



SALT SPRING ISLAND
AREA FARM PLAN
DETAILED REPORT

JANUARY 2008

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ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

“That Salt Spring Island becomes a place where agriculture is a strong, vital and productive part of the local economy and is carried out in a manner that promotes and protects a sustainable community.”

- Guiding Vision

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2005, the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Advisory Committee recommended that an area farm plan be developed for the island. In 2006, the Salt Spring Island Farmers Institute and the Island Natural Growers, in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee, began the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan process. A Steering Committee was established to oversee the process. Members of the Steering Committee are:

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Thank you to everyone who participated in the Area Farm Plan process. This document is a reflection of your efforts and ideas.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is committed to working with our industry partners and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC to increase public awareness of the importance of the agriculture and agri-food industry to Canada. Opinions expressed in this strategy are those of the participating organizations and not necessarily Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's.

Abbreviations

AAFC	Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada	SD64	School District 64
AFP	Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan	SSI	Salt Spring Island
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission	SSIAA	Proposed Salt Spring Island Agriculture Alliance
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve	SSIAAC	Salt Spring Island Agriculture Advisory Committee
APF	Agricultural Policy Framework	SSICC	Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce
BCAC	BC Agriculture Council	SSIFI	Salt Spring Island Farmers Institute
CRD	Capital Regional District	SSILTC	Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee
EFP	Environmental Farm Plan	SSSF	Salt Springers for Safe Food
FIRB	Farm Industry Review Board	SSSS	Salt Spring Seed Sanctuary
IAF	Investment Agriculture Foundation	VIHA	Vancouver Island Health Authority
ING	Island Natural Growers		
IMF	Salt Spring Island Monetary Fund		
IT	Islands Trust		
MAL	BC Ministry of Agriculture & Lands		
MoE	BC Ministry of the Environment		

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	9
Context	13
Key Issues	19
A. Local Authority for Agricultural Decisions.....	19
B. Improved Protection & Utilization of Farm Land.....	25
C. Environmental Stewardship.....	28
D. Local Agricultural Knowledge & Awareness.....	32
E. Supporting Infrastructure & Services.....	34
F. Economic Viability.....	38
G. Food Security & Sovereignty.....	44
Guiding Vision & Values	49
Recommendations of the Area Farm Plan	51
Implementation	63
Next Steps	75
Appendix A – OCP Agriculture Recommendations	77
Appendix B – Agricultural Statistics	93
Appendix C – SSIAAC Terms of Reference	95
Appendix D – DRAFT IAF Long-term Tracking Plan	97

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Salt Spring Island is located off the east coast of Vancouver Island in the Strait of Georgia, between Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia. Covering 18,555 ha and home to over 9,500 people, it is the largest and most populated of the Southern Gulf Islands. Economic activities include the social services sector, construction, tourism, retail businesses, arts and crafts, forestry and farming.

Salt Spring Island has a rich and varied agricultural history and tradition that spans over 150 years. However, in recent years, issues such as declining farming profits, rising land prices, infrastructure and input costs, an aging farm population and problematic government regulations, are compromising the viability of the Island's agriculture economy.

In 2006, following a recommendation of the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Advisory Committee to help secure the long-term viability of Salt Spring Island's food and agricultural activities, the Salt Spring Island Farmers Institute and the Island Natural Growers in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and Islands Trust, initiated an area farm planning process. The mission of the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan process is:

To return agriculture to a place of prominence on Salt Spring Island as a healthy, viable, and culturally supportive endeavour.

The central goals of the Plan are to:

- Re-establish agriculture as a social, cultural and economic priority;
- Facilitate the growth of associated farming activities; and
- Encourage the adoption of environmentally and socially considerate farm practices.

The Planning Process

In November 2006, the Area Farm Plan Steering Committee made up of members of the initiating groups and agencies, with the assistance of Masselink Environmental Design began the Area Farm Plan process. The main elements of the Salt Spring Area Farm Plan process included the:

- Collection and analysis of relevant background information;
- Identification of issues affecting or influencing agriculture;
- Identification of opportunities for agriculture;
- Establishment of a guiding vision for agriculture on Salt Spring;
- Development of action oriented strategies and recommendations necessary to achieve the vision;
- Provision of recommendations to the Official Community Plan review process; and
- Identification of implementation procedures and responsibilities.

On completion and acceptance of the plan by the community the implementation process will begin. The completion of the plan will allow the Steering Committee to

apply for funding to support the implementation process. The implementation is expected to begin early in 2008.

Salt Spring Island OCP Review Process

One of the purposes of the Area Farm Plan was to help inform the development and provision of agricultural recommendations to the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan review process. In May 2007, the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan Steering Committee submitted a series of policy proposals to the OCP review process.

Public Consultation

Community involvement and understanding is necessary to achieve the mission and goals of the Area Farm Plan process. Individuals and groups with an interest in the future of food and agriculture on Salt Spring Island were invited to participate early on in the process through three linked Community Dialogue sessions held on the Saturday afternoons of January 20th, February 17th, and March 10th, 2007. During these facilitated discussions participants were asked to identify and discuss issues, assets, opportunities, and strategies for agriculture on Salt Spring, and collectively articulate a future vision for food and agriculture on the island. The information and ideas generated by the three Community Dialogue sessions helped direct and inform the development of the Area Farm Plan's strategies and recommendations.

Early in November 2007 a copy of the draft plan was sent to Community Dialogue participants, interested members of the public, and Ministry of Agriculture and Lands staff for their review and feedback. Reviewers were provided with response form on which to record their feedback. On November 29th and December 12th, 2007 Steering Committee members met with individual farmers to receive additional feedback. Comments received during this period were used to further refine the Area Farm Plan.

Supporting Information & Research

A comprehensive understanding of the state of agriculture on Salt Spring Island was achieved through an agricultural Land Use Inventory conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands in 2006, and information gleaned from Statistics Canada's 2006 and 2001 Census data. Additional research was conducted to support the development of recommendations that support the goals of the planning process.

Key Issues

During the planning process seven key issues that are affecting Salt Spring Island's ability to achieve its vision of a viable, healthy, diverse and appreciated agricultural economy were identified. They are:

- Local authority for agricultural decisions;
- Protection and use of agricultural land;
- Environmental stewardship;
- Local agricultural knowledge and awareness;
- Supporting infrastructure and services;
- Economic viability; and
- Food security and self-sufficiency.

These key issues capture and describe a number of additional specific issues, which are affecting agriculture on Salt Spring. Overlaps between and across the identified key issues naturally exist. However, for the purposes of organization and economy these overlaps have been minimized within the document.

The extent to which each of these issues is considered and addressed, will determine Salt Spring Island's ability to achieve the goals of the Area Farm Plan.

Guiding Vision

Salt Spring Island's agricultural community in collaboration with interested members of the community and local government have proposed the following agrarian vision for the island, that:

“Salt Spring Island becomes a place where agriculture is a strong, vital and productive part of the local economy and is carried out in a manner that promotes and protects a sustainable community.”

Key Recommendations

The Area Farm Plan identifies three key recommendations that will put Salt Spring Island in a position to return agriculture to a place of prominence within the community.

- 1. Establish a Salt Spring Island Agricultural Alliance.** Establish an Agricultural Alliance made up of groups and agencies with agricultural interests on Salt Spring Island. The Alliance would assume responsibility for the implementation of the Area Farm Plan from the existing Steering Committee, and will provide a central contact point and coordinating role for agricultural matters on or involving Salt Spring Island.
- 2. Establish a community farmland Trust.** Create a local community farmland trust that can accept, acquire and manage farmland and ensure that it is farmed in perpetuity.
- 3. Establish key community facilities that support the expansion of agricultural activities.** Pursue the establishment of key agricultural infrastructure such as an abattoir, and cold storage, processing and composting facilities on Salt Spring.

Additional Recommendations

The Area Farm Plan makes 22 additional recommendations to address the seven key issues facing agriculture on Salt Spring Island.

A. Ensure Local Participation in Agriculture Decisions

- 4. Maintain local agricultural information.**

B. Protect and Use Farmland

- 5. Implement accepted agricultural OCP policies.**
- 6. Work with government agencies, such as BC Parks and the Capital Regional District, regarding the use and management of their agricultural holdings.**
- 7. Pursue strategies that make more land available for farming.**

8. Increase agricultural awareness of new and potential residents.

C. Encourage & Support Environmental Farm Practices

9. Establish a voluntary Salt Spring Island agricultural code of practice.

10. Harmonize local environmental bylaw policies on farmland with existing federal and provincial environmental regulations.

11. Encourage the implementation of beneficial farm management practices.

12. Explore potential programs that support environmental services on farms.

D. Increase Local Understanding & Appreciation of Agriculture

13. Improve local agricultural literacy through the provision of agriculture-focused public education activities and events.

14. Increase agricultural education opportunities for children and youth.

E. Provide Supportive Agricultural Infrastructure & Services

15. Address the farm housing issue.

16. Increase local agricultural training and mentoring opportunities.

F. Provide Conditions that Encourage & Support Agricultural Enterprise

17. Determine the potential costs and profitability associated with farming on Salt Spring Island.

18. Develop a coordinated approach to production and sale of locally grown products.

19. Develop local agri-tourism guidelines.

20. Address local farm labour issues.

21. Encourage the development of local agricultural product purchasing policies.

G. Improve Local Food Security & Self-Sufficiency

22. Increase local seed production capability.

23. Encourage producers to adopt a genetically engineered (GE) free policy for locally grown agricultural products.

24. Establish local food safety protocols and standards that reflect the needs of small producers and processors.

25. Participate in regional, provincial and national agricultural discussions.

Implementation

While the implementation of a number of these recommendations will be relatively straightforward, others will require additional planning and resources. In order to guide and assist the implementation process each recommendation is prioritized, timing of implementation is suggested, and potential sources of funding are identified.

The Plan identifies three key initial steps that will help with the implementation process. They are:

Establish the Salt Spring Island Agriculture Alliance to oversee the implementation of the Area Farm Plan and facilitate a number of its specific recommendations.

Secure implementation support from the local community, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and the Investment Agriculture Foundation necessary for the successful implementation of the Plan.

Establish a long-term tracking plan to measure the success of the Plan, make adjustments if necessary and help justify and secure additional funding.

INTRODUCTION

Salt Spring Island has a rich and varied agricultural history and tradition that spans more than 150 years. In recent years the continuation of this history and heritage has been threatened. Issues such as declining farming profits, rising land prices, infrastructure and input costs, an aging farm population and problematic government regulations, are compromising the viability of the Island's agriculture economy.

In 2006, in an effort to secure the long-term viability of Salt Spring Island's agricultural economy, the Salt Spring Island Farmers Institute and the Island Natural Growers in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the Islands Trust, and with assistance provided by the Investment Agriculture Foundation and the Capital Regional District, initiated an area farm planning process.

The Planning Process

The purpose of an area farm plan is to develop and prioritize practical approaches and recommendations that take advantage of identified assets and address local issues in a way that improves the long-term health and viability of agriculture and the surrounding community.

An area farm plan looks ahead and considers a community's agricultural situation in order to identify practical solutions to current issues, identify opportunities to strengthen farming, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of agriculture.

Development of the Area Farm Plan was guided by a Steering Committee consisting of members from the organizations that initiated the process. Early on in the planning process the Steering Committee developed the following overarching goal or mission for the Plan:

To return agriculture to a place of prominence on Salt Spring Island as a healthy, viable, and culturally supportive endeavour.

In addition, the following goals were set:

- To re-establish agriculture as a social, cultural and economic priority;
- To facilitate the growth of associated farming activities; and
- To encourage the adoption of environmentally and socially considerate farm practices.

Development of the Salt Spring Area Farm Plan process involved the:

- Collection and analysis of relevant background information;
- Identification of issues affecting or influencing agriculture;
- Identification of opportunities for agriculture;
- Establishment of a guiding vision for agriculture on Salt Spring;
- Development of action oriented strategies and recommendations necessary to achieve the vision;
- Provision of recommendations to the Official Community Plan review process; and the

- Identification of implementation procedures and responsibilities.

Once accepted, implementation of the Plan can begin. A completed Area Farm Plan will allow those responsible to apply for funding to support the implementation process. The implementation of the Plan is expected to start early in 2008.

Salt Spring Island OCP Review Process

One of the purposes of the Area Farm Plan was to help inform the development and provision of agricultural recommendations to the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan review process. In May 2007 the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan Steering Committee submitted a series of policy proposals to the OCP review process. A copy of the Steering Committee's submission is provided in Appendix A.

Public Consultation

Community involvement and understanding is necessary to achieve the mission and goals of the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan process. Consequently, community involvement was an important part of the planning process. Community involvement was achieved through three linked Community Dialogues sessions held early on in the planning process on three Saturday afternoons (January 20th, February 17th, and March 10th, 2007) to identify and discuss issues, assets, opportunities, strategies and the overall vision for the Plan and to establish a common base of knowledge and understanding. During these facilitated discussions, participants were asked to discuss the opportunities for agriculture on Salt Spring and collectively articulate a future vision for food and agriculture on the island.

Individuals and groups with an interest in the future of food and agriculture on Salt Spring Island were invited to participate. There was a strong desire to attract a diverse group of community members who would reflect the many people who currently benefit from the island's agriculture, such as: farmers, food processors, retailers, environmentalists, restaurateurs, tourism operators, farmers' market customers, and satisfied eaters.

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

Details on the Community Dialogue process and material generated by each session are available in a separate document.

Early in November 2007 a copy of the draft plan was sent electronically to Community Dialogue participants, interested members of the public, and Ministry of Agriculture and Lands staff for their review and feedback. A response form accompanied the draft plan providing reviewers with a way to record and submit their feedback. A total of 9 response forms were returned. On November 29th and December 12th, 2007 members of

the Steering Committee met with farmers to receive additional feedback. Comments received during November and December 2007, were used to further refine and in some cases correct the final draft of the Area Farm Plan.

Supporting Information & Research

Agricultural information from a Land Use Inventory conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands in 2006,¹ and Statistics Canada 2006 and 2001 Agriculture Census^{2, 3} provided a more comprehensive understanding of the state of agriculture on Salt Spring. Anecdotal information and ideas generated during the three Community Dialogue sessions helped direct and refine the development of the Area Farm Plan's strategies and recommendations.

¹ www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/800series/830110-3.pdf

² Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Agriculture.
www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm

³ Statistics Canada 2001 Census of Agriculture.
www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2001/index.htm

CONTEXT

Salt Spring Island is located off the east coast of Vancouver Island in the Strait of Georgia, between Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia. With a total area of 18,555 hectares (45,849 acres), and a full-time residential population of approximately 9,640,⁴ it is the largest and most populated of the Southern Gulf Islands. Economic activities include the social services sector (health and education), construction, tourism, retail businesses, arts and crafts, forestry, and farming. Salt Spring Island is accessible by three ferry routes, and scheduled floatplane services from Vancouver.

Climate⁵

The climate of Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf Islands is similar to that of the northern Mediterranean region with its cool dry summers and humid or wet mild winters. The average annual precipitation is 910 mm and the average annual temperature is around 10 °C. July, August, and September are generally the warmest and driest months. The average air temperature between July and September is 17 °C with less than 8% of the annual precipitation occurring during this period. The wettest time of the year occurs between November and January when almost 50% of the annual precipitation falls.

Soils⁶

The soils of Salt Spring Island have mainly developed from materials that have been transported and deposited by glaciers, rivers, gravity, lakes and the sea since the last ice age. Only a few soils have developed on more recent fluvial materials, shorelines and organic deposits. Soils with a capability for agriculture are generally found at elevations below 100 m above sea level on gently sloping terrain or in valley bottoms or topographic depressions. Approximately 17% of Salt Spring's land area is comprised of these soil types.

Soils that exhibit more severe limitations for agricultural crop production and offer fewer opportunities for improvement tend to be found at elevations over 100 m above sea level and generally occur on more steeply sloped terrain. Approximately 30% of Salt Spring's soils meet these criteria. Most of these soils are quite shallow and tend to be very stony. Agricultural uses on these soils tend to be restricted to natural grazing, the production of perennial forage crops or specifically adapted crops such as tree fruits and grapes.

On Salt Spring Island, agricultural capability is limited by six different factors: droughtiness caused by soil and/or climate characteristics; soils that prevent adequate

4

www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5917027&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Capital%20F&SearchType=Begin&SearchPR=59&B1=All&Custom

5 van Vliet, L., A. Green and E. Kenney. 1987. *Soils of the Gulf Islands of British Columbia: Volume 1, Soils of Salt Spring Island*. Research Branch, Agriculture Canada. Vancouver, BC.

6 Ibid.

root penetration and drainage; degree of stoniness; depth to bedrock; steep topography or slope pattern; and excess water.

Water

Approximately 17% or 150 mm of Salt Spring Island's annual rainfall falls during the period from May to September. In an average year, depending on soil type and crop coverage, a moisture deficit is experienced between May and August, when evapotranspiration losses exceed precipitation levels. In contrast, over 80% of the annual rainfall occurs during the period from October to April with approximately 50% falling during the wettest months from November to January. Exceptionally dry years may provide as little as 560 mm of annual rainfall while wet years can yield over 1000 mm. It has been recently estimated that precipitation annually available to recharge ground water reserves is between 84 – 150 mm/year.⁷

Salt Spring Island can be divided into 24 topographically separated watersheds.⁸ There are nine freshwater lakes comprising a total area of 292 ha; all are currently sources for water. The largest lake, St. Mary Lake (182 ha) supplies water to residents in the North Salt Spring Water District. Cusheon Lake (27 ha) supplies water to residents in the watershed. Maxwell Lake (26 ha) and St. Mary Lake provide water to Ganges Village. Weston Lake (19 ha) supplies water to the community of Fulford. The remaining lakes – Bullock, Stowell, Ford, Roberts and Blackburn - supply local residents and range from 11 – 2 ha in size.⁹

There are increasing concerns about water use, the drawing down of the aquifer and its susceptibility to saltwater intrusion - particularly near coastal areas, and phosphorus loading in a number of the Island's lake systems. Agricultural activities are affected by or implicated in each of these issues. The Salt Spring Island Water Council has recently initiated a ground water study in an effort to determine the extent and condition of existing groundwater reserves.¹⁰

With its relatively high number of lakes, Salt Spring Island is uniquely able to consider the possibility of using surface water for field irrigation purposes. However, the irrigation of large field areas is generally not practiced. The fragility of ground water resources and increasing public concern generally prevent the use of ground water for field irrigation purposes.

Approximately 80 licences for surface water use for agricultural purposes (irrigation and stock watering) have or are in the process of being approved by the Ministry of Environment¹¹ with 131 irrigated hectares reported in 2005.¹²

⁷ www.islandstrust.bc.ca/lrc/ss/pdf/ssocpreviewrptpotablewatermay092007.pdf

⁸ Harrington, S. and J. Stevenson (eds.) 2005. *Islands in the Salish Sea: A Community Atlas*. TouchWood Editions, Canada.

⁹ van Vliet, L., A. Green and E. Kenney. 1987. *Soils of the Gulf Islands of British Columbia: Volume 1, Soils of Salt Spring Island*. Research Branch, Agriculture Canada. Vancouver, BC.

¹⁰ Macey, A. 2008. *Pers. comm.*

¹¹ www.elp.gov.bc.ca:8000/pls/wtrwhse/water_licences.input - accessed Aug. 17, 2007.

Agricultural History^{13,14}

Salt Spring Island is part of the traditional territory of a number of First Nations. Aboriginal activities on the island date back thousands of years. First Nations' relationships with the island's marine and land ecosystems evolved slowly over time resulting in a culturally modified land and seascape that satisfied most of their needs. Foods were harvested, gathered, cultivated and preserved in quantities that sustained their communities and met their spiritual, ceremonial, social and trade requirements. These aboriginal communities are the closest example of sustainability ever achieved on Salt Spring Island.

During the mid to late 1800s Victoria's population was rapidly increasing prompting Governor James Douglas to promote Salt Spring Island as a food-producing hinterland for Victoria. So in 1859 the first non-native settlers arrived on Salt Spring Island to begin farming. By 1880 many of the best-located farms were established and orchards planted. Ruckle Farm, established in 1872, is the oldest remaining example of these first farms and the oldest family farm still in operation in BC.

Early settlers used the mountainous areas of the island to graze livestock. The introduction of grazing animals marked the beginning of a number of agriculturally induced changes to the island ecosystem including the introduction of non-native forage plants, the extirpation of large predators such as wolves and bear, and the clearing of large areas for forage production. By the 1890s Salt Spring Island was exporting its first specialty crop - fruit – by boat and rail to markets in Eastern Canada. Dairy farming and poultry production had been identified as economically viable specialties. In December of 1895, the Islands Farmers' Institute was founded.

By the early 1900s Salt Spring Island was self-sufficient in forage for local livestock and started exporting feed to Victoria and other Gulf Islands. In addition, with other Southern Gulf Islands, it was renowned for its large harvests of fruit. Dairying was important and the butter produced by the Salt Spring Island Creamery, largely exported to Victoria, supported dairying on Salt Spring and in the Southern Gulf Islands. Poultry and sheep farming had also become important economic activities.

After World War II agricultural activities on Salt Spring steadily declined due to rising costs of feed and shipping coupled with the growth of more profitable farming locations in other areas of the Province. This decline was marked by the close of the Salt Spring Island Creamery in 1957.

A revival of agriculture on Salt Spring was recognized with the reestablishment of the Salt Spring Island Fall Fair in 1976, the acquisition of the current Salt Spring Islands Farmers Institute Fair Grounds on Rainbow Road in 1979 and the completion of the

¹² www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/95-629-XIE/4/4.12-1_F.htm#59

¹³ Rautenbach, U. (ed.) 2005. *1895-2005 Agriculture – Our Island Tradition*. Published by the Islands Farmers Institute. Salt Spring Island, BC.

¹⁴ Harrington, S. and J. Stevenson (eds.) 2005. *Islands in the Salish Sea: A Community Atlas*. TouchWood Editions, Canada.

exhibition hall on the grounds in 1982. This period was also noted for the growth of small-scale, value-added (often organic) agricultural enterprises that catered to increasing numbers of tourists and seasonal residents.

Salt Spring Island's Current Agricultural Situation

A number of aspects of Salt Spring Island's current agricultural situation are worth noting. A table with some of this data is provided in Appendix B. Much of this information was derived from the Land Use Inventory conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands in the fall of 2006¹⁵ and from the 2006 Canadian Census of Agriculture.¹⁶

Agricultural Land Base

- In 2006, 2,921 ha (16%) of Salt Spring's land base was in the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) – a figure that hasn't changed since the 2001 Agricultural Census.
- 9% (254 ha) of the ALR land base is not available for farming.
- 514 properties are in the ALR.
- Approximately 10% has been excluded from the Island's original ALR holdings since 1974.
- In 2006, 659 ha of non-ALR land were being farmed.
- According to the 2006 Canadian Census of Agriculture 2,501 ha was reported being farmed – down 871 ha from the 2001 Census.¹⁷ This may be due to changes in census methodology between 2001 and 2006.¹⁸

Agricultural Activities

- In 2006, agricultural activity was occurring on 2,138 ha, of which 1,479 ha were located in the ALR.
- 167 farms were reported during the 2006 Census down from 170 reported in 2001.
- 55% of ALR land available for farming is used for the production of forage and pasture
- 5% of ALR land is used for the production of field vegetables and flower crops.
- 46% of farms reported the use of organic practices in 2006.

Farm Size & Nature of Farmers

- In 2006 40% of farms were less than 4 ha, 87% were less than 28 ha.
- 65% of properties under 4 ha found within the ALR were not being farmed.
- In 2006, 245 farm operators were reported. 255 were reported in 2001.
- In 2006 the average age of farm operators increased from 52.4 in 2001 to 55.3.

¹⁵ Kline, R. 2007. *Salt Spring Island Agricultural Land Use Inventory 2006*. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Victoria, BC.

¹⁶ www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm

¹⁷ Appendix B.

¹⁸ Kine, R. 2008. *Pers. comm.* Ministry of Agriculture and Lands staff will be following up with Statistics Canada to determine the reason for this significant and as yet unsubstantiated change.

Economic Viability

- In 2006 gross farm receipts were \$3,998,362, a 125% increase from 2001.
- 65% of farms reported gross farm receipts of less than \$10,000
- 3 farms reported annual gross earnings of over \$250,000.
- Total farm expenses were \$3,905,981, leaving a per farm average annual net income of approximately \$550 for the 167 farms reporting.
- There are two seasonal weekly markets in Ganges that annually draw over 100,000 visitors, and contribute an estimated \$3 million to the local economy with direct sales of produce, food and crafts of approximately \$1.5 million.^{19,20}

Identified Issues

This contextual information and Community Dialogue discussions helped identify a number of key issues that are affecting Salt Spring Island's ability to achieve its vision of a visible, healthy, diverse and appreciated agricultural economy. They include:

- Local authority for agricultural decisions;
- Protection and use of agricultural land;
- Environmental stewardship;
- Local agricultural knowledge and awareness;
- Supporting infrastructure and services;
- Economic viability; and
- Food security and self-sufficiency.

These key issues capture and describe a number of additional specific challenges, which are affecting agriculture on Salt Spring. Overlaps between and across the identified key issues naturally exist. However, for the purposes of organization and economy these overlaps have been minimized within the document.

The extent to which each of these areas is considered and addressed, will determine Salt Spring Island's ability to achieve its agrarian vision.

¹⁹ www.unbc.ca/assets/planning/localfood/reports/unbc_final_report_ssi_sat.doc

²⁰ www.unbc.ca/assets/planning/localfood/reports/unbc_final_report_ssi_tues.doc

KEY ISSUES

A. Local Authority for Agricultural Decisions

As is the case throughout British Columbia, farmland use and farm production on Salt Spring Island is governed by a myriad of local, provincial, and federal legislative acts and regulations. These laws and policies have varying implications for the kinds of decisions that can be made by a community. At best, the complexity of these governing laws and policies can be confusing. At worst, their interpretation, enforcement, and application can either be out of sync with local needs and priorities or be sufficiently contradictory as to create conflict. Local examples of legislative and policy challenges include:

- The new provincial Meat Inspection Regulations under the *Food Safety Act* make it illegal for the farm gate sale of meat products not inspected at a federally or provincially licensed facility. The absence of such a facility on the island forces farmers to take their animals to off-island licensed abattoir facilities for processing. This increases the cost for farmers and the stress on animals. The community also loses the economic benefit of having a local meat processing facility.
- The application of highly specific and rigid water and property line setback regulations in the *Land Use Bylaw 355* duplicate or exceed current provincial standards.
- A provincial farm tax status assessment policy that does not account for the supporting services and functions of undeveloped, “wild” or forested on-farm areas in the determination of a farm’s tax status for properties located outside of the ALR.²¹
- The reassessment of non-ALR farm properties in the Capital Regional District may result in significant tax increase for partially farmed properties that would force many elderly owners sell them, potentially losing these farmlands to subdivision and development.
- The apparent lack of guiding agricultural land management policies by government agencies such as BC Parks and the Capital Regional District, currently responsible for the management of certain agricultural properties on Salt Spring Island.

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

²¹ www.bccassessment.bc.ca/process/agricultural_forestry/classify_farm.asp “Unused land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) may qualify for farm class if part of the parcel is farmed. To qualify, the owner must certify that the unused area is being held for primary agricultural production. If the property is not in the ALR, the non-farmed portion will be classified according to the property’s use and zoning.”

Agriculture on Salt Spring, as is the case everywhere, is subject to the effects of provincial and federal government policies, national and international trade agreements, and market economy forces. And while these factors can significantly impact the composition and viability of agriculture, farmers, communities, and even local governments generally are restricted in their ability to participate in or affect the discussions and decisions involving these factors.

Legislative Context

There are a number of provincial and federal acts and regulations that affect agriculture on Salt Spring Island. The following is a summary of a number of key legislative policies.

Salt Spring Island is located within the **Islands Trust**, a federation of twelve independent local trust governments and one island municipality. The Islands Trust has been given the responsibility to plan land use and regulate development in the Trust Area. Established under the *Islands Trust Act* by the Province of British Columbia in 1974 the Trust's purpose is,

*"...to preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the trust area and of the province generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the Government of British Columbia."*²²

Similar to other British Columbia municipalities, Islands Trust communities are required by law to elect local representatives every three years. The **Salt Spring Island Local Trust Council (SSILTC)** consists of two elected local trustees and an appointed chair from the Trust's Executive Committee. The SSILTC is responsible for making local land use decisions for the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area, which includes Salt Spring Island and twenty-five smaller associated islands.²³

Under the *Islands Trust Act*, which allows for the application and administration of the *Local Government Act* and *Community Charter* the SSILTC is responsible for the development and application of official community plans, land use zoning and other land use bylaws. The *Local Government Act*, *Community Charter* and *Agricultural Land Commission Act* allow the SSILTC to make certain decisions involving agricultural land use activities where agriculture is seen as benefiting from their involvement. These include:

- The establishment of bylaws and land use policies that reduce conflicts between agricultural and other land uses;
- Protect the health of the community and natural environment; and
- Maintain certain form and character aspects important to the local community.

²² www.islandstrust.bc.ca/tc/pdf/orgpolstatement.pdf

²³ www.islandstrust.bc.ca/ltc/ss/default.cfm

The SSILTC has established an **Agriculture Advisory Committee (SSIAAC)** that provides recommendations “on matters referred to it by the Local Trust Committee concerning policy, regulation and planning approval applications relative to issues affecting agriculture and agricultural land use.” The SSIAAC’s role is advisory and its recommendations are not binding upon the SSILTC. The SSIAAC consists of minimum of seven members “with qualifications related to the mandate of the committee and persons that represent a wide cross section and the varied interests of the community.” The current Terms of Reference for Salt Spring Island’s AAC is provided in Appendix C.

The provincial **Agriculture Land Commission (ALC)** is an independent provincial agency responsible for administering the Province’s land use zone or Agricultural Land Reserve in favour of agriculture. ALC is made up of six regional panels that carry out the duties of the Commission and represent the Commission in different areas of BC. Members of each panel are appointed from the region for which they are responsible. Members are selected via a process under the direction of the BC Government’s Board Resourcing and Development Office.²⁴ Salt Spring Island is located within the ALC’s Island Panel region.²⁵

The ALC is responsible for the administration of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. The *ALC Act* requires that agricultural land within the ALR not be used for non-farm uses unless specifically permitted by the Act or its associated regulations. The *ALC Act* takes precedent over, but does not replace other provincial legislation and local bylaws and policies. And while the *ALC Act* supersedes the zoning powers administered by the SSILTC, according to the *Local Government Act* the SSILTC can act as the agent for the ALC in land use matters related to the ALR. A local government can deny an application thereby preventing its submission to the ALC for review if the proposed removal of land from the ALR or non-farm use results in a zoning change. However, the ALC is required to make the final decision on matters having to do with removal of land from the ALR or that would allow for non-farm uses on ALR land, not in accordance with the provisions of the *Act*, and do not result in changes to local zoning. The ALC is also required to provide a final decision in the situation of a dispute or appeal.²⁶

The **Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL)** is responsible for the administration of a wide variety of legislation that involves or affects agricultural land and activities including *Agricultural Produce Grading, Animal Disease Control, BC Wine, Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm), Fisheries, Game Farm, Land, Local Government (Sections 916-919), Plant Protection, and Weed Control Acts*.²⁷ Under the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* MAL with assistance from the Farm Industry Review Board is responsible for protecting “normal” farm practices occurring on properties within the ALR, where farming is a permitted activity or in areas licensed or zoned for agriculture.²⁸

²⁴ www.lcs.gov.bc.ca/BRDO/

²⁵ www.alc.gov.bc.ca/contacts/regions.htm

²⁶ www.alc.gov.bc.ca/index.htm

²⁷ www.al.gov.bc.ca/ministry/legsum/legsum_index_mal.stm

²⁸ www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/farmpp/index.htm

BC Assessment, a provincial Crown corporation, is responsible for the classification of properties as farms under B.C. Regulation 411/95 of the *Assessment Act* for property assessment and tax purposes. Farm classification is a voluntary program that provides the benefit of a low tax rate for assessed properties.²⁹ BC Assessment is currently reviewing the status of farm properties located on non-ALR farmland in the Capital Regional District. Farms not being fully farmed could lose their farm-class status for the entire farm and instead would receive farm tax status only on the portion currently being farmed. Public concerns about the possible negative impacts arising from these reclassifications have prompted the BC Minister of Small Business and Revenue to order a review of the property tax assessment policy.³⁰

The **BC Ministry of Environment (MoE)** is responsible for a wide variety of legislation that involves or affects agricultural land and associated activities including the *Drainage, Ditch and Dike, Environmental Assessment, Environmental Management, Fish Protection, Park, Pesticide Control, Water, Water Protection, and Wildlife Acts*.³¹

The **BC Ministry of Health** administers the *Health and Food Safety Acts* and through these acts establishes standards and procedures aimed at protecting public health. Local health boards and inspection agencies are responsible for the inspection and enforcement of these regulations. The *Food Safety Act* was established in 2002 to consolidate food safety aspects of the *Milk Industry, Meat Inspection, and Health Acts* under one statute administered by the Minister of Health. The new and controversial Meat Regulation is part of this *Act* as is the Food Premises Regulation.³²

In addition to these local and provincial government agricultural regulations and policies, there are a number of federal acts and regulations administered by **Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Health Canada, and Transportation Canada**.³³

Direction

During the Community Dialogue sessions, restrictive government regulations were identified as a major obstacle to the health and development of agriculture on Salt Spring. Most groups said that a lack of provincial and federal government support was also an issue. A need for clarity and more local coordination and control was identified as one of the four key challenges. One group proposed the establishment of a local agriculture commission or council that would provide a coordinated approach to agricultural issues as a strategy to address this issue.

Other area farm plans in BC have addressed the issue of local agricultural decision-making by recommending the establishment or continuation of Agriculture Advisory

²⁹ www.bccassessment.bc.ca/pdf/process/agri_forest/farm_brochure.pdf

³⁰ Kane, M. 2007. "Policies eyed to protect small farms." *The Vancouver Sun*. Published: Monday, December 17, 2007.

³¹ www.al.gov.bc.ca/ministry/legsum/legsum_index.stm

³² www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/ehp_foodsafety.html

³³ www.al.gov.bc.ca/ministry/legsum/legsum_index_fed.stm

Committees (AACs). The Salt Spring Island LTC has already established an AAC but its authority, mandate and operation is restricted by the *Local Government Act*. Under this Act:

- AACs cannot lobby local government, or pursue their own interests or agenda's - their responsibility is to respond to requests for advice from the local government body on land use matters and decisions involving agriculture;
- AAC membership is determined by the elected local government officials - they may not be able to fully represent local agricultural interests or issues; and
- AACs cannot engage in beneficial advocacy, extension, education, or economic enhancement, research or fundraising services for the local agricultural community.³⁴

In the past, the BC Government provided extension services structured to help farmers understand and negotiate their way through the various and overlapping governmental regulations and policies, while providing them with resources and assistance to improve the economic viability of their operations. However, due to government cutbacks many of the services have been decreased or automated and provided on-line.

A few BC communities have decided that the best way to assist local farmers is by improving the local economic environment for agricultural businesses through the establishment of agricultural economic support and enhancement programs.³⁵ However, no BC community has attempted to establish a community-based agricultural agency or office to support and coordinate local agricultural efforts, and to improve connections with the various government agencies on agricultural matters.

In May 2007, the Area Farm Plan Steering Committee submitted a list of policy recommendations to the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan review.³⁶

Strategic Objectives

- Provide a coordinated approach to agricultural planning and extension services on Salt Spring Island;
- Build and maintain wide support from local and provincial governments and the Salt Spring Island community for ongoing implementation of the Area Farm Plan;
- Ensure that non-farm uses do not intrude into the Agricultural Land Reserve and other farm lands;
- Ensure that decisions that involve or affect agriculture on Salt Spring are made in consultation with the local agricultural community in order to minimize potential

³⁴ www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/aac/index.htm

³⁵ Recommendation of the Spallumcheen Agricultural Area Plan (www.spallumcheentwp.bc.ca/files/{E244CCF4-9825-4CF4-BAC1-21B3C0508C74}Agriltural%20Area%20Plan%20-%20Phase%203%20Report%20Final.pdf) and part of the Okanagan Agrifutures Program being developed by the Regional District of Central Okanagan (www.okanaganagrifutures.com).

³⁶ Appendix A.

negative impacts and maximize the potential positive effects of government policy, regulation and decision making on agricultural land and farm activities; and

- Ensure that ongoing dialogue between the agricultural and non-agricultural community on issues involving agriculture is improved and maintained.

B. Improved Protection & Utilization of Farm Land

The beauty and climate of the West Coast and Salt Spring Island coupled with a strong real estate market is increasing the demand for residential properties. As a consequence, there have been substantial increases in the price of all island properties, including farmland. Agricultural properties on Salt Spring are currently valued between \$60,000 and \$100,000 per acre depending on location of the property, the presence of water views, and the extent and condition of associated buildings and infrastructure.³⁷ These high land prices present a barrier to many aspiring farmers, as income provided by most agricultural ventures is insufficient to cover the capital cost of acquiring the land. High property values and low farm incomes also make it attractive for existing farmers to sell their farms for the capital gains benefit.

Following provincial and national trends the average age of Salt Spring's farmers continues to rise. In 2001, the average age of a Salt Spring Island farmer was 52.4.³⁸ Today it is 55.3, three years older than the Canadian average.³⁹ If younger family members do not take over the farming responsibilities it is anticipated that farms will be coming up for sale at prices beyond the reach of the average beginning or established farmer. Unfortunately, many retiring or aging farm families cannot afford to pass on their farms at a reduced price, as their farms are their main source of retirement funds.

Concerns have been expressed about the growth and potential expansion of Salt Spring's Ganges and Fulford Harbour village areas on to surrounding natural and agricultural lands. As has been demonstrated in other growing areas of the Province, communities are increasingly being pressured to accommodate population growth by allowing the expansion of village boundaries and through the development of important community facilities on farmland.

Population growth and increased development are also having an impact on the Island's natural and community infrastructure. While there have only been a few disagreements between local residents and farmers, the potential for conflict is increasing as new residents - mainly non-farmers - move into or adjacent to farming areas.

The establishment of the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) has helped maintain a significant amount of agricultural land on Salt Spring Island. Since 1974 approximately 10% (300 ha) has been excluded from Salt Spring's ALR lands.⁴⁰ The current Official Community Plan supports agriculture and the maintenance of the Island's ALR. However, it still allows for the contemplation of non-farm uses and exclusions from the ALR to accommodate recreation needs (up to 11 ha) and essential community services that cannot be located elsewhere due to engineering constraints, or "strategic

³⁷ According to a review of real estate listings for agricultural and acreage properties listed in the Sept 19 – Oct 17, 2007 Gulf Islands Real Estate publication. www.gulfislands.net

³⁸ www25.statcan.ca:8081/AgrProfile/showData.jsp?LocCode=034064

³⁹ www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/95-629-XIE/8/8.5_F.htm

⁴⁰ www.sierraclub.ca/bc/programs/communities/s2sgbs_saltspringisland_v2.pdf

considerations such as those that determine the best location for an emergency response station."⁴¹

Farmland Use on Salt Spring

According to the 2006 Salt Spring Island Land Use Inventory conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands as part of this Area Farm Plan study, there are:

- 2,922 hectares of ALR land on Salt Spring Island of which 91% (2,667 ha) is available for farming;
- 9% (254 ha) of Salt Spring's ALR is not available for farming due to physical constraints (e.g. lakes, rivers, road allowances), or due to conflicting land use activities such as commercial and industrial development, golf courses and parks, institutional uses and residential properties under 0.4 ha in size;
- 55% (1,479 ha) of the ALR available for farming was actively being farmed;
- On ALR land available for farming, 44% (1,161 ha) was not being farmed.
- 70% (808 ha) of these unfarmed lands were not yet developed or cultivated. The remaining 353 hectares had limited agricultural activity;
- 94 properties, covering 659 hectares of non-ALR land, were actively being farmed; and
- Within the ALR, farming appeared to be more prevalent on parcels over 4 ha with 65% of ALR properties under 4 ha not being farmed at the time of the survey.⁴²

The 2006 Canadian Census of Agriculture reported 167 farms on Salt Spring, down slightly from 2001 when 170 farms were reported. More significantly was the decline in the total area of reporting farms, which at 2,501 hectares suggests a significant and currently, unexplainable loss of 871 hectares from the 2001 Census.⁴³ In 2006, the total number of farm operators was 245, a slight decline from the 2001 when 255 reported.⁴⁴

Direction

The protection and utilization of farmland was identified by all groups participating in the final Community Dialogue session as one of the top four challenges to be addressed in order to improve the health and viability of agriculture on Salt Spring Island. Most groups were particularly concerned about the escalating price of farmland and the amount of farmland not being farmed. A number of groups proposed establishing a local farmland trust that could receive, purchase and manage farmland on behalf of the local community.

Consistent with the farmland use and protection issues identified at the public dialogue sessions, the Area Farm Plan Steering Committee recommended during the 2007 Salt

⁴¹ www.islandstrust.bc.ca/lrc/ss/pdf/ssbylbaseocpvolume10345.pdf

⁴² Kline, R. 2007. *Salt Spring Island Agricultural Land Use Inventory 2006*. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Victoria, BC.

⁴³ MAL is currently looking into how this figure was arrived at by Statistics Canada.

⁴⁴ Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Agriculture.
www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm

Spring Island Official Community Plan (OCP) review process that the OCP be revised as follows:

- Limit the non-farm use and subdivision of agricultural land, and institute a “no net loss” policy for ALR land;
- Provide a more explicit statement in support of local agriculture that captures the vision of the Area Farm Plan, and updates the existing definition of farming so that it includes modern farming practices and consideration of the nature and potential of agro-forestry;
- Incorporate the spirit and intent of the provincial *Farm Practices Protection (“Right to Farm”)* Act within the OCP;
- Encourage the establishment of a community farmland trust and cooperative farming initiatives supported by local input and involvement; and
- Establish clear policy directions that make developers responsible for the establishment of buffers that protect adjacent farmlands and sensitive ecosystems.⁴⁵

Strategic Objectives

- Minimize non-farm activities and subdivision of land within the Agricultural Land Reserve and encourage farming as the primary land use activity;
- Protect and enhance Salt Spring Island’s existing agricultural land base;
- Encourage farmland owners to farm or make it available for farming;
- Provide long-term, affordable access to farmland for beginning farmers;
- Support the continuation of agricultural activities on lands located within island village settlement areas and outside of the Agricultural Land Reserve; and
- Ensure the compatibility of proposed land uses adjacent to agricultural land.

⁴⁵ Appendix A.

C. Environmental Stewardship

There is a wide range of farming practices occurring on Salt Spring. Generally, most farmers and food producers are using or are interested in organic and ecologically sensitive or appropriate practices. A number of farms are participating in the Canada - British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program. In addition, farmers are required to follow stringent pesticide application, health and pollution laws and regulations. Even given this situation, local community members continue to harbour concerns about the potential negative impact that farming could have on the health of the local environment and community. Specific concerns include: the continued use of pesticides and fertilizers and the potential for unintended consequences such as surface and ground water contamination; the introduction or use of genetically modified organisms; and potential negative environmental and health effects associated with some conventional or large-scale farm operations. Additional concerns identified during the Community Dialogue sessions included: the introduction of pests and diseases, including invasive plant species; pollution of watersheds by livestock and overgrazing; the potential aesthetic and environmental impact of aquaculture operations; the excessive use of water and energy; and disposal of agricultural wastes.

Public interest in environmental and personal health issues is growing. This is reflected in an increasing demand for local, environmentally and ethically produced farm products. Most farmers on Salt Spring Island farm in a manner that is considerate of the environment. Concerns have been raised by members of the farming community regarding the imposition of inflexible policies and regulations on farm properties, such as *Land Use Bylaw 355*, that may not be consistent with existing provincial or federal regulations, and do not allow for local adaptation.

Climate change will likely become a significant issue for island agriculture in future years. The climate is expected to become less stable and unpredictable with wetter winters and possibly drier summers.⁴⁶ As a result of these changes the availability of adequate water for irrigation during the summer months may become a key challenge for produce and fruit growers as well as livestock producers who depend on the production of local forage crops. Over the coming years there is an expectation that climate change will eventually affect the way that farming is practiced and the types and range of crops that can be reliably grown. Adaptation will be an important strategy and farmers are expected to need additional assistance and training to help them cope with the anticipated changes.

In 2005, the Earth Festival Society through the Salt Spring Community Energy Strategy identified ways in which the community could reduce its contribution to greenhouse gases. In addition to directly reducing the production of greenhouse gases through the use of bio-fuels, more efficient vehicles and use of alternative, non-polluting transportation options, they recommended that the community reduce its reliance on imported food by increasing its consumption of locally grown, organic food to 5%, replacing 25% of the Island's imported fruit and vegetables with local products, and

⁴⁶ www.usgcrp.gov/usgcrp/nacc/education/pnw/pnw-edu-2.htm

10% of imported conventionally produced dairy, eggs, meat, fruit and vegetables with BC grown organic products by 2012. These actions would result in a 5% reduction of the Island's total greenhouse gas emissions – 23% of the targeted greenhouse gas emissions reduction for Salt Spring.⁴⁷

The Salt Spring Community Energy Strategy is but one demonstration of the strong environmental and social values held by Salt Spring Islanders. There is significant local expertise in the science and practice of sustainability, with interest and awareness on a broad range of associated topics that include affordable housing, energy, water, agriculture and local food production.

Context

The application of additional or more restrictive environmental policies that go beyond existing provincial and federal legislation is difficult as they can be interpreted as restricting a farmers "right to farm" under the *Farm Practices Protection Act* administered by the Farm Industry Review Board. Unless the farm practices in question contravene existing provincial or federal legislation, they are considered to be "normal farm practices" and there is really no way to restrict them. On Salt Spring Island there have been concerns raised by producers about *Land Use Bylaw 355* and its establishment of prescriptive water setbacks that currently exceed current provincial and federal regulations and standards.

In 2003, the Canada - British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program was launched in an effort to improve and enhance the current environmental stewardship practices of British Columbian producers. The EFP Program encourages farmers and ranchers to be better stewards of the land by increasing awareness and understanding of existing environmental regulations, helping operations proactively identify where they are not in compliance, and assisting with the implementation of beneficial management practices. Participation in the program is voluntary and funded. Resulting plans are protected by confidentiality agreements. Additional goals of the program include improving the public perception of agriculture, reducing conflicts between agriculture and environmental interest, and reducing wildlife impacts on agricultural lands.⁴⁸

As indicated previously there is a wide range of provincial and environmental legislation that affects farmers. At the provincial level this includes the *Environmental Land Use, Fish Protection, Park, Pesticide Control, Water, Water Protection, and Wildlife Acts*.⁴⁹ At the federal level it involves the *Canadian Environmental Protection, Fisheries, Species at Risk, Migratory Birds Convention, and Wildlife Acts*.

As more and more people from urban environments move to rural places the possibility for conflict – particularly around the environmental nature of certain farm practices

⁴⁷ www.saltspringenergystrategy.org/docs/SS_Energy_Strategy.pdf

⁴⁸ www.bcac.bc.ca/efp_programs.htm

⁴⁹ www.al.gov.bc.ca/ministry/legsum/legsum_index.stm

such as the application of pesticides and manure – increases.⁵⁰ While the close proximity of urban populations may result in a number of negative impacts on farming they have been shown to encourage the uptake of environmentally friendly production practices.⁵¹

Direction

During the Community Dialogues concern for the environment and support for conservation and sustainability measures was widely supported. Participants encouraged the Steering Committee to expand the original goals of the Agricultural Farm Planning process to include the adoption of environmentally and socially considerate farm practices. In the words of one participating group, “agricultural activities should be environmentally sensitive, socially just and sustainable.” In spite of the recognition and support for the environment, environmental issues were not identified as being critical to the realization of the vision of the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan. This suggests that most farmers are using agricultural practices that are not in conflict with the Island's environmental ethic.

Environmental issues such as the protection of fish, wildlife and sensitive habitats, as well as the control of pests, are generally considered in most area farm plans. The extent of the environmental recommendations and strategies proposed in an area agriculture plan depends on the nature and extent of the challenge faced by the community and the amount of environmental support that exists.

Farm practices on Salt Spring are generally conducted in an environmentally considerate manner. Improvements could be made particularly in the areas of on farm habitat enhancement, and energy and resource conservation. Environmental farm practices are encouraged and supported through the existing Canada - BC Environmental Farm Planning Program, which provides farmers with an understanding and appreciation for existing environmental legislation and policies, in addition to funding for the implementation of beneficial on-farm practices. Programs like the EFP program have been shown to improve the adoption of on-farm conservation practices. Farmers are able to develop a personal understanding of the costs of environmental degradation to their profitability and to their health, and are provided with adequate information on the practical beneficial management practices.⁵²

The Area Farm Plan Steering Committee recommended two environmental policy ideas to the Salt Spring Island OCP review process:

- To define water quality protection setbacks for farm management practices according to existing standards established by existing provincial legislation; and
- To encourage the use of perennial vegetative buffers adjacent to surface watercourses to protect and improve the quality of surface runoff and to reduce the potential for erosion.

⁵⁰ dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/21-004-X/21-004-XIE2005003.pdf

⁵¹ <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/21-601-MIE/21-601-MIE2005073.pdf>

⁵² [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0023-7639\(199802\)74%3A1%3C114%3A0AOCPT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0023-7639(199802)74%3A1%3C114%3A0AOCPT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G)

During the Community Dialogue sessions a suggestion was made to develop a local voluntary environmental farming code of practice that could be connected to an associated marketing program. The California Association of Wine Growers is currently implementing this type of approach. In 2003, the Association formed the non-profit California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance to promote its Sustainable Winegrowing program and associated "Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices." The impetus behind the creation of this program appears to be a desire to set California wines apart from the competition with sustainable practices that improve the quality and marketability of the wines.⁵³ Such a program could be implemented on Salt Spring but would have to be voluntary so as not to conflict with the *Agricultural Land Commission* and *Farm Practices Protection Acts*.

There are a number of examples of environmental incentive programs used to encourage and reimburse farmers for the provision of valued ecological services ranging from the protection or enhancement of environmentally sensitive features or habitat, the provision of wildlife habitat or forage, or the sequestration of atmospheric carbon. Environmental incentive programs are often referred to as market-based instruments because of the use of market adjustments to encourage environmentally beneficial behaviours. In Canada, most market-based instruments are price based and influence or encourage behaviours through the provision of subsidies or rebates for certain environmentally supportive practices. Examples of these programs include the Delta Wildlife and Habitat Trust Fund that pays farmers to establish and maintain grassland set-a-sides for waterfowl and wildlife,⁵⁴ and the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) Program in Manitoba that is currently being piloted as a way of paying farmers for the protection of riparian habitat.⁵⁵

Strategic Objectives

- Increase the adoption of farm practices that reduce environmental impacts;
- Support farmers in the development and implementation of environmentally considerate farm practices;
- Establish stronger connections between the Island's agricultural and environmental/conservation communities; and
- Improve the definition of environmental farm practices within local land use bylaws and ensure that they support existing Provincial legislation and policies.

⁵³ www.wineinstitute.org/initiatives/sustainablewinegrowing

⁵⁴ www.deltafarmland.ca/dfwt2.html

⁵⁵ www.deltawaterfowl.org/alus/TychniewiczConsultingALUSReportJan2007.pdf

D. Local Agricultural Knowledge & Awareness

Since the Second World War North American society has been experiencing a loss of farmers, and with them an overall loss of agricultural knowledge. This is due in large part to declines in the rural, and in particular, the agricultural economy. Fewer and fewer people are living on the land and deriving an income from it. Currently, over half of the world's population lives in cities.⁵⁶ Less than 20% of Canada's population lives in rural areas like Salt Spring Island,⁵⁷ and less than 2% live on farms.⁵⁸ This rural/urban disconnect has resulted in a loss of understanding and knowledge about agriculture and the issues and challenges faced by farms and farmers today. However, issues such as personal health, food safety, and sustainability are causing more people to consider where their food comes from and how it is grown. This renewed interest in food and agriculture may provide an opportunity for an improved dialogue between Salt Spring Island's farming and non-farming community, and ultimately could translate into more support for local producers and the community's agricultural infrastructure.

Context

There are a number of Salt Spring-based organizations that are working to improve the community's understanding and appreciation of agriculture. They include the Salt Spring Island Farmers Institute, Island Natural Growers, and Salt Springers for Safe Food.

The Salt Spring Island Farmers' Institute is a 112-year old volunteer-based organization that encourages the preservation and development of agriculture on Salt Spring Island and supports farmers in their quest for sustainability. Founded in 1895, the Institute is committed to serving the local community. The Institute maintains a number of facilities at its four-hectare property on Rainbow Road including: an exhibition hall – the largest of its kind on the island; a number of heritage buildings which house the Community Museum and spinning mill; two antique equipment sheds; livestock, swine, and poultry barns; outdoor livestock display rings; a riding ring; and a covered stage and barbeque pit. The Salt Spring Island Farmers' Institute actively promotes the theory and practice of agriculture through workshops, the circulation of information and various other educational methods. Its 220 families are directly involved with issues involving agriculture practices, food production, land use and the preservation of island agricultural heritage. The annual Fall Fair organized and hosted by the Institute is a two-day seminal agricultural event on the island that attracts 10,000 visitors annually. The Institute publishes an annual farm produce and services directory, and maintains a web site.^{59,60}

Island Natural Growers (ING) is the Gulf Islands chapter of Canadian Organic Growers - a registered charity with a mission to lead local and national communities towards

⁵⁶ news.ncsu.edu/releases/2007/may/104.html

⁵⁷ www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/070516/d070516a.htm

⁵⁸ www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/agrc42g.htm

⁵⁹ www.ssifi.org

⁶⁰ Threlfall, T. 2007. *Pers. comm.*

sustainable organic stewardship of land, food and fibre, while respecting nature, upholding social justice and protecting natural resources. ING is essentially a local education and networking organization promoting organic farming and gardening through monthly on-farm meetings and through workshops designed to address issues and needs identified by the members. Its 87 members (94% of which are located on Salt Spring Island) include farmers, gardeners, processors, retailers, and consumers. ING hosts an annual Seedy Saturday event on Salt Spring,⁶¹ publishes the annual Salt Spring Island Local Organic Food Guide, organizes the Tuesday Farmers Market in the summer months and works on projects aimed at strengthening and supporting local food production.^{62,63}

Salt Springers for Safe Food is a grassroots, non-profit group concerned about issues that affect local food safety and food security. Founded in 1998, the organization brings attention to and lobbies against genetic engineering of foods. The group has increased local awareness about food safety by hosting numerous speakers and films, and encouraging public dialogue and debate on food safety issues. In addition to campaigning against genetically engineered foods they have hosted two "Real Food Faires" which have brought local growers together with a diverse group of chefs, food activists, value-added producers and gardeners, to highlight and promote the connection between consumers and local food.⁶⁴

The Salt Spring Island Garden Club provides residents with horticultural information and advice, offers workshops and informative talks, and supports the development of vegetable gardens and food producing activities on the island.⁶⁵

Salt Spring Island residents and visitors learn about agriculture through the various events and activities hosted by these four organizations. Notable events include the: Lavender Festival; Fibre Festival; Apple Festival; Wine Harvest Ball; Ruckle Farm Day; Seedy Saturday; and Fall Fair.

In addition, they have an opportunity to meet farmers directly through farm visits (many farms maintain farm stands and markets) and by visiting the two local markets. Agricultural operations are fairly visible and imbue Salt Spring with a certain agrarian atmosphere that contributes to its growing recognition as a rural idyll. In addition, a number of individual farms have provided directed learning and working opportunities for interested interns and volunteers.

In the past, the Gulf Islands Secondary School supported an agricultural work experience program, however, it now no longer exists. Current food or gardening/farming-focused educational programming is extremely limited.

⁶¹ A local event that encourages and allows for the exchange of crop seeds between producers and gardeners.

⁶² www.cog.ca/ing/index.htm

⁶³ Macey, A. 2007. *Pers. comm.*

⁶⁴ saltspringersforsafefood.com

⁶⁵ Pilon, C. 2008. *Pers. comm.*

Direction

While the importance and need for greater public understanding and awareness of agriculture and food issues was acknowledged throughout the Community Dialogue sessions and in particular the third and final session, it was not identified as one of the priority issues to be directly addressed by the agricultural planning process. This may be because public education programming can be indirectly provided through other programs such as marketing campaigns that also address the issue of farm profitability.

Food and agriculture education programs provide an effective vehicle to creatively realize a wide range of learning outcomes including math, science, environmental education, nutrition and even literature in addition to making children more aware about food and agriculture issues. In addition, food and agriculture-based or focused programs are often structured to support the development of beneficial habits and behaviours. Given their ability to connect to food and food issues these programs generally have a strong nutrition and preparation component. The presence and quality of the Gulf Islands Secondary School's existing cafeteria program may provide an opportunity to encourage the development of additional food and agriculture-based education opportunities.

Strategic Objectives

- Improve Salt Spring Island's understanding and appreciation of its agriculture and farming community;
- Increase the profile of agriculture on Salt Spring Island; and
- Improve connections between the non-farming and farming community.

E. Supporting Infrastructure & Services

There are a number of important agriculture-related facilities and services currently not available or in short supply on Salt Spring Island. They include:

- On-island meat processing and storage facilities;
- Long-term cold storage facilities for produce;
- Adequate food processing facilities; and
- Specialized farm equipment and technology that could be shared.

Changes to provincial and federal food safety regulations are impeding the re-establishment of local meat processing facilities. Other agriculture infrastructure gaps are likely due to high development and operation costs coupled with a lack of coordination and cooperation amongst producers and processors.

There is a need for more affordable housing on Salt Spring for farm labourers and new farmers. Current land use regulations limit the construction of permanent, on-farm housing and prevent farmers from offering long-term, good quality housing to farm labourers. Affordable on-site housing would help farmers recruit potential farm workers.

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

Education opportunities to learn the skills and knowledge necessary for farming or food processing are limited on Salt Spring. There are few local training or internship opportunities for young farmers or for existing farmers interested in upgrading or learning new skills. While there are a number of knowledgeable and successful farmers on the Island, there currently is no program in place to link them with aspiring farmers.

Transportation costs on, and to and from, Salt Spring are rising. The Island's increasing popularity is resulting in the congestion of local ferry service and main roads, particularly during the summer months. In spite of these rising costs and delays, attempts have not been made to coordinate off-island or on-island transportation services for procurement of staples and the shipping of livestock and products.

Context

In 2005 in anticipation of upcoming regulation changes that would affect the slaughter and processing of livestock in BC a study was commissioned by the Salt Spring Island Islands Farmers Institute to determine the feasibility of three abattoir options available to farmers in the Southern Gulf Islands. The three options considered included:

- The establishment of a local on-island abattoir facility;
- The creation of a mobile abattoir facility that could move between islands to process large livestock and poultry; and

- The use of Vancouver Island based inspected and licensed abattoirs.⁶⁶

The study concluded that the mobile abattoir was the most feasible option as it could be moved between the Gulf Islands and therefore could avoid the transportation and health impacts, and costs that would be incurred by moving animals to a centralized facility either one of the Southern Gulf Islands or on Vancouver Island.⁶⁷ Due to concerns over high operational costs and limited livestock numbers, this option was not pursued. In the mean time, an abattoir has been established on Saturna Island, and there is talk of establishing one on North Pender Island. Discussions have been renewed the possibility of establishing additional fixed or mobile abattoir facilities to address Salt Spring Island's need. Currently, livestock owners have to rely on existing facilities on Vancouver Island.

There is growing interest in the development of a central composting facility that would produce compost acceptable to the organic certification agencies. A pilot facility is being developed that will use a covered windrow system, however the finished compost from the pilot facility will be made with sewage sludge and therefore will not be acceptable for food crops or for any certified organic operations. If the pilot is successful, it is anticipated that an in-vessel composter will be purchased to replace the windrow system. The current location that is being proposed is in the Burgoyne Bay area. Access will be restricted because the entry road crosses private property. There is interest in considering alternative sites that allow for public access, are more centrally located and use feedstock approved for organic farms. Potential issues for the location and development of such a facility include zoning, the collection and handling of wastes, the impact of increased traffic, and access via neighbouring properties.

In the 2006 Salt Spring Island Food Security Discussion and Planning Paper, the development of supporting facilities, services such as an abattoir and the provision of training opportunities, are seen as benefiting local agriculture and food security. The 2005 Local Produce Study identifies the need for shared processing facilities, tool and equipment sharing, improved on-farm storage or centralized storage facilities, and farm business planning and financial management training.⁶⁸

Direction

During the Community Dialogue sessions, participants identified critical infrastructure gaps as the key issue impacting the health and development of agriculture on Salt Spring Island. A wide variety of suggestions were made to address this issue including the development of cold storage facilities, food processing/agro-industrial processing facilities, on island meat processing facility, community composting facility, coordinated off-island transport for livestock, online supplies list/web forum, and farm worker accommodation such as a hostel.

⁶⁶ www.bcfpa.ca/documents/Livestock%20Processing%20Feasibility%20Study.doc.pdf

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸

www.communitycouncil.ca/crfair_nl/PDFs/crfair_nl_Salt_Spring_Island_Food_Security_Report.pdf

In its policy proposals for agriculture to the Salt Spring Island OCP review process, the Area Farm Plan Steering Committee recommended that opportunities be provided to increase housing availability for farm workers and others who augment family farm income. It suggested that the Island Trust establish guidelines and criteria to assist in the determination of dwellings "necessary for farm use" on farmland located outside of the ALR and to assist the ALC with the determination of legitimate need for lands located within the ALR.

There is growing concern about the lack of young, aspiring farmers on Salt Spring. The challenge to encourage more young people to consider farming as a viable professional pursuit is a daunting one. Succession planning, affordable access and investment in farmland, low-cost financing, agricultural education and mentoring, social support and appreciation for the farming profession were identified as critical to addressing this challenge.

Strategic Objectives

- Provide facilities and strategies that support and expand agricultural activities by addressing identified gaps;
- Provide agricultural education services that address the needs of existing and new farmers;
- Pursue strategies to reduce increasing transportation costs;
- Cooperatively develop and deliver these supporting services and infrastructure;
- Support the creation of affordable and temporary housing necessary to support the growth and development of agriculture on Salt Spring; and
- Encourage and support young people in the pursuit of farming as a viable profession.

F. Economic Viability

There is a general understanding that farming is no longer financially profitable on Salt Spring Island. Reasons for this include:

- Higher capital costs (land and equipment);
- Increased debt loads.
- Higher input and operating costs due to increasing transportation (ferry fares and gas) costs;
- High cost of labour;
- Increases in cost of living;
- Loss of local services requiring more off-island travel and therefore additional costs;

These increased costs make it difficult to compete with off-Island producers who avoid these additional costs and may also enjoy additional supportive subsidies.

The retail price for food on Salt Spring often does not reflect the true cost of production. Due to their additional production costs, local agricultural products are often priced higher than imported, more cheaply produced products. This price difference contributes to the reluctance of consumers to buy locally produced products. There may be a lack of appreciation or understanding that the higher prices are necessary to provide a fair return to farmers for their services and products. Alternatively a number of local consumers may not be able to afford to pay the price difference.

There is a perception that there are not enough interested young farmers available to replace farmers who are retiring or leaving. Young people may be discouraged from pursuing farming as a profession due to high land costs, the poor financial return for the amount of required work, societal stigmas associated with labour-oriented professions, the lack of training opportunities and the lack of interest in the farming lifestyle. Local farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to secure consistent, reliable, affordably priced skilled and unskilled labour during peak production periods.

Federal and provincial agriculture and food policy is perceived to be unsupportive of Salt Spring's small-scale farming operations. In addition government subsidy programs are often geared to address the needs of large-scale agri-businesses.

Economic Context

In 2006 Canadian Census of Agriculture:

- 167 farms, with an estimated total farm capital value of \$86,519,750, reported gross farm receipts of \$3,998,362 - a 125% increase from the 2001 census;
- The average annual gross earnings of a Salt Spring Island farm was approximately \$24,000;
- 65% of the farms reporting had total gross farm earnings less than \$10,000;
- Only 3 farms reported gross earnings over \$250,000;
- Total farm expenses for farms on Salt Spring were \$3,905,981; and the

- The average annual net income for each Salt Spring Island farm was \$553.⁶⁹

According to the 2006 Land Use Inventory, Salt Spring supports a wide variety of farm production including sheep, lamb, goats, llamas, poultry, cheese, tree fruits, vegetables, wine and lavender. Organic food production is a strong and growing aspect of Salt Spring Island farms with 46% reporting the use of organic methods with 7% certified organic. Most Salt Spring Island farm produce is marketed locally through farm gate sales, two community markets and through local commercial grocers.⁷⁰

There are currently two public markets that farmers and food processors can participate in:

- The Saturday Market in the Park held in Centennial Park, Ganges Village from April to October; and
- The Tuesday Farmers Market which takes place on the Salt Spring United Church grounds in Ganges from July until the second week in October.

In addition to the farmers markets, an annual Local Organic Food Guide is published annually in an effort to connect people with the families, farms and places that offer local organic produce and processed food on Salt Spring Island. The guide also advertises the annual Salt Spring Island Apple Festival, the Seed and Plant Exchange, and the Tuesday's Farmers Market. The Salt Spring Island Farmers Institute produces an annual Farm and Farm Services Directory.⁷¹

The Market in the Park has become a very popular summer attraction for tourists and local residents attracting more than 88,000 visitors in 2006. The theme of the market is *Make It, Bake It, Grow It*. This requires participating vendors to provide locally produced wares. In addition, vendor permits are only available to established Salt Spring residents. In 2006 there were approximately 120 registered vendors, 10% of which were farmers. The Capital Regional District currently administers the Market in the Park. In 2006 it was estimated to have made a contribution of \$2.8 million to the local economy.⁷²

In 2006 there were twelve vendors attending the Tuesday market, which is restricted to produce and food vendors. This market is one-tenth the size of the Saturday Market and drew an estimated 11,500 visitors in 2006. The Tuesday Market provides another sales outlet and significant source of direct revenue for farmers. In 2006 it was estimated to have made a contribution of \$177,000 to the Island's economy (twice the estimated

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

⁷⁰ Kline, R. 2007. *Salt Spring Island Agricultural Land Use Inventory 2006*. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Victoria, BC.

⁷¹ www.saltspringmarket.com/salt_spring_island_farmers/farm_directory.htm

⁷² www.unbc.ca/assets/planning/localfood/reports/unbc_final_report_ssi_sat.doc

value of market sales).⁷³ This market is experiencing considerable growth with 16 vendors in 2007 - all reporting increased sales over 2006.⁷⁴

In addition to the financial information derived from their 2006 economic and community impact assessment of Salt Spring Island's farmers markets, researchers from the University of Northern British Columbia also determined that:

- Those that attend the markets are likely to do additional shopping or eating while in Ganges thereby providing an addition contribution to the local economy;
- Both markets have become important weekly social events; and
- Food issues of greatest importance to customers surveyed included "nutritional content", "in season", and "grown/produced locally."^{75, 76}

Agri-tourism is becoming an increasingly important and significant aspect of many farm operations on Salt Spring Island. Agri-tourism generally "refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation."⁷⁷ Consequently, it includes a range of activities including farm stays, farm tours, farm gate sales and retail outlets, on-farm attractions and events, u-pick operations, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, farm festivals and events, and working holidays. A strong tourism market is encouraging the growth of agri-tourism activities on Salt Spring.

The 2005 Salt Spring Island Local Produce Study determined that the income from produce sales was generally not adequate to provide a full-time income. While farmers were interested in expanding their production they were being constrained by a lack of: skilled farm help; appropriate mechanization; financial, marketing and customer support. Most farmers expressed an interest in coordinating aspects of farm operation and marketing with other producers.

In 2000, an economic profile of Salt Spring Island was prepared for the Economic Growth for a Sustainable Salt Spring Advisory Committee. At the time of the study, which relied on 1991 and 1996 Census data, 190 people or 4% of the working population reported working in agriculture. Today this number has increased to 245 people. The study identified a number of assets and challenges that remain true today. Identified assets included:

- Quality of agricultural products;
- Growing market for local, high quality and organically grown food; and a

⁷³ www.unbc.ca/assets/planning/localfood/reports/unbc_final_report_ssi_tues.doc

⁷⁴ www.unbc.ca/assets/planning/localfood/reports/unbc_final_report_ssi_tues.doc

⁷⁵ www.unbc.ca/assets/planning/localfood/reports/unbc_final_report_ssi_sat.doc

⁷⁶ www.unbc.ca/assets/planning/localfood/reports/unbc_final_report_ssi_tues.doc

⁷⁷ www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/definition.html

- Strong tourist market.⁷⁸

Recognized challenges that were affecting the economic viability of farm operations in 2000 included:

- High land prices;
- Low profit margins due to high expense costs;
- Weak marketing and promotion of locally grown products;
- Increased government regulations; and
- Existing marketing board regulations.⁷⁹

Direction

Lack of profitability was identified by all groups participating in the final Community Dialogue session as one of the key challenges to be addressed. There was overwhelming agreement that if the economic viability of farming could be improved, agriculture would resume its place of prominence on Salt Spring Island. Participants suggested a number of potential strategies including the branding/marketing and promotion of local food and agriculture products, development of agro-eco-tourism, provision of low interest loans to small and beginning farmers, and the creation of a four-season farmer's market.

In its policy proposals for agriculture to the Salt Spring Island OCP review process the Area Farm Plan Steering Committee recommended that:

- There should be allowances made to expand the possibilities of marketing locally produced food in different parts of the Island; and
- That the concept of agri-tourism be "introduced" into the OCP.

There is a desire to more concretely quantify and forecast the costs and profitability of current and potential farming activities on Salt Spring. This information would help producers determine ways in which to decrease costs, and identify higher value crops and potential marketing opportunities. In addition, as identified in the preceding Supporting Infrastructure & Services section, cooperative arrangements should be pursued to reduce the increasing transportation costs associated with island farming.

A need to identify and develop new and creative sources of farm financing and investment opportunities beyond what is suggested within this document was identified by a number of producers.

There are some concerns about the growth of agri-tourism – particularly if it results in the erosion of the agricultural capability of a farm or farm area. There is a desire to encourage agri-tourism activities that support farming, provide an opportunity for

⁷⁸ Garvie, E. 2001. *A Window of Opportunity: Economic Profile of Salt Spring Island – 2000*. Prepared for the Economic Growth for a Sustainable Salt Spring Advisory Committee. Unpublished. Salt Spring Island, BC.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

members of the community and the public to connect more directly with farms and farmers without compromising the agricultural capability of the farm.

Supported by a growing interest and desire for locally produced food there has been a tremendous increase and development of “buy local” campaigns in the US, UK, New Zealand and Australia that showcase fresh, local agricultural produce. These are extensions of existing, more generalized, buy local campaigns that have successfully advocated for the purchase of local goods and services.⁸⁰ They are often connecting to existing farmers markets and focus on promotion of quality products and the people that produce them. Considerable resources are available on-line to assist those interested in establishing such a campaign in their community.⁸¹

Buy local campaigns often make use of visually appealing on-line and printed advertising and information material. A number of branding schemes have developed to further identify and promote local products. Farmers participating in these programs pay a membership fee and agree to certain production conditions such as where (localness) and how (environmental and social standards) their produce or product was grown or produced. In return, they are able to use a visible and recognized local brand or label to market their produce and they are included in any publicity materials and marketing activities for the brand. Pure Catskills is an example of a local branding campaign that is being used by a number of farmers.⁸² During the Community Dialogues it was pointed out that Salt Spring Island products enjoy an international reputation for quality. This suggests that local products may already be benefiting from an informal branding arrangement.

In the United States, many county governments maintain an agriculture commission or extension offices that provide resources and assistance to the local agriculture community. In most cases economic development support is part of their mandate. A BC example is the recent establishment of the Central Okanagan Regional District's Okanagan Agri-futures Program. Supported by funding from the Western Economic Diversification program and the Regional District's Economic Development Commission the mission of the program is to assist individual farmers and agribusiness owners in the Central Okanagan region to realize new opportunities in their businesses. They currently provide one-on-one mentoring to individual businesses and on-going professional development opportunities. They facilitate the creation of new agricultural associations and maintain an information resource centre for farmers and other agricultural stakeholders. In addition they contribute to new stakeholder initiatives of agricultural associations and industry support organizations.⁸³

Local purchasing policies are another way that organization, institutions and communities can support local businesses and farms. These policies ensure that a significant number of day-to-day purchases are made from local businesses and

⁸⁰ www.newrules.org/retail/news_slug.php?slugid=353

⁸¹ www.foodroutes.org/toolsforaction.jsp

⁸² buypurecatskills.com/pdfs/Pure%20Catskills%20Standards.pdf

⁸³ www.okanaganagrifutures.com

producers within their community. They also allow organizations and communities to direct their purchases to support certain activities and ventures.

Canadian examples of programs that are encouraging or developing institutional markets include the Canadian Organic Grower's (COG) Growing Up Organic Project and the Ontario-based initiative, Local Food Plus. COG's Growing Up Organic Project is a national initiative that provides financial support to its chapters like Salt Spring's Island Natural Growers (ING) to develop institutional markets for organic and transitional farmers. The objective is to build stronger local organic food systems. The initial focus was on the provision of local food to childcare facilities, but the project is expanding to other institutions such as schools, hospitals and nursing homes. ING has received funding to research the possibilities on Salt Spring and to conduct a pilot project in 2008.⁸⁴ Local Food Plus is a recently established non-profit organization that is working to connect sustainable farmers and food processors with local purchasers including institutions in Ontario.⁸⁵ A number of additional North American examples exist for implementation of local food purchasing policies in hospitals⁸⁶ and schools.⁸⁷

Strategic Objectives

- Determine the current and future costs and profitability of existing and potential farming activities;
- Identify and develop new and creative sources of farm financing and investment opportunities;
- Provide conditions and services that improve the long-term economic viability farming;
- Provide local extension services that improves farmers and local food processors access to profitable market opportunities;
- Support the balanced pursuit of agri-tourism opportunities that benefit agriculture and do not lead to the loss of productive agricultural land;
- Pursue a local agricultural products purchasing policy.

⁸⁴ Macey, A. 2007. *Pers. comm.*

⁸⁵ www.localflavourplus.ca

⁸⁶ www.noharm.org/details.cfm?ID=1052&type=document

⁸⁷ www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/policies/pdf/text/BerkeleyFoodPolicy.pdf

G. Food Security & Self-Sufficiency

Salt Spring Island has one of the largest agricultural land holdings in the Islands Trust. The Island's high quality soils, mild climate, presence of a diverse range of microclimates, reasonable water availability, and supportive local markets allow for the production of a great range and quality of food products. In spite of these favourable conditions, Salt Spring Island farmers do not produce and process enough food to provide a reasonable level of food security for their community. According to a 2006 discussion and planning paper by the Salt Spring Island Community Food Security Project Steering Committee, less than 5% of the Island's annual food requirements were met by local production.⁸⁸ The 2006 Land Use Inventory revealed that only a fraction of the Island's agricultural land is being used to produce food for human consumption.⁸⁹ Interest in locally produced and processed foods, coupled with concerns about local sustainability, food access and climate change, is bringing more attention to the issue. There is a desire to improve local food security and in doing so address a number of related issues.

Definition

In recent years there has been growing interest around food security and self-sufficiency on Salt Spring Island. Food security, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization, exists when, "all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."⁹⁰ Household or home food security is the application of this concept to the family level, where individuals within homes are the focus of concern. The Community Food Security Coalition has extended the definition to communities, and states that community food security is the, "condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice."⁹¹ Food insecurity exists when individuals, households or communities do not have immediate and adequate physical, social or economic access to food as defined above.⁹² It also exists when a community is dependent on imported food.

There is a growing realization that Salt Spring Island is increasingly dependent on imported food and energy. Salt Spring is no longer food self-sufficient to the extent that it was in the late 1800s or early 1990s. There is also a desire to reduce Salt Spring's contribution to greenhouse gases. The Salt Spring Energy Strategy set a target to

⁸⁸ www.communitycouncil.ca/crfair_nl/crfair_nl_salt_spring_story.html

⁸⁹ Kline, R. 2007. *Salt Spring Island Agricultural Land Use Inventory 2006*. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Victoria, BC.

⁹⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization. *Food Security: Concepts and Measurement*. www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4671E/y4671e06.htm. Accessed Aug. 16, 2007.

⁹¹ Hamm, M. and A. Bellows. *Community Food Security Coalition Web Site*. www.foodsecurity.org/views_cfs_faq.html. Accessed Aug. 16, 2007.

⁹² Food and Agriculture Organization. *Food Security: Concepts and Measurement*. www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4671E/y4671e06.htm. Accessed Aug. 16, 2007.

increase the local production of food from 5% to 10% by 2012 in an effort to improve food security and reduce targeted greenhouse gas emissions.⁹³

Food sovereignty is another aspect that is often linked to concerns about food security and self-sufficiency. The concept of food sovereignty was first proposed in 1996 as a result of growing concerns that food security did not adequately capture all the issues associated with the growing and provision of food. While food security suggests the issues of access and distribution, the concept of food sovereignty captures the broader issues of sourcing, production and ultimately local responsibility and control. Food sovereignty has been described "a platform for rural revitalization at a global level based on equitable distribution of farmland and water, farmer control over seeds, and productive small-scale farms supplying consumers with healthy, locally grown food."^{94,95}

The concept of food sovereignty is applicable to the Salt Spring Island situation in that it recognizes the interest and need for more local control. Its application is also congruent in that it can occur at a variety of scales starting at the local or community level and depending on interest and capacity can address regional, provincial, national or international issues.

Food sovereignty also addresses the issue of responsibility of ownership and control. These issues are increasingly important for rural communities like Salt Spring Island who want to maintain a hand in guiding how agriculture is locally practiced. For example, Islanders may want to discourage or prevent controversial practices such as the growing or testing of genetically engineered crops or livestock.

Context

According to the 2006 BC Food Self Reliance Report⁹⁶ BC is 48% food self-reliant. This figure is reduced to 34% if BC's population was to follow the *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* diet recommendations.⁹⁷ This report also estimated that 0.524 ha of land would be required to produce a healthy diet for the average British Columbian per year. Approximately 10% of this area (0.053 ha) would need to be irrigated. With 75% (0.394 ha) of the 0.524 ha devoted to the production of meat and meat alternatives. It is likely that significantly less land would be required to support a vegetarian diet.

According to the 2006 Salt Spring Island Land Use Inventory, of the 1479 ha of ALR land being farmed it was estimated that approximately 90% (1390 ha) of this land was supporting food producing agricultural activities. 55% of this area was in forage and

⁹³ www.saltspringenergystrategy.org/docs/SS_Energy_Strategy.pdf

⁹⁴ 2005. *Global Small-Scale Farmers' Movement Developing New Trade Regimes*. Food First: Institute for Food and Development Policy News and Views. Vol. 28 No. 97. www.foodfirst.org/pubs/newsviews/2005/sp05v28n97.pdf. Accessed August 24, 2007.

⁹⁵ A broader, more complete definition of food sovereignty is captured in the *Declaration of Nyéléni* available online at www.nyeleni2007.org/spip.php?article290

⁹⁶ www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/Food_Self_Reliance/BCFoodSelfReliance_Report.pdf

⁹⁷ www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html

pasture. Of the 659 ha of the farmed land located outside of ALR, 83% (544 ha) supported food-producing activities, with only 25% (136 ha) in forage or pasture.

At the time of the 2005 Salt Spring Island Local Produce Study there were only 36 ha of farmland in commercial produce production. The study found that:

- The total volume of commercial produce produced on Salt Spring represented less than 5% of all the produce brought onto the island for sale by local grocers;
- Approximately 2% of grocers inventory comes from local sources; and
- Local farms are producing a wide range of crops but not in high enough quantities, and only through the spring, summer and early fall.⁹⁸

In 2006 a number of local groups on Salt Spring with the support of funding provided by the Vancouver Island Health Authority as part of the Community Food Action Initiative initiated a food security study.⁹⁹ The initial project focused on conducting a local assessment and then generating a number of potential actions that could help inform the development of a larger plan.

The project focused on three areas:

- Development of a preliminary food security assessment of the local community, focusing on food production and processing, distribution and handling, policy and safety, and access by individuals and households;
- Identification of a number of potential community food security priorities; and
- Development of a community action-planning framework that will help with the realization of a systems-based local food security plan.

The study determined that Salt Spring Island currently only provides for 5% of its annual meat and produce needs, which roughly translates into 10 kilograms of produce and fruit, and half a chicken per resident per year. It also revealed that institutional and local grocers only have a two to three day supply of food. Emergency officials estimate that Salt Spring only has a three-day supply of food.

There is a question of how many people Salt Spring Island can support. Given that the 2006 BC Food Self Reliance Report estimates that 0.524 ha of land would be required to produce a healthy diet for the average British Columbian, and that the Salt Spring Island Land Use Inventory, estimated that there was approximately 3580 ha of agricultural land, Salt Spring Island currently has the ability to support 6,800 people or 71% of its current population of 9,640.

⁹⁸ www.communitycouncil.ca/crfair_nl/PDFs/crfair_nl_ING_Produce_Study.pdf

⁹⁹ The partner groups overseeing the project were: Salt Spring Island Community Services Society (lead agency), Island Natural Growers, Gulf Islands Coalition for Children and Families, the Earth Festival Society/Community Energy Strategy, Salt Spring Island NatureWorks, Lady Minto Hospital, and Salt Springers for Safe Food.

Direction

All but one of the nine Community Dialogue discussion groups identified the inability to achieve local food security and self-sufficiency as an obstacle to the health and development of agriculture on Salt Spring. However, overall it was ranked as a lower priority item. It was suggested that local food security and self-sufficiency would be improved if a number of the higher ranked challenges such as critical infrastructure gaps and economic viability were addressed. One Dialogue group made up of “eaters” (individuals interested in or involved with food access issues) identified food security as one of the top challenges and suggested a number of strategies to address it including the collection of baseline data that captures the current extent of the issue, the identification of measurable and achievable food security targets and the establishment of a local organization to coordinate agricultural and food security activities on Salt Spring Island.

During the review of a draft of the Area Farm Plan in November and December 2007, the issue of food security and self-sufficiency received more attention. Many reviewers felt that this was a significant issue and one that would only be growing in importance in the coming years. They also stated that Salt Spring has a responsibility to “feed itself.”

The issue of food security and self-sufficiency has received only a brief mention in previous agricultural area plans. This may be because there is a belief that food security is focused on food access and is not concerned with other more general agricultural issues. However, in recent years the North American food security movement has become very involved with agricultural issues through: its promotion of local food and farmers markets; in its development of education programs, policy proposals; and other initiatives that support farmers, encourage the practice of farming and protect farmland. The movement has supported and encouraged agricultural practices such as urban agriculture, gardening, composting, seed saving, and the maintenance of heritage crop and livestock varieties. It has joined other movements in opposition to the development, testing and growing of genetically engineered plants and animals.

The Salt Spring Island Community Food Security Project identified a number of related objectives in its 2006 report including:

- Increase local food production in a manner that is sustainable, supports biodiversity and is organic;
- Increase local priorities and participation in food policy and regulation;
- Improve food safety throughout the local food system in a manner that supports local food culture;
- Improve local young people's understanding and appreciation of good food and food production;
- Increase community involvement in improving local food security; and
- Establish a local food security council to coordinate and focus efforts.¹⁰⁰

100

www.communitycouncil.ca/crfair_nl/PDFs/crfair_nl_Salt_Spring_Island_Food_Security_Report.pdf

In its policy proposals for agriculture to the Salt Spring Island OCP review process, the Area Farm Plan Steering Committee recommended that the Island Trust should work cooperatively and collaboratively with other agencies and groups to encourage and promote and support a strong and independent local food system.¹⁰¹

Strategic Objectives

- Take more responsibility for meeting community food needs with local production;
- Reduce dependence on off-island inputs for the production, processing and transportation of local food products;
- Increase local seed production, seed saving;
- Encourage the development of locally adapted crop and livestock varieties;
- Discourage the establishment and production of genetically engineered crops and animals; and
- Increase food safety from field to plate in a manner that respects and supports the development of a local Salt Spring Island food culture.

¹⁰¹ Appendix A.

GUIDING VISION & PRINCIPLES

A vision provides a framework or common understanding that helps guide future decision-making. Salt Spring Island's agricultural community in collaboration with interested members of the community and local government have proposed the following agrarian vision for the island, that:

“Salt Spring Island becomes a place where agriculture is a strong, vital and productive part of the local economy and is carried out in a manner that promotes and protects a sustainable community.”

In support of this vision the following key principles have been identified to provide a more comprehensive and complete understanding of the manner in which this vision will be achieved.

- Protection** Support the protection and appropriate use of agricultural land on Salt Spring Island.
- Education** Develop an understanding and appreciation for agriculture among island residents and visitors.
- Stewardship** Encourage appropriate and environmentally sensitive farm practices.
- Cooperation** Establish collaborative networks of support among farmers, and between farmers and the community.
- Self Reliance** Reduce dependence on imported food and other inputs.
- Transparency** Ensure open and inclusive decision-making around issues involving agriculture.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AREA FARM PLAN

A number of recommended actions have been identified to address identified issues and to achieve the overarching goals of the Area Farm Plan process.

Key Recommendations

Three key recommendations have been identified that will put Salt Spring Island in a position to return agriculture to a place of prominence within the community. They are:

1. Establish a Salt Spring Island Agricultural Alliance

Action

- On acceptance of the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan dissolve the Steering Committee and strike a Salt Spring Island Agricultural Alliance responsible for the implementation of the Area Farm Plan and the coordination and delivery of a number of identified agricultural activities and programs.

Responsibilities

- Coordinate the implementation of the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan.
- Represent local agricultural interests at all levels of government.
- Provide a central contact and resource for individuals and agencies on agricultural matters.
- Work with various governments and government agencies on agricultural matters concerning Salt Spring Island.
- Assist with the marketing and promotion of Salt Spring agriculture.
- Find and secure funding and resources to support agriculture.
- Identify, receive, assess and share new approaches and ideas that support the mission of the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan.

Governance & Operation

- Established as a non-governmental organization under the appropriate provincial legislation.
- Board of Directors membership could include representatives from each local agriculture organization, independent farmers, food processors, chefs, agricultural suppliers, and others involved with food and agriculture on Salt Spring.
- Advisors to the Board of Directors (non-voting members) could include: representatives from the Salt Spring Island LTC, BC Parks, and other government organizations with interests in local agriculture and food production; the Coordinator position; MAL's Regional Agrologist; and representatives from the SSIALC and CRD.
- The Board of Directors would meet monthly or as required
- A designated Board member would chair meetings. The Chair would be supported in their role by the Coordinator position.
- Alliance members and advisors would be responsible for establishing and funding a Coordinator position who would assist with the organization and delivery of the Alliance's responsibilities

- Operational funding could be provided through a combination of Alliance member contributions and funding secured from outside sources. Part of the duties of the Coordinator position would be to secure long-term funding for their position and the delivery of the Alliance's programs.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved/coordinated decision-making.
- Improved realization and coordination of agricultural efforts.
- Effective delivery of the Area Farm Plan.
- Improved ability to deal with issues and challenges.
- Reduced costs.
- Improved ability to access additional funding sources.
- Long-term financial sustainability.

2. Establish a community farmland trust

Action

- Support the creation of a local community farmland trust.

Responsibilities

- Establish a mandate and governance model that allows the farmland trust to accept, acquire and manage farmland, and ensure it is actively farmed in perpetuity.
- Establish management protocols, leaseholder agreements and other legal instruments that ensure that farmland held by the farmland trust is actively farmed in an environmentally and socially considerate manner.
- Ensure the sustainable growth and management of the community farmland trust and its associated farmland holdings.

Governance and Operation

- To be determined. It could be established as a stand-alone body under appropriate provincial legislation, allowing it to receive and issue receipts for cash and land donations. The farmland trust could also be established under an existing or proposed local organization.

Desired Outcomes

- Ability to proactively protect and manage farmland.
- Ability to accept anticipated farmland donations.
- Improved ability to provide affordable farming opportunities to young and emerging farmers.
- Maintain local control and responsibility.

3. Establish key community facilities that support the expansion of agricultural activities

Actions

- Abattoir - Resume discussions on how to locally address the recently implemented meat inspection regulations. There is currently one plant in the Southern Gulf Islands on Saturna Island, with potentially one more planned on Pender Island. Discussions would have to address issues around need, cost (construction and on-going management), location, and existing and anticipated alternatives). In the short term there is a

need to coordinate off-island transport of live animals to slaughter and the return of inspected processed meat.

- Cold storage facilities – Resume initial discussions about the need for on-island cold storage facilities for produce and meat. Need to address issues such as: location(s), ownership and management, size and configuration, and cost. Discussions should also consider potential alternative arrangements.
- Processing facilities for agricultural products – Initiate discussions on the need for local processing facilities. Issues to address: nature of need, facility size, type, location(s), configuration and cost. Discussions should explore the possibility of alternative arrangements.
- Composting facilities – Continue and expand initial discussions around the establishment of local composting facilities

Desired Outcomes

- Facilities that support the expansion of agricultural activities.
- Improved economic viability for local farm operations.
- Increased range of locally grown and processed products.
- Increased ability to meet the needs of local producers and processors.

Additional Recommendations

Twenty-two additional recommendations have been developed to address the seven key issues facing agriculture on Salt Spring Island. There is an understanding that many of these recommendations are interconnected and could be associated with a number of the other key issues. However, for organizational purposes these recommendations are grouped according to the main challenge (reworded as a goal) they meet.

A. Ensure Local Participation in Agriculture Decisions

4. Maintain local agricultural information

Actions

- Update the information used to prepare the Plan and support its implementation every five years (the year following each Census period).
- Review and expand the scope of the agricultural information as required. Information to be reviewed and updated includes: the Land Use Inventory; local agricultural profile (supported by Statistics Canada Census, economic (contribution of agriculture to local economy), real estate trend, approved ALR exclusions and non-farm uses, and climate data; and updated zoning base maps.
- Monitor and track changes in Salt Spring Island's agriculture sector to determine issues of concern and changes in overall viability and as a way of gauging the effectiveness of the Area Farm Plan. The following indicators are suggested:
 - Hectares of land being farmed on Salt Spring (ALR and non-ALR land);
 - Hectares of ALR on Salt Spring Island;

- Annual number of applications, approvals and rejections for exclusion, non-farm use and subdivision for ALR land;
- Net returns from agriculture;
- Number of new and continuing agricultural operators and processors; and
- Total number of farms.

Desired Outcomes

- Effective provision of data necessary to support and justify agricultural decision-making.
- Improved ability to assess the effectiveness of the Area Farm Plan.
- Increased ability to support/guide necessary adjustments.

B. Protect & Use Farmland

5. Implement accepted agricultural OCP policies

Actions

- Implement those agricultural policy recommendations submitted by the Area Farm Plan Steering Committee during the Salt Spring Island OCP review process that are accepted by Salt Spring Island LTC.

Desired Outcomes

- Area Farm Plan recommendations are reflected in the revised OCP.
- Greater consideration of farmland and issues affecting agriculture in the OCP.
- Increased protection for farmland.

6. Work with government agencies regarding the use and management of their agricultural holdings

Actions

- Identify government agencies with agricultural holdings on Salt Spring Island.
- Engage government agencies with agricultural land - such as BC Parks and the CRD - in a discussion regarding the ongoing management of their agricultural properties.
- Request that these agencies support active and ongoing agricultural activities on these lands.
- Propose additional agricultural uses that support the interests and policies of each responsible agency.

Desired Outcomes

- Maintenance of the Island's existing agricultural land base.
- Improved recognition and support for local agriculture by government agencies with farmland.
- Increased recognition and support for Salt Spring's working landscape.

7. Pursue strategies that make more land available for farming

Action

- Explore alternative options of secure land tenure, financing and management that encourage farming. This would require research to identify and recommend potential models that could be implemented on Salt Spring.
- Establish mechanisms that identify unused or available farmland. This may include the creation of a local database.
- Explore the need and opportunity for farm succession planning.

Desired Outcomes

- Provision of additional affordable farming opportunities.
- Increased use of unused farmland.
- Link existing or aspiring farmers with farmland.

8. Increase agricultural awareness of new and potential residents

Actions

- Develop agricultural information materials to provide new and potential future residents considering the purchase of property adjacent or near farmland. Materials could include a brochure that describes Salt Spring Island's agricultural economy and history, a description of local farm types and practices, a copy of the MAL publication "The Countryside and You,"¹⁰² and list of local contacts (members of the proposed Salt Spring Island Agricultural Alliance).

Desired Outcomes

- Reduced potential for conflict between farmers and non-farm residents.
- Increased understanding, support and appreciation for local agriculture.

C. Encourage & Support Environmental Farm Practices

9. Establish a voluntary Salt Spring Island agricultural code of practice

Actions

- Explore the potential for establishing a voluntary local agricultural code of practice. This would include a detailed review of existing codes, an analysis of the costs and benefits, and consideration on how it could be structured to support existing or anticipated agriculture marketing initiatives.
- Depending on the outcome of the review, develop a code of practice for community review, and secure funding support for implementation and management.

Financing

- Further consideration of this issue would benefit from outside funding. It may qualify for outside support – particularly if it can be shown to benefit the economic viability of farm operations and the local community.

¹⁰² www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/800Series/800300-1Countryside.pdf

Desired Outcomes

- Improved environmental farm practices.
- Acknowledgement of existing environmental farm practices.
- Increased visibility and marketability of farm products produced in an environmentally considerate manner.

10. Harmonize local environmental bylaw policies on farmland with existing federal and provincial environmental regulations

Actions

- Engage the Salt Spring Island LTC and Islands Trust planning staff in a review of the existing environmental policies that apply to farmland within *Land Use Bylaw 355* to ensure that they support and encourage agricultural activities that comply with existing provincial and federal environmental regulations guidelines, and employ the latest beneficial management practices.
- Ensure that identified issues such as water and property line setback regulations are addressed in the subsequent review of the Salt Spring Island *Land Use Bylaw 355*.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved local policies so that they support agriculture.
- Reduced presence of conflicting environmental policies.
- Improved local compliance with environmental regulations.
- Improved relationship between local producers and the Local Trust Committee.

11. Encourage the implementation of beneficial farm management practices

Actions

- Introduce farmers to programs that support the implementation of beneficial management practices through the provision of information, prescriptions and funding. Currently, the Canada - British Columbia Environmental Farm Program is delivered by the BC Agriculture Council through its member organizations.
- Help farmers access additional sources of information and funding that assist the implementation of environmental farm management practices.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved understanding and awareness of beneficial farm management practices.
- Increased implementation of environmental farm practices.
- Improved access to resources that support the implementation of beneficial farm management practices.
- Reduced costs and additional benefits for farmers through the implementation of beneficial management practices.
- Improved local environmental community health.

12. Explore potential programs that support environmental services on farms

Actions

- Investigate the potential for establishing market or subsidy-based programs that support the establishment, protection and enhancement of environmental services on agricultural land. Currently there are a number of these programs in Canada that should be considered.
- Depending on the outcome of the investigation develop a proposal to initiate a pilot project that could be reviewed by the community and potentially submitted for funding support.

Financing

- Initial consideration of this issue would benefit from outside funding. Depending on the incentive method used the program could be self financed but likely will require outside government support. The ALUS pilot program receives funding from a number sources including the Advancing Canadian Agriculture & Agri-Food program, the Delta Waterfowl Foundation, the Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council, Manitoba Agriculture, Food & Rural Initiatives, and the Rural Municipality of Blanshard, Manitoba.¹⁰³

Desired Outcomes

- Increased support for environmentally sensitive farm practices.
- New income source for farmers.
- Financial recognition for the environmental services that farms and farmers provide.

D. Increase Local Understanding & Appreciation of Agriculture

13. Improve local agricultural literacy through the provision of agriculture-focused public education activities and events

Actions

- Provide and encourage the development of local activities and events that improve public understanding and appreciation of agriculture. These could include agricultural presentations, workshops, films, festivals and celebrations.
- Support community activities or events that have a connection to or celebrate agriculture.
- Identify existing community activities or events through which agriculture could be featured.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved local awareness and appreciation for agriculture.
- Increased local support for farming.

¹⁰³ www.kap.mb.ca/alus/MBfeature2_feb07.pdf

14. Increase agricultural education opportunities for children and youth

Actions

- Meet with School District 64's Board, staff, teachers, Parent Advisory Committee, and interested parents to discuss the possibility of expanding the existing applied learning opportunities connected to agriculture and food.
- Provide examples where agriculture and food based learning programs are being successfully integrated¹⁰⁴ and show how they support and extend existing learning objectives and targets.
- Explore the possibility of starting a pilot program such as a school market garden or farm practices program.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved awareness and appreciation for agriculture.
- Increased local support for farming.
- Increased appreciation for the range of educational opportunities that agriculture offers.
- Improved connection between the agricultural community and local schools.

E. Provide Supportive Agricultural Infrastructure & Services

15. Address the farm housing issue

Actions

- Develop a proposal for the provision of on-farm housing on Salt Spring Island. The proposal should consider a variety of options including the possibility of locating farm worker housing in existing settlement areas adjacent to working farmland in an effort to limit the potential development of farmland. Discussions that informed the OCP review process suggested the establishment of guidelines and criteria to assist in the determination of dwellings “necessary for farm use” on farmland located outside of the ALR and to assist the ALC with the determination of legitimate need for lands located with the ALR.
- Initiate a discussion with the Province regarding its current on-farm housing policy. This discussion may involve other regional municipalities that are currently struggling with this issue.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved ability to meet the housing needs of farmers and farm labourers.
- Avoid negative impacts to the ALR and agriculture land.
- Improved economic viability for local farm operations.

¹⁰⁴ Resources are available from Berkeley Edible Schoolyard Project (www.edibleschoolyard.org), the locally produced Edible Schoolyard DVD (www.lifecyclesproject.ca/temp/kezco/Edible_School_Yards.html), Life Lab (www.lifelab.org), and LifeCycles (www.lifecyclesproject.ca/resources/index_teachers.php).

16. Increase local agricultural training and mentoring opportunities

Actions

- Provide wide range training opportunities for young, new and existing farmers. They could include the provision of farm management, business, and marketing courses, and crop or product specific training and extension services for farmers.
- Explore the possibility of encouraging mentoring relationships between young/new and established farmers.
- Encourage the provision of internship/apprenticeship opportunities for people interested in farming.

Desired Outcomes

- Support and encourage the participation and development of new and young farmers.
- Improvements in the skills and abilities of new and existing farmers.
- Increased availability of skilled labour.
- Improved production capability.
- Improved product quality.
- Increased economic viability of farms
- Increased ability of local farms to adapt to new and changing markets.

F. Provide Conditions that Encourage & Support Agricultural Enterprise

17. Determine the potential costs and profitability associated with farming on Salt Spring Island

Action

- Conduct an economic study of agriculture to more concretely quantify and forecast the costs and profitability of current and potential farming activities on Salt Spring.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved understanding of the economic environment for agriculture.
- Identification of ways in which to decrease costs.
- Identification of potential market opportunities.
- Establishes a baseline for future studies.

18. Develop a coordinated approach to production and sale of locally grown products

Action

- Support the development and pursuit of coordinated production approaches that share common resource needs (tools, equipment and labour), and that encourage the collaborative selection of crop types, timing of planting, cultivation, and harvest, and marketing approaches as cost effective and self-supporting ways to help small and beginning farmers.

- Develop an island marketing approach for locally grown products that is available to producers and highlights the quality and sustainable nature of their products. This will involve the development of a business plan that can be presented to potential program participants and funders. A program could be designed to support a number of the Area Farm Plan recommendations. For example, the program could identify producers participating in the proposed environmental farm code or using beneficial management practices.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved success for small and beginning farmers.
- Increased cost savings for producers.
- Improved access to local markets.
- Increased consumption of local products and increased returns to farmers and producers.
- Reduction of competing local labels/Increased recognition of local products.

19. Develop local agri-tourism guidelines

Actions

- Develop agri-tourism guidelines for Salt Spring Island that are informed by the policy recommendation provided by the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan Steering Committee during the OCP process. Specifically that:
Agri-tourism cannot be the primary activity on the farm, but rather is complementary to other existing primary farm activities [and] It must be shown that the agri-tourism activity is directly related to agriculture.¹⁰⁵
- Initiate a discussion with the Agricultural Land Commission on agri-tourism. It may be useful to involve other regional municipalities that are currently dealing with this issue.

Desired Outcomes

- Development of a local position on agri-tourism.
- Recognition of agri-tourism in the OCP.
- Increased and regionally inclusive discussion on agri-tourism.

20. Address local farm labour issues

Actions

- Establish an online resource to connect potential agricultural employers with employees. This resource could include the advertisement of supporting services such as accommodation and transportation. It could be developed by the proposed Salt Spring Island Agriculture Alliance and provided through their website.
- Initiate local discussion on how to attract and keep quality/skilled farm labour.

¹⁰⁵ Appendix A. Policy Idea #11.

- Explore the possibility of providing for credit on-farm work experience/apprenticeship opportunities for Gulf Islands Secondary School students.
- Explore the potential to provide more temporary housing on farms. Discussion should consider how these housing arrangements can be structured/managed to be more attractive to seasonal labourers.

Financing

- Development and maintenance of the web site could be covered by the Association’s operating budget.

Desired Outcomes

- Improve local labour issue.
- Improve ability to find out about local agricultural job opportunities.
- Increase and formally recognize local applied agricultural learning opportunities.

21. Encourage the development of local agricultural product purchasing policies

Actions

- Initiate discussions with local agencies, institutions and food retailers on the development of local purchasing agreements. These discussions would involve the presentation of example agreements and policies from other communities, review of expected costs and benefits, and an identification of the requirements and expectations of the purchaser(s) and suppliers.
- If possible establish a small trial program to demonstrate the benefits, and identify and address any unforeseen issues.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased size of local markets.
- Improve opportunity for local agencies to support agriculture.
- Increased consumption of local products and increased returns to farmers and producers.
- Increased investment in the community.
- Increased economic viability of local producers.
- Increased market opportunities.

G. Improve Local Food Security & Self-Sufficiency

22. Increase local seed production capability

Actions

- Provide information to growers and consumers on the benefits of self-sufficiency in seed production.
- Support and expand the activities of the Salt Spring Seed Sanctuary to ensure local growers have access to high quality seed adapted to the bioregion.
- Provide continuing education to growers regarding the production of high quality, disease free seed.

- Encourage and facilitate seed trials to demonstrate non-genetically engineered plant varieties suited to Salt Spring Island.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased self-sufficiency.
- Reduced dependency on outside seed sources.
- Development of high quality locally adapted plant varieties.

23. Encourage producers to adopt a genetically engineered (GE) free policy for locally grown agricultural products

Actions

- Encourage producers and growers to prevent the establishment and production of genetically engineered crops and animals on Salt Spring Island.
- Provide information to farmers on the benefits of maintaining Salt Spring Island as a GE-free island.

Desired Outcomes

- Maintain Salt Spring Island as a GE-free community.
- Discourage genetic engineering trials on Salt Spring Island.
- Improved understanding and appreciation of benefits of preventing the establishment of GE crops and animals.

24. Establish local food safety protocols and standards that reflect the needs of small producers and processors

Actions

- Develop and implement locally appropriate food safety protocols and standards for food producers and processors that are consistent with existing health and safety regulations.
- Provide supporting information and training.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved adherence to health and safety regulations.
- Influence existing health regulations.

25. Participate in regional, provincial and national agricultural discussions

Action

- Represent Salt Spring Island's agricultural interests at regional, provincial and national discussions as required.

Desired Outcomes

- Ability to influence discussions that impact the viability of agriculture on Salt Spring.
- Increased attention to Salt Spring Island's agricultural issues.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following table describes the requirements necessary for the implementation of the proposed recommendations and their associated actions. To help guide the implementation process a lead or responsible agency has been identified, along with potential partners and participants. Implementation timing, relative priority, additional resource requirements and potential sources of funding are indicated for each recommendation.

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
Key Recommendations							
1. Establish a SSI Agricultural Alliance		AFPSC	SSILTC, ING, SSIFI, MAL, CRD, BCParks, SSSF?, others?	Immediate	High	Yes	IAF, Association members
2. Establish a community farmland trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resume discussions that support the creation of a local community farmland trust 	SSIAA	Interested individuals, SSI LTC/IT, ING, SSIFI, MAL, ALC, IMF	Immediate	High	Yes	Lease and membership fees, donations (land & cash), ITF
3. Establish key community facilities that support the expansion of agricultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abattoir – need, type, size, location, cost. Interim coord. of off island livestock/meat transport Cold storage – need, type, size, location(s), cost Processing – type, size, location(s), cost Composting – location 	SSIAA or private sector	Facility Committee(s) (SSIA), interested farmers/food processors. May require involvement of SSILTC, IT, MAL, ALC	Immediate – Medium	High	Yes	IAF, private sector
A. Ensure Local Understanding & Participation in Agricultural Decisions							
4. Maintain local agricultural information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update supporting information Monitor and track changes in the SSI agriculture sector 	SSIAA	SSILTC, IT, ALC, MAL	Medium (every 5 years)	Medium	Yes	IAF, MAL, IT

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
B. Protect & Use Farmland							
5. Implement accepted agricultural OCP policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the proposed agricultural policy recommendations 	SSILTC	SSIAA, ALC, MAL	Immediate	High	No	
6. Work with government agencies regarding the use and management of their agricultural holdings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify government agencies with agricultural holdings on Salt Spring Island Engage government agencies with ag. land in discussions about the management of their properties Request that these agencies support active and ongoing ag. activities on these lands Propose ag. uses that support the interests and policies of the responsible agency 	SSIAA	BC Parks/MoE (others?), MAL, ALC, SSILTC	Immediate	High	No	

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
7. Pursue strategies that make more land available for farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore alternative models of land tenure, financing and management that encourage farming • Establish mechanisms that identify unused or available farmland • Explore the need and opportunity for farm succession planning. 	SSIAA	SSIAA, ALC, MAL, SSILTC, local realtors	Short	Medium	Yes	
8. Increase agricultural awareness of new and potential residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ag. information to provide future residents 	SSIAA	SSIAA members, MAL, SSI realtors, Chamber of Commerce	Short	Medium	Yes	IAF, MAL
C. Encourage & Support Environmental Farm Practices							
9. Establish a voluntary SSI agricultural code of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the potential for establishing a voluntary code • Depending on discussions develop & implement code of practice 	SSIAA	Interested community members, ING, SSIFI, SSSF, MAL, ALC, SSICC	Medium - Long	Medium	Yes	Private sector

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
10. Harmonize local environmental bylaw policies on farmland with existing federal and provincial environmental regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the existing environmental policies that apply to farmland within Land Use Bylaw 335 Ensure identified issues are addressed in the review of <i>Land Use Bylaw 355</i> 	SSILTC	SSIAA, IT. May require the involvement of MAL, ALC	Short	High	No	
11. Encourage the implementation of beneficial farm management practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce farmers to programs that support the implementation of beneficial management practices Help farmers access additional sources of info. and funding that assist with the implementation of environmental farm management practices 	BCAC – EFP Program SSIAA	ING, SSIFI, MAL	Ongoing	Medium	Yes – to support the provision of additional resources and information	BCAC
12. Explore potential for programs support environmental services on farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the potential for establishing market or subsidy-based programs that 	SSIAA	ING, SSIFI, MAL, interested community members,	Medium	Medium	Yes	IMF, APF, IAF

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
	benefit the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on outcome develop proposal for a pilot project 		ALC				
D. Increase Local Understanding & Appreciation of Agriculture							
13. Improve local agricultural literacy through the provision of agriculture-focused public education activities and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide/encourage local activities and events that improve public understanding and appreciation of agriculture Support community activities and events that have a connection to or celebrate agriculture Identify existing community activities or events through which agriculture could be featured 	Various. SSIAA could coord.	Ag. Education Committee (SSIAA), interested community members	Short	High	Variable – activity/ event specific	
14. Increase agricultural education opportunities for children and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with SD 64 staff, teachers and interested parents Provide examples and show how they 	SSIAA	Ag. Ed. Committee (SSIAA), interested community	Short	Medium	Yes	To be determined (SD64, Evergreen, TD Environment)

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
youth	support and extend existing learning objectives and targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore possibility of starting a pilot program 		members/ farmers, SD64 staff and teachers, parents and students. Could involve outside ed. organizations				Fund)
E. Provide Supportive Agricultural Infrastructure & Services							
15. Address farm housing issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a proposal for the provision of on-farm housing on SSI • Initiate a discussion with the Province on its on-farm housing policy 	SSIAA - ALC may take lead later on	Interested/ affected farmers, SSILTC, IT, ING, SSIFI, MAL, ALC, other local governments	Short	High	Initial on-island discussions would not require funding	ALC
16. Increase agricultural training and mentoring opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a wide range training opportunities for farmers • Explore the possibility of establishing mentoring relationships between farmers • Encourage the provision of internship opportunities for 	SSIAA, other agencies or private sector	Extension Service Committee (SSIAA), interested members of the farming community, MAL, UBC Agroecology Program	Medium	Medium	Yes	IAF, BCAC

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
	people interested in farming						
F. Provide Conditions that Encourage & Support Agricultural Enterprise							
17. Determine the potential costs and profitability associated with farming on SSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an economic study of agriculture on SSI 	SSIAA	Marketing Committee (SSIAA), interested ag. and food producers and retailers, SSICC, MAL	Short	Medium	Yes	IAF
18. Develop a coordinated approach to production and sale of locally grown products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development and pursuit of coordinated ag. production approaches Develop a marketing approach for local products that is available to local producers and highlights their quality and local nature 	SSIAA	Marketing Committee (SSIAA), interested ag. and food producers and retailers, SSICC, MAL	Short	Medium	Yes	IAF
19. Develop local agri-tourism guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop agri-tourism guidelines for SSI Initiate a discussion with the ALC on agri-toursim – 	SSIAA - ALC may take lead later on	Interested/ affected farmers, SSILTC, IT, ING, SSIFI, MAL, ALC, SSICC,	Short	Medium	Initial on-island discussions would not require funding	ALC

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
	include interested local governments		other local governments				
20. Address local farm labour issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an online resource to connect potential agricultural employers with employees Initiate local discussion on how to attract and keep quality/skilled farm labour Explore possibility of providing for credit ag. work experience opportunities for GISS students Explore the potential to provide more temporary housing on farms 	SSIAA	Labour Committee (SSIAA), interested community members, ING, SSIFI, SSILTC, IT, MAL, ALC	Short	High	Yes	IAF
21. Encourage the development of local agricultural product purchasing policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate discussions on the development of local purchasing agreements Establish a small trial program 	ING	Members of SSIAA, SD64, VIHA, IT, CRD. Could expend to include other local suppliers	Short	Medium	Yes	COG

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
G. Improve Local Food Security & Self Sufficiency							
22. Increase local seed production capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to growers and consumers on the benefits of self-sufficiency in seed production • Support and expand the activities of the SSSS to ensure local growers have access to high quality seed adapted to the bioregion • Provide continuing education to growers regarding the production of high quality, disease free seed • Encourage and facilitate seed trials to demonstrate non-genetically engineered plant varieties suited to SSI 	SSSS	ING, SSIFI, interested individuals	Medium	Medium	Yes	

Recommendations	Associated Actions	Lead Agency	Partners/ Participants	Timing*	Priority**	Resources Required?	Pot. Funding Source(s)
23. Encourage producers to adopt a genetically engineered (GE) free policy for locally grown agricultural products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage producers and growers to prevent the establishment and production of GE crops and animals on SSI Provide information to farmers on the benefits of maintaining SSI as a GE-free island 	SSSF?	ING, SSIFI, IT, interested community members and groups	Short	Medium	No	
24. Establish local food safety protocols and standards that reflect the needs of small producers and processors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement local food safety protocols and standards for food producers and processors Provide supporting information and training 	SSI AA	Local producers and processors, VIHA, CRD	Short	Medium	Yes	VIHA
25. Participate in regional, provincial and national agricultural discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent SSI agricultural interests at regional, provincial and national discussions 	SSI AA	Designated reps.	Ongoing	Variable	Yes	

* Anticipated implementation timeline: Immediate = 0 – 6 months; Short = <2 years; Medium = 2-5 years; Long = >5year

** High, Medium, Low

NEXT STEPS

The Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan proposes a number of recommendations that will be implemented over the next few years. Some of these recommendations are relatively straightforward and easy to implement, others will require additional planning and resources. In order to assist with the implementation process a number of key initial steps have been identified.

Establish the Salt Spring Island Agriculture Alliance

One of the key recommendations of the plan is the establishment of an agricultural organization that can oversee the implementation of the Area Farm Plan and facilitate a number of its specific recommendations. For the past year the Area Farm Plan Steering Committee has with some success provided a more centralized point of contact and forum to address agricultural issues and concerns. The proposed Alliance builds on the success and structure of the Steering Committee and formally establishes a fundable, central community directed agricultural agency to ensure the effective coordination and implementation of the Area Farm Plan and ongoing consideration of local agricultural issues and interests.

Secure Implementation Support

Support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) is critical for the successful implementation of the Plan. It will be important for the Ministry and IAF to quickly determine the extent to which they can support the Plan's recommendations. Their response will enable the development of a more comprehensive, funded implementation plan.

Establish a Tracking Plan

The Investment Agriculture Foundation, the major funder of the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan has developed a long-term tracking plan for the implementation process. The IAF is required to track certain projects in order to meet reporting requirements of their partner organization, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC). The tracking plan will allow the IAF and those responsible for the implementation of the Area Farm Plan to recognize resulting measurable benefits to Salt Spring Island's agricultural sector and potentially justify the need for future funding.

The IAF has identified that the expected long-term outcome for the Area Farm Plan process is:

"...to allow the agriculture sector on Salt Spring Island to input into policy development, thus protecting and enhancing the viability of agricultural production."

Short-term success of the Area Farm Plan will be indicated by:

- Utilization of the Plan to revitalize local interest in agriculture;
- Provision of an agricultural framework for the OCP;
- Provision of action options or recommendations for community input; and
- Provision of agricultural baseline information.

More significantly the IAF suggests that longer-term (post-plan completion) success will be indicated by the:

- Use of the Area Farm Plan to guide local land-use decisions;
- Protection of agricultural land and/or increased agricultural production; and
- Increased public awareness and support for agriculture.

The IAF has requested that these longer-term indicators be measured and monitored. The following table provided by the IAF identifies the expected measures of success and specific measurable indicators for each of the three identified performance indicators.

General Performance Indicators	Measures of Success	Measurable Indicators
Area Agriculture Plan used in land-use decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agriculture framework developed is included in the Official Community Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review OCP to ensure AFP included • Reference to Area Agriculture Plan in Island Trust decisions
Agricultural Production on SSI is protected/increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers identified through project are decreased • Opportunities identified are seized • Positive change in ALR/Farmland in use for agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use 2006 land use/ALR inventory as a benchmark • Redo inventory in 2011 • Number of new agricultural operations/processors on SSI
Public Awareness of and support for agriculture is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random survey of community demonstrates increased awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public awareness and support for agriculture is benchmarked through initial public survey (2007) • Follow-up survey conducted (2011)

APPENDIX A – OCP AGRICULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY PROPOSALS FOR AGRICULTURE May 2007

Recommendations to the Official Community Plan Review
Prepared and Presented by the
SSI Area Farm Plan Steering Committee

1. Background

The Salt Spring Island (SSI) community is currently engaged in a strategic planning process to develop an Area Farm Plan (AFP). This process was initiated by the Islands Trust in 2005 on recommendation of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC). The Island Farmers Institute and Island Natural Growers are working in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Agriculture (BCMAL) and the Islands Trust to develop the plan with additional funding provided by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC, the Capital Regional District and BCMAL.

Our planning process has coincided with the Islands Trust Official Community Plan Review and therefore our objectives, with respect to recommendations, are to ensure that any revisions of the OCP facilitate, rather than restrict, the implementation of strategies that will be identified in the Area Farm Plan. Completion of the plan is expected to be December 2007.

2. AFP Steering Committee Members: Anne Macey (Chair), Conrad Pilon, Tony Threlfall, Pat Reichert, John Wilcox, Jane Squier, Rebecca Bloch, and George Ehring (Trustee). Islands Trust planner Alison Fox and Rob Kline (BCMAL) have also provided assistance to the group. This report is a joint effort of all members of the committee.

3. The Process

The committee has been meeting since the summer 2006 with the objective of developing a strategic plan to re-establish agriculture as a social, cultural and economic priority on SSI. Work started in the fall with an agricultural land use inventory conducted by BCMAL. The process continued from January to March 2007 with a broad community consultation in the form of three facilitated community dialogues attended by over 100 people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Over the next six months a consultant will prepare a draft plan based on this community input. The AFP steering committee has also held several meetings specifically to review the OCP and to elaborate recommendations, which take into consideration the community input to the strategic planning process.

4. Summary of recommendations

Although the current OCP is generally supportive of agriculture, the AFP steering committee strongly recommends placing a higher priority on agricultural policies and strengthening and clarifying certain sections that will guide land use decisions over the life of the revised OCP. The recommendations that follow are based on a combination of factors including the results of the Area Farm Plan community dialogue discussions, food security imperatives and best agricultural practices. The recommendations have to do with:

- A. agricultural land use objectives. Key recommendations in this section are to recognise a broader definition of farming activities, no net loss of agricultural land, the need for a local food system and encouraging the creation of community farmland.
- B. specific operational practices. Key recommendations include increasing availability of farm and farm-related housing and the creation of an agricultural council for Salt Spring.
- C. areas of overlap with work being done by other focus groups. Key recommendations include encouraging the use of vegetation buffers and good management practices to protect water quality.

There are a total of 15 recommendations.

5. General Comments

During the dialogue process there was a general feeling that smaller-scale agriculture and the production of local food are not high priority issues amongst local governments - policies and specific regulations are not always sensitive to the challenges faced by island farmers who are trying to maintain local, smaller-scale farm and processing operations. We are also faced with the removal of production potential as result of development pressure or the need to locate community services in readily accessible areas of the island.

The AFP steering committee believes the OCP to be generally supportive of agriculture on Salt Spring. It was reported to be one of the best in the province by the Agricultural Land Use Commission when it was adopted in June 1998. However problems have arisen because the Land use Bylaw 355 (LUB 355) appears to be in conflict with some of the policy statements in the OCP.

In this review we have identified areas where the OCP can be strengthened with respect to agriculture. Our recommendations are intended to encourage a consistent policy with respect to the development or revisions of any bylaws that might impact the future of farming on the island.

6. The Policy Proposals

A. Objectives

Several of the proposals are related to the overall objectives for agriculture land use (OCP B.6.1)

#1 Policy Idea: to amend and ‘modernise’ the OCP description of farming land use

6.1.1 What is the problem?

The terminology of B.6.1.1.1 ‘To support farming as an important traditional land use, lifestyle and livelihood on Salt Spring Island’ reflects the agricultural heritage of the island and thus implies that the farming practices on Salt Spring are not modern.

6.1.2 Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

Trust Policy Statement 4.1.1 says that “Trust Council recognizes that agriculture is a *traditional* and valuable activity in the Trust Area.”

6.1.3 What is the policy proposal?

The policy statement is intended as a broad ‘introductory’ objective on farming and could be amended to better reflect the current farming practices and directions of farming on Salt Spring.

Re-state the objective: *‘To support farming as a social, cultural and economic priority and an ecologically responsible land use on Salt Spring’.*

6.1.4 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

It is consistent with the stated goals of the Area Farm Plan in which the Islands Trust is an important contributor.

#2 Policy Idea: Expand the definition of farming to be a made on Salt Spring definition of “farm” and “farm activity” that reflects the nature and potential of our agro-forest amenity.

6.2.1 What is the problem?

B.6.1.1.2 ‘To maintain the long term potential for farming on Salt Spring Island; to preserve agricultural land and necessary water supplies’ needs to incorporate the agro-forest amenity of the island. The current BC Assessment Authority does not adequately reflect the matrix of factors that define a farming activity. (land costs, size, value added...). The Trust currently adheres to the letter of the BC Assessment directives without reflecting the local nature of the OCP.

6.2.2 Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

“Agricultural land” and “Forests” are considered separately in the Trust Policy Statement under the Part IV, “Stewardship of Resources.” They are treated as separate sections, but with similar goals that recognize that they are working lands that need to be preserved.

In particular, see:

4.2.1 Trust Council recognizes that forestry is a traditional land use in the Trust Area, and supports sustainable forestry as an appropriate form of land use.

4.2.2 It is the position of Trust Council that sustainable forestry depends on maintaining and, where necessary, restoring the ecological integrity of forests.

However the Trust policy also refers to the relationship to other land uses:

4.1.5 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address the preservation, protection and encouragement of farming, the sustainability of farming, and the relationship of farming to other land uses.

6.2.3 What is the policy proposal?

The policy statement is intended as a broad statement on farming and could be amended to better reflect a broader definition of farming.

Restate the objective: *'To maintain and protect the long term potential of the agro-forest amenity of Salt Spring Island; to preserve agricultural land and necessary water supplies'.*

Include a local definition in the OCP and revised definition in LUB 355

The BC Assessment Authority classification of 'farm' and 'farm activity' take into account the 'local' definition when making assessment decisions.

#3 Policy Idea: Link the protection and preservation role of the Islands Trust in agriculture to existing and changing Provincial governance (legislation/guidelines).

6.3.1 What is the problem?

The objective 'B.6.1.1.3 To incorporate the spirit and intent of the provincial *Farm Practices Protection ("Right to Farm") Act* into local land use policies and bylaws' needs to incorporate the application of Guidelines for Bylaw development in Farming areas, the 'Provincial Interest' mandates of the Ministry of Agriculture and reflect the 'Encourage Farming' mandate of the of the Agricultural Land Commission.

6.3.2 Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy Statement mandates in 4.1.2 that "Trust Council shall consult with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the British Columbia Land Reserve Commission to request that agriculture policies applied to the Trust Area are appropriate to the nature of agriculture within the Trust Area, including, but not limited to, the smaller island scale of agricultural activities."

6.3.3 What is the policy proposal?

The policy is intended as a broad statement on farming and could be amended to better reflect the support role played by Provincial Department/Agencies.

- Restate the objective: ' *To incorporate the spirit and intent of the provincial Farm Practices Protection ("Right to Farm") Act into local land use policies and bylaws in accordance and assistance with the mandates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands through the application of Guidelines for Bylaw development in Farming Areas* '.
- Introduce policy statements to encourage farmers to conduct an Environmental Farm Plan and Nutrient Management Plan to ensure Beneficial Management Practices are implemented which benefit both the environment and the farmer. The BC Environmental Farm Plan Program (a partnership between AAFC, BCMAL and BCAC) is a voluntary program which currently assists farmers in this process.

6.3.4 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

It would make island bylaw development as it pertains to farming, consistent with the amenity preservation mandate of the Islands Trust and associated Provincial Legislation/Guidelines.

#4 Policy Idea: Reference to B6.1.1.14 - To limit the non-farm use of agricultural land. No net loss of ALR (Land in Agricultural Land Reserve) on Salt Spring Island.

6.4.1. What is the problem?

The OCP allows for non-farm use of ALR or rezoning applications on the basis of public *essential* services and other considerations, in essence removing land from the ALR. The AAC (Agricultural Advisory Committee) makes recommendations to the Trust which may or may not be acted upon. In all cases the final decision rests with the Land Commission usually on the recommendation(s) of the local Trust Committee.

The critical issue on Salt Spring Island is that the ALR is finite. There is a trend towards a *net loss* of ALR generally and of farmable land within the ALR. When land is removed or non-farm use is approved, the ALR on Salt Spring Island is reduced and the overall agricultural capability of the island is also reduced.

6.4.2. Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

While the Trust Policy Statement does not have a "no net loss of ALR land" policy, it does have a number of "Directive Policies" mandating the OCPs in local trust areas to reflect support for and encouragement of the preservation of agricultural land for current and future uses. For example, see subsection 4.1.5:

4.1.5 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address the preservation, protection and encouragement of farming, the sustainability of farming, and the relationship of farming to other land uses.

Section 4.1.11 recommends:

4.1.11 Trust Council encourages the British Columbia Land Reserve Commission to approve applications from property owners for inclusion of their land with potential for agriculture in the Provincial Agricultural Land Reserve.

6.4.3. What is the policy proposal?

The Islands Trust Objective should include the following Principles / Guidelines:

- For the guiding principle of *No Net Loss* of ALR on Salt Spring to apply, it would be the responsibility of the proponent, either public or private developer, to locate and purchase

an 'equal' parcel (of agricultural value) in another 'zoned' area to replace the ALR land selected.

- Consideration for removing land or non-farm use from the ALR is to be based on *essential* community service (as per the OCP). A definition of *essential* should be limited to public safety and/or health.
- Removing land or non-farm use from the ALR is to be based on a *direct* and tangible *benefit to the agricultural community* on Salt Spring Island.
- Exemptions or alternatives to the purchasing of an equal parcel will be considered when the community benefit is clearly demonstrated. An alternative could be cash in lieu for the acquisition of additional community food lands.

6.4.4 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

This policy idea is consistent with the rezoning for land designated for industrial use and the objective of B.6.1.1.4 to limit the non-farm use of agricultural land. It is also consistent with the 'encourage agriculture' mandates of BCMAL and the ALC whose purposes are to encourage farming on agricultural land and to encourage local government to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land in their plans, bylaws and policies.

#5 Policy Idea: The Island Trust should

- ***Work cooperatively and collaboratively with other agencies and groups to encourage, promote and support a strong and independent local food system, including food production, value-added processing, storage, distribution and marketing.***
- ***Ensure that food security for Salt Spring residents is taken into account in land use and development decisions. (Food security goals, objectives and criteria that support this policy will have to be developed.)***

6.5.1. What is the problem?

- Energy issues, global climate change, political and economic forces are threatening the industrial food system in ways that increase the need for communities to reclaim responsibility for food production and distribution at the local level. These changes are expected in our lifetime and need to be considered now.
- At present Salt Spring Island is producing only enough food to feed a small proportion (4%) of Salt Spring residents and only 1% of farm land is being cultivated for food production.
- Policy does not speak directly to the link between increased land development and population and to the question of how we feed ourselves. Nor does current policy take into account that a more productive and advanced local food system is a major tool in achieving reduced energy use objectives.

6.5.2. Does the trust policy statement provide any guidance?

While the Trust Policy Statement does not speak directly to food security, statements in support of the preservation of agriculture reflect the recognition of the need for the production of food.

Subsection 4.1.4 directs:

4.1.4 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address the

identification and preservation of agricultural land for current and future use.

6.5.3 What is the policy proposal?

- That the OCP include building a local food system as a key community objective.
- That the Islands Trust put in place mechanisms that actively support public farm land trusts and community-owned public food gardens.
- That the Islands Trust put in place a mechanism for collaborating with other local government and appropriate NGO groups to build and coordinate a local food system. Idea # 9 is one example of a mechanism that would facilitate collaboration.
- That the Islands Trust provide incentives which enhance food production and value-added food processing on Salt Spring.
- That the Islands Trust develop Bylaws which support the recommendation having to do with farmers markets (see # 8 policy idea).

6 Policy Idea: Encourage Community Farm Land Trust and cooperative farming initiatives.

6.6.1 What is the problem?

Faced with the growing value of land and cost of infrastructure, new farming development on Salt Spring requires new approaches. Current Trust Objectives do not reflect the policy idea adequately.

6.6.2 Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy Statement does not speak to issues of a farmland trust.

6.6.3. What is the policy proposal?

- Objective: to encourage and support the development of a community farm land trust making reference to *the Area Farm Plan* which when completed will provide a framework for the structure and governance of such trusts.
- Change wording in H.3.2 e) to read "...provided to the Salt Spring Farmers Institute or community farmland trust organisation".

6.6.4 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

See OCP B. 6.1.2.22

B. Specific Polices related to agriculture and the food system.

#7 Policy Idea: Provide opportunity to increase housing availability for farm workers and others who augment family farm income.

6.7.1 What is the problem?

Revitalization of the agricultural economy on Salt Spring Island and the potential increase in productivity will only be achieved if there are people available to work the land. Lack of housing has been identified as a critical issue when farms wish to employ farm workers or involve more than one family in a multi-generation farm operation. The problem is further compounded by the high cost of farm land and the need for off-farm income to support the farm operation in today's economic reality. Current regulations are considered restrictive and potentially limiting. The Steering Committee believes that additional guidance is needed for the decision making

process when applications are made for additional dwellings. It is not appropriate to consider additional dwellings simply based on the size of the land parcel or other single criteria.

6.7.2 Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy Statement does not specifically speak to housing issues. But subsection 4.1.5 (cited above) speaks to the “sustainability of farming” and subsection 4.1.8 says:

4.1.8 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address land uses and activities that support the economic viability of farms without compromising the agriculture capability of agricultural land.

6.7.3 What is the policy proposal?

That the Islands Trust establish guidelines and criteria to assist in the determination of a dwelling as ‘necessary for farm use’. These should be applied to all applications for additional dwellings on farm land outside of the ALR and will also be useful for determining legitimate need within the ALR as long as any other criteria required by the Act are considered.

The steering committee recommends that a consistent set of criteria be applied taking into consideration the following:

- Size of farm and type of farming operation – small farms are often more labour intensive.
- Number of people living on the farm and their role on the farm. “Farm help” should have a broader definition than farm labourer and might include those people who provide financial support to the farm operation with off-farm income.
- The proposed site of the additional dwelling which should not impede the cultivation of high capability soils.
- The existence of a whole farm plan or business plan.

In addition it is proposed that Section B6.1.2.7 be revised to make reference to incorporating or supporting any housing objectives elaborated in the Area Farm Plan (our strategic plan for agriculture on SSI) which will be completed by the end of 2007.

6.7.4 Are there alternatives to consider?

It is likely that several strategies will be needed to provide enough affordable housing for those who wish to live and work on the land. Policy such as that included in B1.8.5 for non-traditional residential settlement could be strengthened to ensure that the establishment of eco-villages, colony farms, or other cluster housing situated close to active farm land are encouraged. Also to be considered is the need for a transportation system or rideshare program to facilitate commuting from available housing. Further suggestions may be elaborated in the AFP.

6.7.5 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

It is consistent with the objective stated in B6.1.1.5. and policies of other agencies to encourage agriculture. Sec. B.6.1.2.7: allows for rezoning to address the need for additional housing on agricultural land to support local farming activities. The Trust committee defers to the advice of the Agriculture Advisory Committee to determine when an additional dwelling is necessary. Guidelines would help with the determination of ‘necessity’ with respect to the ALR regulations as well as provide greater flexibility on farmland not within the ALR.

6.7.6. How might the policy idea be implemented?

Through the adoption and enactment of the Area Farm Plan, the creation of a farm bylaw or revision of current bylaws.

8 Policy Idea: Expand the possibilities for marketing of locally produced food in different parts of the island.

6.8.1 What is the problem?

Direct farm marketing can have a positive impact on farm viability but depending on the location of the farm is not always practical. Current regulations for ALR land prevent operators with farm stands/stores from selling product from other farmers if it is more than 50% of the total. The steering committee supports the development of a year-round farmers market in Ganges, however additional markets in other areas of the island will further assist with meeting the targets for reduction of GHG emissions and reduce car parking problems.

6.8.2 Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy Statement does not speak to marketing issues, but does address marketing indirectly with the statement of economic viability in:

4.1.8 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address land uses and activities that support the economic viability of farms without compromising the agriculture capability of agricultural land.

6.8.3 What is the policy proposal?

Allow for the establishment of farm stores or markets which collect produce grown on several neighbourhood farms to make product available to residents and tourists. Specific guidelines would be needed as to type and origin of product sold. The AFP will provide further direction in this regard.

6.8.4 Are there alternatives to consider?

See comments above under 6.8.1

6.8.5 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

The ALR use regulation states 50% of sales must be from products produced on the farm which may limit the application of an alternative policy so this may require clarification. This idea is, however, consistent with proposed food policy objectives. B6.1.2.7e. allows for the development of new zones which would allow for community farming activities – it is not clear whether this refers to both production and marketing. B 6.1.2.7.f supports the development of farmers markets.

6.8.6. How might the policy idea be implemented?

Through revision of zoning bylaws

#9 Policy Idea: Create an Agriculture Commission/Council for Salt Spring Island

6.9.1 What is the problem?

The Farmers Institute and Island Natural Growers are currently undertaking a strategic planning process for agriculture on SSI. Implementation of the plan will require support from local government agencies and a commitment at all levels to take food production seriously. It is anticipated that the strategic plan will include several initiatives beyond the mandate or capability of the existing organizations. An Agricultural Advisory Committee exists but is primarily responsible for providing recommendations to the Island Trust on land-use matters and only meets as directed by the Trustees.

6.9.2 Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy Statement does not speak to creation of community commissions.

6.9.3 What is the policy proposal? That the Islands Trust support the establishment of a Council at arms length to local government with paid staff and a primary mandate to implement the recommendations of the Area Farm Plan. This might involve fundraising for projects and infrastructure; management of non-policy activities and lobbying governments. It might also provide the infrastructure necessary for managing an agricultural land trust on SSI.

6.9.4 Are there alternatives to considers?

Expand the makeup and mandate of the AAC, give it more independence from the Trustees and provide funding for a coordinator. While it would be beneficial for the mandate of the AAC to be broadened to allow the committee to advise the Trustees and planners on critical farm issues in addition to the applications at hand, a more arms length organization is preferable.

6.9.5 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

It is consistent with a renewed focus on agriculture and with objectives related to strengthening and supporting a comprehensive range of agricultural activities.

6.9.6 How might the policy idea be implemented?

The Area Farm Plan process could be directed to develop a detailed proposal and implementation could be into the implementation of the AFP in 2008.

#10 Policy Idea: Improve the integration of land planning functions and the development of regulations to be consistent with the stated policy and the mandate of the Islands Trust to ‘Preserve and Protect the Trust area and its unique amenities and environment’.

6.10.1 What is the problem?

Policy statements (see B1.10.6 and B6.1.2.6) in the OCP supporting agriculture do not always seem to be reflected in bylaws which some believe have placed unnecessary restrictions on farming activities in order to protect natural areas. The range of regulations and jurisdictions governing farming activities creates obstacles for all concerned.

6.10.2 Does the Trust policy statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy statement has many provisions relating to the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas, ecosystems in general, and other environmental features.

6.10.3 What is the policy proposal?

Farming is an amenity worthy of protection and encouragement along with protection of our natural environment and environmentally sensitive areas. To facilitate this we have the following suggestions for a more integrated approach to planning.

- Local Government should seek the delegation of the Agricultural Land Commission authority (which became available to local governments in 2002 through changes to the ALC Act) in order that the interpretation of the ALC protocols will be made in keeping with, and in the best interests of, the community. Island farming should only be regulated in keeping with the type of ecologically responsible farming (eco-

farming) practices that are fitting to this Islands Trust Region. Local Government interpretation of ALC protocols should conform to the mandate of the Islands Trust.

- Recommend that the Islands Trust develop a Victoria based agricultural/forestry planner position to provide support and expertise to trust staff and trustees on matters related to the working landscape.

6.10.4 Are there alternatives to consider?

That regulatory development for farming in the island community be developed in accord with and in the context of “Going Forward” Part 4 of Moura Quayle’s *Stakes in the Ground Report* on provincial interest in the ALR.

6.10.5 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

B6.1.2.2 states the trust committee will work with the local farming community, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission to develop common policies. B6.1.2.26 states the BC Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture are requested to help develop mutually acceptable recommendations in consultation with the community about the management of wetlands, stream corridors and other environmentally sensitive areas.

#11 Policy Idea: Mechanisms for supplementing family farm income – introduce the concept of Agri-tourism into the OCP.

6.11.1 What is the problem?

Agri-tourism is a viable means for farmers to supplement their income. It can promote education, value added products, community marketing, and agricultural awareness. There is no mention of agri-tourism in the OCP.

6.11.2 Does the Trust Policy Statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy Statement does not speak specifically to agri-tourism. See the clauses cited above in support of the sustainability and viability of agriculture.

6.11.3. What is the policy proposal?

Recommendations should be in keeping with the OCP’s current, regulated support for tourism on the island; (B.1.8.4. / B.3.1.1.1) and alternate farm activities (B.3.1.2.6.).

This proposal would call for support of agri-tourism, as well as continued support for a varied farm venture, to help with the economic viability of agriculture.

These recommendations include:

- Agri-tourism cannot be the primary activity on the farm, but rather is complementary to other existing primary farm activities
- It must be shown that the agri-tourism activity is directly related to agriculture
- There would be support for community / co-operative farm markets and farm stands, which sell local farm produce. These may be in areas that are not currently zoned for commercial activities (see policy idea # 8).
- A definition of agri-tourism should be provided.

Examples of agri-tourism can include: agri-educational centres, retreats, community events, farm markets, farm tours, and animal rides.

6.11.4 Are there alternative ideas to consider?

No.

6.11.5 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

Other policies that show support for expanded farm ventures include sections:

B.3.1.2.6, B.6.1.2.7 and B.3.1.1.1 to recognize the economic importance of tourism by ensuring that Salt Spring Island remains an attractive, livable and authentic rural community. To welcome and accommodate tourism that is compatible with this goal. The trust already permits some tourism activities on agricultural properties including Bed and Breakfast operations on farms and campsites in the A-1 zone subject to approval of the Agricultural Land Commission.

6.11.6. How might the policy idea be implemented?

This policy should be added to the existing (above) policies. It can be added as an amendment to the acceptable “use” of land, and options available to farmers. It can be used as a directive statement when the trust has to make a decision governing the viable use of land, or type of activity proposed by a farm owner.

#12 Policy Idea: Need for clear policy directions to put the responsibility on the developer for the creation of buffers and to prevent surface run-off onto adjacent farmland and sensitive ecosystems.

6.12.1 What is the problem?

Encroaching development has a large effect on active and non-active agricultural land. There is a need for buffers, between the zones, to ensure safety of crops, pollution protection and ecosystem health. Surface run off can also create significant problems. Enforcement of existing regulations is poor and farmers are forced to take remedial actions – it should not be their responsibility to protect themselves.

6.12.2 Does the Trust Policy Statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy Statement does not speak specifically to buffers, but subsection 4.1.6 reads:

4.1.6 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address the use of adjacent properties to minimize any adverse affects on agricultural land.

6.12.3 What is the policy proposal?

The policy proposal is that a buffer be required on development property, regardless of the zoning of the land being developed. That buffer must meet all requirements to ensure zero impact on the farm side. The cost for protection should not fall to the farmer. There are guidelines for buffers in the Canada- British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan, prepared by BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Resource Management Branch (editors Brown, Kleeck, Hughes-Games) and published by the B.C. Agriculture Council (Jan 2005). However these guidelines deal with the farmers’ responsibility to provide buffers to their farm operation including: Buffer Legislation, Beneficial Management Practices and Riparian Buffers (pps.73,78,144-146); Our proposal is for the reverse situation. This information can be used to form similar regulations for developers adjacent to agricultural land.

6.12.4. Are there alternative ideas to consider?

No. However in keeping with the adoption of measures for improved food security on the island, it is also recommended that all developments include some land which is available for food production such as the planting of fruit and nut trees throughout the development site, enough land for a community garden or funds which go towards the provision of equivalent areas elsewhere.

6.12.5 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

The OCP already has policies in place that address regulations and ramifications of new development. These include B.6.1.2.16, B.6.1.2.17, B.6.1.2.18, B.6.1.2.19, B.6.1.2.20.

This policy would act as an addition to these policies. It is also consistent with the BC Ministry of Agriculture policies in the Environmental Farm Plan.

6.12.6 How might the policy idea be implemented?

This is a directive statement for regulations imposed on developers when it occurs adjacent to agricultural lands.

#13 Policy Idea: More local input in encouraging the creation of a land trust. (see OCP B 6.1.22)

6.13.1. What is the problem?

In B6.1.2.22 the current OCP states: The Islands Trust Fund Board is encouraged to help in the creation of an agricultural land trust. The Islands Trust Fund Board is not a local community organization. It may or may not include one of the local Trustees, therefore, local input and encouragement is not assured.

6.13.2 Does the Trust Policy Statement provide any guidance?

The Trust Policy Statement does not speak to creation of a farmland trust.

6.13.3 What is the policy proposal?

Reword B.6.1.2.22 to read:

The Local Trust Committee and the Islands Trust Fund Board are encouraged to help in the creation of a community farmland trust.

6.13.4 Are there any alternative ideas to consider?

None were considered

6.13.5 Is this idea consistent with other policies?

Yes

6.13.6 How might the policy be implemented?

Insert the words “The Local Trust Committee and” at the beginning of the existing wording of B6.1.2.22 and change ‘agriculture land trust’ to ‘community farm land trust’

C. Policies which overlap with those being considered by other focus groups.

Water Quality Protection

These policy ideas are intended to encourage sustainable farm practices to protect riparian areas and surface water bodies from contamination,

Potential impacts to domestic water supplies and aquatic life have been the major environmental concerns with agricultural nutrient management. Losses of agricultural nutrients to water from land will follow one of two pathways; surface runoff or infiltration through the soil before entering either groundwater or surface water.

Runoff occurs when rainfall (or irrigation) rates exceed the infiltration capacity of the soil. It is a complex process and the quantity and quality of runoff will be a function of several variables,

including rainfall intensity and duration, slope, soil (texture, organic matter content, moisture content) and vegetative cover (type and stage of growth). Vegetative cover immediately adjacent to surface water courses is of particular importance. A healthy vegetated buffer strip can significantly improve the quality of surface runoff and reduce stream bank erosion. (<http://www.rem.sfu.ca/FRAP/9528.pdf>)

#14 Policy idea – to reduce nutrient leaching and runoff by defining water quality protection setbacks for farm management practices following the existing standards set by the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation

6.14.1 What is the policy problem?

B.6.1.2.26 doesn't offer guidelines for management practices.

6.14.2 Does the Trust Policy Statement provide any guidance?

See 4.1.6 cited above. The Trust Policy Statement does not speak specifically to water-borne nutrients, but there are numerous statements in section 4.4 dealing with the protection of freshwater resources.

In particular, note 4.4.2:

Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address measures that ensure:

- water quality is maintained....

6.14.2 What is the policy Proposal?

Setback for farm practices will comply with water quality protection guidelines and regulations of the *Environmental Management Act, Health Act, AGRICULTURAL WASTE CONTROL REGULATION* http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/E/EnvMgmt/131_92.htm

The OCP could also adopt policies that stress performance based standards rather than prescriptive setbacks. This would allow for farming activities to continue as long as the management practices do not negatively impact water quality or sensitive areas. Farmers should be encouraged to conduct Environmental Farm Plans, Nutrient Management Plans or other agricultural stewardship activities as appropriate.

6.14.3 Are there any alternative ideas to consider?

See policy idea # 15.

6.14.4. Is the idea consistent with other policies?

It is not consistent with Bylaw 355, section 4.5.2 which recommends a 60 m setback from domestic water sources for specific farm practices and also 30m setbacks from other water bodies. It is consistent with the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation.

6.14.5 How might the policy be implemented?

Add the policy proposal to B.6.1.2.26

#15 Policy idea - to encourage the use of perennial vegetative buffers immediately adjacent to surface water courses to improve the quality of surface runoff and to reduce stream or lake bank erosion.

6.15.1 What is the policy problem?

Set backs are not the only appropriate way to deal with these issues.

6.15.2 Does the Trust Policy Statement provide any guidance?

Again, section 4.4 of the Trust Policy Statement offers general guidance about the protection of freshwater sources. In particular, note:

4.4.4 Trust Council encourages island property owners, residents and visitors to adopt conservation practices in their use of freshwater.

4.4.5 Trust Council encourages the Provincial government to implement property tax incentives for the retention of groundwater and watershed recharge areas and freshwater wetlands.

4.4.6 Trust Council encourages the Provincial government to adopt legislation that protects the sustainability and quality of the groundwater of the Trust Area.

6.15.3 What is the policy proposal?

The trust committee will encourage the use of perennial vegetative buffers immediately adjacent to surface water courses to improve the quality of surface runoff and to reduce stream or lake bank erosion.

6.15.4 Are there any alternative ideas to consider?

Protect riparian and watershed areas from contamination by encouraging farmers to conduct Environmental Farm Plans in sensitive watersheds including the Nutrient Management plans to optimize all their nutrient uses while protecting water resources.

#16 Policy Idea – Proposals for agriculture within the boundaries of Ganges and Fulford Villages.

In keeping with the policy proposals elaborated in this document, the steering committee recommends the following specific policy ideas to provide guidance for the development or expansion of Ganges and Fulford villages.

- Include the concept of urban agriculture and local food systems in village design and expansion proposals – this would include food production, food processing, farmers markets and other agricultural related businesses.
- Avoid spreading and expanding village containment boundaries into ALR land – instead lift height zoning regulations and encourage multi-story work/live development i.e. keep village compact increase densities vertically before increasing density laterally. This includes preventing the spread of parking lots.
- Do not consider ALR land as a future land bank for urban development. Any expansion of the village boundary only encourages more expansion in the future. Have policies in place which ensure green areas or community gardens included in the design are not subject to future rezoning.
- Edge planning to protect agriculture from urban development will be important. The design process should aim to improve the health and respect of working and wild landscapes immediately adjacent to village centres.
- Incorporation of productive landscapes within the villages and encouragement of management practices that are not harmful or conflict inducing.
- If agricultural land or other green space is rezoned for development, those developments should incorporate some aspect of food production e.g. landscaping with

fruit/nut producing trees, areas for a community or allotment garden alongside a high density residential development etc.

- Consider the location and functioning of sites used for Farmers markets in the design for Ganges or Fulford Village.

7. Proposed encouragement statements.

The Local Government should encourage means by which the ALR lands within Local and Provincial Parks can be managed and stewarded by resident farm people, in keeping with options enabling the farming of such lands in accordance with any eco-farm and land management lease/share practices developed through the creation of a Community Farmland Trust for the Island or equivalent.

Further proposals are expected to be elaborated in the Area Farm Plan. In the words of a group of participants at the Plan to Farm Community Dialogue #3

“It is hoped that Salt Spring Island can be a model for a new, economically viable, land based agricultural economy linking production of food, drink, fibre and wood products with processing, marketing, education and tourism. Such activities should be environmentally sensitive, socially just and sustainable.”

APPENDIX B – AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Agricultural Statistics for Salt Spring Island	2001 ¹⁰⁶	2006 ¹⁰⁷
Number of Farms	170	167
Size of Farms		
Under 10 Acres		67 farms, 40% of total
Between 10 & 70		78 farms, 47% of total
Over 70 acres		22 farms, 13% of total
Total Farm Area	3,372 ha (8,332 acres)	2,501 ha (6,180 acres)
Total Area in ALR	2,922 ha ¹⁰⁸	2,922 ha ¹⁰⁹
Farm Capital Value		
Total Farm Capital – millions of dollars	\$86.520	\$155.730
Farms reporting total farm capital less than \$100,000		3 farms, 2% of total
Farms reporting total farm capital \$100,000 - \$499,999		55 farms, 33% of total
Farms reporting total farm capital of \$500,000 to \$1M		64 farms, 38% of total
Farms reporting total farm capital of >\$1M		45 farms, 27% of total
Farm Receipts		
Gross Farm Receipts - millions of dollars	\$3.232	\$3.998
Total Farm Expenses – millions of dollars	\$3.770	\$3.906
Farms reporting < \$10,000 total gross farm receipts		108 farms, 65% of total
Farms reporting \$10,000 to \$24,999 total gross farm receipts		21 farms, 13% of total
Farms reporting \$25,000 to \$99,999 total gross farm receipts		31 farms, 18% of total
Farms reporting \$100,000 - \$249,999 total gross farm receipts		4 farms, 2% of total
Farms reporting \$250,000+ total gross farm receipts		3 farms, 2% of total
Farm Characteristics		
Total area of farms	3,372 ha (8,332 acres)	2,501 ha (6,180 acres)
Area Owned by Operators		Data suppressed
Area Rented by Operators		Data suppressed
Use of Irrigation - Farms Reporting		72 farms, 43% of total
Use of Irrigation - Acres		131 ha (324 acres)
Operator Characteristics		
Total Number of Operators	255	245
Under 35 years		20 farmers, 4% of total
35 to 54 years		105, 47% of total
55 years and over		130 farmers, 45% of total
Male		155 farmers, 64% of total
Female		95 farmers, 36% of total
Average Age of Operators	52.4	55.3

¹⁰⁶ Statistics Canada 2001 Census of Agriculture.
www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2001/index.htm

¹⁰⁷ Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Agriculture.
www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2006/index.htm

¹⁰⁸ Meech Savidant, T. 2008. *Pers. comm.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

APPENDIX C – SSIAAC TERMS OF REFERENCE



Islands Trust

SALT SPRING ISLAND AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Approved by SSILTC September 29, 2004)

1.0 Role and Mandate

- 1.1 The Agriculture Advisory Committee shall provide recommendations to the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee (Local Trust Committee) on matters referred to it by the Local Trust Committee concerning policy, regulation and planning approval applications relative to issues affecting agriculture and agricultural land use.
- 1.2 The role of the Agriculture Advisory Committee is advisory to the Local Trust Committee and recommendations of the Agriculture Advisory Committee are not binding upon the Local Trust Committee.
- 1.3 Agriculture Advisory Committee members are to exercise their judgement based on personal expertise, experience and knowledge of the subject matter as objectively applied to a specific application. On the other hand, the gauging of community opinion on a particular issue or application is more appropriately considered one of the roles of the Local Trust Committee.
- 1.4 The Agriculture Advisory Committee shall be guided by the general policy intent as set out in the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw.
- 1.5 Agriculture Advisory Committee members shall listen to and acknowledge the views of other Agriculture Advisory Committee members and promote a meeting environment where all opinions are respected and all members feel comfortable expressing their views.
- 1.6 The Agriculture Advisory Committee may request information from other agencies through Islands Trust Staff. The establishment of policy and liaison with other levels of government, non-government agencies and community interest groups is the responsibility of the Local Trust Committee.

2.0 Membership

- 2.1 The total number of members shall not exceed 7.
- 2.2 The members of the Agriculture Advisory Committee shall be appointed by resolution of the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee.
- 2.3 The Local Trust Committee may, by resolution, remove a member at any time.
- 2.4 If a member resigns, or an appointment is otherwise terminated, the Local Trust Committee may, by resolution, appoint a member to serve the balance of the term of the appointment.
- 2.5 The Local Trust Committee will endeavour to reappoint half of the membership each year.
- 2.6 Members shall be appointed for a term not exceeding 2 years.
- 2.7 The Local Trust Committee may reappoint a member for additional terms.
- 2.8 The Local Trust Committee shall be ex-officio members of the Agriculture Advisory Committee.
- 2.9 The membership of the committee shall include both those persons with qualifications related to the mandate of the committee and persons that represent a wide cross section and the varied interests of the community. The mandate of the committee includes the related qualifications of agriculture, animal husbandry, drainage engineering, horticulture, soil engineering and forestry.

3.0 Chair and Vice-Chair

- 3.1 The members shall, at the first meeting of a calendar year, elect from among the members a Chairperson and Vice-chairperson.
- 3.2 In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson shall act in place of the Chairperson.

1

- 3.3 In the absence of a Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson, the quorum of members amongst themselves shall appoint an acting-Chairperson.
- 3.4 The Chairperson is to ensure proper conduct of all meetings in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.
- 3.5 The Chairperson shall sign the minutes certifying that they are true and correct after they have been approved by the Agriculture Advisory Committee

4.0 Recording Secretary

- 4.1 A recording secretary shall be appointed by Islands Trust administration. The recording secretary shall:
 - a. ensure that notification of the Agriculture Advisory Committee meetings is given in accordance with the terms of reference,
 - b. provide members with agenda, reports and pertinent background material in advance of the meeting,
 - c. provide to applicants notification of meetings at which their applications are scheduled to be considered,
 - d. ensure that members are notified of any extraordinary meetings at least 5 days prior to the proposed meeting date,
 - e. keep minutes of all meetings and ensure that they are signed by the Chairperson or member presiding at the meeting, and
 - f. maintain a record of approved minutes to be made available to the public upon request.

5.0 Meetings

- 5.1 A quorum for a meeting shall be a majority of the members.
- 5.2 Public notification of the date, time and location of Agriculture Advisory Committee meetings shall be posted on the Islands Trust Notice Board not less than 72 hours prior to the meeting.
- 5.3 All deliberations of the Agriculture Advisory Committee must take place at a meeting of the Agriculture Advisory Committee and such meetings must be open to the public.
- 5.4 All regular meetings of the Agriculture Advisory Committee shall be held on a monthly advisory committee meeting day as scheduled by the Local Trust Committee.
- 5.5 In the event that there are no referrals or other business to conduct, no meeting need be held.
- 5.6 Extraordinary meetings of the Agriculture Advisory Committee may be held only if approved by the Local Trust Committee upon request by the Chairperson or an Applicant.
- 5.7 The Agriculture Advisory Committee shall not receive delegations or hold public participation meetings except as directed by the Local Trust Committee.
- 5.8 The Agriculture Advisory Committee will provide an opportunity for applicants to speak to the Agriculture Advisory Committee at a meeting during which their application is being considered.
- 5.9 If an applicant or their agent fails to appear at a meeting of which they were duly notified, the Agriculture Advisory Committee may proceed and reach its recommendation in their absence.
- 5.10 A motion of the Agriculture Advisory Committee must be provided to the recording secretary or their designate prior to conducting a vote.
- 5.11 Prior to a scheduled meeting the panel members shall advise the coordinating secretary respecting their attendance at the meeting and review the agenda documents in preparation for an informed and critical evaluation of the agenda items.

6. Referrals and Other Matters

- 6.1 Members of the Agriculture Advisory Committee shall not contact applicants, representatives of applicants or agency representatives directly respecting applications or other matters under consideration by the committee. Communication with such persons should be directed through Islands Trust staff or the Local Trust Committee
- 6.2 The committee shall respond in a timely manner on all referrals and prior to a date that may be specified by the Local Trust Committee in its referral.
- 6.3 If the Local Trustees have not been in attendance at a meeting where a recommendation is made, the Local Trust Committee may receive a verbal report from the Chairperson or Islands Trust staff.

APPENDIX D – DRAFT IAF LONG-TERM TRACKING PLAN

August 2007

IAF Long-Term Tracking Information Sheet

Long-Term Tracking

The Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) of British Columbia has been asked by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to develop a plan for the long-term tracking of project impacts. The information will be used to validate the allocation of funds for the program. This information sheet has been provided to answer some basic questions about what long-term tracking will involve.

Background Information:

The full benefit of a project may not be known at the time of project completion, and it may take several years to measure project impacts. Long term tracking will allow the IAF and our funding partners to assess the results of a project which may occur three to five years after project completion and final payment.

Long-term tracking is a good performance measurement practice. It provides valuable information to both the IAF and project proponents on the actual benefits of a project to agriculture.

Why is this necessary?

The IAF is required to track certain projects in order to meet the reporting requirements of our funding partner Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). This tracking will assist the IAF to demonstrate that funds have provided measurable benefits to the agriculture sector. It may also provide justification that there is a need for future funding.

How were projects selected for Long-Term Tracking?

Projects were selected from a cross-section of project types, and where the likely impact on the sector would be significant. We are requesting your participation as this project was chosen due to its relevance to the industry, potential for measurable results, and the long term benefits expected.

What will be expected?

IAF staff will work with your group to identify appropriate indicators for measuring project impacts, and a plan for how these indicators can be tracked. A draft plan is attached as a starting point.

Two to three indicators will be developed with your group that are measurable, and can provide the relevant information on your project benefits without being too onerous. Long-term tracking will require a commitment by your group to continue providing indicator information for a specified period after project completion, normally 3-years. The IAF will provide funding for additional costs that may occur as a result of long-term tracking. Conditional grant agreements will be amended to include long-term tracking plans.



Draft Long-Term Tracking Plan for Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan

What is the Expected Long-Term Outcome?

The expected long-term outcome for the Salt Spring Island Area Farm Plan is for the Area Farm Plan to allow the agriculture sector on Salt Spring Island to input into policy development, thus protecting and enhancing the viability of agricultural production.

What are the Indicators of Project Success?

Indicators of success are used to measure the results of the project. For the Salt-Spring Island Area Agriculture Plan success will be indicated in the short-term by:

- Utilization of plan for revitalization of interest in agriculture on Salt Spring Island
- Provision of an agricultural framework for Official Community Plan
- Provision of action options for community consideration
- Provision of baseline information for tracking process and effectiveness of implementation phase

In the longer-term (post-project completion) the following indicators of project success are suggested:

- The Area Agriculture Plan is used for land-use decisions by local government
- Agricultural production on Salt Spring Island is protected and/or increased
- Public awareness of and support for agriculture is increased

The following is a sample of the type of information we are proposing to collect. It is suggested as starting point only, and IAF staff will work with you to develop a full plan, including how to budget for and access funding for additional costs incurred.

LTT Performance Indicator	How will we know if successful?	How will it be measured?
Area Agriculture Plan used in land-use decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agriculture framework developed is included in the Official Community Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review OCP to ensure included • Reference to Area Agriculture Plan in Island Trust decisions
Agricultural Production on SSI is protected/increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers identified through project are decreased • Opportunities identified are seized • Positive change in ALR/Farmland in use for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use 2006 use land use/ALR inventory as a benchmark • Redo inventory in 2010 • Number of new agricultural operations/processors on SSI
Public Awareness of and support for agriculture is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random survey of community demonstrates increased awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public awareness and support for agriculture is benchmarked through initial public survey (2007) • Follow-up survey conducted (2010)

Next steps:

Please contact Alana Wilson, Program Analyst at the IAF to discuss this further.

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Agriculture
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