend in August for the past three years.

2.8.2 Direct Sales

North Saanich farm produce is marketed locally through farm gate sales, two community markets, the newly established North Saanich farmer's market and others nearby, directly to restaurants, and through the Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) box program.

Direct farm marketing and value-added activities are recognized as increasingly valuable and necessary economic activities for farmers in the District.

North Saanich Farmers' Market

The market is in its second year at a new location at St. Johns United Church on West Saanich Road. It features 10 to 20 vendors and includes a community table where growers with a small amount of produce can leave it for volunteers to sell. The North Saanich Food for the Future Society runs the market and anticipates further growth with increased community outreach and planning.

Other Farmers' Markets

Two larger, more established farmers' markets that are located relatively nearby include the **Peninsula Country Market** at the Saanich fairgrounds near Brentwood Bay held on Saturdays, (June to mid October) and the **Sidney Summer Market** on Beacon Avenue in downtown Sidney

⁵³ District of North Saanich Bylaws. www.northsaanich.ca/Municipal_Hall/Bylaws.htm.

⁵⁴ Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association. 2009. *Southern Vancouver Island Growers E-Guide*. www.islandfarmfresh.com.

on Thursday evenings (June to the end of August). North Saanich producers participate in both of these markets.

Roadside Farm Stands

There are a number of roadside stands selling fresh produce, eggs, flowers and composted manure. Consumers can buy these products daily during the growing season while products are available. The stands are often small with simple signage and are operated on a self-serve basis.

2.8.3 Local Food and Agriculture Organizations

North and South Saanich Agricultural Society

Established in 1868, the central focus of the non-profit Society is the promotion of agriculture during the three-day **Saanich Fair**. An average of 45,000 people attend the September fair, which is located in Central Saanich, each year.⁵⁵ It is the oldest continuous running fair in Western Canada. The fair provides the chance to showcase many local agricultural products and educate the public about agriculture.

North Saanich Food for the Future Society (NSFFS)

Community members interested in supporting a sustainable food system in North Saanich founded the organization in 2008. Seven board members run this non-profit group. The main focus of the Society is running the Saturday North Saanich farmers' market during the growing season.

Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR)

CR-FAIR is a multi-stakeholder group in Victoria that connects, advocates and educates around local food and agriculture issues on a regional scale. CR-FAIR's mission is to increase knowledge and bring about positive change in the food and agriculture system within BC's Capital Region by expanding awareness and communication, bringing people together, supporting program initiatives, and promoting long-term change.⁵⁶

2.8.4 Agricultural Education Activities

Within North Saanich, there are limited opportunities (particularly for adults) to learn the skills and knowledge necessary for farming or food processing. Children and youth have access to a greater number of opportunities. Adults have access to a wide range of gardening, horticulture, farming and other course within the greater region.

School District 63

A few local elementary schools have taken part in the **LifeCycles' Growing Schools Project**,⁵⁷ where students learn hands-on food production. The following North Saanich schools that have participated in the program:

- **Kelset Elementary School** is currently working to design raised garden beds for every class in the school, plus a large greenhouse and perennial orchard.
- **Deep Cove Elementary School** has a large courtyard space with 4 raised garden beds and lots of perennial planting interspersed. The teacher/librarian maintains the garden throughout the summer.

⁵⁵ Saanich Fair. www.saanichfair.ca/index.htm.

⁵⁶ CR-FAIR. www.communitycouncil.ca/initiatives/crfair/index.html.

⁵⁷ LifeCycles Growing Schools Project: School Information. www.westshoreharvest.ca/PDFs/GSschool.info.pdf.

- **North Saanich Middle School** planted several containers with herbs and vegetables in 2009 with the Enviro club and Foods class. Students took food boxes home over the summer.

Panorama Recreation Centre

Growing Schools Program has established and will maintain food gardens for summer camp participants to learn about growing and preparing food and composting through fun, hands-on gardening activities.

4-H

A national non-profit organization that provides educational programs for youth to gain skills in the areas of public speaking, leadership, community involvement and general livestock knowledge. Currently there is a Saanich Peninsula 4-H Beef and Swine Club, Horse Club, Lamb Club and Cloverbud Club.

Stewards of Irreplaceable Land (S.O.I.L.)

One North Saanich farm is participating in this Canada wide program which links farmers willing to take on and train apprentices with people wanting to work and learn on an organic farm using sustainable practices.⁵⁸ It is one of the few local training or internship opportunities for young farmers or for existing farmers interested in upgrading or learning new skills.

⁵⁸ Stewards of Irreplaceable Land. www.soilapprenticeships.org.

3 ESTABLISHING AN AGRICULTURAL VISION

A clear vision provides the necessary foundation on which to develop goals, objectives, strategies and actions that will effectively determine and guide future agricultural decision-making in North Saanich.

The development of a guiding agricultural vision for North Saanich was a critical part of the Agriculture Plan process. The guiding agricultural vision was developed through extensive discussion with the District's AAC and staff, as well as valuable input received from participants in the Community Dialogue process and the on-line survey. Existing resources, such as the OCP and recently developed Food Charter (Appendix B), also contributed to the vision.

3.1 The Vision

The proposed agricultural vision for North Saanich establishes that:

North Saanich is sustained by a diverse, productive and vibrant agricultural economy that ensures the long-term health and vitality of our community and the neighbouring First Nation and municipal communities of the Saanich Peninsula.

We actively demonstrate our support for our agricultural heritage and economy through our involvement in and responsibility for the ownership and stewardship of our productive lands, the growing production of a diversity of high quality local foods and farm products, and by our care and support for those who do this work.

In so doing we have created a diverse and exemplary network of positive and supportive economic, social and ecological relationships and interconnections that sustain, strengthen and define our vibrant rural community and its agricultural enterprises.

In order to achieve this vision, local agriculture must be economically viable. To achieve this viability, the following conditions need to be met:

- North Saanich's agricultural land base be protected, used and shared;
- Agriculture be valued, supported and celebrated by the community;
- Those involved with agriculture will have to work with Nature - not against it;
- Agricultural production will need to be as local as possible;
- Local agricultural knowledge and skill be maintained, advanced and shared;
- Young people be encouraged and supported to participate in agriculture;
- Members of the agricultural and local community demonstrate respect and support for one another;
- Members of the agricultural community work together; and
- North Saanich works and collaborates with neighbouring municipalities, regional government and the Province.

3.2 Challenges and Goals

Five key challenges may impede the achievement of North Saanich’s agricultural vision. These challenges were identified through background research, as well as the contributions of the Agricultural Advisory Commission, Community Dialogues participants, on-line survey respondents, and discussions with residents and farmers.

The key challenges are:

1. **Economic Viability**
2. **Leadership and Governance**
3. **Protection and Stewardship**
4. **Education and Training**
5. **Community Health and Sustainability**

Five related goals have been identified in order to address these key challenges and achieve North Saanich’s agricultural vision:

Economic Viability - Provide the conditions that stimulate and support the long-term health, development and diversification of our agricultural economy.

Leadership and Governance - Lead and govern in a manner that values, includes and supports our agricultural community.

Protection and Stewardship - Actively farm, protect and enhance our agricultural land base in perpetuity.

Education and Training - Increase our understanding and appreciation of agriculture and improve and advance agricultural abilities and techniques within our community and on the Saanich Peninsula.

Community Health - Improve the long-term health and resiliency of our community by encouraging and supporting the production and consumption of local food.

These challenges and goals were used to guide the analysis of North Saanich’s agricultural assets and issues, described in the following chapter (Chapter 4).

4 ISSUES IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

The following chapter is divided into five sections, corresponding to each of the key challenges identified in Chapter 3 (economic viability, leadership and governance, protection and stewardship, education and training, and community health and sustainability). Each section begins with a description of the related assets and issues identified through research and public input. This is followed by an analysis of the particular challenge.

This analysis was necessary for the identification and development of the set of strategies and supporting actions described in Chapter 5 that will ultimately help North Saanich achieve its vision for local agriculture. The analysis drew on the detailed agricultural background information summarized in Chapter 2; input received from Community Dialogue sessions; meetings with AAC, producer/stakeholder, staff, Council, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands; and the consultant's expertise.

4.1 Economic Viability

The long-term economic viability of local agriculture is the central concern of those involved with or interested in farming in North Saanich. There was a general recognition by many of those involved in the development of the Agriculture Plan that if farming does not remain an economically viable activity, it will continue to decline in North Saanich and on Southern Vancouver Island.

4.1.1 Recognized Assets

Agricultural Land Base

North Saanich has an excellent land base for agriculture and food production. It has:

- High quality soils;
- A mild climate that provides year-round growing opportunities for a wide range of crops;
- Large, flat and relatively contiguous tracts of land; and
- Reasonable water availability in most areas.

A number of large, undeveloped properties are still available for future food production. A significant portion of North Saanich is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and in the District's own agricultural zone. Many residents actively maintain home gardens that increasingly are used to grow food.

Diverse Agricultural Economy

Agriculture in North Saanich is split between food and non-food production. Except for dairy production, agriculture in North Saanich appears to be evolving towards non-food production with focus on such items as nursery products, greenhouse grown bedding plants (often for non-food items) and horses. Food production appears to be concentrating on fruit, berries and nuts, particularly blueberries and grapes. Presumably these are more profitable crops and may reflect an increasing specialization of North Saanich agriculture.

Access to Markets

The relative close proximity of North Saanich to Victoria and the Lower Mainland provides a valuable marketing opportunity. Existing transportation infrastructure such as the Patricia Bay Highway, BC Ferries Swartz Bay Terminal and the Victoria International Airport provides opportunities to efficiently bring in farm inputs and send out products to markets. The

District's situation near to the Provincial capital and within a growing regional district provides additional retail, marketing and agritourism opportunities. During the growing and harvesting seasons, residents of the Capital Regional District visit the District to enjoy its beautiful agricultural landscapes, and its diverse and delicious farm produce.

Increasing Interest in Local Food

Interest is growing in locally grown food. Farmers are able to sell food to local retail and restaurants and develop strong personal relationships. Customers can also buy food directly from farmers at the farm gate, at the North Saanich and Sidney farmers markets, the Roost Bakery, and at local agritourism operations. Many residents of North Saanich and the Peninsula are willing and able to pay higher prices for fresh, local and organic food. As a result, direct farm marketing and value added activities are recognized as increasingly valuable and necessary economic activities for farmers in the District.

Creative Marketing Approaches

The marketing of local agricultural products is done by individuals, larger regional commodity groups such as the Wine Islands, by the Southern Vancouver Direct Farm Marketing Association, and a few non-profits like Lifecycles and The Land Conservancy who support and advocate for local farming and food production. Direct farm marketing, value-added processes and production of high quality and unique products are increasing as producers take advantage of the more lucrative approaches. In an effort to increase local awareness and support for producers the District has initiated the annual District-wide Flavour Trail event.

4.1.2 Key Issues

Lack of Profitability

In spite of these valuable assets, for many North Saanich farmers, agriculture is no longer a financially profitable business. Most supplement their farm income by working other jobs and long hours. For others farming is a recreational occupation that is supported by off-farm income. Reasons for this lack of profitability, many of which were identified during the Community Dialogues and through the on-line survey, include increasing:

- Capital costs (land, buildings and equipment);
- Debt loads (often a result of rising capital costs);
- Input and operating costs due to rising material and transportation costs;
- Labour costs; and
- Living expenses.

Effects of Globalization

In addition, North Saanich growers face competition from lower-priced products brought in from larger off-island or more often foreign farms that cater to customers unwilling or increasingly unable to pay prices that reflect the true cost of local production. Unfortunately, many people still make purchasing decisions based on price. The current economic crisis may affect people's willingness and ability to buy more expensive local products.

Declining Farm Population

The number of farm operators in North Saanich continues to decline. Farmers are aging and fewer young people are replacing those farmers as they retire. Aside from a small number of large farms, the economics of agriculture in North Saanich are not healthy and may be discouraging potential young farmers from entering the industry. According to the 2006

Census of Agriculture, revenues exceeded operating expenses by \$435,254 or an average of \$5,580.18 per farm.⁵⁹

Increasing Regulations

Changes to provincial and federal food safety regulations have seriously affected the re-establishment of local meat processing facilities. There are currently no provincially or federally licensed abattoirs in North Saanich. Livestock producers have a few options for provincially licensed abattoirs that slaughter animals and process the meat.⁶⁰ Currently the closest abattoir facilities include: Maplewood Farms in Metchosin (the new operator expects to narrow the focus on sheep and pigs); Westholme Meat Packers, located just north of Duncan, that slaughters larger animals such as cattle and pigs but does not do custom work; and Farmhouse Poultry in Cowichan Bay that provides custom slaughtering for poultry. The meat produced in these abattoirs can be sold anywhere in British Columbia, but not outside of British Columbia. North Saanich livestock producers must drive their animals from 35 km to 80 km distance to slaughter at one of these licensed facilities.

Declining Agricultural Suppliers

While not always readily available in North Saanich, most of the agricultural supply and farm machinery needs of local farmers are met by sources located on the Saanich Peninsula or west of Victoria. Money spent by North Saanich farmers on non-labour expenses would be inadequate to support a North Saanich-based agriculture supply sector. Local agriculture suppliers depend on the support of the entire south Island farm community and increasingly on non-agricultural clients for their survival. Farm expenditures are inadequate for the development of a competitive agricultural supply chain within North Saanich alone.

Lack of Supporting Infrastructure

A number of important agricultural infrastructure elements or services are limited or unavailable in North Saanich or on the Peninsula. Important agricultural-supporting infrastructure missing from the community includes:

- Meat processing and storage facilities;
- Community composting facilities;
- Food processing and storage facilities;
- A permanent year-round farmers market facility;
- Shared agricultural hall or fair grounds.

Other local agricultural infrastructure gaps are likely due to high development and operation costs coupled with a lack of coordination and cooperation amongst producers and processors.

There is a desire to establish a permanent farmers' market location in association with a number of other agricultural enterprises in a centralized "agripdex." A number of locations have been identified including the former McTavish Road Elementary School site and the Sandown Harness Raceway.

⁵⁹ Statistics Canada. 2006 Census of Agriculture. www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm.

⁶⁰ BC Centre for Disease Control. 2010. *Provincially Licensed Meat Plants Pursuant to the BC Meat Inspection Regulation*. www.bccdc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/161B504B-8E5D-43BA-B111-684DA64996C6/0/MeatPlantEstablishmentWEBVERSION.pdf.

Location

North Saanich's location just off of the Peninsula's major thoroughfare - The Patricia Bay Highway, coupled with its lack of a central "heart" or village, present significant marketing challenge for farms interested in pursuing direct marketing approaches - selling their agricultural products directly to consumers.

Lack of an Economic Development Plan for Agriculture

The District does not have an economic development plan to emphasize its significant agricultural and rural assets.

Availability and Cost Water

Many farmers identified the cost and availability of water for irrigation as a concern. Participating producers indicated that they are worried about potential increases in water rates. Existing wells do not always meet existing demands. The District does not provide water to a number of farms.

Labour and Housing Shortages

Each year North Saanich farms struggle to find reliable labour. This may be due to the limited wages and long hours that farmers offer. A lack of nearby or onsite affordable housing compounds this problem for potential farm labourers and new farmers. Current land use regulations limit the construction of permanent, on-farm housing preventing farmers from providing local, affordable, quality housing for their farm workers. High land prices provide a significant barrier to the provision of additional off- farm housing. There is a feeling that affordable on-site housing would help farmers recruit potential farm workers.

4.1.3 Analysis

- North Saanich residents with an interest in farming and food are aware and generally in agreement on the challenges that face agriculture locally.
- North Saanich residents believe that sustainable agriculture is an important part of the District's future but there is less agreement on what exactly should be done to support its growth and development.
- Within the agricultural community, one idea proposed is the establishment of an agricultural centre or agriplex that houses a number of supportive services (4-season market, food processing and storage facilities, meeting facilities, etc.) and businesses in order to achieve multiple objectives. An opportunity to establish such a facility at the recently vacated school facility on McTavish Road is being pursued with School District 63.
- There was general agreement by participants in the planning process and members of the AAC that more could and should be done with regards to marketing local agriculture within the District and to visitors to and residents of the Peninsula and Vancouver Island. The successful marketing approaches undertaken by communities in the Cowichan and Comox Valleys indicate that North Saanich's situation and agricultural features and products could pair nicely with the public's growing interest in food and agricultural experiences.
- There is an opportunity to further develop direct marketing, value-added and agritourism opportunities in North Saanich since the area is a major transportation corridor through which 7 million BC Ferry passengers and 1.5 million Victoria Airport

passengers travel annually.⁶¹ There is also potential for more farm stays and bed and breakfasts in North Saanich as these are allowed in the ALR.

- The community has many valuable and creative ideas as to how agriculture can be sustained over the long-term. These ideas range from major infrastructural investments such as an abattoir, an agriplex, an indoor farmers' market and a municipal composting facility, professional services such as an agriculture extension specialist, and marketing and branding services, community services such as a meeting place for farmers and an agriculture museum, through to home-based business opportunities such as the manufacture of cold frames and agritourism possibilities such as bed and breakfasts, and on-farm shops providing specialized products such as cheese or ice cream. An agriplex or agricultural centre that co-locates a number of these businesses and services (year-round market, food processing and storage facilities, meeting facilities, specialty shops, etc.) has been proposed by and received strong support from several leaders in the agricultural community. There is a need to determine which ideas make the most sense and take best advantage of the District's assets and contribute to the District's agricultural vision.
- Apart from the District's Agricultural Advisory Commission, North Saanich's agricultural community has no overarching group or institute to represent their interests, coordinate specific projects and/or secure funding. The AAC is increasingly looked to provide this service.
- There is interest within the community for cooperative approaches to sharing information, tools, labour, etc. Due to the lack of an appropriate agency or organization like a local farmers' institute there is no one able to take on this responsibility.
- North Saanich is a relatively small community with limited services composed of a number of roughly defined rural neighbourhoods. North Saanich does not have an easily identified centre. However, it is located next to the small, well-defined community of Sidney that has a number of easily accessible facilities (Mary Winspear Centre) and appropriately zoned properties located along the Pat Bay Highway corridor that may be able to accommodate the District's agricultural infrastructure needs.
- The Peninsula communities of Saanich, Central Saanich and Sidney share many of the District's agricultural challenges and interests. The District maintains close ties with these communities through intergovernmental linkages. The District's agricultural community already understands itself as part of this geographic community accessing services, processing, marketing and selling, and evening farming in neighbouring jurisdictions. This proximity and understanding should not be ignored. There is a real opportunity to work together with neighbouring jurisdictions and their farming communities to effectively address these issues.

4.2 Leadership and Governance

The complex policy and legislation environment responsible for supporting and regulating agriculture in BC and North Saanich was summarized in Chapter 2. The District is fortunate to have a Mayor and Council that has been supportive of local agriculture. A preliminary review of the North Saanich OCP and Zoning Bylaws found the North Saanich's policies and regulations to be generally supportive of local agriculture. During the planning process, a

⁶¹ North Saanich Economic Planning Sub-Committee Report. *Agricultural Lands*. March 2004.

number of potential opportunities were identified that would significantly improve the effectiveness of the District’s support, and these are outlined below.

4.2.1 Recognized Assets

Supporting Mayor and Council

The current Mayor and Council of North Saanich have supported sustainable, local agriculture and the preservation of the rural and agricultural character of the District. They have demonstrated this commitment through the establishment of the community’s Food Charter (Appendix B), the establishment of the AAC and the initiation of the Agriculture Plan. The Mayor has stated a goal of making North Saanich more self-sufficient in food production and has been directly involved with the establishment of the local farmers market.

Supportive Local Institutions

There are several community organizations and local institutions working on issues related to agriculture and local food production in North Saanich. Local environmental, watershed, food policy and land conservancy organizations provide a solid foundation upon which to link different people and groups, and explore new ways of supporting agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands provides limited but valuable guidance and support through their Regional Agrologist. The ALR and farm tax system are seen as important supports for local agriculture.

Rural Identity

Community dialogue participants identified the rural character of the community as a source of pride, and indicated strong support for local farms. North Saanich residents are described as educated and forward thinking, and increasingly concerned about sustainability, health and environmental issues. They have demonstrated this commitment through: the establishment and growth of their local markets; hosting the annual Flavour Trail event; by electing an agriculturally and environmentally considerate local government; and by participating in the Agriculture Plan process.

4.2.2 Key Issues

Problematic Provincial Government Regulations and Policies

As mentioned in Chapter 2, farmland use and farm production in the District of North Saanich is governed by a series of local, provincial, and federal legislative acts and regulations. These laws and policies have varying implications for the kinds of decisions that can be made by a community. Their interpretation, enforcement, and application may not consider local needs and priorities or be sufficiently contradictory as to create conflict. Identified local legislative and policy challenges include:

- A provincial farm tax status assessment policy that does not account for the supporting services and functions of undeveloped, “wild” or forested on-farm areas in the determination of a farm’s tax status for properties located outside of the ALR⁶² (this may change with the proposed adjustments to Regulation 411/95 of the *BC Assessment Act*);

⁶² BC Assessment. From: *Classifying Farmland*. “Unused land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) may qualify for farm class if part of the parcel is farmed. To qualify, the owner must certify that the unused area is being held for primary agricultural production... If the property is not in the ALR, the non-farmed portion will be classified according to the property’s use and zoning.”
bcassessment.gov.bc.ca/evaluatebc/asba/process/agricultural_forestry/classify_farm.asp.

- Changes to Regulation 411/95 of the *BC Assessment Act* may provide farm tax benefits to rural property owners who want “huge country homes that sprawl over viable farmland.”⁶³ Under the proposed changes qualifying properties will be taxed at a lower agricultural rate so long as at least half of their land is farmed or a quarter of it is farmed and generates a minimum of \$3,500 per year;⁶⁴ and
- The provincial Meat Inspection Regulations under the *Food Safety Act* that make it illegal for the farm gate sale of meat products not inspected at a federally or provincially licensed facility. The increased distance travelled to one of the few licensed abattoirs (located 30-80 km away) increases the cost for farmers and the stress on animals. The community also loses the economic benefit of having a local meat processing facility.

Decisions involving agricultural land uses and activities on land located within the Agricultural Land Reserve, or in areas where farming is permitted by local zoning bylaws, generally rest with provincial authorities such as the Agricultural Land Commission and the Farm Industry Review Board. Local government, community members, the public and affected or interested provincial and federal agencies are often invited to participate in these decision-making processes.

A number of Community Dialogue and survey participants felt that federal and provincial agricultural policies and regulations generally support large-scale agribusiness, rather than the small-scale farm operations typical of North Saanich. There is also the perception that federal and provincial officials do not understand the economic or physical realities of farming. The current system for taxing farms and the lack of additional tax breaks or incentives was also identified as an issue. Other issues mentioned within the jurisdiction of the provincial or federal government include expensive inheritance taxes, lack of farm subsidies, lack of flexibility for secondary uses of farmland, barriers to establishing alternative farm ownership models, and pest and predator control restrictions.

Lack of Agricultural Advocacy OCP Policies

While the District’s new Mayor and Council are understood to be very supportive of local agriculture, there is a general feeling that some existing District policies do not respond to the challenges faced by those interested in farming or “serious” food production. The preliminary review of North Saanich’s OCP found that it contains a limited number of agricultural advocacy policies - policies that state the District’s interest in areas where it does not have the legal authority or responsibility.

Zoning Bylaw Not Current

There is interest within the agricultural community to update the Zoning Bylaw. Areas identified for consideration include:

- Improving the clarity and consistency of the language used in the Bylaw so that it clearly indicates its connection to overarching provincial legislation;
- Providing definitions that are consistent with those used in governing legislation;
- Establishing different zoning titles for Agricultural and Rurally zoned land; and

⁶³ BC Local News. 2009. Farm Tax Leaves Cities to Fight Monster Estates. www.bclocalnews.com/news/78339262.html.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

- Reviewing those parts of the Bylaw that restrict direct marketing, agritourism, value-added activities on farmland.

Restrictive Provincial Government Regulations and Policies

Additional regulations and policies identified as problematic for commercial farmers include: restrictive burning regulations; zoning regulations that limit the size of on-farm sales buildings; building setbacks and height limitations; and parking requirements. A number of challenges for food production within residential areas were identified and include: limitations on number and types of livestock; high residential water rates and property taxes; and the requirement for business licenses, even for small operations.

Lack of Support

There are concerns about declining extension services and agricultural support from provincial government, which, apart from web-based resources, is almost non-existent. Declining budgets are expected to hamper MAL's ability to maintain an up-to-date agricultural information base for the District.

Agritourism

There is a need to further determine the opportunities for and support of agritourism activities. This topic was only briefly addressed by input received during the Community Dialogue and survey. Some people indicated a desire to more fully accommodate agritourism opportunities for the benefit of local agriculture. There is some concern that a number of the regulations in the Zoning Bylaw are too restrictive and are unduly limiting the growth of this industry. Others cautioned that increased support for agritourism could potentially result in an increase in activities that do not support agriculture.

Housing

There is a lack of affordable on-farm housing for farm workers on the Saanich Peninsula and in North Saanich. While this issue received little attention during the Community Dialogues and survey, it was raised in meetings with a number of local producers. In addition it is an issue of considerable concern for the neighbouring communities of Central Saanich and Salt Spring Island.^{65,66}

4.2.3 Analysis

- Increasing responsibility for agricultural development and oversight is being shifted from the provincial to local government. Given recent and ongoing cuts to MAL's budget, this trend is expected to continue. If local and regional governments are interested in maintaining or expanding agricultural enterprises, they likely will have to become more directly involved. This involvement could include the provision of monetary or political support, the provision of agricultural planning and extension services, and possibly incentive programs.
- Given the challenges that agriculture faces it will be important for the District to carefully review its land use policies and bylaws to ensure that they fully support agriculture and do not provide unnecessary or problematic barriers. It is equally important that a review does not result in adjustments that allow for activities that put agricultural land at increased risk of development and alienation. A preliminary

⁶⁵ District of Central Saanich. 2008. *Official Community Plan*. www.centralsaanich.ca/Assets/Central+Saanich/Bylaws/OCP+Bylaw+1600.pdf.

⁶⁶ Masselink, D. 2008. *Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan*. masselinkdesign.com/pdf/reports/SSI%20Area%20Farm%20Plan.pdf.

review of the District's OCP and Zoning Bylaw has been done. The results of this review suggested that both they are quite supportive of agriculture and only require a few minor changes. District Council has initiated a more detailed legal review of the OCP and Zoning Bylaw. The purpose of this detailed review is to address the concerns held by members of the AAC and local agriculture community.

- There is an opportunity for greater clarity in the Zoning Bylaw. The preliminary review of the Zoning Bylaw suggests that it generally is supportive of agriculture and is not in conflict with the *ALC Act* and its associated regulations. However, there may be a few areas where improvements could be made have been identified. Additional issues that should be considered include: on-farm parking requirements, and setbacks for temporary structures and roadside farm stands.
- Recognizing that the District's agricultural interests are inextricably connected throughout Southern Vancouver Island and in particular, the Saanich Peninsula, there is a need and an opportunity to work with adjacent municipalities to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture.
- The Tri Municipal Council (North and Central Saanich, and Sidney) and the Peninsula Agricultural Commission (PAC) may be useful forums in which to consider and exercise this collaboration. It should be noted that PAC is severely constrained by its current mandate and resources.⁶⁷ This will have to be addressed at a political level before PAC can be used as an effective vehicle to address agricultural issues more broadly.
- Up-to-date agricultural information such as that provided by the LUI and Statistics Canada is necessary to support informed land use and even economic development decision-making processes. The Provincial government is not able to provide this service reliably. This responsibility may have to be taken on by the District.
- Agritourism and on-farm worker housing are larger issues that are affecting a number of rural municipalities in the CRD. It may be helpful to work with local affected and interested municipalities to address them - perhaps through PAC, with assistance provided by MAL and the ALC. This work would help determine if changes need to be made to the Zoning Bylaw with regards to direct farm marketing, value-added, agritourism and farm worker housing activities on land zoned for agriculture.
- An important distinction is being made between agritourism, direct farm marketing and value-added agricultural activities by a number of North Saanich producers. Agritourism is understood to be an activity that caters to visitors from outside of the community and may not involve the direct consumption or purchase of an agricultural product from a farm and can impact the productivity of farmland. While direct farm marketing and value-added activities are understood to involve the sale or transformation of farm products to a local market resulting increased profits for the farmer and little or no alienation of the agricultural potential of the farm or land base.
- It may be effective for the District to demonstrate leadership through the management and delivery of its programs and services. A growing number of North American municipalities are implementing internal policies around local food purchases for example, to demonstrate their support for local and sustainable agriculture and food. While North Saanich is a small municipality with a limited

⁶⁷ Maxwell, R. 2009. Chair, Peninsula Agriculture Commission. *pers. comm.*

operating budget, it is still expected that such an approach would be well received by the community and region.

4.3 Protection and Stewardship of Agricultural Land

North Saanich has an excellent land base for agriculture and food production. It has healthy, high quality soils; a mild climate that provides year-round growing opportunities for a wide range of crops; large, flat and relatively contiguous tracts of land; and reasonable water availability in most areas. Several large, undeveloped properties are still available for future food production. A significant portion of North Saanich is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and in the District's own agricultural zone. Many residents actively maintain home gardens that could be used to grow food.

Participants in the Agriculture Plan process recognized the significance and value of their agricultural and rural lands. As a consequence they emphasized the need for the continued protection, support and careful management of the District's agricultural lands. It was also made clear that North Saanich's agricultural and rural land base provides additional and equally important benefits or services to the community such as, ecosystem health, climate change mitigation, storm water catchment and treatment, rural aesthetics, privacy, identity, and economic opportunities. These services need to be recognized and maintained in balance with agricultural interests and opportunities.

4.3.1 Recognized Assets

Agricultural Land Reserve

The establishment of the provincial ALR has helped maintain a significant amount of agricultural land in North Saanich. 1,407 hectares of land is in the ALR; that accounts for approximately 30% of the total land base.⁶⁸

Farmland Use in North Saanich

The 2006 Canadian Census of Agriculture reported 115 farm operators with 78 farms in North Saanich, down from 2001 when 125 farm operators with 84 farms were reported. However, there has been a steady increase in the total area being farmed. In 2006 the total farmed area was 1,226 hectares, an increase of 201 hectares from 2001.⁶⁹

According to the 2009 North Saanich Land Use Inventory conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands as part of this Area Farm Plan study:

- There are 1,407 hectares of ALR land in North Saanich of which 75% (1,055 ha) has the potential for agriculture as primary use;
- 62% (689 ha) of ALR lands available for farming was being actively farmed;
- 20% (269 ha) of North Saanich's ALR has reduced agricultural potential due to competing land uses;
- Of the ALR land with full potential to be used for farming, 35% (366 ha) was not being farmed at the time of the survey;
- Within the ALR, 89% of ALR properties not being farmed at the time of the survey were less than 4 ha in size;

⁶⁸ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 2009. *DRAFT North Saanich Land Use Inventory Version 5.0 - December 2009*. Victoria, BC.

⁶⁹ Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Agriculture. www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm.

- The majority of parcels under 4 ha within the ALR were not being farmed at the time of the survey.⁷⁰

Environmental Stewardship

There is a wide range of farming practices occurring in North Saanich and many farmers use practices such as organic, biodynamic, ecological permaculture and agroforestry that support environmental values. A number of farms are participating in the Canada - British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program, which aims to improve understanding and application of environmental regulations. In addition, farmers are required to follow increasingly stringent pesticide application, health and pollution laws and regulations. It is interesting to note that the close proximity of urban populations may provide the benefit of encouraging the implementation of environmentally friendly production practices.⁷¹

Protective Environmental Legislation

Farm practices are governed by several pieces of legislation, including, at the provincial level, the *Environmental Land Use, Fish Protection, Park, Pesticide Control, Water, Water Protection, and Wildlife Acts*.⁷² At the federal level it involves the *Canadian Environmental Protection, Fisheries, Species at Risk, Migratory Birds Convention, and Wildlife Acts*.

Increasing Interest in Health and the Environment

Public interest in environmental and personal health issues is growing. This is reflected in an increasing demand for local, environmentally and ethically produced farm products. Many farmers in North Saanich farm in a manner that is considerate of the environment and some are using ecological farming methods as the following 2006 Census of Agriculture statistics show:

- In 2005, 19 farms (24% of farms) in North Saanich reported using organic practices; four of these farms were certified organic;
- 29% of farms used crop rotations, 31% practiced rotational grazing;
- 18% of farms used winter cover crops, 18% ploughed in green manure crops; and
- 21% of farms used windbreaks or shelterbelts, and 14% reported having buffers around water bodies.⁷³

Carbon Sequestration

A number of agricultural practices that sequester atmospheric carbon, such as maintaining or enhancing forested agricultural buffer areas, and using soil conserving tillage methods, are in place on a number of North Saanich Farms. In addition, significant extent of North Saanich's agricultural land base is still forested.

⁷⁰ Kline, R. 2005. *North Saanich Agricultural Land Use Inventory 2005*. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Victoria, BC.

⁷¹ Jayasinghe, U., A. Weersink, B. Deaton, M. Beaulieu and M. Trant. 2005. *Effect of Urbanization on the Adoption of Environmental Management Systems in Canadian Agriculture*. Statistics Canada Agriculture and Rural Working Paper Series. dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/21-601-MIE/21-601-MIE2005073.pdf.

⁷² BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Legislative Summaries. www.al.gov.bc.ca/ministry/legsum/legsum_index_fed.stm.

⁷³ Jayasinghe, U., A. Weersink, B. Deaton, M. Beaulieu and M. Trant. 2005. *Effect of Urbanization on the Adoption of Environmental Management Systems in Canadian Agriculture*. Statistics Canada Agriculture and Rural Working Paper Series. dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/21-601-MIE/21-601-MIE2005073.pdf.

4.3.2 Key Issues

Increasing Cost of Farmland

North Saanich's mild climate and rural character make it an attractive place to live. Over the years residential development has increasingly competed with agriculture for land use. BC farmland values increased almost 63.5% in the five years between 2004 and 2009, according to Farm Credit Canada's semi-annual appraisal of benchmark properties.⁷⁴ These high land prices present a barrier to many aspiring farmers, as income provided by most agricultural ventures is insufficient to cover the capital cost of acquiring the land. High property values and low farm incomes also make it attractive for existing farmers to sell their farms for the capital gains benefit.

Aging Farm Population

Following provincial and national trends the average age of North Saanich's farmers continues to rise. In 2001, the average age of a North Saanich farmer was 52.8.⁷⁵ In 2006 it was 55.4, three years older than the Canadian average.⁷⁶ If younger family members do not take over the farming responsibilities it is anticipated that farms will be coming up for sale at prices beyond the reach of the average beginning or established farmer. Unfortunately, many retiring or aging farm families cannot afford to pass on their farms at a reduced price, as their farms are their main source of retirement funds.

Rural-Urban Conflicts

As more and more people from urban environments move to rural places the possibility for conflict - particularly around the environmental nature of certain farm practices such as the application of pesticides and manure - increases.⁷⁷ A number of Community Dialogue and survey participants felt that population growth and increased development is having an impact on the District's natural and community infrastructure. While there have only been a few minor complaints about farming from local residents, the potential for conflict between farmers and their neighbours is increasing as new residents - mainly non-farmers - move into or adjacent to farming areas. Currently, the District does not have development permit areas to buffer agricultural lands from land uses on neighbouring properties, a practice used in a number of rural BC municipalities.

Farmland Not Being Farmed

There is the perception that more and more agricultural land is not being farmed. A number of different reasons may exist for this including: an aging farm population; lack of profitability; limited incentive to cultivate poorer quality farmland; and existing barriers for new farmers, such as the high price of farmland. Alternative long-term land access arrangements may be possible but, in general, are not pursued. Food production is generally not a priority for those who have smaller sized residential properties.

⁷⁴ Farm Credit Canada. 2009. Spring 2009 Farmland Values Reports. www.fcc-fac.ca/en/Products/Property/FLV/Spring2009/index.asp#bc.

⁷⁵ Appendix A.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Jayasinghe, U., A. Weersink, B. Deaton, M. Beaulieu and M. Trant. 2005. *The Urban-rural Clash: Environmental Management Systems on Canadian Farms*. Statistics Canada: *Vista on the Agri-Food Industry and the Farm Community*. dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/21-004-X/21-004-XIE2005003.pdf.

Environmental Impacts of Agriculture

There are concerns about the continued use of pesticides and fertilizers and the potential for unintended consequences on ground water, the environment, and human health. Additional concerns include excessive agricultural water use, and manure management. The lack of enforcement is not helping correct or address poor farming practices. Farmers may be reluctant to invest in new, more environmentally considerate technologies because of their high implementation costs.

In 2007 the former North Saanich Agricultural Task Force identified some of the community's concerns about the potentially negative impact that farming could have on the health of the local environment and community. Specific concerns include: air quality and odour issues from farm practices such as manure application; on-farm composting that attracts unwanted pests, insects, rodents, domestic/wild animals; the use of pesticides and fertilizers and the potential for unintended consequences such as surface and ground water contamination; and the necessity for edge planning and buffer zones to prevent conflict between farm operations and adjacent development.⁷⁸

Deforestation of Forested Farmland

In 2009 there were about 414 ha within North Saanich's ALR with some level of forested land use (233 ha of quality agriculture land is forested).⁷⁹ There are increasing concerns about the removal of trees and forested areas from these farmlands. During the planning process a number of people emphasized the need to highlight the agricultural and ecological values, and economic potential of these forested agricultural lands.

Availability and Cost of Water

The cost and availability of water is a constraint to many small farms. Wells do not always meet existing demands. Additional concerns include future water shortages due to a changing climate, and the degradation of local watersheds by poor farm and land management practices

Increasing Problem Wildlife Populations

Increasing populations of certain wildlife species are impacting agricultural crop production on the Peninsula and in North Saanich. A number of producers stated that current bylaws and regulations do not always enable farmers to effectively protect their crops and livestock. There is a need for management strategies and potentially resources to help prevent crop loss or damage caused by wildlife such as geese, deer, rabbits, squirrels, raccoons and dogs.

Climate Change

Climate change will likely become a significant issue for North Saanich agriculture in the future. Scientists predict that the local weather is expected to become more unpredictable with wetter winters and possibly drier summers.⁸⁰ As a result of these changes the availability of adequate water for irrigation during the summer months may become a key challenge for produce and fruit growers as well as livestock producers who depend on the production of local forage crops. Over the coming years there is an expectation that climate change will eventually affect the way that farming is practiced and the types and range of crops that can

⁷⁸ North Saanich Agricultural Task Force Final Report, March 2007.

⁷⁹ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 2009. *DRAFT North Saanich Land Use Inventory Version 5.0 - December 2009*. Victoria, BC.

⁸⁰ US Global Change Research Program. 2003. *US National Assessment of the Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change - Regional Paper: Pacific Northwest*. www.usgcrp.gov/usgcrp/nacc/education/pnw/pnw-edu-2.htm.

be reliably grown. Adaptation will be an important strategy and farmers are expected to need additional assistance and training to help them cope with the anticipated changes.

4.3.3 Analysis

- The notion of protecting and maintaining North Saanich’s farmland has broad community support. There is an understanding that increasing food and fuel costs, coupled with the impact of climate change, more food may need to be grown on these lands.
- There is a need to attract new farmers. Most aspiring farmers do not have the finances necessary to purchase land while establishing a viable farm operation - this is particularly true for smaller non-commodity oriented operations.
- The District has an OCP and supporting Zoning Bylaw that clearly states its commitment to protect farmland. While such protection is critical, it does not in itself encourage farmland to be farmed. There is an opportunity to strengthen local policy and legislation to support working farmlands. There is also the opportunity for North Saanich’s OCP to include supportive agricultural advocacy policies (policies that express the District’s interest in areas where it does not have the legal authority or responsibility). Several neighbouring communities, including Central Saanich and Salt Spring Island, have included such policies within their OCPs.
- Increasing long-term, affordable access opportunities to quality farmland is critical to the long-term economic viability of agriculture. Numerous strategies could be explored to address this issue, including a local farmland trust bank alternative land tenure, financing and management options.
- There is the perception that new residents may not share an appreciation or have an understanding of agriculture. It could be helpful if new residents had the opportunity to develop such an understanding before purchasing properties near agricultural land. This could be achieved through the use of development permit areas and associated guidelines. It should be noted that the implementation of agricultural Development Permit Areas (DPA) can be controversial, as they are generally most effective when applied to land that has not yet been developed or where development is limited. Given that most non-agricultural properties found adjacent to agricultural land have been ‘developed’ to some degree, the cost of implementing an agricultural DPA may outweigh the limited benefits. It may be more effective to increase the agricultural awareness of potential residents through the provision of educational material through realtors or the Municipal Hall.
- While most farmers use appropriate farm practices, public concerns continue to grow about the use of pesticides and fertilizers and the potential for unintended consequences on ground water, the environment, and human health.
- With increasingly dry summers and a growing population there are increasing concerns about water availability and use.
- It is in the best interests of the farm community to use beneficial farm management practices. Farms can save money, avoid unnecessary legal conflicts and conflict with their neighbours, and access lucrative organic markets by implementing ecological farming practices which include the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and forested areas. The Environmental Farm Plan program provides assistance to farmers interested in improving their farming practices. Some producer groups in other jurisdictions recognize that ecological approaches provide them with a market advantage over competitors from other areas.

- There is a need to encourage producers and farmland owners to retain the forested and undeveloped areas of their lands. These are increasingly recognized as valuable contributors to the farm and surrounding community. The EFP program has developed a comprehensive guide, *Planning for Biodiversity*, to assist ranchers and farmers successfully protect and integrate these important areas on their farms.⁸¹
- Increasing populations of problem wildlife on the Peninsula - largely a result of urbanization (loss of predators, reduction/elimination of hunting, creation of habitat) - are becoming an issue for farmers. It may be difficult to address this issue locally given the overarching responsibility of provincial and federal government for wildlife.
- Common agricultural practices such as buffers and different tillage methods can remove or store carbon from the atmosphere (carbon sequestration). In addition to addressing climate change concerns, carbon sequestration may provide future economic opportunities for local farmers and the District.
- There may be an opportunity to recognize North Saanich's rural and agricultural lands as a climate mitigation strategy.
- The Saanich Peninsula may bear many impacts due to climate change. Canada as a whole may become a refuge for those fleeing impacts of climate change in other countries, and the Saanich Peninsula will need agricultural land to support a growing population and demand for food. There is concern that North Saanich is not keeping land in production for future needs. In addition, the specific effects of climate change on watersheds, groundwater and soil are poorly understood.

4.4 Education and Training

Over the past fifty years, Canada - and indeed much of the world - has been experiencing a loss of farmers and their associated agricultural knowledge. Fewer and fewer people are living in the rural countryside and deriving an income from it. Today, over half of the world's population lives in cities.⁸² Less than 2% of the Canadian population lives on farms.⁸³ This loss of farmers has resulted in a loss of understanding and appreciation of agriculture and the issues and challenges now facing our remaining farmers and farm families.

Fortunately, issues such as personal, community and environmental health, food safety, and sustainability are stimulating a renewed interest in food production and agriculture. This renewed interest may result in increased support for North Saanich agriculture and local farmers and may also spur increased participation in agriculture. In order to harness and support this growing interest it will be important offer agricultural education and training opportunities.

4.4.1 Recognized Assets

Farming History and Expertise

North Saanich has a long history of food production and farming. The local First Nations community provides a link to traditional food production practices on land and water. The Saanich Fair is an agricultural institution. Many of the old farmers and farming families are

⁸¹ Canada - BC Environmental Farm Plan Program, 2008. *Planning for Biodiversity: A Guide for BC Farmers and Ranchers*. www.ardcorp.ca/index.php?page_id=39.

⁸² United Nations Populations Fund. 2008. *Urbanization: A Majority in Cities*. www.unfpa.org/pds/urbanization.htm.

⁸³ Statistics Canada. 2006. *2006 Census of Agriculture: Farm Operation and Operators*. www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/070516/d070516a.htm.

still around. The land has been farmed well over the generations, and experienced farmers have local knowledge, experience and skills to share.

Diverse Farm Community

North Saanich enjoys diversity of farm types, farmers, and farming, processing and marketing approaches. This diversity provides some resiliency to the local agricultural economy. It also provides significant educational opportunities for those interested in farming or learning more about agriculture and local food production.

Local Food and Agriculture Organizations

There are few local and regional organizations such as the North Saanich Food for the Future Society and CR-FAIR working to improve the community's understanding and appreciation of agriculture. Events, such as the North Saanich Flavour Trail organized by members of the North Saanich AAC, celebrate local food and agriculture raising the profile and helping to promote agriculture in the community.

Existing Educational Programs

There are a number of established local agricultural education programs. A number of local schools are supportive of agricultural and agricultural education and even provide some programs. Good communication exists between schools and food-related community programs. A number of schools have gardens. Additional educational opportunities include the Flavour Trail, local horticulture programs and active 4-H programs.

4.4.2 Key Issues

Lack of New Farmers

As the average age of farmers rises, there are concerns that there are not enough new farmers arriving to replace them. Most young people are not interested in farming - possibly due to the high cost of land and equipment, the poor financial outlook, the lack of training opportunities, the general lack of respect given to the vocation of farming, and the farming lifestyle in general. Those that do enter into farming often are not adequately prepared to weather all of these challenges and therefore may not continue farming.

Agricultural Education Opportunities

As the farm population ages, important agrarian heritage and wisdom is slowly lost. And while there appear to be new and aspiring farmers drawn to the idea of growing food, they may not have the training or knowledge necessary to run a farm operation. In addition they may not have the financial ability to acquire or even lease farmland due to increasing land prices.

Limited Appreciation for the Challenges Associated with Farming

While interest in local food is growing, the public at-large generally does not have a complete appreciation of the challenges associated with and facing farming. The broad support that exists for North Saanich's "rural character," does not always translate into support for "working farms." There is limited appreciation of the true cost of producing food locally, the need for certain agricultural practices, and the multiple benefits of local food (health and nutrition, local economy, quality, etc).

4.4.3 Analysis

- There is an opportunity to access, share and build on the remaining agricultural wisdom that exists in North Saanich.
- Issues such as personal health, food safety, and sustainability are causing more people to consider where their food comes from and how it is grown. This renewed interest in food and agriculture may provide an opportunity for an improved dialogue between North Saanich's farming and non-farming community, and ultimately could translate into more support for local producers and the community's agricultural infrastructure.
- There has been limited investment by the District to showcase local agriculture. There is an opportunity for the District to take greater advantage of its significant agricultural and rural features beyond what it does now - mainly through the annual Flavour Trail event. Such an approach would highlight and celebrate agriculture. It would draw more attention and visitors into the District, likely providing significant economic benefits to both farmers and the District. It would also bring more people in contact with local agriculture.
- Many local educators are supportive of agriculture and agricultural education. Good communication exists between schools and community programs. Additional educational opportunities include local farm tours, school food gardens, in-school and local horticulture education programs. There is an opportunity to support and expand on the work that is already being done.
- The need for local agricultural training. There is a growing interest in agriculture and in particular the growing of food by a variety of groups and individuals that range from new or existing farmers, teachers, homeowners and community gardeners. There are an increasing number of courses offered within the CRD, provided by the private, public and non-profit sectors. It appears that there is very little in the way of coordination happening in this area.
- There are few formal opportunities for farming-related education provided within North Saanich. Local groups including members of the AAC host the occasional workshop or meeting. No community-wide agricultural organization such as a farmers institute exists that could provide or help coordinate educational and training opportunities within the District.
- Even though there is a stated desire for increased local agricultural training and educational opportunities, it is not clear who would provide or at least coordinate these activities, or how big the market would be. A thorough needs assessment would be beneficial to determine whether the desire can be met in partnership with existing organizations within the region.
- Limited agricultural learning opportunities may be affecting the numbers of potential farmers, as new farmers may be intimidated by the magnitude of skills and knowledge needed? The lack of learning opportunities may also impact established farmers, who would otherwise be interested in trying new crops or growing techniques.
- The Centre for Plant Health could be explored as a potential community education partner.
- There may be a need to better coordinate educational, training and mentorship opportunities throughout the Peninsula.

4.5 Community Health and Sustainability

There is a growing recognition that agriculture, and in particular, the growing of food, is an important contributor to the long-term health and viability of community. This recognition was evident from the input received through the Community Dialogues and on line survey as well as with members of the AAC, Council members and stakeholders.

Because of this and because the ability to produce food locally is so critical to the long-term sustainability, resilience and ultimately health of a community the food production aspect of agriculture deserves recognition.

Agriculture on southern Vancouver Island operates within a local, regional, national and international environment. Many of the challenges and opportunities facing agriculture are influenced by sources beyond the control and influence of the local community. International issues such as global warming, international trade liberalization, and commodity prices impact local agriculture. National health and food inspection, labelling and trade rulings affect the interface between the producer and the consumer. Provincial policies and programs related to land use, community health and land assessment have important implications for agriculture. Finally, at the local level, issues pertaining to land zoning, drainage and development controls all have a bearing on agriculture.

From this broad context, a goal of developing sustainable agriculture in North Saanich requires that agriculture be economically viable, and be socially and environmentally responsible to the interests of the local community. "Sustainability is related to the quality of life in a community -- whether the economic, social and environmental systems that make up the community are providing a healthy, productive, meaningful life for all community residents, present and future."⁸⁴

4.5.1 Recognized Assets

Quality Agricultural Land Base

As mentioned previously North Saanich has an excellent land base and mild climate that provides year-round growing opportunities for a wide range of crops. Producers who take advantage of these conditions can produce an impressive range of quality products.

Committed and Creative Farm Community

North Saanich farmers are passionate and committed, and regardless of the daunting investment of money and energy continue to do what they love. Many people move to North Saanich to try farming and to live the life of a farmer. This is indicated by increasing numbers of food gardens, hobby farms and new specialty farm enterprises. Although they may not have access to land, there are a growing number of young people on the Peninsula with an interest in farming, particular in using organic and ecological methods.

Interest in Local Food and Sustainability

North Saanich residents are described as educated and forward thinking, and interested in sustainability, health and environmental issues. Many residents actively maintain home food gardens, and as mentioned previously, interest and support for local food by North Saanich residents and businesses is increasing. The 100-Mile Diet and food security have increased the general public's awareness of the benefits of local food and organic farming. The current economic crisis and the threat of future fossil fuel shortages are bringing more attention to

⁸⁴ Hart, M. 2006. Sustainable Measures. www.sustainablemeasures.com.

the nature and health of the local economy and the District's reliance on imported food. More people bought seeds and grew their own food this year.

Interest in Food Security and Sovereignty

The District of North Saanich Council has recently adopted the *North Saanich Food Charter* (Appendix B). This charter supports the right of all residents to adequate amounts of local safe nutritious food and quality and supply of water for home and agricultural use. Some of the objectives to improve food security and support local agriculture are: the protection of agricultural land, encouraging healthy food choices in schools, education programs about food and agriculture, encouraging composting, and supporting local farmers' markets.⁸⁵

During the Community Dialogue sessions the District's Mayor expressed the hope of having North Saanich become more food self-sufficient. Food self-sufficiency or self-reliance is a goal fundamentally concerned with issues of responsibility and sustainability. By increasing its capacity to meet its food needs, a community increases its ability to sustain itself. Self-reliance, particularly with regard to food production, increases a community's resilience or ability to withstand events that might affect or limit outside food sources. There is a growing appreciation and concern that most communities are extremely vulnerable when it comes to their food supply. This vulnerability also translates into lack of sustainability, as food must be imported often from afar with environmental consequences and costs.

4.5.2 Key Issues

Lack of Food Self-Sufficiency

While North Saanich does have an excellent agricultural land base and climate it may not be adequate to meet the Mayor's goal of food self-sufficiency. The 2006 BC Food Self Reliance Report,⁸⁶ estimated that 0.524 ha of land would be required to produce a healthy diet for the average British Columbian per year (about 10% of this area (0.053 ha) would need to be irrigated). If this is accurate, North Saanich's 11,000 residents would require 5,764 ha of arable land - well beyond the current 1407 ha found with in the ALR in North Saanich. It is important to note that this assumes a typical North American diet, which includes meat and dairy. With 75% (0.394 ha) of the 0.524 ha devoted to the production of meat and meat alternatives it is likely that significantly less land would be required to support those with vegetarian diets.

The challenge of food self-sufficiency is not unique to North Saanich. North Saanich's significant agricultural land holdings and rural setting provide it with a significant advantage with regard to food production over more urbanized communities like Sidney, Oak Bay or Victoria. An increasing number of communities around North America are encouraging their residents to grow food in an effort to protect farms, address food security concerns, decrease reliance on outside imports, reduce the environmental effects and fossil fuel use associated with imported food, stimulate economic growth, and reduce waste. They are interested in enhancing the health and viability of their community's food system, which includes growing, harvesting processing, distribution, selling and recycling food, because of a growing body of evidence that suggests that healthy food systems support healthy communities.

⁸⁵ District of North Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission, North Saanich Food Charter.

⁸⁶ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 2006. *B.C.'s Food Self-Reliance: Can B.C.'s Farmers Feed Our Growing Population?* www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/Food_Self_Reliance/BCFoodSelfReliance_Report.pdf.

Climate Change

As previously identified, the Saanich Peninsula may face a number of challenges due to climate change. Canada, including British Columbia, may become a refuge for those fleeing impacts of climate change in other countries. If this occurs, the Saanich Peninsula may have to use its agricultural lands to support growing population and demand for food. Given this possible future scenario, there are concerns that North Saanich is not keeping enough agricultural land in production to meet these future needs. In addition, the potential effects of climate change on agricultural productivity and ecological health in North Saanich is not known.

Aging and Diminishing Farm Population

As mentioned previously, the average age of North Saanich farmers is increasing and there are concerns that the difficult nature of farming is discouraging young people from entering the profession and may be causing some young farmers to leave. This issue is a problem for North Saanich given the District's desire to become self sufficient in food production. In addition to this issue there are no local and limited regional supports for the few remaining farmers who are subject to increasing pressures and stresses.

4.5.3 Analysis

- While issues such as food access may not be a problem within the community there is a growing understanding and concern that much of the food that North Saanich residents consume comes from outside of the community and Vancouver Island. There is a desire to change this.
- There is a limited understanding of the state or even of the extent of the District's existing food system. As yet, no municipality within the CRD has conducted a food system assessment (however a baseline food system assessment of the CRD was conducted in 2004).⁸⁷ Such an assessment would provide the District with a more comprehensive understanding of the health of their food system and would help identify and prioritize areas that require attention. It is expected that such an assessment would complement the Agriculture Plan with its support for local food and sustainable agriculture.
- More and more municipalities around North America are recognizing food and the food system as a determinant of health and as such an important contributor to community health and sustainability. As a result they are taking a more active role in promoting activities and behaviours that support and improve the local food system, even though many of these activities fall outside of their area of responsibility. The growing recognition of the link between food and community health is an opportunity for North Saanich to move beyond its traditional role as a local government.
- North Saanich has a Mayor and Council that appear to understand the value of a healthy and resilient local food system. They have the ability to position the District as a leader in food system planning on the Island. Such an approach would not only be good for local agriculture and community health, it will also draw attention to, and investment in, the community.
- Collaboration with other municipalities and the CRD - perhaps through CR-FAIR or VIHA - may help to more effectively address many food system issues.

⁸⁷ MacNair, E. 2004. *A Baseline Assessment of Food Security in British Columbia's Capital Region*. CR-FAIR, Victoria, BC. www.islandnet.com/~vipirg/campaigns/crfair/CR-FAIR_FS%20Assessment_web.pdf.

- Innovative approaches to community health, which ultimately affect and improve liveability, are desired outcomes for most community planning processes. Good food, including its production, has the ability to do this. A Local, Healthy Food Directive or Initiative by DNSC could increase North Saanich's profile.
- If there is a desire to increase the number of young farmers in the District and on the Saanich Peninsula, there may be the opportunity to establish supportive networks similar to those that exist in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.⁸⁸ These can provide the support and guidance necessary to help farmers struggling to adjust and meet the challenges associated with this profession and lifestyle.

DRAFT

⁸⁸ Farm Tribute Canada. Farmer Resources. www.farmtributecanada.ca/farmers_resources.htm#National.

5 STRATEGIES

A number of strategies and associated actions have been identified to address the challenges and achieve the goals of the Agriculture Plan with the desire of achieving the agricultural vision.

The responsibility for the implementation of the North Saanich Agriculture Plan rests with the District of North Saanich. As a result most of the proposed strategies and actions are those that the District itself can implement. There are, however, a few exceptions. They include strategies that are outside of the District's jurisdiction, but if realized would greatly help the District achieve its agricultural vision and goals. These advocacy strategies also involve actions that the District could undertake.

5.1 Key Strategies

Four key strategies are seen as critical first steps towards realizing its agricultural vision and would start to provide the conditions that improve the health and viability of the local agricultural economy.

- Collaborate as a community for the benefit of local agriculture;
- Develop a detailed local economic development strategy for agriculture;
- Establish North Saanich's identity as an agricultural community; and
- Support the establishment of facilities and infrastructure that stimulate growth and diversification of local agriculture.

5.1.1 ECONOMIC VIABILITY

Goal: *Provide the conditions that stimulate and support the long-term health, development and diversification of our agricultural economy.*

The long-term economic viability of local agriculture is a central concern. If farming is not economically viable, it will continue to decline in North Saanich and on Southern Vancouver Island. If agriculture in North Saanich is to be economically viable:

- It must be supported by the District and by local agricultural and community organizations;
- Innovative local growing, possessing, and marketing approaches that emphasize quality should be encouraged and supported;
- Access to a protected and properly managed land base must be maintained;
- Environmentally considerate and sustainable land practices must become the norm; and
- Education and training opportunities for young and mature farmers as well as residents and visitors must be provided.

Global issues such as climate change and rising non-renewable energy costs are anticipated to have an increasing effect on local agriculture. It is anticipated that in the foreseeable future, local food producers will be recognized as vital contributors to the immediate and long-term health and resiliency of the community.

1. Encourage coordinated and cooperative approaches that benefit local agriculture.

Key Objectives:

- Improve realization, coordination and support for local agricultural efforts.
- Reduce costs and duplication of efforts.
- Effective implementation of the Agriculture Plan recommendations.
- Increase access to outside resources and sources of funding.

Supporting Action:

a. Encourage the establishment of an independent local agriculture organization.

Support and encourage the establishment of an independent agricultural organization that can effectively represent the District's considerable and diverse agricultural interests. This body could:

- Provide non-partisan representation and support to the District's varied agricultural interests;
- Provide a central point of contact and resource centre for local agricultural matters;
- Assist with the implementation of the Agriculture Plan and the coordination and delivery of a number of local agricultural activities and programs;
- Secure and manage sources of funding and resources to support agriculture; and
- Participate and possibly lead agricultural economic development efforts including the marketing and promotion of North Saanich agriculture.

This is not a recommendation that will be easily achieved. Currently, there is no existing District-based body - other than the Agricultural Advisory Commission - that represents local agricultural interests and organizations.

At this time it is unclear how the District might best encourage the establishment of such a group, which would clearly benefit the local agricultural sector and would be the logical group to help with implementation of the Agriculture Plan.

2. Develop a detailed local economic development strategy for agriculture.

Key Objectives:

- Clear, supported direction for local agricultural economic development.
- Innovative approaches that are tailored to local need, situation and values.
- Supports existing District policies and regulations and the Agriculture Plan.

Supporting Action:

a. Undertake an Agricultural Economic Development Plan.

Initiate an economic development strategy that considers individual farm opportunities as well as larger, longer-term District-wide and Peninsula-wide approaches.

3. Reinforce North Saanich’s agricultural identity.

Key Objectives:

- Increase North Saanich’s recognition as a diverse and beautiful seaside agricultural community.
- Increase the visibility of North Saanich’s agricultural attributes.
- Establish the link between North Saanich’s rural quality of life and its agricultural attributes and activities.

Supporting Actions

a. Pursue an agricultural branding strategy.

Support the development of a coordinated marketing approach that establishes a common identity or brand for North Saanich agriculture and agricultural products.

Assist the agricultural community with the development of a common local identity or brand that can be used to highlight North Saanich farms and their farm products and differentiate them from other Island farms and farming areas.

The final branding strategy should consider and meet local interests and needs and should work at a variety of scales i.e. farm product → District signage.

This action could be addressed through the recommended Agricultural Economic Development Plan.

b. Establish a supportive roadside signage program.

Establish signage that:

- Identifies North Saanich as an agricultural community;
- Celebrates and reveals the District’s significant agricultural features and heritage to Island visitors and regional residents; and
- Takes advantage of the major transportation corridors and centres found within the community (Patricia Bay Highway, Victoria International Airport, BC Ferries Terminal).

A signage plan would be informed and potentially guided by the proposed Agricultural Economic Development Plan and branding strategy.

4. Support the establishment of facilities and infrastructure that stimulate the growth and diversification of local agriculture.

Key Objectives

- Provide the conditions that increase the economic viability of local farm operations.
- Develop facilities and infrastructure that support the growth and diversification of the District and region’s agricultural sector.
- Meet the needs of local and regional producers and processors.

Supporting Actions

a. Encourage the growth of farmers markets.

Support/encourage the establishment of farmers markets, including smaller “pocket” markets, in appropriate locations throughout the District.

Secure a more permanent location for North Saanich's farmers' market that:

- Reflects and contributes to North Saanich's rural identity and vision;
- Provides an effective direct marketing outlet for the agricultural community;
- Meets the needs and concerns of local residents;
- Increases the number of customers;
- Can accommodate growth (customers and producers); and
- Eventually can host a year-round market.

The North Saanich Farm Market is located at St. John's United Church on West Saanich Road every Saturday from June to October. At this time the existing market location appears to be adequate.

The recommended Agricultural Economic Development Plan could consider the growth and development of District farmers markets.

b. Consider the establishment of a local abattoir.

Identify opportunities for North Saanich to support the establishment of a local abattoir facility that could service Peninsula and Gulf Island producers. Support could include:

- Facilitating community discussions on this topic - perhaps through the AAC;
- Ensuring that this topic is considered during the development of the recommended Agriculture Economic Development Plan;
- Identifying appropriate models and methods (e.g. mobile or fixed?); and
- Identification of potential locations and establishing supporting municipal zoning.

District's role in these discussions would largely be supportive. The private sector or the agricultural community would be responsible for the establishment of such a facility.

c. Support the considered development of additional agricultural infrastructure.

Consider and support the establishment of additional beneficial agricultural infrastructure (e.g. community kitchens; cold storage, processing and composting facilities). It is recognized that the growth and development of the local agricultural economy will require the provision, maintenance, and development of supportive infrastructure.

The District can provide assistance (e.g. supportive zoning, facilitate community discussions, etc.) to help with the identification and establishment of these facilities.

The proposed Agricultural Economic Development Plan will help to identify priorities.

5.2 Additional Strategies

Nineteen additional strategies have been identified to address the challenges facing agriculture in the District of North Saanich and support the realization of the agricultural vision. These strategies are seen as important but not as immediately critical to achieving the District's agricultural vision. That said, a number of these strategies and actions may be relatively easy for the District to implement.

5.2.1 LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Goal: *Lead and govern in a manner that values, includes and supports our agricultural community.*

5. Protect local agricultural interests.

Key Objectives:

- Protect and maintain North Saanich's significant agricultural lands, features and activities.
- Provide leadership in the area of food and agriculture.
- Solidify the District's reputation for protecting agricultural land and associated farm practices.

Supporting Actions:

a. Maintain supportive policies and bylaws.

Ensure that land use policies and bylaws reflect and support the District's agricultural vision, the Agriculture Plan, and Food Charter. This would involve:

- A regular review and update (as required) of the District's OCP, bylaws and administrative policies every 3 years by staff and the AAC to ensure that they reflect the District's increasing interest and commitment to local food agriculture, and to highlight any new developments or plans; and
- Clear direction and support to District staff and the AAC to undertake these activities.

An initial review of the District's OCP, Zoning and Animal Control Bylaws was conducted with involvement from District and MAL staff and the AAC during the development of the Agriculture Plan. This review determined that the District's policies and bylaws are generally supportive of agriculture and provided the following suggestions:

- Consider the addition of OCP policies that advocate for agriculture and reference the Agriculture Plan and its associated recommendations.
- Commit to a careful consideration of the potential need to establish edge planning policies and regulations to address conflicts between farming and non-farming properties.
- Harmonize agricultural terms and definitions found within the Zoning Bylaw with the terms and definitions used by the governing legislative acts and regulations (ALC Act, Right to Farm Act, etc.).
- Bill 27 requirements provide the District with an opportunity consider additional policies that support local agriculture and food production and reduce carbon emissions.

- Provide District committees and commissions with opportunities to regularly review and comment on District policies, bylaws and regulations so that they remain familiar, to address any misunderstandings and ensure that they protect the agricultural land base and support the growth and diversification of local agriculture and food production.

6. Influence regional and provincial food and agriculture policy decision-making.

Key Objectives:

- Increase consideration of local food and agriculture related issues by the CRD and Province.
- Represent the District's growing interest in food security and agriculture.
- Encourage the discussion and development of regional and provincial food and agriculture policies that benefit Peninsula agriculture.

Supporting Actions:

a. Represent local agricultural interests.

Continue to support and participate in regional and provincial discussions involving agriculture such as the Peninsula Agriculture Commission (PAC), at UBCM and with CRD's Environment Committee.

b. Support the establishment and maintenance of effective regional food and agriculture committees.

Work with CRD municipalities towards the establishment of new committees focused on food and agriculture issues. Suggested new committees include:

- CRD Food and Agriculture Committee;
- Regional food policy council; and
- A revitalized, empowered and supported PAC.

c. Advocate for local agriculture.

Encourage regional, provincial and federal governments to establish food and agricultural policies and protocols sensitive to the needs, situation and often limited resources of most Peninsula producers and processors.

7. Maintain and track agricultural information.

Key Objectives:

- Support and justify agricultural development and decision-making with quality information.
- Measure the effectiveness of the Agriculture Plan.
- Guide policy and regulatory changes to support agriculture.

Supporting Actions:

a. Maintain and improve the existing agricultural information base.

Review and expand the scope of the District's current agricultural information base.

- Maintain the baseline agricultural information database that has been established during the preparation of this plan. Update the agricultural census and land use inventory data every five years, following the Federal Agriculture Census.

- Where possible expand the range and frequency of agricultural information recorded and tracked.
- Work with the agricultural community to identify information needs.

b. Monitor changes to North Saanich’s agricultural sector.

Identify key agricultural indicators can be used to monitor the health and viability of the District’s agricultural sector and associated land base. Monitoring can also be used to determine the effectiveness of the Agriculture Plan over time and may help to identify if and where potential adjustments should be made. Potential performance indicators include:

- Amount of land in production (ALR and non-ALR land);
- Number of applications, approvals, and rejections for exclusion, non-farm uses and subdivisions of ALR land;
- Number and age of farm operators;
- Total number of farms; and
- Average net returns for North Saanich farms.

8. Provide knowledgeable agricultural services.

Key Objectives:

- Maintain the quality of services.
- Maintain and improve agricultural in-house expertise.
- Support the agricultural sector.

Supporting Actions:

a. Provide quality services.

Ensure that District employees and members of the AAC have the appropriate level of understanding of agriculture and associated agricultural legislative and policy frameworks that allow them to effectively address the needs and concerns of the community and District Council.

b. Establish an agricultural extension position.

Pursue the creation of a Peninsula Agricultural Extension position in collaboration with neighbouring municipalities. This position could act as a regional resource to municipalities and their citizens on agricultural matters. This position would fill the increasing resource gap that is not being adequately addressed by the Provincial government. The participating municipalities and their associated needs would determine this nature and management of this position.

9. Address local shortages of farm labour and on-farm worker housing.

Key Objectives:

- Increase the pool of quality workers available to North Saanich farmers.
- Improve the identification of local agricultural job opportunities.
- Involve interested neighbouring municipalities.
- Increase interest in and consideration of this issue.

Supporting Actions:**a. Establish a local agricultural labour pool.**

Establish a simple internet-based local farm labour posting service or pool that better connects agricultural workers and employers. This service could also list supporting services such as accommodation and transportation. Initially the service could be provided through an agriculturally-focused page on the District's website.

This service could eventually be hosted by:

- The recommended independent local agricultural organization;
- A local employment or community service agency such as Beacon Community Services
- A number of local municipalities.

b. Examine opportunities to address the shortage of on-farm worker housing.

Identify current on-farm or near-farm housing options for farmers and farm labourers. This initial first step in a longer process to establish more affordable on-farm farm worker housing would:

- Work within existing District and Provincial policies and regulations; and
- Identify policy and regulatory changes that could be made by the District to support the establishment of affordable on-farm worker housing that does not compromise the agricultural productivity and integrity of farms.

10. Develop additional strategies and policies that benefit farming.**Key Objectives:**

- Increase and demonstrate support for local producers.
- Create policies that support agriculture.
- Recognize the importance of direct farm marketing and value-added activities.

Supporting Actions:**a. Support direct farm marketing and value-added initiatives.**

Review existing policies and regulations to ensure that they support these types activities as they have been described in this plan. Continue to work with the agricultural community to their interests are adequately considered.

b. Establish local agritourism guidelines.

Develop agritourism guidelines for North Saanich that support complimentary agritourism activities that directly support primary agricultural pursuits and maintain the integrity of the farm, its soils and land base. Development of the guidelines may involve discussions with:

- Adjacent municipalities dealing with this issue; and the
- Agricultural Land Commission and MAL staff.

c. Implement a local/ethical food procurement policy.

Establish a local/ethical food procurement policy for all District events. While annual food purchases are relatively small, such a policy would allow the District to demonstrate its commitment and support for local and ethically produced foods and services.

5.2.2 PROTECTION AND STEWARDSHIP

Goal: *Actively farm, protect and enhance our agricultural land base in perpetuity.*

11. Actively protect farmland.

Key Objectives:

- Increase amount of farmland protected from non-agricultural development.
- Improve the ability to proactively protect and manage farmland.
- Provide the ability to accept future farmland donations.
- Provide aspiring farmers with access to affordable farming opportunities.
- Increase local control and responsibility over the agricultural land base.

Supporting Action:

a. Support establishment of a farmland trust.

Support the creation of a local land bank or trust either as a District or in collaboration with adjacent municipal jurisdictions or a local non-profit organization, to accept farmland donations and actively purchase and manage farmland in perpetuity. This will likely require establishing management protocols, leaseholder agreements, and additional legal instruments that ensure that entrusted farmland is actively farmed in a manner that meets the identified objectives.

12. Pursue strategies that increase land available for farming.

Key Objectives:

- Increase agricultural land in production.
- Increase number of farmers.
- Decrease in the average age of North Saanich farmers.
- Increase number of farms that are passed on to family members.

Supporting Actions:

a. Identify alternative models and methods that support farming.

Identify long-term land tenure, financing and management options that encourage farming. This will involve the identification of potential options that could be implemented locally

b. Link farmland with future farmers.

Establish a District database service that helps connect available farmland with potential farmers. This service could potentially be connected to the proposed farm labour pool and posted on the associated website. It will require the creation and maintenance of a database, which could initially be developed and maintained by the municipality, and then eventually transferred to another interested body such as the proposed local agricultural organization.

c. Provide farm succession support.

Assist farm families dealing with the challenge of farm succession. Help connect them with professional support services and information. Depending on the need, work with government agencies, local agricultural organizations, and interested neighbouring municipalities to provide this service.

13. Increase agricultural awareness and appreciation in new and future residents.

Key Objectives:

- Increase local understanding and appreciation of agriculture.
- Reduce conflicts between members of the farming and non-farming community.
- Encourage economic support for local farmers.

Supporting Actions:

a. Establish an agriculture webpage.

Create an agriculture web page on the District's website. This page could act as the agricultural desk or storefront for the District, providing pertinent agricultural information and links to the public.

b. Provide agricultural information to new residents.

Develop information materials that could be provided to new or future residents - particularly those who have or are considering purchasing property on, adjacent or near farmland. Information materials could include:

- A brochure describing North Saanich's agricultural situation and history;
- A directory of North Saanich farms with their location, products and contact information;
- District contact information including a link to the proposed District Agriculture Web Page on the municipal website, and a copy of the MAL publication, *The Countryside and You*.⁸⁹

14. Encourage the use of ecological farming practices.

Key Objectives:

- Increase understanding and benefits of beneficial farm management practices.
- Increase the implementation of ecologically sensitive and sustainable farm practices.
- Assist farmers with the implementation of sustainable farm practices and technologies.
- Protect and improve the health of the local environment.
- Improved appreciation and consideration of the environment and its services by the agricultural community.
- Reduce cost and improve economic returns to farmers.

Supporting Actions:

a. Support the implementation of beneficial farm management practices.

Improve local participation in programs that result in the implementation of beneficial farm management practices such as the Environmental Farm Program. Help farmers access other sources of information and funding that result in the implementation of environmental farm management practices including:

- Conserve and enhance soils;

⁸⁹ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 1998. *The Countryside and You: Understanding Farming*. www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/800Series/800300-1Countryside.pdf

- Conserve water;
- Manage manure and maintain fertility; and
- Retain forested, riparian, wetland and other sensitive or threatened habitats.

- b. Encourage the use of farm practices that protect the natural environment.**
Encourage those with challenging, environmentally sensitive and forested properties to consider alternative ecological farming practices such as organic and biodynamic agriculture, and agroforestry that result in high quality, high value and marketable products.

15. Participate in programs that reward farmers for the environmental services they provide.

Key Objectives:

- Identify potential environmental incentive programs.
- Establish a new income source for farmers
- Reward farmers for the provision of environmental services.
- Increase support for environmentally sensitive farm practices.

Supporting Action:

- a. Encourage participation in environmental incentive programs.**
Encourage farmers to become involved with incentive programs that reward them for the environmental goods and services that they provide. Incentives could include tax reductions, carbon credits, subsidies, and direct payments.
- The District could assist with the development of a pilot carbon sequestration incentive program that helps the District reduce its carbon footprint and meet *Bill 27* requirements.

16. Support farmers dealing with environmental issues.

Key Objectives:

- Help farmers deal with challenging environmental issues.
- Maintain access to affordable water for farmers.
- Prepare for climate change.
- Increase the resilience and health of the community.

Supporting Actions:

- a. Address problem wildlife issues.**
Participate in discussions and activities assisting farmers with the management of problem wildlife. Expanding deer, rodent, and waterfowl populations on the Peninsula are causing significant amounts of damage to crops and fields. While jurisdiction for the management of mammals and migratory waterfowl lies with the Provincial and Federal governments respectively, the District should participate and ensure that the needs and concerns of its farming and non-farming citizens are addressed.

b. Maintain access to adequate and affordable water.

This would include working with:

- Neighbouring municipalities and the CRD to maintain bulk water rates for District farmers and access to adequate supplies for irrigation purposes; and
- The agricultural community to encourage the continued development and implementation of agricultural water conservation measures.

This matter is of considerable importance and concern to North Saanich farmers. There is an appreciation that the growing Peninsula population, coupled with potential drier summers, could result in increased costs and even allocation restrictions for regional water supplies for agriculture. This could have tremendous impacts on the local agriculture sector.

c. Assist with climate adaptation.

Assist farmers dealing with the effects of climate change. As indicated previously the effects of climate change are anticipated to present an increasing challenge over the coming years particularly to the agriculture sector, which can be hugely impacted by climatic events.

In order to realize its agrarian vision, the District will need to help farmers preparing for and potentially dealing with the effects of climate change.

17. Work with local agencies and jurisdictions to maintain the agronomic capability of their agricultural lands.

Key Objectives:

- Protect agricultural lands outside the District's municipal authority.
- Improve consideration and support for the District's limited agricultural land base by government agencies with farmland holdings.

Supporting Action:

a. Encourage local agencies to maintain the agricultural productivity of their agricultural land holdings.

Encourage agencies, such as the Victoria Airport Authority and Centre for Plant Health, with significant agricultural land holdings, to maintain their agricultural potential. Engage these agencies in a discussion regarding:

- The ongoing management of their agricultural properties;
- The District's interest in seeing the use of these properties maintained as agricultural;
- Potential agricultural uses that fit within their existing development plans and management requirements and meet the needs of the local agriculture community; and
- The possibility of establishing preparatory zoning that anticipates the sale of these properties by the Federal Government and the re-establishment of municipal authority over them.

5.2.3 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Goal: *Increase local understanding and appreciation of agriculture, improve and advance agricultural abilities and techniques within our community and on the Saanich Peninsula, and secure additional supportive services for our farmers.*

18. Improve local understanding and appreciation of agriculture.

Key Objectives:

- Improve the understanding and appreciation of local agriculture.
- Increase and strengthen supportive connections between the farming and non-farming elements of the community.
- Re-energize and enhance local agricultural events.
- Build support for agriculture.

Supporting Actions:

a. Celebrate agriculture!

Encourage, support and host agriculture-focused public education activities, events and celebrations. Identify existing activities and events that could feature local agriculture.

Delivery of these activities and events - including the annual Flavour Trail - would benefit greatly from the establishment of the recommended local agriculture organization.

b. Host agricultural dialogues.

Building on the success of the Agricultural Plan's Community Dialogues, provide opportunities and situations where members of the farming and non-farming community can come together to consider and discuss issues of shared concern.

19. Encourage youth-focused agricultural learning opportunities.

Key Objectives:

- Increase awareness and appreciation for agriculture at a young age.
- Cultivate interest in agriculture, gardening and food.
- Increase opportunities for young people to participate in agriculture.
- Learn through agriculture and gardening.

Supporting Actions:

a. Support children and youth-based agricultural education initiatives.

Encourage the growth and development of school and youth-based agricultural education opportunities. Opportunities include:

- School - based curricula supported by MAL's Agriculture in the Classroom program and by non-profit organizations like Lifecycles;
- Farm-based service or experiential learning for credit for high school students;
- 4H programs; and
- Food and gardening programs offered through local community recreation facilities.

Events and activities involving or featuring agriculture should include ideas to attract and connect with young people.

b. Encourage the development of agricultural teaching facilities.

Support and endorse the establishment of more school gardens and other agricultural teaching facilities that can be used to expose gardening and agricultural activities to young people.

20. Increase local agricultural training and mentoring opportunities for existing and new farmers.

Key Objectives:

- Support the development of local farmers.
- Expand the skill set of new and existing farmers.
- Support the development of high quality agricultural products.
- Improve the economic viability of local farms.
- Increase the resiliency and adaptability of North Saanich's agriculture sector.

Supporting Actions:

a. Encourage increased training opportunities.

Support the development and provision of a range of needs-based training opportunities for local farmers. These could include courses and workshops such as farm management, business development, marketing, financial management, identification of new crops, and crop management practices.

Provision and organization of these courses would benefit from the establishment of the recommended local agriculture organization.

b. Encourage mentorship opportunities.

Support the provision of mentorship opportunities between new or young farmers and established farmers. Encourage the provision of local farm internships or apprenticeships for people interested in agriculture.

Coordination and support for these mentorship opportunities would benefit from the establishment of the recommended local agriculture organization.

5.2.4 COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Goal: *Improve the long-term health and resiliency of our community by encouraging and supporting the production and consumption of local food.*

21. Grow North Saanich's local food system.

Key Objectives:

- Improve the District's ability to feed itself.
- Increase the District's resiliency and sustainability.
- Decrease District's reliance on outside sources of food.
- Decrease District's contribution to climate change.

Supporting Actions:

a. Undertake an assessment of the District's food system.

Conduct an assessment of the North Saanich's food system to establish an understanding of the current situation. Such an assessment would provide a baseline that would reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the system and suggest where efforts and resources would result in the greatest gains.

b. Increase the resiliency of the District’s food system.

Support and endorse efforts and activities that lead to a more complete, diverse and therefore more sustainable and resilient local food system (food growing, processing, cooking, seed-saving, composting, and sharing).

c. Increase number of food gardens and farms.

Encourage and support efforts to increase number of community, home and school food gardens.

As an initial step, the District could encourage and support local food growing through information provided on the agriculture page on the District’s website.

22. Encourage healthy local food choices.

Key Objectives:

- Increase community’s consumption of locally produced food.
- Improve the health of residents.
- Support the production of healthy and quality local food choices.

Supporting Actions:

a. Start a local, healthy food initiative.

Support local food growing and eating initiatives that emphasize health. Increasingly, municipal jurisdictions are providing information services to their communities that emphasize the connection between healthy eating, personal health and a healthy agricultural sector.⁹⁰

This information could be provided through the proposed agriculture page on the District’s website.

This initiative should be linked with the economic development, marketing and educational activities recommended in this Plan.

b. Participate in regional food initiatives.

Work with VIHA, the CRD, CR-FAIR and other regional organizations and groups involved with the development and delivery of local food and healthy eating initiatives.

23. Increase support services for farmers and their families.

Key Objectives:

- Provision of social support services for farm families.
- Improve the health and wellbeing of the farm community.
- Increase the network of support for the agricultural community beyond what is currently in place

Supporting Actions:

a. Encourage the provision of supportive services for the farming community.

Work with VIHA, CR-FAIR and others to consider the establishment an outreach service to support people in the agricultural sector who may be struggling with

⁹⁰ Healthy and Sustainable Food for San Francisco. 2009. *Executive Directive 09-03 from the Office of the Mayor*. www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/sffood/policy_reports/MayorNewsomExecutiveDirectiveonHealthySustainableFood.pdf.

stresses and challenges associated with farming. Unlike a number of other Canadian provinces, there are no support services for farmers and farm families in BC.

Initially these services could be provided via the Internet. Depending on interest and funding they could be expanded to include a phone service. Potentially, free or affordable agricultural-specific counselling services may help farmers and farm families dealing with the mental and emotional stresses associated with farming. Such a service might also be linked to financial and succession planning services.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

The North Saanich Agriculture Plan identifies a number of strategies that the District will directly pursue or support as it begins to implement the Plan. The implementation of a number of these recommendations will be relatively straightforward for the District while others will require the support and involvement of other agencies, groups and individuals.

6.1 Implementation Tables

To assist with the implementation of the Agriculture Plan the following tables have been developed to identify potential partners and participants, the timing, relative priority and potential sources of funding for each of the 23 strategies' associated actions.

6.1.1 Proposed Key Strategies

Strategies	Supporting Actions	Potential Partners & Participants ⁹¹	Funding Requirements & Potential Sources	Priority ⁹² & Timing ⁹³
Economic Viability				
1. Encourage coordinated and cooperative approaches that benefit local agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the establishment of an independent organization to represent the District's considerable and diverse agricultural interests 	Lead: Local ag. community NSFFS, DNS, MAL, CRD	Funding Requirements: Depends on the nature and activity of the organization Potential Sources: IAF, membership dues, project grants, fund raising events	Priority: High Timing: Dependent on the local ag. community
2. Develop a detailed local economic development strategy for agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an agricultural economic plan 	Local ag. community, SPCC, CRD, adjacent municipalities, MAL, PAC	Funding Requirements: Significant - requires outside expertise Potential Sources: IAF, DNS contribution, other grants, SPCC	Priority: High Timing: Immediate
3. Reinforce North Saanich's agricultural identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue an agricultural branding strategy 	Lead: Local ag. community and DNS SPCC, CRD, adjacent municipalities, MAL, PAC	Funding Requirements: Significant - requires outside expertise Potential Sources: IAF, DNS contribution, other grants, SPCC	Priority: High Timing: Immediate - part of Strategy #2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a supportive roadside signage program 	Local ag. community, SPCC, CRD, adjacent municipalities, MAL, PAC	Funding Requirements: Significant - requires outside expertise Potential Sources: IAF, DNS contribution, other grants, SPCC	Priority: High Timing: Immediate - part of Strategy #2

⁹¹ Unless otherwise noted, the District of North Saanich is responsible for leading proposed action.

⁹² Priority: High, Medium, Low, Ongoing

⁹³ Timing: Immediate (0-1 year), Short (1-2 years), Medium (2-5 years), Long (>5 years)

Strategies	Supporting Actions	Potential Partners & Participants ⁹¹	Funding Requirements & Potential Sources	Priority ⁹² & Timing ⁹³
4. Support the establishment of facilities and infrastructure that stimulate the growth and diversification of local agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage the growth of farmers markets</i> 	Lead: NSFFS DNS, local ag. community	Funding Requirements: Depend on work undertaken. Establishment of a permanent facility will require significant \$\$. Potential Sources: Grants, donors, others?	Priority: High Timing: Will depend on interest from the ag. community
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consider the establishment of a local abattoir</i> 	Lead: Local ag. community DNS, CRD, MAL, MIES, CFIA, PAC	Funding Requirements: Depends on the extent of the work undertaken. Initial consideration would be negligible. Facility development would be borne by the proponent. However, it may be helpful to sponsor a feasibility study to attract interest. Potential Sources: IAF (for feasibility study)	Priority: High Timing: Will depend on interest from the ag. community
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support the considered development of additional agricultural infrastructure</i> 	Lead: Local ag. community DNS, MAL	See above comments.	Priority: High Timing: Will depend on interest from the ag. community

6.1.2 Additional Strategies

Strategies	Supporting Actions	Potential Partners & Participants	Funding Requirements & Potential Sources	Priority & Timing
Leadership and Governance				
5. Protect local agricultural interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintain supportive policies and bylaws</i> 	DNS, local ag. community, MAL, ALC, PAC, CRD	Funding Requirements: Existing resources	Priority: Ongoing Timing: Immediate
6. Influence regional and provincial food and agriculture policy decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Represent local agricultural interests</i> 	DNS, CRD, PAC, UBCM	Funding Requirements: Existing resources	Priority: Ongoing Timing: Immediate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support the establishment and maintenance of effective regional food and agriculture committees</i> 	DNS, CRD, PAC, CR-FAIR, VIHA	Funding Requirements: Existing resources	Priority: Ongoing Timing: Immediate

Strategies	Supporting Actions	Potential Partners & Participants	Funding Requirements & Potential Sources	Priority & Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advocate for local agriculture</i> 	DNS, local ag. community	<p>Funding Requirements: Existing resources - increased advocacy may require additional resources.</p>	<p>Priority: Ongoing</p> <p>Timing: As required</p>
7. Maintain and track agricultural information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintain and improve the existing agricultural information base</i> 	DNS (staff and AAC), MAL, ALC, CRD	<p>Funding Requirements: Will require additional resources to update LUI, acquire Statistics Canada data, etc.</p> <p>Potential Sources: DNS budget, MAL</p>	<p>Priority: Ongoing</p> <p>Timing: Short-Med.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Monitor changes to North Saanich's agricultural sector</i> 	DNS (staff and AAC), MAL, ALC, CRD	<p>Funding Requirements: Existing resources.</p>	<p>Priority: Ongoing</p> <p>Timing: Med.</p>
8. Provide knowledgeable agricultural services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide quality services</i> 	DNS, MAL, ALC, PAC	<p>Funding Requirements: Existing resources - there may be a need for additional resources to support implementation of Ag Plan and provide increased support to AAC</p>	<p>Priority: Ongoing</p> <p>Timing: Immediate</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Establish an agricultural extension position</i> 	DNS, Peninsula municipalities, CRD, SPCC	<p>Funding Requirements: Significant if borne by the District alone</p> <p>Potential Sources: Peninsula municipalities (if position shared), MAL, CRD</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Short-Med.</p>
9. Address local shortages of farm labour and on-farm working housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Establish a web-based local agricultural labour pool</i> 	Beacon Services, HRDC, SPCC, local ag. community	<p>Funding Requirements: Some funding required for establishment and ongoing maintenance of service</p> <p>Potential Sources: HRDC, IAF, MAL, Beacon Services (may be able to eventually become the service provider), SPCC</p>	<p>Priority: Med.</p> <p>Timing: Short-Med.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Examine opportunities to address the shortage of on-farm worker housing</i> 	DNS, MAL, ALC, local ag. community, Peninsula municipalities, PAC	<p>Funding Requirements: Depends on the extent of the investigation and who is the lead</p> <p>Potential Sources: IAF, MAL</p>	<p>Priority: Med.</p> <p>Timing: Med.</p>
10. Develop additional strategies and policies that benefit farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support direct farm marketing and value-added initiatives</i> 	DNS, local ag. community, MAL, PAC, ALC	<p>Funding Requirements: Existing resources</p>	<p>Priority: Ongoing</p> <p>Timing: Immediate</p>

Strategies	Supporting Actions	Potential Partners & Participants	Funding Requirements & Potential Sources	Priority & Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Establish local agritourism guidelines</i> 	DNS, local ag. community, MAL, PAC, SPCC,	<p>Funding Requirements: Depends on the nature and extent of process used to develop guidelines</p> <p>Potential Sources: IAF, MAL</p>	<p>Priority: Med.</p> <p>Timing: Short-Med.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Implement a local/ethical food procurement policy</i> 	DNS, local food producers and processors	<p>Funding Requirements: Existing resources.</p>	<p>Priority: Low</p> <p>Timing: Immediate (expected to be easy to implement)</p>
Protection and Stewardship				
11. Actively protect farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support establishment of a farmland trust</i> 	DNS, TLC, Peninsula municipalities, donors	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the action is implemented</p> <p>Potential Sources: Donors (land and \$\$)</p>	<p>Priority: Med.</p> <p>Timing: Med.-Long</p>
12. Pursue strategies that increase land available for farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify alternative models and methods that support farming</i> 	DNS, local ag. community, regional food/ag. organizations, FFCF, PAC, UVic Environmental Law Centre, MAL, ALC	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the action is implemented</p> <p>Potential Sources: IAF, MAL, ALC, FFCF, UVic Env. Law Centre</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Med.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Link farmland with future farmers</i> 	DNS, local ag. community, NSFFS, local/ regional food/ag. organizations, PAC	<p>Funding Requirements: Some funding required for establishment and ongoing maintenance of service</p> <p>Potential Sources: IAF, MAL, SPCC - may be able secure grant funding if action is undertaken by a non-profit society</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Short (should be relatively easy to implement)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide farm succession support</i> 	DNS, local ag. community, MAL, regional food/ag. organizations, PAC	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the action is implemented</p> <p>Potential Sources: MAL</p>	<p>Priority: Med.</p> <p>Timing: Med.-Long</p>
13. Increase agricultural awareness and appreciation of new and future residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Establish an agriculture webpage</i> 	DNS, local ag. community, MAL, PAC, ALC, local/regional ag./food organizations	<p>Funding Requirements: Limited - depends on the quantity and nature of the information placed on this page and how often it needs to be updated</p> <p>Potential Sources: DNS budget</p>	<p>Priority: High.</p> <p>Timing: Immediate (easy to implement)</p>

Strategies	Supporting Actions	Potential Partners & Participants	Funding Requirements & Potential Sources	Priority & Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide agricultural information to new residents</i> 	DNS, local ag. community, SPCC, local realtors, CRD, MAL	Funding Requirements: Limited. Potential Sources: DNS budget, SPCC, sponsors (realtors, grocers)	Priority: High Timing: Immediate-Short (easy to implement)
14. Encourage the use of ecological farming practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support the implementation of beneficial farm management practices</i> 	DNS, BCAC, MAL, local producers	Funding Requirements: Most effective if incentives provided to farmers. Limited funding and assistance available through the Environmental Farm Plan Program Potential Sources: BCAC - ARDCorp	Priority: Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage farm practices that protect the natural environment</i> 	DNS, local producers/property owners, MAL, CRD, PAC, regional ag./food organizations	Funding Requirements: Existing resources.	Priority: Ongoing
15. Participate in programs that reward farmers for the environmental services they provide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage participation in environmental incentive programs</i> 	DNS, local producers, MAL, CRD, Peninsula municipalities, regional ag./food organizations	Funding Requirements: Most effective if incentives provided to farmers. Potential Sources: MAL, IAF	Priority: Med. Timing: Med.
16. Support farmers dealing with environmental issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Address problem wildlife issues</i> • <i>Maintain access to adequate and affordable water</i> • <i>Assist with climate adaptation</i> 	DNS, local producers, PAC, MAL, MoE, CWS, DNS, CRD, PAC, local producers DNS, local producers, MAL, PAC, regional ag./food organizations, BCAC	Funding Requirements: Most effective if incentives provided to farmers. Potential Sources: MAL, IAF, BCAC - ARDCorp Funding Requirements: Existing resources. Funding Requirements: Most effective if incentives provided to farmers. Potential Sources: MAL, IAF	Priority: High Timing: Immediate - Short Priority: Ongoing Priority: Med. Timing: Short - Med.
17. Work with local agencies and jurisdictions to maintain the agronomic capability of their agricultural lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage local agencies to maintain the productivity of their agricultural land holdings</i> 	DNS, Victoria Airport Authority, Centre for Plant Health	Funding Requirements: Existing resources.	Priority: Ongoing

Strategies	Supporting Actions	Potential Partners & Participants	Funding Requirements & Potential Sources	Priority & Timing
Education and Training				
18. Improve local understanding and appreciation of agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Celebrate agriculture!</i> 	<p>Lead: DNS with local ag. community and NSFFS</p> <p>Local community, regional ag./food organizations, PAC, Peninsula municipalities, MAL</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the nature of the event</p> <p>Potential Sources: Sponsors</p>	<p>Priority: Ongoing</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Host agricultural dialogues</i> 	<p>DNS, local ag community, local community, NSFFS, regional ag./food organizations, PAC, Peninsula municipalities, MAL</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the nature of the event</p> <p>Potential Sources: DNS budget, sponsors</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Immediate and ongoing</p>
19. Encourage youth-focused agricultural learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support children and youth-based agricultural education initiatives</i> 	<p>Lead: SD63, 4-H,</p> <p>Agriculture in the Classroom, local ag. community, DNS, MAL, PAC NSFFS, community recreation centres, regional ag./food organizations</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the action is implemented</p> <p>Potential Sources: MAL, AITC</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Short</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage development of agricultural teaching facilities</i> 	<p>Lead: SD63, 4-H,</p> <p>Agriculture in the Classroom, local ag. community, DNS, MAL, PAC NSFFS, community recreation centres, Lifecycles</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Yes - amount depends on how the action is implemented</p> <p>Potential Sources: MAL, AITC, sponsors, grant funding accessed by non-profits</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Short</p>
20. Increase local agricultural training and mentoring opportunities for existing and new farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage increased training opportunities</i> 	<p>Lead: Local ag. community</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the action is implemented</p> <p>Potential Sources: MAL, IAF, BCAC</p>	<p>Priority: Med.</p> <p>Timing: Med.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage mentorship opportunities</i> 	<p>Lead: Local ag. community</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the action is implemented</p> <p>Potential Sources: MAL, IAF, BCAC</p>	<p>Priority: Med.</p> <p>Timing: Med.</p>

Strategies	Supporting Actions	Potential Partners & Participants	Funding Requirements & Potential Sources	Priority & Timing
Community Health and Sustainability				
21. Grow North Saanich's local food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Undertake an assessment of the District's food system</i> 	<p>Lead: NSFFS</p> <p>DNS, local ag./food community, regional ag./food organizations</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Significant - requires outside expertise</p> <p>Potential Sources: IAF, DNS contribution, VIHA, other grants</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Short</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase the resiliency of the District's food system</i> 	<p>DNS, NSFFS, local ag./food community, Lifecycles, regional ag./food organizations, VIHA</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Most effective if supportive funding provided.</p> <p>Potential Sources: DNS, VIHA, outside grants</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Short and ongoing</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase number of food gardens and farms</i> 	<p>NSFFS, local ag./food community, DNS, Lifecycles, regional ag./food organizations, VIHA</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Most effective if supportive funding provided.</p> <p>Potential Sources: DNS, VIHA, outside grants</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Short and ongoing</p>
22. Encourage healthy local food choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Start a local, healthy food initiative</i> 	<p>DNS, VIHA, local food producers, NSFFS, CR-FAIR, Lifecycles, regional ag./food organizations</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: For the development and launch of the initiative. Extent of resource requirements depends on the extent of the initiative</p> <p>Potential Sources: DNS, VIHA, ActNowBC, outside grants</p>	<p>Priority: High</p> <p>Timing: Immediate (may be easy to implement)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Participate in regional food initiatives</i> 	<p>DNS, VIHA, CRD, CR-FAIR</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Existing resources - there may be a need for additional resources depending on level of participation</p>	<p>Priority: Ongoing</p>
23. Increase support services for farmers and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage the provision of supportive services for the farming community</i> 	<p>DNS, VIHA, CR-FAIR, regional ag./food organizations, MAL, BCAC</p>	<p>Funding Requirements: Amount depends on how the action is implemented</p> <p>Potential Sources: MAL, IAF, BCAC</p>	<p>Priority: High-</p> <p>Timing: Short (could be relatively easy to implement)</p>

6.2 Ensuring Success

The North Saanich Agriculture Plan identifies 23 recommendations that will be implemented over the next few years. To assist with their realization, three important initial implementation steps have been identified. They involve:

- Securing implementation funding;
- Initiating the proposed agriculture economic development plan; and
- Establishing a monitoring/evaluation program.

6.2.1 Implementation Funding

Funding support will be critical for the successful implementation of the elements of the Agricultural Plan. While a number of the Plan’s strategies and associated actions can be undertaken by the District with existing resources, a few will require funding support outside sources such as the Investment Agriculture Foundation. While a number of potential funding sources are identified in the Implementation Table, it will be important to finalize and secure the sources of funding necessary to initiate these strategies.

6.2.2 Economic Development Plan

One of the central recommendations of the Agriculture Plan is the creation of a detailed local economic development plan for agriculture that considers individual farm opportunities as well as larger, longer-term District-wide and Peninsula-wide approaches. Initiation of the economic development plan is important because economic viability is considered to be essential for the long-term health of agriculture and because it is connected to a number of the other proposed strategies and actions. The economic development plan will answer a number of remaining questions and will provide the District and the agricultural community with the required direction as it moves forward to support and develop its agricultural resources.

6.2.3 Monitoring/Evaluation Program

There is a great desire to ensure that this Plan is effectively implemented. To help the District determine the efficacy of the plan a number of indicators have been identified. These indicators will help the District determine if the Plan is being effectively implemented and if the Plan’s proposed strategies are meeting their stated objectives. The results provided by these indicators will help the District make adjustments either to the way the strategies are being implemented or to the strategies themselves. They may also help justify the need for additional funding.

It is expected that success will be indicated by the:

- Application of the Agriculture Plan in land-use decision-making and incorporation of its recommendations in District bylaws, policies and regulations;
- Establishment of supporting infrastructure;
- Protection and increased agricultural use of farmland;
- Increased public support for and participation in agriculture and food production; and
- Recognition of North Saanich as an agricultural community.

The following table identifies the specific measurable indicators associated with each of the five desired outcomes.

Evaluative Measures

Desired Outcomes	Measurable Indicators	Data Sources
Ag. Plan guides District’s decision-making processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agriculture Plan is referenced in OCP ▪ Agriculture Plan is utilized by Council in decision-making ▪ Regular review of District’s agricultural bylaws, policies, regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ North Saanich OCP ▪ Council minutes ▪ Staff reports

Desired Outcomes	Measurable Indicators	Data Sources
Presence of supportive infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishment of a permanent farmers' market site ▪ Establishment of supportive zoning ▪ Creation of supportive infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presence of permanent farmers' market site ▪ Amendments to the Zoning Bylaw ▪ Presence of additional infrastructure
Increased protection and productive use of farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More farmland being farmed ▪ Increasing numbers of young farmers ▪ Decreasing average age of farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Statistics Canada, Land Use Inventory ▪ Statistics Canada ▪ Statistics Canada
Increased support for and participation in local agriculture and food production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More home gardens ▪ Increasing farmers' market sales and visitation numbers ▪ Increasing net farm returns per hectare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land Use Inventory ▪ Farmers' market statistics ▪ Statistics Canada
North Saanich recognized as an agricultural community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognition in media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Media clipping service

6.3 Conclusion

The long-term health and viability of local agriculture is a concern for those involved with farming. Participants in the Agriculture Plan recognize that farming must be an economically viable if the North Saanich's vision for agriculture is to be realized. If agriculture in North Saanich is to be economically viable:

- It must be supported by the District and by local agricultural and community organizations
- Access to a protected and properly managed land base must be maintained;
- Environmentally considerate and sustainable land practices must become the norm; and
- Education and training opportunities for young and mature farmers as well as residents and visitors must be provided.

In addition, global issues such as climate change and rising non-renewable energy costs are anticipated to have an increasing effect on local agriculture. It is expected that in the near future, local food producers will once again be recognized as vital contributors to the immediate and long-term health and resiliency of the community.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	Agricultural Advisory Commission
AAFC	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
AITC	Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
APF	Agricultural Policy Framework
ARDCorp	BC Agricultural Research and Development Corporation (a subsidiary of BCAC)
BCAC	BC Agriculture Council
CAS	Climate Action Secretariat
CFIA	Canadian Food Inspection Agency
CRD	Capital Regional District
CR-FAIR	Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable
DNS	District of North Saanich
EFP	Environmental Farm Plan
FIRB	Farm Industry Review Board
IAF	Investment Agriculture Foundation
MAL	BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
MEIA	BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
MOE	BC Ministry of the Environment
NSFFS	North Saanich Food for the Future Society
PAC	Peninsula Agriculture Commission
SD63	School District 63
SPCC	Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
UVic	University of Victoria
VIHA	Vancouver Island Health Authority

GLOSSARY

Agritourism

“The act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.”⁹⁴

Direct Farm Marketing

Selling food and farm products directly to consumers without using an intermediary resulting in improved profits for the farmer. Examples include: roadside markets and farm stands; farmers’ markets and public markets; U-pick operations; community supported or subscription-based agriculture; direct sales to restaurants and stores.

Food Security

Food security, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization, exists when, “all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food

⁹⁴ Lobo, R. 2009. *Helpful Agricultural Tourism (Agritourism) Definitions*. University of California Cooperative Extension, San Diego County, CA. www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/definition.html.

which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”⁹⁵ Food insecurity can exist when a community is dependent on imported food.

Food sovereignty

The concept of food sovereignty was first proposed in 1996 in an effort to more completely describe and address issues associated with the growing and provision of food. While food security tends to focus on issues of access and distribution, the concept of food sovereignty captures the broader issues of sourcing, production and ultimately local responsibility and control. Food sovereignty has been described as “a platform for rural revitalization at a global level based on equitable distribution of farmland and water, farmer control over seeds, and productive small-scale farms supplying consumers with healthy, locally grown food.”^{96,97}

Value-added Agricultural Products

The value-added process results in:

- A change in the physical state or form of the product (such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam).
- The production of a product in a manner that enhances its value, as demonstrated through a business plan (such as organically produced products).
- The physical segregation of an agricultural commodity or product in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product (such as an identity preserved marketing system).

As a result of the change in physical state or the manner in which the agricultural commodity or product is produced and segregated, the customer base for the commodity or product is expanded and a greater portion of revenue derived from the marketing, processing or physical segregation is made available to the producer of the commodity or product.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization. *Food Security: Concepts and Measurement*. www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4671E/y4671e06.htm.

⁹⁶ 2005. *Global Small-Scale Farmers' Movement Developing New Trade Regimes*. Food First: Institute for Food and Development Policy News and Views. Vol. 28 No. 97. www.foodfirst.org/pubs/newsviews/2005/sp05v28n97.pdf.

⁹⁷ A broader, more complete definition of food sovereignty is captured in the *Declaration of Nyéléni* available online at www.nyeleni2007.org/spip.php?article290.

⁹⁸ This definition of value-added agriculture is from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Business Development. www.agmrc.org/business_development/getting_prepared/valueadded_agriculture/articles/usda_valueadded_ag_definition.cfm.

APPENDIX A – AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Agricultural Statistics for North Saanich	1991 ⁹⁹	1996 ¹⁰⁰	2001 ¹⁰¹	2006 ¹⁰²
Number of Farms	67	74	84	78
Average Size of Farms (ha)	10.1	10.2	12.2	15.7
Under 4 ha (10 acres)	38 (57%)	42 (57%)	45 (54%)	43 (55%)
Between 4 & 52 ha (10 & 129 acres)	26 (39%)	30 (41%)	36 (43%)	30 (38%)
Over 52 ha (130 acres)	3 (4%)	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	5 (7%)
Total Farm Area (ha)	677	757	1,025	1,226
Total Area in ALR (ha)	--	--	--	1,381 (29%)
Farm Capital Value			--	
Total Farm Capital - millions of dollars	\$39.55	\$52.31	\$69.78	\$113.23
Farms reporting total farm capital less than \$100,000	--	5 (7%)	4 (5%)	3 (4%)
Farms reporting total farm capital \$100,000 - \$499,999	--	32 (43%)	39 (46%)	21 (27%)
Farms reporting total farm capital of \$500,000 to \$1M	--	27 (36%)	27 (32%)	21 (27%)
Farms reporting total farm capital of >\$1M	--	10 (14%)	14 (17%)	33 (42%)
Farm Receipts				
Gross Farm Receipts - millions of dollars	\$3.30	\$10.47	\$10.26	\$9.33
Total Farm Expenses - millions of dollars	\$2.44	\$9.90	\$9.55	\$8.90
Farms reporting < \$10,000 total gross farm receipts	N/A	46 (62%)	49 (58%)	49 (63%)
Farms reporting \$10,000 to \$24,999 total gross farm receipts	N/A	11 (15%)	18 (22%)	4 (5%)
Farms reporting \$25,000 to \$99,999 total gross farm receipts	N/A	6 (8%)	6 (7%)	11 (14%)
Farms reporting \$100,000 + total gross farm receipts	N/A	11 (15%)	11 (13%)	14 (18%)
Farm Characteristics				
Area Owned by Operators	431 (64%)	505 (67%)	699 (68%)	778 (63%)
Area Rented by Operators	246 (36%)	252 (33%)	326 (32%)	453 (37%)
Use of Irrigation (ha)	194 (29%)	505 (67%)	224 (22%)	257 (21%)
Operator Characteristics				
Total Number of Operators	--	--	125	115
Under 35 years	--	--	--	5 (4%)
35 to 54 years	--	--	--	45 (39%)
55 years and over	--	--	--	65 (57%)
Male	--	--	--	65 (57%)
Female	--	--	--	50 (43%)
Average Age of Operators (yrs)	--	50	52.8	55.4

⁹⁹ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. 2008. District of North Saanich Agricultural Overview.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Statistics Canada 2001 Census of Agriculture. www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2001/index.htm.

¹⁰² Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Agriculture. www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm.

APPENDIX B – NORTH SAANICH FOOD CHARTER

The Municipal District of North Saanich supports Canada's national commitment to food security. As a part of the Capital Regional District, we support the following elements as a basis for a North Saanich Food Charter:

- The right of all residents to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious food quality and supply of water for home and agricultural use
- The protection of our local agricultural land base
- Support local farmers by encouraging residents to purchase seasonal products and other farm foods
- Promote health strategies which increase the good health of all members of the municipality; promote food safety programs and services work with the local School Board to encourage the Healthy Snack program in local schools
- Partner with community, cooperative, business and government organizations to increase the availability of healthy foods,
- Encourage the recycling of organic materials which nurture soil fertility
- Promote education programs in all our schools to educate our children in healthy food choices, purchasing of secure food and what healthy fresh products are available in the district.
- Promote and encourage formers' markets on the Saanich Peninsula
- Collaborate with other municipalities in the Capital Regional District to promote health food-purchasing practices which support locally grown food and food businesses

These objectives will be achieved by working in partnership with community-based organizations, associations, aboriginal peoples, resident groups, business organizations, trade unions, educational and health institutions and other levels of government.

DRAFT

Funding provided by:

