

GROWING together



CONSUMERS are recognizing the importance of maintaining a secure, local food supply. Locally produced food is fresher and more

nutritious. It also represents a huge reduction in energy use and pollution and an increase in dollars circulating through the local economy.

We've made it easier for farmers to access farmland within their communities by making changes to the Land Title Act. The amendments to the Act permit farmers to enter into long-term leases without going through subdivision requirements.

Municipal governments provided valuable input for our upcoming provincial *Agriculture Plan*. We all agree that a thriving, local agriculture community is necessary for the health of the province and its citizens. I am confident the new Plan will position the agriculture industry towards a bright and prosperous future.

PAT BELL
Minister of Agriculture and Lands

RDCO hires Agriculture Support Officer

THE Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) hired an Agricultural Support Officer to implement its agricultural area plan.

"In its 2005 agricultural area plan, RDCO identified a number of issues and farmers identified several gaps, mostly concerning regional and municipal planning, business management, education, and information sharing," says Keith Duhaime, an agronomist hired in mid-2006. During RDCO's two-year pilot program, Duhaime will be bridging those gaps.

Labour shortages and on-farm seasonal housing are just two of the issues facing farmers and the RDCO. Seasonal workers from Caribbean countries and Mexico require temporary housing which must meet federal, provincial, and regional government standards. Duhaime liaises between industry and government, alternately advising farmers on complying with regulations and government on modifying the rules.

On the farm business management



With retirees and oil patch executives driving Okanagan land prices up to \$100,000 an acre, preserving farmland and farming is a challenge, says Keith Duhaime.

front, Duhaime is helping farmers plan the transition from tree fruit to grape and cherry production.

Not only are farmers benefiting, RDCO is too.

"Having someone in-house who understands both agriculture and the planners' perspective benefits local government," said Ilene Watson, RDCO's senior planner.

"Keith understands and links farmers,

the community, and local government. He's helping to build robust, long-term solutions," said Glen Lucas, general manager of the BC Fruit Growers Association.

Local residents benefit too. Ensuring farmers minimize noise, odour, and dust and that residents understand normal farming practices reduces the number of urban-rural conflicts RDCO must resolve.

Duhaime is planning a "farm fresh guide" with maps showing Okanagan residents and visitors where they can buy fruit, vegetables and other products.

With retirees and wealthy investors driving Okanagan land prices up to \$100,000 an acre, preserving farmland and farming is a challenge, says Duhaime.

RDCO's decision to hire an Agriculture Support Officer is an innovative example of how local governments can balance community interests.

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Local Planning for Specified Risk Material Disposal

MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL governments wanting to ensure their agri-food sector handles abattoir wastes wisely now have access to federal/provincial funding assistance.

The \$12.5 million Canada-British Columbia Specified Risk Material Management Program, announced in April, helps industry and communities comply with new Canadian Food Inspection Agency regulations which came into effect in July.

The program is for communities and eligible businesses wanting to manage specified risk materials (SRM), or carcass parts that could be infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or mad cow disease).

The federal government's \$7.5 million contribution is part of an \$80 million nationwide SRM management and risk mitigation effort aimed at making Canada BSE-free. The provincial government is contributing \$5 million through the complementary Livestock Waste Tissue Initiative (LWTI).

Funding is available for SRM separation, storage, destruction and containment on-site within slaughter plants. Money is available to municipal and regional governments and community groups wanting to undertake SRM destruction or containment initiatives involving incineration, rendering, landfilling, composting, or other innovative technologies.

Safe handling and disposal of SRM wastes will improve Canada's food safety, ensure its cattle industry prospers, and enable Canadian food producers and processors to meet international food safety standards.

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Abbotsford Agritourism bylaw

THE CITY OF ABBOTSFORD amended its zoning bylaw to make it easier for farmers to operate agritourism and direct farm marketing enterprises.

The new bylaw is designed to align with Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) regulations which consider those activities to be part of farming. Farmers need not go through a lengthy application and approval process. They can now construct on-farm retail and agritourism facilities to a maximum of 300 square metres.

In recent years, the number of agrito-

urism and direct farm market enterprises in the Fraser Valley has increased. Diversification strengthens the farm sector and enhances its ability to contribute to the local economy. Harmonizing Abbotsford's bylaws with the Agricultural Land Commission's rules encourages producers to expand their businesses.

Other communities wanting to encourage agri-business can draw from Abbotsford's example.

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B.C.'s first Aquaculture Advisory Committee created



THE REGIONAL DISTRICT of Mount Waddington (RDMW) inaugurated B.C.'s first Aquaculture Advisory Committee (AAC) this spring.

"Our AAC promotes dialogue," said RDMW chair Brenda Swanson.

The nine-member committee includes representatives from provincial government, environmental groups, the salmon farming industry, shellfish sector, regional district, and local First Nations communities.

"Salmon farming is a contentious issue and we may have diverse opinions, but as long as we're all at the table talking, we have a chance of agreeing on what we want at the local level," said Swanson.

"Aquaculture is complex", said coastal land use specialist Clint Collins. "Working together lets AAC members share information and pool their expertise."

RDMW's AAC is modelled after Advisory Committees in agriculture which other communities are now using to foster communication, understanding, and community-based decision making.

"AACs enable local governments to influence the future of their communities," said Collins.

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Agriculture Advisory Committee Workshop

WELL OVER 100 delegates attended the third biennial province-wide Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) workshop held in Langley in February 2007.

Issues covered included agricultural area planning and rezoning for seasonal farm worker housing. The Taste of Agassiz Committee explained how delegates can work with chefs to showcase local fare to residents. Small group sessions focused on subdivision criteria, water management, and ways to limit the amount of farm land taken out of production by country estates. In their own special session, local government staff discussed ideas, information and tips on working with AACs.

"The workshop gives people involved with AACs a chance to learn more about forging good working relations between local government representatives, farmers, and residents," said Ken Nickel, Director of Resource Management for the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, which organized the event.

For more information, contact: Jim LeMaistre 604 556-3106, Jim.LeMaistre@gov.bc.ca

Delta Zoning Bylaw amendments support agriculture

THANKS to dialogue and persistence, the Corporation of Delta has added new agriculture-related provisions to its zoning bylaw. The Minister of Agriculture and Lands approved and Council adopted the bylaw in June 2007.

Using the Ministry's Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas, the bylaw defines farming and specifies building setbacks and site coverage maximums. It also updates criteria for farm retail sales.

To minimize future urban/rural conflicts, the bylaw calls for modified farm uses within 150 metres of the Agricultural Land Reserve / urban edge. The Ministry and Delta are committed to future "edge planning" that will add measures for urban side uses to create compatibility with farming.

For more information, contact: Kathleen Zimmerman 604 556-3048, Kathleen.Zimmerman@gov.bc.ca

Emergency carcass disposal planning funding available through UBCM

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT is one of today's fastest growing areas of concern. While local governments may be well prepared to manage floods and fires and care for citizens, managing livestock disease outbreaks remains a challenge for many communities.

When disasters strike, the volume and infectious nature of carcass disposal can pose huge challenges.

Being prepared is the best strategy.

Under the Livestock Waste Tissue Initiative (LWTI), \$705,000 will be made available this fall to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities

(UBCM) to help local governments develop emergency response plans to deal with large-scale livestock mortalities. The funding is part of the federal and provincial \$12.5 million Specified Risk Material program designed to help B.C.'s beef processors and communities dispose of waste in a safe, efficient, cost-effective manner. Funding for emergency carcass disposal plans is being administered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia.

Few communities can reasonably be expected to develop such plans

alone. The UBCM and the provincial government conducted pilot projects to develop two templates for managing mass animal mortalities. One is for a community with intensive farming; the other is for communities with extensive farming.

"The amendment of existing emergency plans to address livestock emergencies will benefit the economic, health, and environmental well-being of local communities," said UBCM President Brenda Binnie.

For more information, contact: Ken Nickel 604 556-3103, Ken.Nickel@gov.bc.ca



Islands Agri-Food Initiative

FUNDING from the \$1.7 million Islands Agri-Food Initiative (IAFI) is being used to develop viable, sustainable agri-food enterprises on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands for attracting new agri-food business investment, scaling up commercial production and developing food security plans.

"The Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) is making expansion of the area's agri-food industry its top priority," said CVEDS economic development officer John Watson. The Agriculture Area Plan and economic development strategy show the Valley has great potential. CVEDS's multi-level "Growing Beyond the Ordinary" campaign includes a Growers Guide and maps showing consumers and visitors where they can purchase farm fresh produce, TV ads touting the quality and benefits

of buying locally produced food, and workshops designed to enhance local producers' production and marketing skills.

To increase the sale of local products, the Cowichan Green Community is cultivating closer links between Cowichan Valley farmers, consumers and grocery chains, institutions and restaurants. It is also developing a community food action plan.

Salt Spring Island farmers are investigating how they can increase their efficiency and yields. With IAFI funding, they're organizing commercial production workshops and on-site demos.

Funding for IAFI projects comes from the Agri-Food Futures Fund, a joint federal-provincial program held in trust with the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.

For more information, go to www.iafbc.ca/iafi

SPALLUMCHEEN'S AGRICULTURAL PLAN AND GOALS

THE TOWNSHIP OF SPALLUMCHEEN completed an Agricultural Area Plan in 2006. The North Okanagan township's nine-point plan focuses squarely on "the promotion of sustainable agriculture." Key goals are to:

1. Support and strengthen local agricultural enterprise
2. Avoid extra costs of doing business and regulation
3. Work with the farm sector to make operations more productive and efficient
4. Protect the resource base (land and water) for working agriculture
5. Promote agricultural best management practices
6. Minimize the impact of agriculture on the environment
7. Protect the township's rural character
8. Encourage "good neighbour" relations
9. Initiate public education about farming.

To achieve these goals, Spallumcheen's Agricultural Advisory Committee will continue to advise Council on agricultural issues. Outreach and communication efforts will include farmers and non-farmers. The township plans to partner with local producers, community groups, and provincial agencies to achieve its goals.

For more information, contact: Kevin Murphy 250 260-3012, Kevin.J.Murphy@gov.bc.ca



Population – production overlaps

TWO TRIANGLES showing where British Columbia's agri-food producers and consumers congregate illustrate how important it is for farmers and urbanites to live cooperatively.

According to 2006 census data, 81 per cent of British Columbians live in two small triangles accounting for 2.7 per cent of B.C.'s land base. The first triangle stretches from Hope through the Fraser Valley to Qualicum Beach to Victoria and Sooke. The second triangle encompasses the Thompson-Okanagan, from Sicamous to Kamloops to Osoyoos.

B.C.'s two most densely populated regions also boast the province's best farm land and growing conditions. They generate much of the province's food. In fact, those two tiny triangles generate 80 per cent of the province's annual farm receipts.

The 2006 census reveals that urbanization and agri-food production are intensifying in unison in the southwestern corner of the province. Between 2001 and 2006, 88.5 per cent of B.C.'s population increase occurred in that region, as did 67 per cent of the total increase in provincial farm receipts.

Matching food production to increases in population creates challenges. But close proximity to food sources can benefit consumers and producers if local governments create conditions that encourage people living on each side of the fence to be good neighbours.

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Financial Contribution of Agriculture to Local Governments

A NEW PROVINCIAL STUDY reveals that farming can be a net contributor to municipal tax bases.

Using Abbotsford and Pitt Meadows as test cases, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (BCMAL) evaluated the financial contributions and costs of all major categories of land use.

The study found that because farm enterprises in those two communities utilize comparatively few community services, they actually contribute more to local revenues than they cost.

Local governments wanting to evaluate the revenue-to-cost ratio of farm land uses can use BCMAL's report as a guide. Copies are available by contacting the Ministry.

For more information, contact: Mark Robbins
604 556-3086, Mark.Robbins@gov.bc.ca

School Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program

Healthy snacks for students



THIS FALL, B.C.'s School Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program (SFVSP) was expanded to include over 160 schools. Under the SFVSP, fresh, nutritious, B.C. fruits and vegetables are provided to participating elementary, middle and secondary schools for 18 weeks.

The program fosters healthy eating practices today and for the long-term. Equally important, the program teaches stu-

dents about food security and the benefits of eating locally-produced agri-food products.

Launched in 2005, the program is one of many ActNow BC initiatives aimed at making B.C. the healthiest region ever to host an Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

The goal for the program is to offer every public school in B.C. the opportunity to participate in the program by 2010.

For more information, contact: Grant Thompson 250 356-8299; Grant.Thompson@gov.bc.ca

North Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission

IN MAY 2007, the District of North Saanich established an Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC).

The North Saanich Council created an Agricultural Task Force in 2005. In its 2007 final report, the Task Force recommended Council create a permanent AAC and undertake an Agricultural Area Plan.

The District will begin work on an Agricultural Area Plan in 2008. This process will create opportunities for Council and staff to work with a diverse array of



North Saanich's agri-food producers.

North Saanich Council is keen to work with the new AAC, which will offer advice on land use policies, regulations and other related matters.

Having a formal forum in which to discuss agricultural issues will help local officials and producers address and meet the challenges and opportunities arising from development pressures in North Saanich.

For more information, contact: Rob Kline
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Kootenay Boundary Agriculture Initiative completed

AN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT STUDY commissioned by the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB) makes several recommendations aimed at developing viable, sustainable agriculture opportunities in the Boundary region.

High on the list are recommendations that RDKB undertake an Agriculture Area Plan, create an Agriculture Advisory Committee and have industry develop a vision for agriculture development.

The study, funded by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC, recognizes ranching as the region's core agricultural enterprise. In addition to promoting agriculture and supporting ranchers, the study suggests that RDKB encourage agritourism, farmers' markets and organic production, and consider expanding local meat processing capabilities. Turkey, goats and cheese, grapes and wine, and Christmas trees were identified as opportunities for diversification.

The study recommends that RDKB appoint a staff person to work with producers, agricultural organizations, and local agencies like the Boundary Economic Development Commission to stimulate and sustain development of the West Kootenay's agri-food industry.

For more information, contact: Carl Withler 250 861-7229, Carl.Withler@gov.bc.ca

ActNow BC

School fridges make milk cool

THE BC DAIRY FOUNDATION is well on its way to providing refrigerators to 700 schools throughout British Columbia thanks to ActNow BC's Incentive Fund Program. The Foundation's Elementary School Milk Program (ESMP) encourages schools to serve milk to students at least three times a week and provides program support such as contests and prizes.

Free fridges are available to elementary schools which sign on to the milk program. Fridges ensure schools have a place to store milk, which makes it easier for students to make healthy, nutritious food choices.

During the first year of the free fridge program, the number of schools participating in the ESMP rose from 40 per cent to 44 per cent.

The fridges also support other in-school Healthy Eating Programs such as the B.C. School Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program.

Easy, healthy food

A NEW AGRIFOOD industry alliance, Agri-Food Partners in Healthy Eating, is striving to make "the healthy choice the easy choice." The alliance includes all members of the food chain, from field to fork -- producers, processors, distributors, retailers, and food service businesses.

Together, members plan to develop and promote fast, nutritious food alternatives. For example, they want to replace junk food sold in vending machines with apple slices, carrot sticks, and low sugar granola bars.

Busy families want convenience, quickness, and high-quality food. By pooling their efforts and ideas, alliance members will promote the development and distribution of tasty, healthy home-grown alternatives at upcoming events throughout B.C.

First Nations Community Food

AS FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE shift away from their traditional diets, they often experience significantly higher rates of obesity, diabetes and other health problems. In response, ActNow BC and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands are supporting the development of First Nations community food systems.

Such systems consist of a community garden, community kitchen, and food processing and food storage technologies.

The success of a Bella Coola community garden inspired 26 other First Nations groups to plan similar projects.

Community food systems aim to help First Nations communities improve their health through increased production and consumption of fruits and vegetables. Through the program, members of the community get more exercise, connect with the land, work together to build capacity, and become more self-sufficient.

For more information, contact: Grant Thompson
250 356-8299; Grant.Thompson@gov.bc.ca

Abbotsford-Sumas Aquifer Conference

CANADIAN and American scientists and government representatives met in Abbotsford in April 2007 to share ideas on protecting the Abbotsford-Sumas Aquifer.

The 100-square kilometre aquifer is a key drinking water supply for Abbotsford area residents, local agri-food businesses, and communities across the Canada-U.S. border.

Agencies on both sides of the border have been trying to lower nitrate contamination for 20 years, but have been unable to achieve significant improvements. Understanding why elevated levels of nitrates persist, despite manure management and household septic disposal initiatives, remains a big challenge.

The conference, spearheaded by the City of Abbotsford's Aquifer Science Committee, gave delegates an opportunity to share what they know about soils, aquifers, and groundwater contamination.

Through further research, scientists and government officials hope to develop policies that will lower nitrate contamination levels and protect drinking water quality on both sides of the border.

For more information, contact: Mark Robbins
604 556-3086, Mark.Robbins@gov.bc.ca

Slow Food Bike Tour



BICYCLING enthusiasts and locavores – people who eat foods grown and produced as close to home as possible – participating in Agassiz's "Slow Food Cycle Tour" (SFCT) nibbled on artisan cheese, crunched on hazelnut treats, sampled honey and herbs, and savoured the farm-fresh flavour of Fraser Valley fruits and vegetables. Along the 30 kilometre route, they visited a B.C. heritage farm, 100-year-old general store, commercial dairy, and an array of local farms. Participants also enjoyed fresh air, exercise, and spectacular scenery.

Inspired by Pemberton's Slow Food Cycle Sunday, which attracted 1,000 par-

ticipants last year, and Fraser Valley self-guided Circle Farm Tours, the SFCT gave consumers an opportunity to meet local farmers and learn more about where their food comes from and how it is produced.

Combined eco-gastronomy explorations, tastings, and conversations give local governments and businesses an opportunity to show consumers the connections between the quality of food they eat, the landscape they see, their ecological and food footprints, and the province's food self-sufficiency.

For more information, contact: Kim Sutherland
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Food Self-Reliance Study

FOOD self-reliance may be studied during community sustainability planning. The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands conducted a food self-reliance study in 2006, and found that B.C. farmers produce less than half of the food consumed in B.C. The study also found that projected population increases and changing dietary preferences will widen this gap unless B.C. food production increases.

Local governments wanting to learn about food self-sufficiency and land and water management can get the study from: http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/food_self_reliance/bcfoodselfreliance_report.pdf

B.C. Agricultural (and Aquaculture) Advisory Committees now total 32

SINCE 2006, five new AACs have been created, bringing the total to **32** (31 Agricultural Advisory Committees plus one Aquaculture Advisory Committee) serving 33 local governments across B.C. Fourteen AACs serve regional governments and 18 serve municipalities, cities, and the Gulf Islands Trust Committee.

Lower Mainland (12 AACs)

- Abbotsford
- Chilliwack
- Fraser Valley Regional District
- Metro Vancouver
- Kent
- Langley, Township of
- Maple Ridge **NEW**
- Pitt Meadows
- Powell River Regional District **NEW**
- Richmond
- Squamish Lillooet Regional District
 - Pemberton Valley
- Surrey

Vancouver Island/Gulf Islands (10 AACs)

- Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District
- Comox-Strathcona, Regional District of (2 AACs)
 - Comox Valley AAC
 - Area 'H' AAC
- Courtenay
- Islands Trust – Salt Spring Island
- Mount Waddington, Regional District of (Aquaculture AC) **NEW**
- Nanaimo, Regional District of **NEW**
- North Cowichan
- North Saanich **NEW**
- Peninsula Agricultural Commission, serving:
 - District of Saanich
 - District of Central Saanich
 - District of North Saanich
 - Town of Sidney

Interior / North (10 AACs)

- Central Kootenay, Regional District of
 - Creston Valley AAC
- Central Okanagan, Regional District of
- East Kootenay, Regional District of
 - Electoral Areas 'A', 'B' and 'C' AAC
- Kelowna
- Lake Country
- Okanagan-Similkameen, Regional District of
 - Area 'C' Rural Oliver AAC
- Peace River Regional District
- Penticton
- Spallumcheen
- Summerland

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Local Agricultural Initiatives across British Columbia

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS across B.C., in partnership with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (BCMAL), are taking steps to support agriculture. Several agricultural land use inventories (LUI) have been finished this past year, or are under way. They provide a background profile of agriculture in various plans, such as Official Community Plans (OCP), Agricultural Area Plans (Ag Plan), or water use strategies. In a few cases, BCMAL initiates LUIs for its own research. Each LUI will have a report containing data tables and maps showing the distribution of land uses.

Local Government	Land Use Inventory	Ag Plan	Other Plans
1 Cariboo RD (Williams Lake and 150 Mile House fringe areas)	Data collected 2005; report in process		OCPs in process for each community
2 Cariboo RD (Quesnel fringe area)	Completion of data collection in 2007		OCP pending in 2007- 08
3 East Kootenay RD	General data collected in 2006	Background report being prepared	Two OCPs in process
4 Salt Spring Island (part of the Islands Trust)	Data collected in 2006; report in preparation	In process	OCP Review in process
5 Capital RD (Metchosin, Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich)	Data collected in 2005; reports in preparation		North Saanich OCP review completed in 2007
6 Fraser - Fort George RD	Completion of data collection in 2007		BCMAL initiative: major transportation project pending
7 Okanagan Basin Water Project (all areas of the basin)	Completion of data collection in 2007		Large study of future water needs
- Rural Oliver	"	In process	
- District of Lake Country	"	In process	
- District of Coldstream	"	In process	
8 Thompson-Nicola RD (Noble Creek area)	Data collected in 2006		Water management study and model in process
9 Thompson-Nicola RD (Nicola River basin)	Data collected in 2007		Water management study and model in process
10 Township of Langley	Data collected in 2007; report to be prepared		Water management study and model in process
11 Fraser Valley Regional District, electoral areas	Data collected in 2007; report to be prepared		BCMAL initiative for research
12 Central Coast Regional District (Bella Coola valley)	By contractor: data collected in 2007	Agri-food strategy in process	
13 Sicamous	Data collected in 2006 by contractor and BCMAL		Municipal Growth Management Study completed in 2007

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