

Interim Report

Comox Valley Regional District Agricultural Plan Update



Cover photo: Tannadice Farms, Courtenay BC

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PREPARED BY



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



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Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 CVAP 2002 REVIEW	1
2.1 CVAP 2002 EVALUATION WORKSHOPS	2
2.2 KEY TAKE-AWAYS FOR PREPARING CVAP 2023.....	2
3.0 BACKGROUND REPORT SUMMARY	4
3.1. INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS	4
3.2 SETTLER AGRICULTURAL HISTORY	5
3.3 BIOPHYSICAL CONTEXT AND AGRICULTURAL CAPABILITY.....	5
3.4 AGRICULTURAL PROFILE AND ECONOMICS.....	6
3.5 FOOD SYSTEM OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES.....	8
3.6 GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND REGULATIONS.....	9
3.7 COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY	9
4.0 ENGAGEMENT TO DATE	10
4.1 KEY PLAYER INTERVIEWS.....	10
4.2 FORMATION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE	10
4.3 INITIAL ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS.....	10
5.0 NEXT STEPS	12
5.1 ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS.....	12
5.2. SECOND ROUND OF ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY GROUPS	12
APPENDIX I: DETAILED REVIEW OF CVAP 2002 RECOMMENDATIONS	I
APPENDIX II: ASSESSMENT OF CVAP 2002 INDICATORS	XVIII
APPENDIX III: ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE	I

1.0 Introduction

It has been over 20 years since the development of one of the first Agricultural Plans in the province, the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan (CVAP), approved in 2002. Due to the evolving nature of the agriculture and food sectors and the regulations surrounding land-use planning policies, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) has embarked on a project to update and modernize the CVAP 2002. The project process to update the CVAP 2002 includes background research and analysis, a high-level overview of policies relevant to agriculture, and engagement with the agriculture sector and the public, which will culminate in a Comox Valley Regional District Agricultural Plan (CVAP 2023). The primary objective of the CVAP 2023 is to produce a comprehensive agricultural planning document that focuses on CVRD jurisdiction and identifies opportunities to strengthen the regional agricultural sector and contribute to its long-term sustainability. The CVAP 2023 will propose recommended actions that anticipate future changes and challenges specific to the CVRD to support regional planning efforts.

The CVAP 2023 was initiated in April 2022 and has included a review of the CVAP 2002, developing a comprehensive background report, developing an engagement plan and undertaking several engagement activities, forming an Advisory Committee, and hosting two project meetings. This interim report summarizes the process and findings to-date as well as outlines preliminary key themes, directions, and next steps.

2.0 CVAP 2002 Review

As part of the agriculture planning process, a review of the CVAP 2002 was completed to provide a comprehensive understanding of past priorities and objectives, as well as the actions, regulatory changes and policies that were initiated and/or implemented. Documents reviewed included the CVAP 2002 priority areas, local Official Community Plans, zoning bylaws, and other local plans and policies which are relevant to the agriculture sector. In addition to the desktop review, input was provided by the CVRD department staff through four CVAP 2002 evaluation workshops that were facilitated by the consulting team.



Figure 1 Sprout Meadows Stables in Courtenay, BC

2.1 CVAP 2002 Evaluation Workshops

The evaluation workshops with CVRD staff were an important step in understanding what actions from the CVAP 2002 are still relevant, those that need revision and those that are no longer relevant.

Departments involved in the workshops included:

- Planning & Development Services
- Transit and Facilities
- Engineering Services
- Community Services
- Water Management

The following discussion questions were used to guide the workshops:

1. **Vision:** Does the CVAP 2002 vision hold true, or does this need an update?
2. **Structure:** Does the structure of the CVAP 2002 document work?
3. **Implementation:** What has been completed? What is in progress? What is not completed or started and why?
4. **Action vs Advocacy:** What is the right combination of direct implementation, partnerships initiatives, and education/advocacy desired for the update? How important is it to have the update be in key leverage areas for local government while acknowledging issues outside of jurisdiction?



Figure 2. Maple Springs Farm, Courtenay, BC.

Through these workshops, the consulting team determined what actions had been completed, not completed or were still in progress/ongoing.

In CVAP 2002 there were 100 recommended actions. Of those, 33 (1/3) have been completed or are in progress while 67 (2/3) have not been completed. Often, the main reason for the action not being completed is because the tasks associated with the recommendation were not within the scope or jurisdiction of the local government.

A summary of CVAP 2002 findings is provided in the Appendix.

2.2 Key Take-Aways for Preparing CVAP 2023

The team used knowledge and experience of best practices in other regions as well as outcomes from the evaluation workshops with CVRD staff to determine what elements of the CVAP 2002 need to be maintained, revised, or deleted as well as how best to approach the revised CVAP.

There are several key take-aways from the review of the CVAP 2002. These findings will help to inform the preparation of CVAP 2023.

1. **The vision should be updated:** The vision for the plan is still relevant but needs to be refreshed to include terms that were not clearly identified in 2002, such as climate change and reconciliation.
2. **Goals, Objectives and Actions should focus on the jurisdiction of local government and partnerships:** A review of the CVAP 2002 revealed that many of the recommendations in the CVAP 2002 are focused in areas where local governments do not have a direct ability to make change and are within the jurisdiction of other levels of government and/or private, community, and post-secondary sectors. Given that plans are most effective when implementation is within the role and jurisdiction of local governments, CVAP 2023 will focus more on what the CVRD has jurisdiction over and can change and influence. In areas that are important to agriculture, but outside the direct purview of the CVRD, partnership, support and/or advocacy roles may be identified. Following from this, many of the CVAP 2002 recommendations will be deleted or substantially reworked.
3. **Watershed planning has made great progress:** The Tsolum River Watershed Plan (2021) contains recommendations for agriculture and provides a critical foundation for developing water-related goals, objectives, and actions for the updated CVAP. As the Watershed Plan did not exist in 2002, this presents a significant opportunity for CVAP 2023 to align with this Plan and other watershed plans. Further, a shift in thinking around water conservation and storage to provide a resilient supply of water for irrigation will need to be further explored and reflected in the CVAP 2023 process. The interjurisdictional nature of watershed management should also be addressed.
4. **The CVAP land use recommendations need modernizing:** Since 2002, there have been several changes to Provincial and Federal legislation and regulation that applies to agriculture. CVAP 2023 will incorporate these new changes (e.g., legalization of recreational cannabis, temporary farmworker housing, secondary dwellings in the ALR) and recommend how Official Community Plans and Zoning bylaws could be updated and modernized for agriculture. Addressing these changes and modernizing the land use planning approaches for land in or near agriculture will replace many of the 2002 recommendations around land management. Consistency with the Regional Growth Strategy on housing and growth should be considered. Further, there are guides and resources that have been developed since 2002 to help planners and approving officers on edge planning and subdivision near farmland that should be reflected in the CVAP. The CVAP could also set out Regional Context requirements related to agriculture for member municipality OCPs.
5. **Continue to apply elements that are working.** There are several elements of the CVAP 2002 that are still relevant and should carry-over to CVAP 2023. These relevant elements include but are not limited to:
 - a. Improving access to information
 - b. Conflict management
 - c. Agriculture governance

- d. Economic development in agriculture
- e. Regional infrastructure for agriculture (e.g., permanent farmers market, food hub)
- f. Impact assessment and CVAP updating

3.0 Background Report Summary

A background report was developed to provide information on current trends in the agricultural sector since the CVAP 2002 was completed and provide an analysis of policies and regulations relating to the agriculture sector in the CVRD. Data sources included Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Agricultural Land Use Inventory and Agricultural Water Demand Model for the Comox Valley. The consulting team also undertook 28 interviews with key regional agri-food stakeholders to inform the background report.

The background report includes the following elements:

- History of the K'ómoks First Nation History by Heritage Consultant Dr. Morin
- History of settler agriculture in the Comox Valley
- Regional geographical and population context
- Biophysical summary including agricultural capability
- Current statistical agriculture profile of the region
- Overview of available agriculture resources and supports
- Contextual review of agriculture policies and regulations

This background report provides the foundational knowledge about the agricultural sector and biophysical characteristics of the Comox Valley to help inform the development of CVAP 2023. The following sections provide a short overview of the more detailed information found in the report.

3.1. Indigenous Food Systems¹

The Pentlatch ancestors of the K'ómoks First Nation who occupied the area now known as the Comox Valley practiced an array of ecosystem management techniques to increase the abundance of preferred plant and animal species in the local area. Early historical records, archaeological data, and ethnographic information can be used to infer traditional Pentlatch plant harvesting and landscape management techniques. This evidence indicates that the open prairies of the Comox Valley as described by settlers in the 1860s were an anthropogenic environment that was closely managed and tended by local Pentlatch people for millennia, and these prairies were undoubtedly owned by specific Pentlatch lineages. The Tsolum River prairie, the open parkland environment encountered by colonists in the mid-19th century in the Comox Valley were anthropogenic environments that were regularly and carefully managed by local Pentlatch people. These prairies were the northern extent of the Garry Oak ecosystem and hosted a range of plant species that were important to traditional Pentlatch diets. These species included camas (*Camassia quamash*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), blueberry (*Vaccinium sp.*), and saskatoon berry (sp). The primary way Pentlatch people

¹ Content provided by Dr. Jesse Morin

maintained these Garry Oak ecosystems and associated prairies was through the use of controlled burns. By burning these prairies, Pentlatch people maintained their extent and increased the productivity of desired plant species and deer.

3.2 Settler Agricultural History

The Comox Valley was settled in the 1860's after it was identified as holding great potential for agricultural production due to fertile soils and a favourable climate. The first Comox Valley pioneers came to farm the land, which they acquired through pre-emption, a process of acquiring land for free from the government under the condition of breaking or clearing the land and farming it. Parcels of land settled through pre-emption were usually around 160 acres. Much of the land within the Comox Valley was pre-empted by 1899. Early farmers in the Comox Valley produced a diversity of foods including grain, silage corn, milk and other dairy products, beef, sheep, hogs, poultry (meat and eggs), peas, potatoes, tree fruits (apples, pears, plums and prunes).² Dairy was the main agricultural sector in the area and culminated into a farmers cooperative creamery called the Comox Creamery which operated for 67 years before dwindling in membership and eventually joining the Fraser Valley Dairy Cooperative (Dairyland) in 1968.

3.3 Biophysical Context and Agricultural Capability

The Comox Valley gets an average of eight frost free months per year, and moderate temperatures year-round, making it a favourable location for a diversity of agricultural production. Lands in the Comox Valley have been classified through agricultural capability ratings as having high potential for agricultural production, due to good soils and relatively flat topography. Approximately 14% of the CVRD's total land area is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).³ The 2013 Agricultural Land Use Inventory found that of the 23,400 ha of ALR in the CVRD, only 23% was being actively farmed and 38% was otherwise unusable for farming due to infrastructure (roads, houses, barns etc.), pre-existing residential infrastructure, waterbodies, wetlands, or its status as a park or reserve.

The Census of Agriculture data from 2021 indicates that out of 9,148 ha of farmed land in the Comox Valley, only 975 ha (10%) is being irrigated. As summers grow longer and hotter with a changing climate, the need for irrigation is increasing. This will apply additional pressure to watersheds which experience significant differences between wet and dry seasons, often bringing floods and high water in the winter and springs, followed by very low water levels in July through October when it is needed the most for agricultural production. The following table highlights other challenges to agriculture due to climate change.

² Comox Valley Agriculture Plan. [Background Report](#). 2000

³ BC Ministry of Agriculture. Comox Valley Regional District Agricultural Land Use Inventory. 2014.

Table 1. Potential agricultural impacts of climate change in Comox Valley on Agriculture⁴.

Condition	Potential Agricultural Impacts
Changing hydrological systems	Increased flows in shoulder seasons with risk of flooding, reduction in water supply during growing seasons, increase in need for water storage infrastructure, negative impacts on non-irrigated croplands.
Increasing temperatures across all seasons	Increased pressures from pests and diseases, increased potential for drought and extreme heat and resulting damage to crops, increased evapotranspiration, and damage to crops.
Increased occurrence of extreme precipitation events	Increased potential for floods and run off, wet soils hindering access to land and productivity of land, increased risk of erosion in fields and riparian areas, potential flooding and resulting infrastructure damage.
Increased risk of wildfires in hot, dry summers	Stunting impacts of smoke and ash on crop production, impacts to livestock and human health, increased damage to agriculture infrastructure, long term impacts on soil and hydrological systems, competing water needs between firefighting and agriculture use, psychological effects on producers.
Increased seasonal variability	Reduced predictability of weather patterns, changes to production scheduling and an increased need for adaptability, unpredictable timing of bloom and changes to pollinator behaviour.
Increased growing degree days and frost-free days	Potential for additional cuts of hay, opportunities for new varieties of crops, inconsistent yield, and quality from previous crops.

3.4 Agricultural Profile and Economics

An agricultural profile of the Comox Valley was developed using 2021 Census of Agriculture data. Below are some of the highlights.

- There are 351 farms in the CVRD, where *farm* is defined as an operation reporting farm revenues and/or expenses to the Canada Revenue Agency.
- Over a third of farms are less than 10 acres in size.

⁴ Climate and Agriculture Initiative BC. [Regional Adaptation Strategy: Vancouver Island](#). 2020.

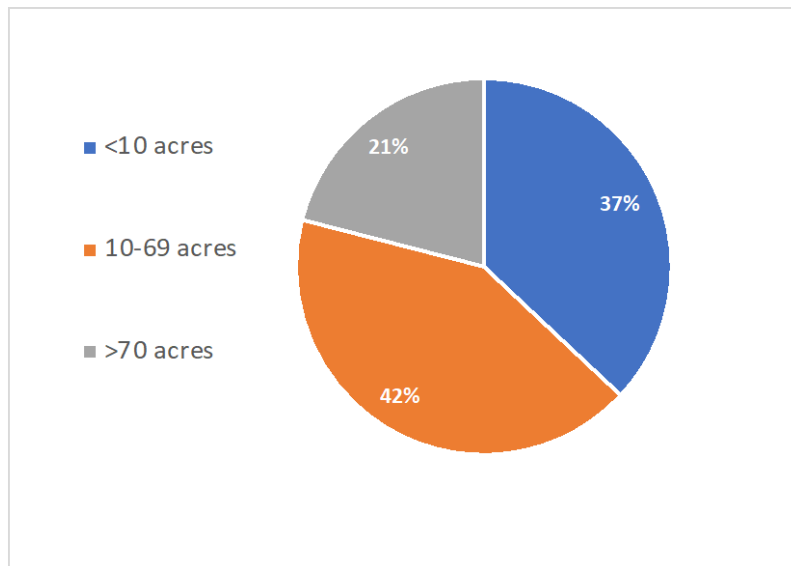


Figure 3 Size of farms in the Comox Valley.

- The average age of farmers is 59.
- Over 80% of land being farmed is owned by the farm operator.
- The most common types of farming activities reported on farms in the CVRD are fruit and tree nut production, cattle ranching, and hay production.
- Poultry and eggs and vegetable production have increased steadily over the last 10 years. There are also a number of horse farms in the Comox Valley.
- Total farm capital (land and buildings, livestock and poultry, farm machinery, and farm equipment) across the Comox Valley has increased from \$530.9 million in 2016 to \$691.1 million in 2021. This is primarily due to the rising cost of land.
- Average gross margins of farms have decline to 4.3%, meaning that for every \$1.00 spent by the farmer, \$1.04 was earned by the farmer.
- The majority of farms reported gross farm receipts less than \$100,000, with a third reporting less than \$10,000.

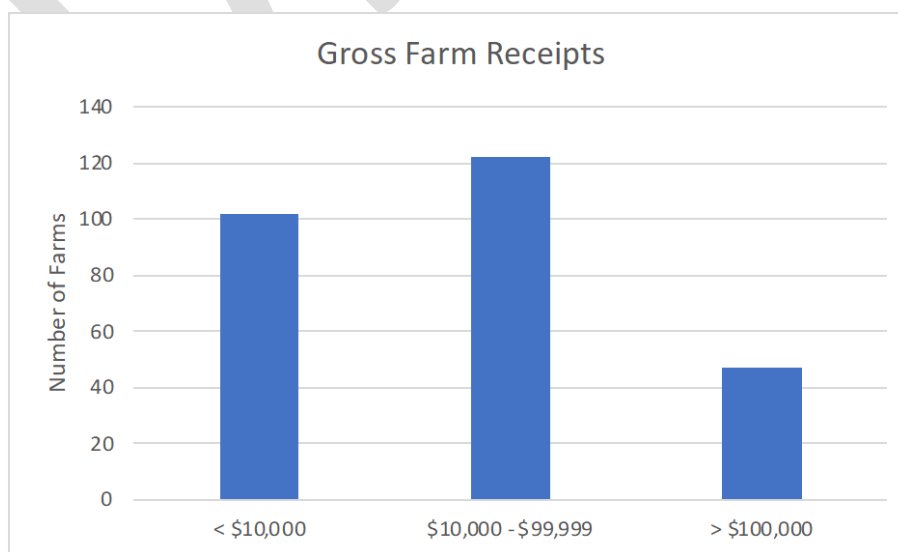


Figure 4 Comox Valley gross farm receipts in 2021.

3.5 Food System Opportunities and Challenges

3.5.1 Transportation and Distribution

Like most agricultural sectors on Vancouver Island, access to transportation, water and waste management, and distribution infrastructure are required to reach the larger domestic and export markets through the Lower Mainland. The CVRD is located within the north-central area of Vancouver Island and is well-served by several transportation nodes including major roads and highways, ferries and airports. Support systems and infrastructure for distributing food to major retail markets have long been established and operate efficiently at the provincial and national levels (Sysco, Gordon Food Services, and Overwaitea are examples). However, many producers in the Comox Valley may have difficulty accessing this distribution system for local markets because their operations and yields are too small to meet production requirements of larger scale retail outlets. Additionally, there may be information gaps around labelling, quality control, traceability, and food safety. Approximately 55% of farm businesses sell their products directly to consumers through farmer's markets, subscription product boxes, and/or at the farm gate.

3.5.2 Processing and Value-Added

Local availability of food processing services and resources are a critical part of a diversified and resilient food system, offering opportunities for producers and processors to create value-added products, reduce transportation of raw products/livestock to more distanced processing facilities, and build their businesses in new directions. The 2021 Census of Agriculture reported 33 farms selling value-added products. There are three local abattoirs located in the Comox Valley that process chicken and turkey and one abattoir that processes red meat (including hogs, cattle, sheep and other livestock). There are dairy processing facilities for cheeses and yogurts. Other processing businesses include wineries, distilleries, craft breweries, bakeries, and products such as condiments/sauces, chocolates and seafoods. There are a few commercial/commissary kitchens available for rent in the Comox Valley and a Food Hub Feasibility study was completed for the CVRD in 2021/2022. A business model has been developed for the establishment of a local food hub and the CVRD is moving forward with the implementation plan.⁵

3.5.3 Agri-Tourism

The Comox Valley has a very active agri-tourism sector with many farms offering agritourism activities such as u-pick, events and cycle tours, and several resources available for locating farms. There are also many non-profit organizations involved in the agriculture and food sector in the region.

⁵ Comox Valley. [Food Hub Project](#). Accessed July 2022.

3.6 Government Policies and Regulations

Agriculture in Canada and BC is governed by a network of Federal, Provincial, and local governments, each playing a specific role in regulating the use of agricultural land, the making and distribution of food products, and ensuring the health and safety of the food system. Other entities and departments within levels of government focus on the economics of agriculture and farming in Canada. Others focus on the interface between environmental protection, climate change and agriculture. At the provincial level, important policies and regulations include the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*, *Water Sustainability Act*, *Environmental Management Act*, and *Assessment Act*.

Regional districts play a role in region-wide planning by developing a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and other policies that link or coordinate the otherwise independent planning and land use regulation choices of member municipalities. The CVRD RGS was adopted in 2011. There are eight goal areas in the RGS, and the agriculture and food sector intersect with several of them, such as “Food Systems”, “Ecosystems, Natural Areas and Parks”, and “Local Economy”. The RGS identifies the land uses for agriculture within the Rural Settlement Areas and Agricultural Areas, which have been established using the ALR boundaries. Agricultural Areas cover approximately 12% of the Comox Valley. Land use policies and regulations in the CVRD’s three electoral areas are contained within the Rural Comox Valley OCP and the Rural Comox Valley Zoning Bylaw which contain relevant policies and regulations for farming practices and the agriculture sector.



Figure 5. Lentelus Farms partnership with Ducks Unlimited.

3.7 Community Food Security

From the late 1800’s to mid 1900’s agricultural development increased and Vancouver Island farms provided most of the food required by residents.⁶ In the last 50 years there has been a decrease in the proportion of food that is produced on the island – unverified figures suggest what was once a resiliency rate of 85% is now closer to 5-10%.⁷ A strong agricultural sector where producers of all commodity types and sizes are supported contributes positively to community food security.⁸ Whether farm products produced in the Comox Valley are sold locally or not, having active farms in the region attracts and retains the supporting systems such as equipment dealers, mechanics, food distribution companies and other supporting businesses for the agriculture sector. Increasing the agricultural productive capacity of Vancouver Island, through methods which are sustainable as well as economically and socially beneficial to local communities, will support food security in the Comox Valley.

⁶ Strategies for Increasing Food Security on Vancouver Island. Vancouver Island Community Research Alliance, Office of Community Based Research. 2011.

⁷ A Baseline Assessment of Food Security in British Columbia’s Capital Region. Emily MacNair. 2004.

⁸ Community food security arises when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.

4.0 Engagement To Date

Engagement of key players is at the core of the process to develop CVAP 2023. A first round of engagement with agricultural producers, industry associations, community organizations has begun to identify opportunities and challenges affecting the agriculture sector and land base. The CVAP 2023 is also exploring ways to work with K'omoks First Nation. A key first step was working with Dr. Jesse Morin on telling a history of Indigenous people and food systems in the area.

4.1 Key Player Interviews

As a first step in the engagement phase of CVAP 2023, the consultant team has conducted one-on-one interviews with 28 individuals. Interview questions focussed on the experiences of the interviewees with regards to agriculture, what key challenges or barriers exist, and what solutions or opportunities they envision for moving the sector forward. The interviews contributed to the background context of agriculture in the Comox Valley including the challenges, opportunities, and benefits of farming in the region. Furthermore, the interview process helped to inform the establishment of the Advisory Committee, development of further engagement tactics, and will ultimately inform the recommendations and actions in the final CVAP 2023.

Interviewees included representatives from:

- Farmers and Ranchers,
- Food Processors,
- CVRD Electoral Area Directors,
- Comox Valley Farmers Market, and
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food staff.

4.2 Formation of the Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee (AC) was formed to assist in providing critical feedback at important steps along the project timeline. Advisory Committee positions were advertised through print media, online (social media), and via email. Interested members of the public were encouraged to complete an application and submit it to the CVRD for consideration and 13 members were selected. The AC members are primarily agricultural producers and were selected based on their expertise and area of focus, in order to represent the broad diversity of the agriculture sector in the Comox Valley. A Terms of Reference was developed for the AC to help guide meetings and a copy is provided in the Appendix.

4.3 Initial Engagement Findings

The first steps of the engagement process has revealed five core agriculture themes within the Comox Valley, presented here in no particular order:

4.3.1 Passionate Agricultural Community

The Comox Valley has a strong agricultural community, holding generations of invaluable knowledge. Interviewees noted that one of Comox Valley's greatest strengths is a long and rich history of agricultural production, with generations of knowledge and experience in farming, foraging and harvesting in the region's climate and landscapes. Within Comox Valley

there are two Farmers Institutes. These organizations sometimes present divergent perspectives on topics of interest. However, holding space for diversity while encouraging collaborative efforts provides better outcomes on issues that impact the wider agricultural community. Early feedback also pointed to a disconnect between local governments understanding of agriculture and the realities on the ground. The new support role of the CVRD Agricultural Coordinator provides hope that these disconnects will be minimized over time. Engaging producers and leaning more into the expertise of the AAC could improve the capacity for the region to support agriculture.

4.3.2 Market Diversity Leads to Sector Strength

Producers based in the Comox Valley sell their products to a wide diversity of markets, from the farm-gate to international customers. The route to market is dictated by many economic drivers and indicators including commodity type, processing availability, storage capacity, transportation and distribution options, and customer base. This market diversity builds resiliency into the sector such that if one market fails or is in flux, the entire sector is not made vulnerable. A strong sector leads to improved agricultural supports and services, as well as access to agri-food resources such as seed supply, feed mills, and processing facilities. However, it was also noted from interviewees that the amount of food being produced in the valley has been on a decline over the past 100 years. Interview findings pointed to rising costs of land, transportation, and inputs such as equipment, seeds, fertilizers, packaging, and feed as one of the core struggles at making farming profitable. In addition to this, lack of processing facilities for meat, dairy and vegetables, all threatened the long-term sustainability of the industry and the regions self-sufficiency. Many producers noted that slaughter and butcher capacity of the Valley was insufficient. With the only red meat abattoir maintaining a wait list of up to 1-year, many producers choose to send animals off island for slaughter and therefore those end products are not necessarily available to local residents. Small scale producers pointed to a lagging timeline for the food-hub development.



Figure 6. Farm in Buckley Bay, BC.

4.3.3 Climate Change and Water Management are Key Concerns

The Comox Valley is experiencing the impacts of climate change through changing hydrological systems. Water management is one of the key issues in Comox Valley, producers note the changing hydrological systems are compromising water availability in the summer and creating drainage issues in the spring which are threatening the viability of the farming sector. Producers stated that there is a need for further support on developing dugouts, in the way of accessible information about where funding can be found, and regulatory advocacy. Many producers also noted a sense that the government and general population perceives members of the agriculture sector as being water wasters, rather than water stewards. Producers noted that there is a need to balance the needs of urban and rural water users, as well as provide information and messaging around agricultural water use during times of drought.

4.3.4 Farmland Protection is Critical

The Comox Valley is a highly desirable place to live, and thus experiences the pressure of urbanization of agricultural land. Many producers pointed to concerns regarding potential shifting of urban boundaries and subdivision of ALR land (or small minimum lot sizes) which often leads to the creation of rural estates rather than small farms. It was also noted that increasing prices of farmland is reducing affordability for farmers to expand their operations or for new entrants to begin financially viable operations. Additionally, many interviewees cited a lack of enforcement on ALR infringements as a contributor to loss of farmland and suggested the CVRD could play a role in enforcement of these infringements.

4.3.5 New Entrants are Needed to Ensure Sustainability

While the Comox Valley has a rich and long history of agriculture, food production and food harvesting, new entrants into the industry often find it difficult or impossible to build a profitable farm, with many new farmers in the region leaving agriculture within the first five years, leading to a somewhat transient local agricultural community. New farmers are often relying on grant programs and bank loans, which are unsustainable and frequently result in the need to close the farm.

5.0 Next Steps

With Phase 1 of CVAP 2023 now complete, additional engagement activities will be undertaken. The findings from the CVAP 2002 review, the Background Report, and the Engagement will inform the final development of the CVAP 2023.

5.1 Advisory Committee Meetings

The Advisory Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis to provide input into the process and provide feedback.

5.2. Second round of engagement with key groups

The consulting team will meet with Farmers Institutes, commodity groups, and other key groups to solicit input throughout 2023. The outcomes of the second round of engagement will be further summarized and shared.

Appendix I: Detailed Review of CVAP 2002 Recommendations

Evaluating level of completion/ implementation

C- Completed

NC- Not completed

IP- In progress/ maintain/ ongoing

Assessment of current status of recommendations from CVAP 2002 for CVAP 2023 plan update

M- Maintain

R- Revise

D- Delete

Dark grey indicates the selected box.

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Objectives, actions, and recommendations							
Section A: Water Management							
Objective 1: To improve access to irrigation water sources for agriculture							
Action a) Watershed Planning							
Identify the major agricultural watersheds in the Comox Valley (e.g., Black Creek, Tsolum River, Little River etc.)							Agriculturally relevant watersheds were identified in the Agricultural Water Demand Model 2002-2013.
For each of the major agricultural watersheds, develop a watershed management plan, which will involve the community and address the competing demands between agriculture, fishery and other water users for water use, quality, wetlands and habitat.							Tsolum River Ag Watershed Plan was developed in 2021. Other watershed plans may be needed.

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Identify and protect critical recharge areas.							Partially complete, implementation has been more complicated than anticipated. Lack of data on groundwater and critical recharge areas.
Identify and mitigate unused or improperly managed wells.							May need to re-direct this action to the province.
Action b) On Farm Water Storage							
Provide policy support, technical assistance and incentives to establish water storage (ponds, containment) and distribution systems.							<p>Farmers Institute has taken a leadership role in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food through the Regional Agrologist.</p> <p>Northeast Comox Stormwater Management Plan addressed water storage but not specific to agriculture.</p> <p>On farm storage was a recommendation in the Tsolum River Watershed Plan.</p>
Action c) Urban "Wastewater"							
Review the Regional District Report on the feasibility of reusing wastewater from municipal waste treatment systems, storm water discharge, liquid waste management plans, or other large water using activities in the Valley for the feasibility of use as irrigation water.							A Liquid Waste Management Plan has been created but not clear if wastewater re-use is in it. Would need to align water servicing/treatment. Demand side management for urban areas is still needed.
Implement options appropriate for agriculture.							Low feasibility of using waste water on food crops without significant infrastructure investments.
Action d) Ground Water							
Review current groundwater inventory and mapping, allocation, and assess potential opportunities for irrigation from aquifer sources.							Mapping was completed in the Agricultural Water Demand Model 2002-2013. Map of aquifers is available on CVRD website. BC Govt Watershed Atlas

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
	■	■	■	■	■	■	online is a good source of ground water data (including wells).
Identify groundwater outflow such as springs and artesian wells and assess their potential as sources of water for irrigation.	■	■	■	■	■	■	More likely to be implemented by private landowners on a site-by-site basis.
Objective 2: To improve drainage and irrigation infrastructure for agriculture							
Action a) Watershed Planning							
As part of the watershed management plan, provide options to improve surface drainage and drainage outlets for sub-surface drain tile.	■	■	■	■	■	■	Drainage (and clearing ditches) continues to be a high priority issue and is managed in part by the CVRD.
As part of the watershed management plan, provide options to improve access to water for irrigation for lands currently being farmed.	■	■	■	■	■	■	Could revise so that it is about accessing storage. Tsolum is overallocated.
Use the MAFF Watercourse Classification in Agricultural Areas 3, and Agricultural Ditch Maintenance Guidelines 4 to help determine drainage priorities and options.	■	■	■	■	■	■	Drainage (and clearing ditches) continues to be a high priority issue and is managed in part by the CVRD.
Access any available funding sources such as infrastructure programs to support shared storage facilities and water distribution systems among individual farms.	■	■	■	■	■	■	The ability to created “shared” storage may be complicated but worth looking into.
Action b) Storm Water Management							
For watercourses and for proposed development areas that drain into agricultural areas, establish sub watershed management areas, inter municipal committees and processes to address water management issues and agricultural impacts.	■	■	■	■	■	■	There are some inter-jurisdictional challenges with managing water but potential collaborative efforts exist (e.g. Brooklyn Creek).
Develop mitigation plans for current development and drainage areas that cause flooding on agricultural lands.	■	■	■	■	■	■	There has been some policy wording added to the Regional Growth Strategy about this. Some good examples include the developments next to Beaver Meadows area, Courtenay Flats, North-EastTown of Comox. Needs support from municipalities. Ministry of

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
	█	█	█	█	█	█	Transportation manages roads and ditches and subdivision process.
While considering the water flow needs for fisheries habitat, and where it would be an advantage to agriculture, require new development to provide water storage for irrigation using density bonusing or other opportunities.	█	█	█	█	█	█	There is an opportunity to implement this recommendation through a Development Permit Area.
Objective 3: To improve the environmental resource data base and mapping							
Action a) Watershed Planning							
As part of the watershed planning process (above), continue to update related information in the Sensitive Habitat Atlas and the related GIS files used by the Regional District and provincial and federal agencies.	█	█	█	█	█	█	Sensitive habitat atlas was last updated in 2014 with the Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory and is now being updated on a case-by-case basis.
Section B: Land Management							
Objective 4: To Protect the Agricultural Land Base							
Action a) Regional and Local Area Planning							
<p>Review and revise policies in the Rural Comox Valley OCP to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support no net loss of land from the ALR. • Maintain and enhance policies that direct rural settlement to designated settlement areas. • Restrict subdivision and housing development on agriculture lands. • Keep ALR lands in the RDCS in boundary expansions. • Retain current large agricultural parcels. 	█	█	█	█	█	█	<p>There is some language in the RGS on no net loss. The 2014 OCP explicitly states to not support subdivisions within the ALR. Could be updated to reflect new ALC policies and regulations and determine how CVRD wants to handle housing options in the ALR.</p> <p>In 2005 there was the creation of a “Rural-ALR” zone in Zoning bylaw 2781 which included all ALR land in the CVRD, and aligned with all use and densities allowed within the provincially defined ALR regulations, so that</p>

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
							the zone is automatically updated to align with new regulations.
Action b) ALR Management							
Monitor ALR policy changes and develop strategies to respond to proposed changes.							Revise as changes are made.
To ensure a consistent policy framework, the Regional Board and ALC should take steps to ensure strong lines of communication and consultation.							Combine with above
Objective 5: To develop management plans, policies and programs to support agricultural development							
Action a) Regional and Local Area Planning							
Work with MAF and adjoining municipalities to define special management areas along urban / agricultural interfaces for the application of policy initiatives designed to enhance land use compatibility.							This can be accomplished through the Farmland Protection Development Permit Area – for review.
Review and revise policies in the Rural Comox Valley OCP and Zoning Bylaw to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate special management areas and develop farm and "urban edge" policies and best management plans and consider the use of development permits for the protection of farming. • Mitigate impacts of greenway development on agriculture, • Use zoning as a tool to reduce conflict, • Develop policy regarding agricultural land committed to conservation, • Develop strategies to enhance on-farm income generation opportunities such as agri-tourism, • Develop policies to support composting, greenhouses, 							<p>Some of this step has been completed when the RGS and/or OCP and/or Zoning Bylaw was updated.</p> <p>Section 303 of Zoning Bylaw 2781 includes regulations regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Siting and sizing of farm retail areas. - Setbacks for riding arenas, intensive agriculture, sawmills, kennels - Limits to agritourism accommodation. <p>The new OCP introduced the Farmland Protection Development Permit Area (section 86).</p>

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
<p>mushroom farms and agro-forestry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop policies to address farm/non-farm conflicts in the ALR. • Identify high risk groundwater areas and develop agricultural policies and standards that will mitigate or avoid those impacts. 							<p>Zoning bylaw still prohibits cannabis production in all zones, however OCP has been amended to allow it.</p>
<p>Work with adjacent municipalities to encourage the efficient use of existing serviced urban, and future urban lands outside the ALR.</p>							<p>Could be brought in through Regional Context Statements and/or be part of a broader advocacy piece.</p> <p>OCP 2014 and RGS set targets to allow 90% of community growth to happen in urban centres with only 10% in rural areas, to prevent urban sprawl into agricultural lands.</p>
<p>Advocate for inclusion of farm related private woodlot and agro-forestry as an agricultural land use for policy and land taxation purposes with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, the BC Assessment Authority and the Union of BC Municipalities.</p>							<p>This could be revised to focus on advocating for alignment with agricultural production levels and property taxation thresholds for Farm Tax Status.</p>
<p>Develop policies for farming areas outside the ALR that support a mix of appropriate small farm and rural residential uses, developed in a manner that reduces the potential for land use conflict.</p>							<p>Domestic agriculture zone was created in 2019 for lots under 0.4 ha (backyard chickens and bees) as well as permitting community gardens. Continue to review as needed.</p>
<p>Objective 6: To Develop Planning Initiatives to Reduce the Potential for Land Use Conflict</p>							
<p>Action a) Conflict Resolution</p>							
<p>Establish conflict resolution mechanisms to mediate and resolve issues before they escalate to a provincial level adjudication or the courts.</p>							<p>Not yet completed.</p>

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Action b) Farmer Education/ Awareness							
Improve farmer outreach programs to increase farmer’s awareness of nonfarm neighbours and approaches to minimize conflict.		■					There is an opportunity for the CVRD Ag Coordinator to participate in this. Requires collaboration with MAF Regional Agrologists.
Action c) Rural and Urban Resident Education and Awareness							
Through public education with rural residents, real estate agencies and organizations, and community associations, reduce trespass, litter and other impacts of non-farm rural residents and rural land users on farms.		■					There is an opportunity for the CVRD Ag Coordinator to participate in this. Requires collaboration with MAF Regional Agrologists. Lots of potential here: signage, awareness campaigns, ag celebration events etc. Compliance and Enforcement may play a role.
Section C: Agriculture/ Environmental Stewardship							
Objective 7: To develop and support plans and programs for environmental stewardship							
Action a) Environmental Farm Plans							
Initiate a pilot project to develop an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) on a “demonstration” farm in the Comox Valley.		■					There has been good uptake in the EFP program since 2002 and there is no longer a need to put so much energy into promoting it. Most farmers are aware they need to have an EFP in order to qualify for provincial funding for Beneficial Management Practices.
Host field days at the pilot farm to demonstrate the improvements that resulted from the plan and encourage others to develop EFP’s.		■					Field days and farmer-to-farmer knowledge transfer events are being hosted by MAF and other organizations.
Promote those farms that participate to build consumer awareness of the stewardship efforts by farmers.			■				There is an opportunity for the CVRD Ag Coordinator to help promote farm that are participating in BMPs.

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Review current enhancement projects and initiate an EFP program for all farms to enhance habitat in a manner that also improves farm productivity.							There is an opportunity for the CVRD to encourage and support habitat protection and restoration but it need not occur only through the EFP program. This could be expanded to larger initiative to support ecological goods and services on farmland (e.g. Farmland Advantage).
Encourage land stewardship practices that lead to enhanced habitat and riparian area management.							See above.
Provide policy support, technical assistance and incentives to maintain and enhance areas of environmental importance.							The CVRD can play a support role in this but needs to be driving by MAF Regional Agrologists.
Action b) Promote adequate compensation for landowners that set aside land for environmental purposes							
Advocate for property tax relief, funds for conservation easements, or other mechanisms to reduce the direct cost of environmental enhancement to farmers.							Payment for Ecosystem Services programs, such as Farmland Advantage, are provincially-led and becoming more and more popular. The CVRD can play a support role.
Where the integrity of the buffer can be maintained, include selective harvest of farm related, private woodlot and agro forestry products as a permitted use in areas that are set aside as buffers to protect streams, water bodies, wetlands and sensitive areas.							The CVRD can play a support role in encouraging these stewardship practices. MAF programs and initiatives set forth by environmental NGOs are a suitable lead.
Section D: Agricultural Opportunities							
Objective 8: To expand agricultural business opportunities and farm incomes							
Action a) Establish an Agricultural Development Commission (ADC) as a sub-group of EDS to promote agricultural opportunities							
Establish an Agricultural Development Commission, as a subcommittee of the Economic Development Society, whose mandate would be to explore and develop economic activities related to agriculture and to investigate opportunities to increase profitability.							A region-wide Agricultural Advisory Planning Commission (AAPC) was created in 2016/17. They have limited actions they can perform and temporary or

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
	■	□	□	□	■	□	“single use” committees have been used in place of a permanent ADC.
Action b) Improve access to and awareness of information							
Establish a portable information centre to provide information to consumers about local production and to prospective farmers about agricultural opportunities, soils, etc. It could be a centre for job postings.	■	□	□	□	■	□	EcDev website was created and is updated regularly. Could be a role to play for the CVRD to create a webpage on their site about agriculture.
Establish a “referral” web site with links to important sources of agricultural information such as B.C. Stats, Island Farmers Alliance, B.C. MAFF.	■	□	□	□	□	■	EcDev website offers local food resources, grower resources, statistics and reports.
Improve farmer and consumer awareness of the benefits of organic biosolid recycling on agricultural land.	□	■	□	□	□	■	Not likely a role for the CVRD.
Action c) Reduce Input Costs							
Include reducing input costs in the mandate of the Agricultural Development Commission	□	■	□	□	■	□	Unclear if this is an area that the AAPC can influence.
Encourage farmers to use environmental programs and the Scientific Research and Experimental Development Program to develop beneficial re-use of waste products.	□	■	□	□	■	□	CVRD’s Ag Coordinator can play a role in distributing information.
Encourage farmers to use provincial and/or federal infrastructure programs to develop shared facilities and infrastructure (e.g., water storage, distribution.)	□	■	□	□	■	□	Biosolids composting facility expansion is an example.
Action d) Support Infrastructure Development							
Review and support opportunities for appropriate additional infrastructure that will enhance rural and agricultural opportunities. Support existing agriculturally related infrastructure (processing, services, distribution, wholesale, retail)	□	□	■	□	■	□	Exhibition grounds have been expanded and are now being used by the Farmers Market. A master plan was created for the exhibition grounds in 2017. However

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
							not all details have been resolved and some use conflicts may remain.
Ensure that policy and zoning is in place that will allow appropriate infrastructure to develop.							Requires more discussion.
Support infrastructure development such as an Airport Terminal and storage and barge facility that are economically viable and that will improve the overall economy.							May no longer be relevant.
Support development of covered shelter or enclosed facility for the farmers market							A farmers market at the exhibition grounds or elsewhere could be possible, but would require a proposal to the CVRD as an initial first step.
Encourage RDCS to retain the ownership and management of the exhibition grounds over the long term and support the use and management of the grounds for the long-term benefit of the agricultural industry and the Comox Valley.							Ownership was retained.
Action e) Retain the Oyster River Research Farm							
Promote and support the continued operation of Oyster River Research Farm, first, as an operating farm and, second, as a research centre and model for improving local agriculture							Research farm was sold in 2005 and is no longer used for research or teaching.
Action f) Market Responsive Marketing Boards and Geographic Equity							
Support farm groups in their efforts to achieve equitable distribution of production quota to Vancouver Island so the Comox Valley can produce a larger portion of the food consumed locally and regionally.							For discussion. This may be a priority for some producers but is not a policy/regulatory area that the CVRD can play much of a role in. Quota is a regulatory issue connected to Marketing Boards and the Province.
Section E: Food Security, Market Development, Safety and Quality							
Objective 9: To increase agriculture's contribution to the economy of the Comox Valley							

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Action a) Mandate the Agricultural Development Commission to expand market opportunities							
Include in Commission responsibilities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm current level of food self-sufficiency in the Comox Valley, • Clarify “local” market (Valley or Island-wide) opportunities, • Set up regional market intelligence capability and information exchange (See Agriculture Centre – Objective 8,) 							These tasks are not within the mandate of the AAPC. Many of these tasks are research-related and may be more easily completed by consultants and/or provincial government staff.
Evaluate and co-ordinate market development opportunities							The Economic Development Commission played a strong role in this early on but there has been a lack of leadership at the local government level. May be best led by the provincial government and/or Farmers Institutes and/or commodity groups.
Action b) Market Research							
Initiate local market research project to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current consumer perceptions, • Potential competitive advantages (e.g., organic, quality, freshness) • Potential market gaps • Potential new product niches and opportunities • Potential for expansion of alternative marketing channels (Farmers’ Market, Direct sales, etc.) 							See comment above.
Action c) Improve Local Marketing							
Promote local agriculture products, including a possible Regional Marketing Campaign.							Annual Growers guide was created in 2004 and has been sustained as a source of information on local agriculture. Maintained by the Comox Valley Record (Newspaper). Local tourism efforts made with the farm

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
							cycle tour, taste of the valley dinner etc. (initiated by EcDev).
Develop regional marketing strategy for new products.							Opportunity for potential partnerships for development and roll out of a regional food brand – many examples from other regions. CVRD could play a supporting role.
Improve “product recognition” of local products (vs. commodity sales).							See comment above.
Promote “trust” in local farmers and farm products.							The CVRD Ag Coordinator has a role to play in this and could include public education/outreach in job description. Local food events such as farm cycle tour and taste of the valley are hosted by EcDev.
Action d) Centre for Innovation							
Investigate how to establish a Comox Valley Centre for Innovation in food and agriculture, ideally at the Oyster River Research Farm to provide research and development services for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Production techniques, • Small scale production, • New products and small-scale processing • Laboratory services, • Marketing innovations. 							Oyster River Research Farm was sold. Cannabis Innovation Centre established in mid 2010’s – though run privately. A centre for innovation is likely better led by an academic institute and/or the province.
Consider re-structuring Oyster River Research Facility to permit these uses.							See comment above.
Ensure plan policies and zoning permits these uses at the Oyster River Research Farm.							See comment above.
Action e) Associations/linkages							

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Develop linkages to other business groups, such as Chamber of Commerce, Rotary clubs, retailers, financial institutions, restaurants, wholesalers, processors, tourism operators to create a comprehensive regional food and agriculture strategy.							The CVRD Ag Coordinator role can help to implement this step.
Action f) Multi-commodity marketing							
Support and improve linkages to Vancouver Island Produce and other brokerage firms and initiatives to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate production and on-stream timing, • Provide a central order desk for local retailers, • Provide information about sources of supply and on-farm markets, • Co-ordinate transportation of inputs and goods for sale. 							Vancouver Island Produce is no longer necessarily relevant to the health and prosperity of local farms. The Farmers Market began an online store during COVID-19. Taste Comox Valley app allows for online purchases from local producers.
Action g) Regulation							
Ensure that on-farm opportunities are recognized in ALR policies and regulations and in local zoning bylaws: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For value added processing of agricultural products, • For marketing of agricultural products. 							Refocus on ensuring regulatory consistency throughout the region.
Include individual and joint farm processing and marketing uses as a permitted use on farms and on individual lots in the agricultural area.							Could still be relevant, but if no update, suggest deleting.
Action h) Skills Development							
Develop training programs related to new market development initiatives and changes in the agriculture and food industry such as marketing, customer service and sales, employee management, "Super host."							This is more suited to MAF as a lead.
Develop training initiatives for both seasonal and part time farm, labour.							See comment above.
Action i) Food Safety							

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Develop a farmer awareness campaign related to food safety.		■				■	This is a role for Federal and Provincial government and Island Health.
Offer Foodsafe registration and information at Fall Fair.		■				■	This is a role for Federal and Provincial government and Island Health.
Prepare media articles.		■				■	This is a role for Federal and Provincial government and Island Health.
Develop an education programme for schools.		■				■	This is a role for Federal and Provincial government and Island Health and School Districts.
Encourage the Farmers' Market Association to require that a Foodsafe course be taken by all food vendors.		■				■	This is a role for Island Health.
Action j) Food Processing							
Devise and support strategies to support small scale local processing.			■		■		Initiation of a food hub in Comox Valley commenced in 2021 and is in progress.
Support initiatives to provide shared laboratory and processing facilities and equipment such as a community kitchen.		■			■		VanIsle Commissary Kitchens exists, but role of CVRD is unclear.
Encourage Research and Development related to processing (see Centre for Innovation.)		■				■	This is outside the scope of the CVRD's jurisdiction, apart from zoning to allow for it.
Provide Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) training and facilities to local producers/processors.		■				■	Outside of jurisdiction- encourage other entities that are already in this space take this on.
Section F: Agriculture Awareness							
Objective 10: To improve community support for farmers and local production and to enhance agriculture's importance in the Region							
Action a) Agriculture Awareness Committee							
Re-focus and re-energize the Agricultural Awareness committee.		■			■		This committee no longer exists. Discuss need for it to be re-convened. There is a role for the CVRD Ag Coordinator to play in this task.

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Involve retailers, processors and educational institutions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a role for the CVRD Ag Coordinator to play in this task.
Action b) Public Relations Campaign							
Ongoing public relations campaign such as weekly farm news in local media.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a role for the CVRD Ag Coordinator to play in this task.
Action c) Agriculture in the Classroom							
Ensure full support of the agricultural community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Farmers Institute released a request to farmers to participate in SD71 lessons in 2020. Not sure if there is a role for CVRD to play.
Identify resources such as farms for farm tours, contacts and speakers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lush Valley initiated and ag in the classroom program. Also: Hands On Farm - Filberg Heritage Lodge and Park Not sure if there is another role for CVRD to play.
Action d) "Food for Thought" Workshops							
Rejuvenate the "Food for Thought" workshops and bus tours. Consider fee-based tours, with revenue supporting agricultural awareness programmes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The CVRD Ag Coordinator may have a role to play – could be in partnership with Farmers Institutes.
Action e) RDCS Agricultural Advisory Committee							
Maintain the Agricultural Advisory Committee to the Regional District of Comox-Strathcona.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider consolidating all of the recommendations regarding committees.
Consider broadening the role to address general agricultural issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See comment above.
Support opportunities for education, training and information exchange with other AAC's.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	See comment above.
Action f) Fall Fair							

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Support and promote the Fall Fair.							There was an effort to create an agricultural awareness centre at the exhibition grounds in 2014. CVEX volunteers don't have the capacity to carry the work needed forward. Need more information on what it looks like in the future, support with grants.
Reduce infrastructure costs to the Fall Fair.							Fall Fair receives CVRD "grants in aid" each fall. Infrastructure needs phase 2-3 power, don't have to carry generators, high costs usually related to rental fees.
Action g) Farmers' Market							
Increase public awareness of the Farmers' Market - support expansion of the size and hours of operation of the Farmers' Market.							Connected with FM Society to discuss what needs currently exist.
Conduct market research to assess demand, product mix and optimum location.							This is a role better suited to the FM Society.
Promote the Farmers' Market as a tourism destination.							This is a role better suited to the FM Society.
Expand and promote existing "Tour of Vendors Farms" programme.							This is a role better suited to the FM Society.
Action h) Signage							
Ensure provincial and regional signage regulations do not limit appropriate agricultural signage opportunities.							CVRD signage jurisdiction is restricted to roads that are not within Min of Transportation oversight.
Improve and expand signage to locations of on-farm sales and agricultural tourism locations.							Min of Transportation blue sign program incorporates farms. Discuss if more signage is needed.
Establish a local signage standard compatible with MoT standards.							See comment above.
Search for or develop programs to fund agriculture and food signage in the Valley.							Examples from City of Delta and City of Kelowna exist.
Action i) Agri-tourism							

CVAP 2002 Recommendation	C	NC	IP	M	R	D	Outcome/ rationale/ comment/ question
Develop an inventory of current and potential agri-tourism and rural experiences.							Agri-tourism bylaw created in 2005 and amended in 2020, allows for accommodation and tourism activities. Experience Comox Valley has a page dedicated to culinary tours, not specific to agriculture.
Link to existing Farm Stay tourism and working holiday programmes.							Agritourism accommodation section in Zoning Bylaw may need a review to align with province.
Establish Comox Valley as a culinary tourism destination using local farm products.							Better led by EcDev and Experience Comox Valley.
Investigate need for revised local government regulations for farm B & B's based on new ALR regulations.							There are new ALR regulations which impact secondary housing on ALR land, to be considered in revising this action.
Develop Valley-wide activities and events that attract tourists to the area, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comox Valley Heritage • mining and farming in 1900, • Agricultural tour routes, • Arts and agriculture Festival. 							Better led by EcDev and Experience Comox Valley.
Develop marketing materials for local agri-tourism opportunities.							Better led by EcDev and Experience Comox Valley.



Appendix II: Assessment of CVAP 2002 Indicators

In CVAP 2002, a set of 10 indicators were provided to provide an opportunity to measure implementation success over time. Each indicator has been reviewed and compared to the most recent data set available, and results are provided in the Comments/Results column.

NOTE: Due to the change in jurisdictional boundaries when the Regional District of Comox Strathcona was divided in 2008, it is difficult to compare figures from before and after that time. Furthermore, Statistics Canada altered the definition of a "farm" in the Census of Agriculture from an operation with an intent to sell agricultural products, to only those that report farm income to the Canada Revenue Agency. This creates unique challenges and barriers to tracking many of these indicators over time.			
Theme	Objective	Indicators (Source)	Comments / Results
A. Water Management	1. To improve access to irrigation water sources for agriculture.	Increase the area under irrigation (Census of Agriculture)	In the 2021 Census of Agriculture there were 141 farms irrigating 975 ha; there were 142 farms irrigating 915 ha in 2016; and 135 farms irrigating 1,302 ha in 2011. It is worth noting that this figure may fluctuate year to year depending on level of natural precipitation, drought, etc.
	2. To improve drainage infrastructure for agriculture.	Number of approved drainage improvement applications (DFO)	<i>The number and status of DFO applications is not made public</i>
	3. To improve the environmental resource data base and mapping.	Updated Habitat Atlas and GIS Mapping (RDSCS)	The CVRD hosts an interactive online GIS mapping interface: https://www.cvr.ca/2025/Maps-GIS
B. Land Management	4. To protect the agricultural land base.	ALR land retained for agriculture. Improved communication between RDSCS, ALC	In the 2021 Census of Agriculture there were 351 farms farming 9,148 ha. There were 416 farms farming 9,653 ha in 2016 and 432 farms farming 11,287 ha in 2011. The decrease in farm numbers is likely related to the change in definition of a "farm" as per Statistics Canada from 2016 to 2021 Census of Agriculture.
	5. To develop management plans, policies, and programs to support agricultural development.	Established urban edge and other special management areas. Revised OCP policies (RDSCS)	The Rural Comox Valley OCP was adopted in 2014. It includes a Farm land protection development permit area and associated guidelines that requires the incorporation of a 30 m wide buffer between non-agricultural land and lands used for food production. This is subjected to new lots created through subdivision or development of the subject lots.
	6. To develop planning initiatives to reduce the potential for land use conflict.	Mediation process established, improved awareness of agriculture (RDSCS)	Land use conflicts can be directed to the provincial Farm Industry Review Board. The CVRD has hired an Agriculture Coordinator and this position can assist with improving awareness of agriculture.
C. Agricultural/Environmental Stewardship	7. To develop and support plans and programs for environmental stewardship.	Number of Environmental Farm Plans, Training Events (BCAC, Min of Ag)	The number of EFPs is not shared by Investment Agriculture Foundation
D. Agricultural Opportunities	8. To expand agricultural business opportunities and farm incomes.	Increase the number, net incomes of farms (Census of Agriculture)	In the 2021 Census of Agriculture there was an average net revenue of \$5,167 per farm
E. Food Security, Market Development, Safety, and	9. To increase local food supply and agriculture's contribution to the economy of the Comox Valley by improving marketing and distribution infrastructure.	Increase in the number of farms, employees, and value of net farm sales (Census of Agriculture). Increase in market share of local products.	There were 351 farms reporting in 2021, 355 farm employees were reported in 2021, 606 in 2016, and 561 in 2011. In 2021 there was an average net revenue of \$5,167 per farm, \$10,028 in 2016, and \$7,423 in 2011. There were 200 farms reporting direct sales in 2021, and 212 in 2016 (it was not measured in 2011).
	F. Agricultural Awareness	10. To improve community support for farmers and local production, and to enhance agriculture's importance in the Region by improving understanding and acceptance of farming practices.	Reduced number of complaints and conflicts (ALC, Min of Ag). Increased agricultural awareness (Min of Ag, Agricultural Awareness Committee). Complaints and conflicts are not made public by the provincial government, however they may be directed initially to the CVRD. It is unclear if the number of these complaints are being tracked. The CVRD has hired an Agriculture Coordinator and this position can assist with improving awareness of agriculture.

Appendix III: Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Comox Valley Regional District Agricultural Plan Advisory Committee

Overview

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) is updating and modernizing the Agricultural Plan that was adopted in 2002. That previous Agricultural Plan provided a study of agriculture in the Comox Valley and included recommendations that were implemented over the intervening years with the goal “to further the development of socially, culturally, environmentally and economically sustainable farming.” This new, second generation Agricultural Plan will build upon that with content suitable for addressing agricultural issue in the foreseeable future. A team of consultants have been contracted to review and evaluate the old agriculture plan, conduct research, facilitate engagement, and produce the new Agricultural Plan. This new plan will guide and inform the CVRD’s administration of agricultural issues into the future and will include specific recommendations for the CVRD and partner agencies to pursue. Implementation of the Agricultural Plan will support regional food and agriculture sectors and enable the CVRD to be a sector partner and help create greater resiliency in the food system.

Purpose

An Agriculture Plan Advisory Committee is required to guide and inform the development of the Agricultural Plan and provide important local context and connections. To that end, the composition of the Advisory Committee should be inclusive of a diversity of agricultural representatives in order to provide comments, recommendations, and local context to inform how future opportunities can best be supported.

Tasks and responsibilities of Advisory Committee members:

Overall, it is expected that Advisory Committee members will inform the development of the Agricultural Plan and provide meaningful feedback, engage in outreach and promotion of the process, and be informed of the past Comox Valley Agriculture Plan and other CVRD agriculture initiatives.

Specific responsibilities for members include:

- attend four to six meetings (including time needed to prepare for meetings);
- bring knowledge and experience on what is working and what is needed in the region;
- help to form the vision for the Agricultural Plan;
- help to promote engagement opportunities (e.g. surveys, open houses);
- provide suggestions for potential key informants in the community;
- review material and provide feedback; and
- review the draft Agricultural Plan and provide feedback to be incorporated into the final Agricultural Plan.

Resources

- The project is being funded by a grant from the Investment Agriculture Foundation and by the Electoral Areas.
- The consulting team will be responsible for preparing an interim report, coordinating engagement, and producing the draft and final Agricultural Plan.
- The CVRD’s Planning and Development Department will provide overall project management support and will be available to assist the Advisory Committee in its work and to ensure that the process unfolds in a timely manner. The CVRD will also provide administrative resources

such as hosting and organizing meetings and sharing meeting agendas, notes, and meeting materials.

Composition of the Advisory Committee

Advisory Committee members will be representative of the diverse food and agriculture sector in the region and include members of agriculture and food stakeholder groups. connected to agriculture sector networks formally and informally. Advisory Committee members may include:

- Producers and processors
- Retailers and restaurateurs of local food products
- Members of Farmer’s Institutes
- Members of local agriculture and food-related organizations
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food staff
- Island Health staff
- K’ómoks First Nation representative

Ideally, the number of members will range from 10 to 12.

Frequency of meetings

The Advisory Committee will meet four to six times between September 2022 and December 2023, a during key points of the planning process. It is anticipated that meetings will range from 60-90 minutes with some additional time required outside of meetings.

Quorum

Meetings will proceed if at least five members are present.

Chair

After the Advisory Committee selection process has been completed a Chair will be selected by the group. This person will be appointed from within the membership and will be responsible for reviewing meeting agendas prepared by consulting team, chairing the meetings, leading consensus decision-making discussions, reviewing minutes, meeting with key stakeholders interested in the market, and responding to media requests.

Decision-making

The Advisory Committee will adopt a consensus decision-making process in which the input of all members present is heard and a motion posed based on what is heard. If a consensus cannot be reached, a vote on individual motions may be held among the members present, with the Chair voting last and only in the event of a tie vote.

Duties of Members

Advisory Committee members are expected to:

- attend all meetings as possible;
- contribute to a positive, constructive, and respectful environment;
- provide input to and accept feedback from others; and
- bring their knowledge and experience to inform the project.

Timeframe

The Comox Valley Agriculture Plan is to be completed by December 2023 and the Advisory Committee will be dissolved at that time.

DRAFT