

Emergency Agriculture Response and Recovery Plan 1st April 2020

Background

The Salt Spring Agricultural Alliance is a network of organizations promoting local healthy food. We have worked with our member organizations and other concerned groups to develop the following response and recovery plan to COVID-19. We're also ensuring that the agricultural plan fits into the overall emergency response on the island. **This is a rolling plan which will be updated regularly as circumstances change.** If you'd like to subscribe to updates, please use the following link

<https://mailchi.mp/194a3e3f5d2d/emaillist>. For more on the Agricultural Alliance's COVID response, please go to <http://plantofarm.org/covid-19/> Food and agriculture, including farming, has been declared an essential service by the Province of B.C. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PSSG0020-000568>

Main challenges:

- Cash flow for farms
- Farmers/Workers getting sick
- Lack of farmworkers, many of whom come from off island seasonally
- Lack of outlets for local produce
- Slow downs could affect fuel, feed and other farm supplies
- Agri-tourism shut down

Capacity and resources:

- A very supportive community that wants to support farmers however they can
- Well functioning organizations federated into an island wide network
- The final draft of the renewed Area Farm Plan document for which planning went on for 9 months before the emergency, which focused on farmer priorities going forward
- Support from Professional Agrologists at Upland Agricultural Consulting
- SSICS Food programs for vulnerable people in the community (Market coupons, Harvest Program).
- New processing and local food storage infrastructure close to being operational.
- A licensed abattoir

Overall plan objectives:

- Promote safety and reduce virus transmission risk as it relates to local food production
- Ensure the viability of farm operations in the short term and increase the production and availability of locally grown food in both the short (this season) and longer terms.
- Ensure smooth transition to recovery stage (extensive experience from disaster response has demonstrated that it's essential to plan for recovery from the start of a disaster)

Plan Components

1. Immediate response

1.1 Run a community on-line marketing service for food producers			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up and maintain localline.ca page for on-line sales from individual farms. This will be open to all farms on island for fresh and processed food. This will reduce human interaction and virus transmission. 	Tuesday Market Society	Set up by April 1st	0

1.2 Run a distribution service for pick up and delivery			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distribution service can pick up from farms and drop off at customers, limiting travel time and costs for all, and reducing transmission risk Set up online booking service This will reduce human interaction and virus transmission. 	Tour Salt Spring SSI Agricultural Alliance/Tour Salt Spring	Ongoing	0

1.3 Provide streamlined no or low interest loans to farmers and food processors			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSSEC has considerable experience in providing loans to green businesses 	TSSEC	Ongoing	0

1.4 Prevent virus transmission			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure safety protocols communicated to all farms, food production facilities and market on an ongoing basis 	SSI AA	Ongoing	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a 1 page tip sheet for farms 	SSI AA	By April 2nd	0

1.5 Run help desk for individual farms			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support individual farms in making applications for grants and loans and government subsidies by providing up to date information through a help desk (phone and email) 	Upland Consulting	Ongoing	\$2,000

2. Increase food production

2.1 Expediate opening of the Root			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate hook up to municipal water source Source funds for purchasing and installing specific kitchen equipment, coolers and freezers to operationalize capacity to process and store year-round supply 	CRD/Water District All	April 15 Ongoing	0 Pending

2.2 Maintain operations at the abattoir			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a “back up” work force for staff shortages and high demand times. Investigate feasibility of increasing capacity with “personal use” only days for poultry bookings with no inspection 	Abattoir Society	April 15	0

2.3 Increase capacity and farmed land			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect landowners with underused land and potential farmers, and develop incubator farm 	SSI Farmland Trust	Ongoing	\$3,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit retired farmers to assist with mentoring new farmers 	Island Natural Growers	Ongoing	0

2.4 Increase home production (includes Community Gardens)			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote increased production through newsletter 	Garden Club	Ongoing	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up Facebook page for home gardeners 	Transition Garden Club	Ongoing Ongoing	0 0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase produce donations to the food bank 			

2.5 Increase poultry levels			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
Promote hatching capacity on island	Poultry Club	Ongoing	0

3. Increase the amount of local food in outlets

3.1 Set up and run Tuesday and Saturday Farmers' Markets			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain permissions to operate restricted market 	Tuesday Market Society	April 6	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure safety protocols met at markets 	Tuesday Market Society	Ongoing	0

3.2 Increase local food in retail outlets			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with Country Grocer, Thrifty Foods, NatureWorks and other outlets about seasonal requirements, potentially as part of regional initiative 	SSIAA In collaboration with regional initiative Closing the Supply Gap	Ongoing	\$2000 staff time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link outlets and farmers 	SSIAA	Ongoing	

3.3 Advertise produce in farms and on farm stands			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regularly updated information on produce available from farms and on farm stands 	Farmers' Institute	Ongoing	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate information about produce availability via website links and using social media 	All	Ongoing	0

4. Increase processing and storage

4.1 Increase processing/freezing capacity for larger harvests			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
Operationalize The Root	Farmland Trust and SSIAA	Ongoing	\$2,000

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4.2 Teach food processing skills for 2020 harvest season			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
Set up webinars from local chefs and virtual workshops on processing	CEDC/Island Natural Growers with Farmland Trust once Root operational	Ongoing	0

5. Ensure supply of labor and key inputs

5.1 Organize bulk buying and storage			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with farmers concerning requirements • Coordinate bulk buying • Identify potential sites for temporary storage of supplies and get agreement from owner (e.g. Slegg, Moonstruck, Root Barn) • Manage storage and distribution for soil, feed, compost etc • Facilitate production of locally produced compost 	Rob Pingle	Ongoing	\$3,000 for contract with SSIAA
	Islands Trust		

5.2 Assess labor needs and respond to shortages			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
• Survey farmers to determine short and longer term labor needs	SSIAA	10 April	0
• Based on survey, train potential farmworkers, taking into account any liability issues	ING	Ongoing	\$500
• Connect farmworkers to farmers	ING	Ongoing	0

6. Ensure food supplies for vulnerable groups

6.1 Support provision of healthy food to underserved populations			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase coupon program and enable pick up of local produce/meat via markets and/or other distribution points • Stronger cooperation and partnership with the Seed Sanctuary • Increase dry storage capacity including at the Root • Increase of budget to buy local bulk from farmers for the food bank 	Community Services	All ongoing	pending

7. Ensure funding, effective administration, liaison, communication to public and coordinated response, tied in to overall Island planning

7.1 Identify and apply for community funding			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and apply for community funding to execute activities identified above and for overall management of response and recovery plan 	Upland Consulting/ CEDC	Ongoing	\$500 \$500

7.2 Farmers and the public receive ongoing information about the response to COVID-19			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop one page communication strategy 	CEDC	6 April	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure regular (at least twice a week), consistent and clear communications through Alliance website, Facebook page, email list, press releases etc. 	CEDC	Ongoing	\$4,725

7.3 Logistics			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain effective administration functions, including website 	Transition/SSIAA	Ongoing	\$2,000
	Coreen Boucher (website)	Ongoing	\$1,000

7.4 Overall coordination and liaison			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget
Liaise and coordinate with key groups – Alliance Member Organisations, other food organisations/ outlets, CRD, CEDC, Community Services, CAG etc	Anne Macey/Tony Beck	Ongoing	0

Overall Budget

SSIAA

Liaison with grocery and other outlets	\$2,000
Organize bulk buying and storage	\$3,000
Regular updates to website	\$1,000
Effective administration	\$800
Support individual farmers through help desk	\$2,000
Community funding applications	\$500

Farmland Trust

Land matching program	\$3,000
Operationalization of the Root	\$2,000

Sub-total - funds currently required **\$14,300**

Cash contributions confirmed

CEDC	\$5,225
Transition Salt Spring	\$1,200
Tour Salt Spring	\$500
Island Natural Growers	\$500

Total including cash contributions confirmed **\$21,725**

Hundreds if not thousands of hours of volunteer time – priceless!