

# Cowichan Region Agriculture Profile



2014



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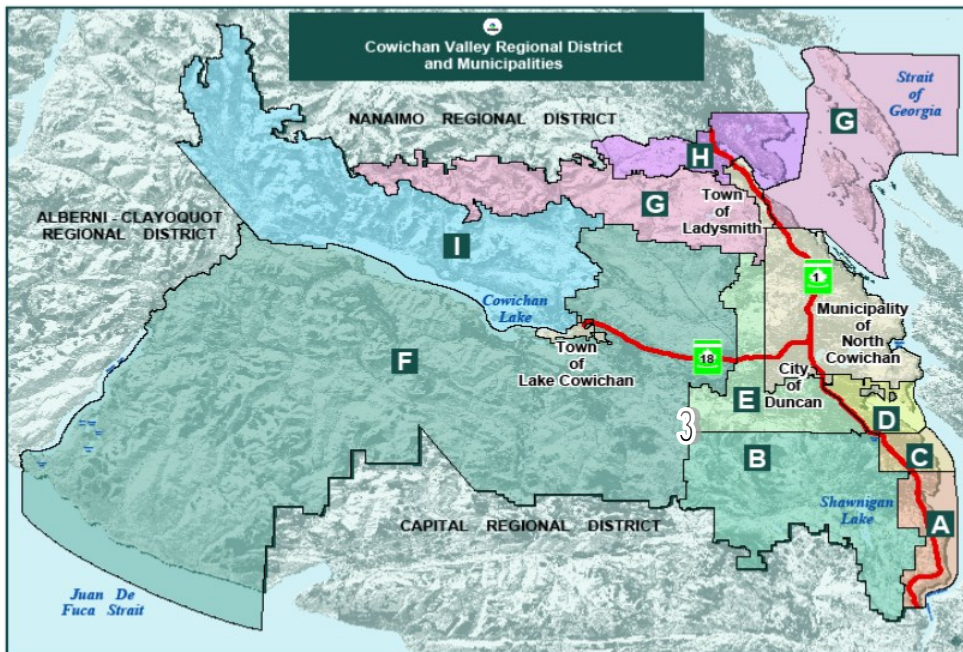
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This report was developed by the Cowichan Valley Regional District, Economic Development Division. Statistical data used in this report was taken from Statistics Canada 2011 Census of Agriculture and the CVRD Area Agriculture Plan 2010.



# Welcome to the Cowichan Region

The Cowichan Region is located on Vancouver Island between Victoria and Nanaimo. Covering a land mass of 350,890 hectares, the region has a population of 85,000 and is made up of the municipalities of Duncan (4935), Ladysmith (7,921), Lake Cowichan (2974), North Cowichan (25,807) and nine electoral areas including the distinct communities of Chemainus (3035), Cowichan Bay (1401), Crofton (1092), Cobble Hill (637), Shawnigan Lake (1310), Mill Bay (1549), Youbou (966), Mesachi Lake/Honeymoon Bay (580) and Maple Bay.



# History of Agriculture

No single source of information could be found which describes the history of agriculture in the Cowichan Region. Tom Paterson of Fir Grove Publishing provided the following brief summary of the local industry:

*...the industry has changed over the years from stump farms to dairying....the annual Sweet Pea Festival that, incredible as it sounds today, was a major event in the '30s. We also had a large seed business in the Valley and Solly's farm at Westholme was a well-known exporter of chicks, purebred dairy cows and fruits between the world wars. T.A. Woods' farm at what is today The Garth was a major shipper of tree fruits.*

*Then there is the Cowichan Creamery story (which included a jam factory). And, in 1910, Valley farmers and businessmen fought hard to have the new Dominion Experimental Farm established here; alas, it went to Saanichton. In 1901 W.P. Jaynes was "one of the first people in Canada to successfully use a silo," according to the 'Leader.'*

*There's a great story in the history of the Cowichan Exhibition and the Cobble Hill Farmers Institute and, more recently, the phenomenal success (as it appears to me) of the Valley's wine industry...*

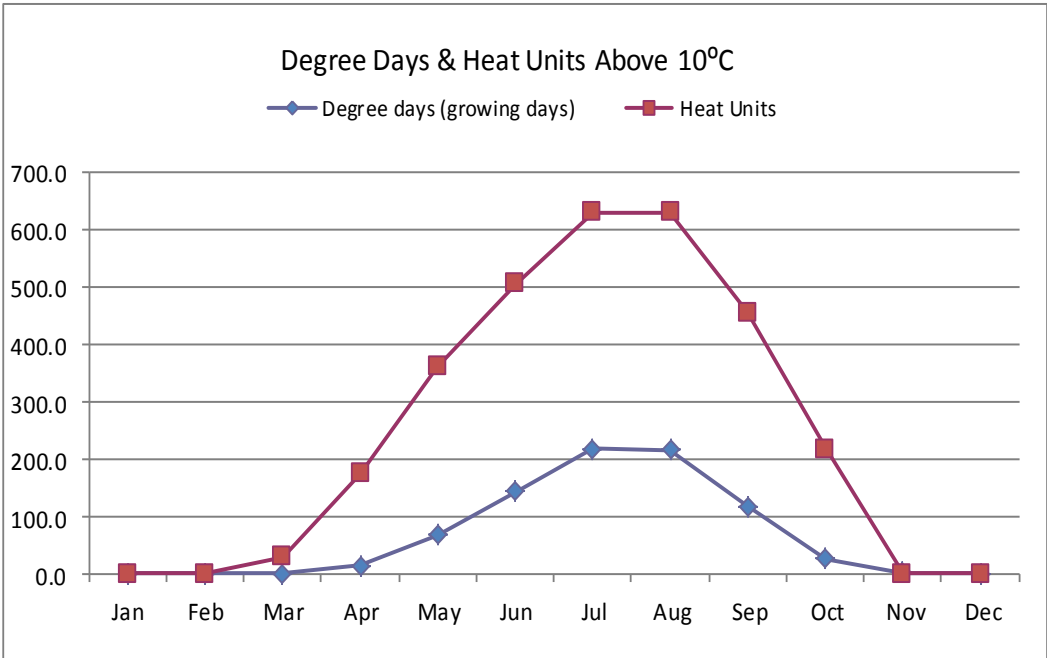
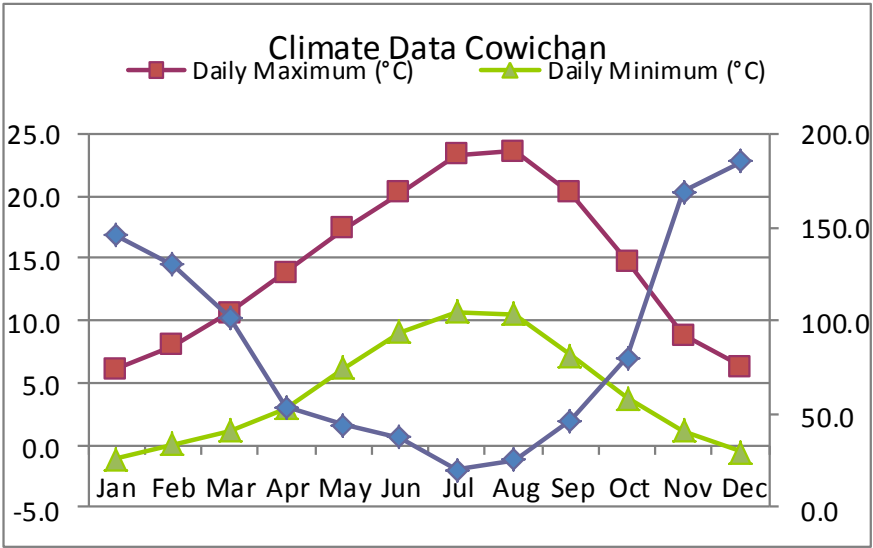
The Cowichan Creamery, formed in 1895, was the first dairy co-op in BC. The co-op was financed with \$10 shares from 70 farmers totaling \$3000. It built a small plant over a spring which was believed to contain the coldest and freshest water in Duncan. In the first year of production, the Creamery produced 47,000 pounds of butter with sales of \$10,386. The Creamery operated for 93 years – closing in 1988.







About 15.8% (estimated 55,586 of 350,890 ha) of the land in the CVRD has a climate suitable for agriculture. Generally, this is the area below 200 m of elevation. It has a temperate climate. Water temperatures and breezes moderate air temperatures near the ocean. Inland areas, near Duncan, are much warmer during the summer. These microclimates have relatively high heat units for coastal areas. The valley enjoys an average of 274 frost-free days, annually, and an average frost-free period of 166 days (ranging from 146 days to 186 days). The western part of the Regional District, inland towards Cowichan Lake, has much higher rainfall and a shorter growing season.





# Agriculture Land Base

33,201 hectares, or 9.5%, of the CVRD land base is capable of agricultural production. About half of that, 16,012 ha, or 4.6%, of the total land base is capable of producing vegetables. Only 2.7 percent is considered prime agricultural land (improvable to Class 3 or better).

## Land Area

Land Area	Area (ha)	% of Agricultural	% of CVRD
Cowichan Valley Regional District	350,890		100%
Area with Climate Suitable for Agriculture	55,586		15.8%
Land with Agricultural Capability	33,201	100%	9.5%
Arable land (land that can be cultivated)	32,830	99%	9.4%
Crop land (suitable for crop production)	16,012	48%	4.6%
Prime agricultural lands (suitable for a wide range of	9,421	28%	2.7%

Based on the unimproved CLI classification, there are only 46.6 ha of prime agricultural land (Class 3 or better) in the CVRD. This includes 29.4 ha of mineral soils and 17.2 ha of organic soils. With improvements, this increases to 9,421 ha – 8,540 ha of mineral soil and 881 ha of organic soil. A review of agricultural capability maps indicates that about 2/3 of the area's soils could be improved to Class 3 or better if they were irrigated – i.e., aridity (A) is the main limitation. Another 20% would be improved to Class 3 or better with irrigation and drainage. This essentially means that irrigation would have a significant beneficial impact on about 8,100 hectares of land within the CVRD. Statistics indicate that 2,465 ha were irrigated in the Cowichan Valley in 2005.





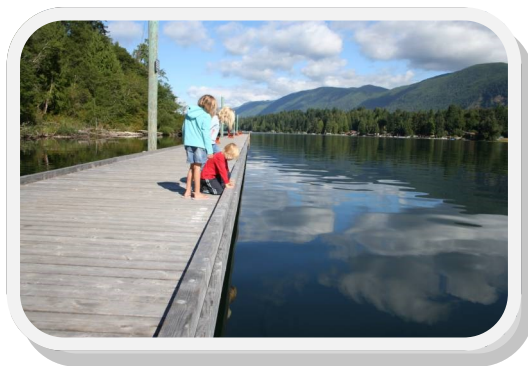


# Water

Irrigation is essential for the production of most high value crops (berries, grapes, vegetables) in the Cowichan Valley. It is also very important for production of consistent, high-quality grass forage for livestock operations. The availability of water for irrigation varies throughout the Cowichan Valley. In some areas, there is adequate groundwater. Some organic soils are sub-irrigated. However, as noted on page 6, of the 16,000+ ha that is suitable for crop production, only 2,465 ha (15.4%) is irrigated. Generally, farms have adequate water for household use and livestock watering.

About one third of the Cowichan Valley Regional District lies within the Cowichan Basin. The “Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan”, completed in 2007, includes the following points relevant to agriculture: More than 530 licenses have been issued to divert water from streams and lakes in the basin, and more than 1300 wells have been drilled to pump water from the aquifers.

The CVRD has also developed an Agriculture Water Demand Model to provide current and future agricultural water demands. The Model calculates water use on a property-by-property basis, and sums each property to obtain a total water demand for the entire basin or each sub-basin. Crop, irrigation system type, soil texture and climate data are used to calculate the water demand.





# Farm Data

The Cowichan Region has 685 farms with the majority of them between 0 and 69 acres.

## Number of Farms

Total Number of Farms	685
Under 10 acres	267
10-69	318
70-129	50
130-179	17
180-239	10
240-399	18
400-559	5
560-759	0

The farming by industry group table shows that 468 farms are involved in the livestock industry and a further breakdown of that sector is on page 10.

## Farms by Industry Group

Type of Farm	Number of Farms Cowichan	Number of Farms Vancouver Island
Cattle ranching	103	277
Hog and pig	3	20
Poultry and egg production	59	252
Sheep and goats	46	180
Other animal production	157	684
Oilseed and grain	2	6
Vegetables and melon	37	228
Fruit and nut trees	74	373
Greenhouse, nursery, floriculture	87	439
Other crop farming	117	541

# Farm Income

Cowichan Region farms reported gross farm receipts of \$48,069,900 for the year 2010. The majority of farms report a gross income of \$24,999 or less.

## Gross Farm Receipts

Amount in Dollars	Number of Farms Cowichan	Number of Farms Vancouver Island
Under \$10,000	430	1951
\$10,000- \$24,999	108	448
\$25,000- \$49,999	41	225
\$50,000- \$99,999	36	118
\$100,000- \$249,000	22	109
\$250,000- \$499,999	20	59
\$500,000- \$999,999	18	53
\$1,000,000- \$1,999,999	7	30
\$2,000,000 and over	3	7

## Paid Work

	Cowichan Region	Vancouver Island
Paid work (full or part time) Farms reporting	76	311
Number of employees	252	1,098
Paid work (seasonal or temporary) Farms reporting	145	634
Number of employees	452	2,999
Total number of employees Farms reporting	186	805
Number of employees	704	4,098





### Livestock (annual)

	Cowichan Region	Vancouver Island
Beef cows– number of farms	112	401
Number of beef cows	946	3,269
Dairy cows– number of farms	41	92
Number of dairy cows	3,582	7,298
Chickens– number of farms	92	358
Chickens in kilograms	335,968	3,579,870
Turkeys– number of farms	49	152
Turkeys– number in kilograms	668,126	762,721
Sheep and lambs– number of farms	129	497
Number of sheep and lambs	2,826	14,923
Pigs– number of farms	33	155
Number of pigs	297	2,134
Horses and ponies– number of	155	671
Number of horses and ponies	714	3,447
Goats– number of farms	51	200
Number of goats	712	1,710
Llamas and alpacas– number of	35	127
Number of llamas and alpacas	431	1,235
Rabbits– number of farms	17	58
Number of rabbits	155	960





**Egg Production**

Eggs in British Columbia are regulated by marketing boards and are subject to a quota system that limits the number of laying hens a producer can have. While farmers are required to have quota, the BC Egg Marketing Board allows farmers to produce table eggs for direct marketing as long as they have less than 99 hens. Anything over that amount requires the producer to purchase quota.

The BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission regulates the production of broiler hatching eggs and there are no allowed limits to production without obtaining quota.

	Cowichan Region	Vancouver Island
Table eggs– number of farms	224	983
Number of eggs (dozens)	3,156,743	5,868,322
Hatching eggs– number of farms	18	70
Number of eggs (dozens)	5,593	13,888





# Crops

## Field Crops

	Cowichan Region	Vancouver Island
Total wheat– number of farms	9	29
Total wheat– number of acres	36	241
Oats– number of farms	7	36
Oats– number of acres	78	X
Barley– number of farms	13	31
Barley– number of acres	120	X
Mixed grains– number of farms	2	16
Mixed grains– number of acres	X	136
Total corn– number of farms	23	42
Total corn– number of acres	1,091	2,204
Corn for grain– number of farms	4	7
Corn for grain– number of acres	50	55
Corn for silage– number of farms	20	36
Corn for silage– number of acres	969	2,149
Total rye– number of farms	3	24
Total rye– number of acres	4	162
Alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures– number of farms	39	128
Alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures– number of acres	661	3,785
Tame hay and fodder crops– number of farms	270	990
Tame hay and fodder crops– number of acres	9,478	31,728
Potatoes– number of farms	15	106
Potatoes– number of acres	25	627

# Vegetables

## Vegetables (excluding greenhouse)

Product	Number of Farms Cowichan Region	Number of Farms Vancouver Island
Total vegetables	110	659
Sweet corn	28	171
Tomatoes	37	264
Cucumbers	28	164
Green peas	29	159
Cabbage	20	107
Green and wax beans	32	235
Chinese cabbage	7	28
Cauliflower	13	88
Broccoli	23	153
Brussels sprouts	9	48
Carrots	31	212
Rutabagas and turnips	11	54
Beets	29	224
Radishes	12	73
Shallots and green onions	13	108
Onions	21	149
Celery	4	34
Lettuce	34	229
Spinach	14	120
Peppers	16	102
Pumpkins	21	135
Squash and zucchini	42	284
Asparagus, producing	5	54
Asparagus, non producing	10	35
Other vegetables	72	402



# Fruits, Berries and Nuts

## Fruits Berries and Nuts

	Number of Farms Cowichan Region	Acres Cowichan Region	Hectares Cowichan Region
Total	153	544	220
Apples	80	73	30
Pears	24	8	3
Plums and Prunes	20	5	2
Cherries (sweet)	23	8	3
Cherries (sour)	2	X	X
Peaches	9	1	0
Apricots	4	1	0
Grapes	41	242	98
Strawberries	29	17	7
Raspberries	36	X	X
Cranberries	2	X	X
Blueberries	34	43	17
Saskatoons	5	X	X
Other fruit	45	96	39

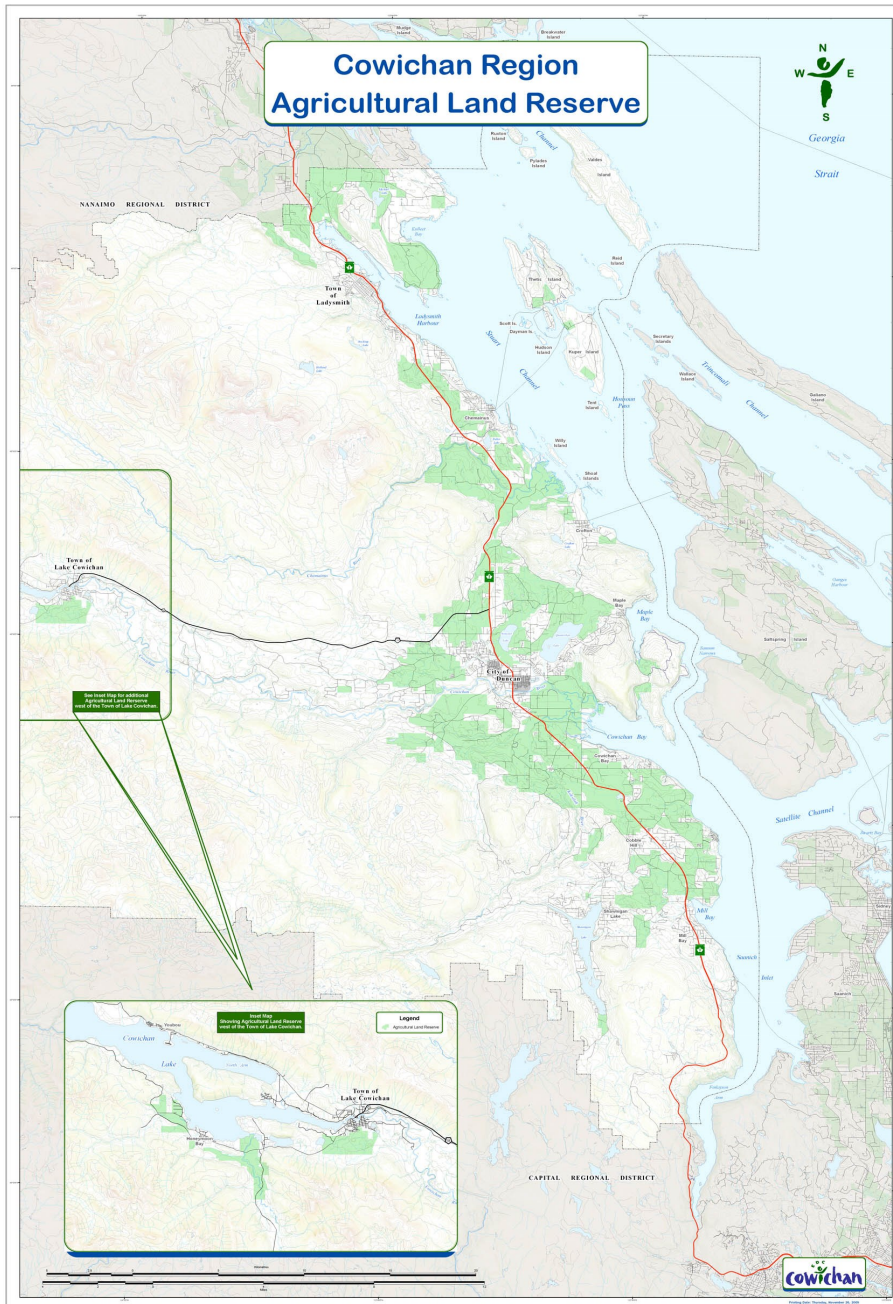


# Agricultural Land Reserve

The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is a provincial zone in which agriculture is recognized as the priority use. In total, the ALR comprises those lands within BC that have the potential for agricultural production. When land is designated as in the reserve, farming is encouraged and non-agricultural uses are controlled.

The ALR covers approximately 4.7 million hectares in British Columbia. It includes private and public lands that may be farmed, forested or vacant land. Some ALR blocks cover thousands of hectares while others are small pockets of only a few hectares.

The Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) is an independent Provincial agency responsible for administering the Province's land use zone in favour of agriculture.



The purpose of the Commission is

- to preserve agricultural land;
- to encourage farming in collaboration with other communities of interest; and
- to encourage local governments, First Nations, the government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies.

The areas in green on the map show the land in the Cowichan Region that is designated ALR. The Cowichan Region has a total of 17,713 hectares in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALC, 2009) which is roughly 5% of the entire region.

Most of the ALR land is concentrated along the eastern side of the region running north to south along Highway 1. There are small amounts of ALR land in the Lake Cowichan, Honeymoon Bay area.

There are a number of activities that are considered acceptable within the ALR designation including:

- Farm product processing, storage, and packing
- Farm retail sales, wineries and cideries,
- Additional residences necessary for farm use and farm buildings



# Government Regulations

The agriculture industry is affected by policy and regulation at every level of government – local, provincial and federal. This section summarizes these policies and regulations. Restrictions and controls on development are established by local governments under the Community Charter and the *Local Government Act*, which contains extensive land use regulations, zoning powers and subdivision powers. The Community Charter came into force on January 1, 2004.

While the B.C. Legislature has largely delegated its jurisdiction over land use and development control to local governments, the provincial government continues to control a number of areas including agricultural land, forestland, riparian land, heritage sites and highways. Additionally, a number of provisions in various statutes permit the provincial government to be involved in local government planning and zoning processes.

## Official Community Plans

An official community plan, while not mandatory, is a general statement of the broad objectives and policies of a municipality regarding the form and character of existing and proposed land use and servicing requirements contained in the area covered by the plan. Additionally, an official community plan may create a policy context that guides development rights within the affected area.

Every community plan that is adopted must conform to the content requirements set out in the Local Government Act and must be adopted with broad consultation with the public, adjacent local governments, first nations, school boards, improvement districts and other governmental agencies.

An OCP affects agriculture and the use of land adjacent to agriculture in several ways. It must include, among other things, the amount and type of present and proposed agricultural land uses. This is usually depicted in a land use map in the OCP. It may contain policies of the local government respecting the maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in a farming area or in an area designated for agricultural use in the community plan. These policies deal with a wide range of issues, including water supply, recreation near farmland, supporting the agricultural industry, and safeguarding the ALR. Finally, local governments may designate development permit areas for the protection of farming in the OCP, and establish guidelines for how urban development may occur adjacent to the ALR. OCPs do not directly regulate land use or farm-related policies, but instead provide high-level guidance on local government land use, subdivision and capital program decisions. While local governments have considerable latitude to establish policies for the future of agriculture in their boundaries, they must ensure that all bylaws and plans, including OCPs, are consistent with the Agricultural Land Commission Act, regulations and orders of the Commission. OCPs that deal with ALR land must be referred to the Agricultural Land Commission for approval.



# Government Regulations

## Zoning Bylaws

The right to use land in B.C. is governed by zoning by-laws as permitted by the B.C. *Local Government Act*. The purpose of Zoning is to help enforce the Official Community Plan. Governments can control the use and the density of use. Zoning can control the distance buildings and uses must be setback from lot lines, the height of buildings, parking spaces on the site and the size of signs.

Zoning regulations, based on the consultation and intent of an OCP policy, can support the ALR and agricultural uses and ensure that land is not used for some other use even if it is removed from the ALR. Zoning regulations can also help to mitigate the cumulative impacts of farm-related activities, such as residential, marketing, processing and agri-tourism, on farmland productivity.



Provincial regulations allow certain land uses and activities in the ALR, but the regulations also allow local governments to regulate or prohibit these same activities and uses. Zoning standards can help prevent an activity from becoming a nuisance to neighbours or interfering with agriculture. Zoning

regulations may mitigate these impacts by directing where these types of activities can occur, and to what extent.

## Development Permit Areas

Development permits areas (DPAs) are one of the strongest tools for shaping new development to ensure that it respects adjacent farmland and farming practices. DPAs allow local governments to create site-specific requirements for development over and above basic zoning. A municipality may designate a DPA in which new development will be required to conform to development permit guidelines. A permit must be obtained before a private landowner may subdivide, alter land, or construct or alter a building in a DPA, and development must be in accordance with the terms of the permit.

Local governments may designate an area as a DPA for a range of purposes, including the protection of farming. When a DPA is established, the local government must describe the special site conditions or objectives that justify the designation, and specify guidelines to achieve those objectives. . DPA guidelines designated to protect farming may include land requirements that result in buffering or separation of development from farming on adjoining or reasonably adjacent land.





# Government Regulations

## Covenants

Under section 219 of the Land Title Act, a municipality or regional district may register a covenant on the title to land to protect specific characteristics of land in or adjacent to the ALR. A covenant is a voluntary agreement between the landowner (often a farmer or a developer) and a covenant holder (a municipality, regional district, or non-profit organization). The landowner agrees to protect the land as contemplated in the wording of the covenant. The covenant holder has the right to monitor and enforce the covenant to make sure the landowner is using the land in accordance with the covenant.

Registering the covenant on the title of the land ensures that the covenant applies to future owners and endures indefinitely. For example, a covenant on the parcels of residential land adjacent to ALR land can outline buffer specifications like large backyards remaining free from development and landscaping requirements such as a hedge of trees or shrubs near the edge of the property. Covenants “run with the land,” meaning they apply to whoever owns the land, thus ensuring that urban-agriculture edge mitigation measures endure over the long term.

Covenants may contain provisions specifying:

- ⇒ the use of land (including that it be used for agricultural purposes), or the use of a building on or to be erected on land;
- ⇒ that land is to be built on in accordance with the covenant or is not to be built on;
- ⇒ that land is not to be subdivided except in accordance with the covenant or is not to be subdivided;
- ⇒ that parcels of land designated in the covenant are not to be sold or otherwise transferred separately;
- ⇒ that land, or a specified feature, be protected, maintained, enhanced, or restored in accordance with the covenant.

For example, covenants can require that a wetland be maintained as a buffer between agricultural land and an urban residential area.

Covenants are often secured on land that is being subdivided adjacent to farmland to ensure that future activities and development of that land does not hinder the productive ability of the land in the ALR. Covenants also provide notice to potential buyers that the land is adjacent to farmland, which helps prevent future conflict about farming practices.



# Government Regulations

## Farm Bylaws

Some farm operations may be inappropriate for a specific area. The ministry and a local government may agree to use a farm bylaw under the *Municipal Act* to directly regulate or prohibit farm operations in a manner consistent with the minister's standards.

A farm bylaw will set special rules for farm practices in that area that can then be enforced directly by local governments. Farm bylaws may only be adopted with the approval of the Minister of Agriculture, and only in an area declared by regulation (sections 917 and 918 Local Government Act).

Farm bylaws allow for greater flexibility in setting standards and deal with matters that cannot be regulated by way of zoning. They may prescribe different standards depending on the size or type of farm, type of farm operation, the site conditions, and the adjoining land uses. Farm bylaws may be used in edge planning as the ALR or farmland equivalent to development permits for the protection of farming. Farm bylaws may include setbacks, siting of farm activities, and buffer requirements. Local governments will particularly want to consider the benefits of regulation by farm bylaw for areas or uses where lot size or configuration makes standard setbacks inappropriate, where topography and waste management create public health issues, and where there are sensitive adjoining land uses such as urban residential.

## Land Use Conflicts

Agricultural operations are protected through right-to-farm legislation in BC (see *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act (FPPA)* below). Farmers cannot be sued for nuisance-type impacts to nearby landowners, such as noise and odour, from normal farm practices. Residents living in farming areas must be willing to accept both the pleasant and not-so-pleasant by-products of an agricultural community. For more information on land use mitigation strategies, the brochure pictured below is available on the Economic Development Cowichan web site at [www.discovercowichan.com](http://www.discovercowichan.com).

### The Cowichan Region has a diverse mix of rural and urban areas

Much of the region is agricultural and for this reason people want to leave the big city and move here to enjoy the peace and quiet of rural life. But along with change, there is a need for understanding. New rural residents may not understand what happens in farming country and farmers may not understand how these new residents perceive country life.



#### BUT IT'S ONLY 5 AM!

Farming requires long hours. The typical workday starts early and ends late. And yes, the rooster does crow at the break of dawn. Just think of it as nature's alarm clock!

#### WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

Most farming is done with large machinery. Sometimes peace and quiet can be disturbed especially during planting and harvest time. Machines can run late into the night and start up very early in the morning.

#### THERE'S THE FENCE... HIS PROPERTY, MY PROPERTY

Most of the time, yes. But property lines in the country are not always clear. Make sure you know where they are and respect them. Most farm animals are fairly docile, however it is not a good idea to be on the same side of the fence as a bull or a stallion. If you are not sure how to act around the neighbor's animals, ask.

#### WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

Many crops rely on fertilization and many farmers use the "end" products, pardon the pun, of their livestock. The farmer is recycling and using an environmentally friendly alternative to chemical

fertilizers. It is quite common to see a farmer spraying this fertilizer onto his fields. That many cows... that large barn... only one bathroom. The accumulated liquids become fertilizer and are normally sprayed on fields twice a year. Depending on wind direction, it can disrupt a patio party quite quickly. It may be a good idea to contact your farming neighborhood and see what the schedule is for spraying.

#### HOW LONG DO WE HAVE TO FOLLOW THIS GUY?

Living in the country can sometimes mean less traffic, but farm equipment is slow and may cause you delays, especially during harvest time. Be patient, the road where he's turning may be just ahead.

#### WHERE DOES FIDO FIT IN?

For many people, moving from the city to a rural property means having a family dog. Dogs are great companions and well suited to a rural lifestyle where there is room to romp and play. Dogs are also predators and given the opportunity, may chase and in some cases kill livestock. It is important that you keep your dog in an enclosed area and do not permit your dog to run loose. One loose dog is bad... more than one loose dog constitutes a "pack"

and farmers can tell you of instances of mass kills of sheep, chickens and other livestock caused by pack dogs. Dogs can also stress livestock even if there is a fence separating them. Please ensure your dog is kept away from property lines and other areas that may allow the dog to interact with livestock.

#### WHERE IS ALL THAT SMOKE COMING FROM?

In BC, farmers are protected under the "Right to Farm Act" and are permitted to clear large tracts of land for crops or grazing. Farmers must be ensured that air quality objectives of the Province are achieved. For information on the Smoke Control regulations go to: [http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/34\\_145\\_93](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/34_145_93)

COMMUNICATION is key to healthy country living. Meet your neighbours. Get to know & understand their lifestyle. They in turn, may get to know yours.

**HAVE A RIGHT TO FARM**  
policy of the new provincial  
m Practices Protection (Right  
at farming areas, particularly the  
Reserve, provided they use  
cess and follow other legislation  
nvironmental Management Act,  
anagement Act, Health Act and

**RIGHT TO FARM ACT  
REFERENCE GUIDE**  
[/resgmt/fpps/refguide/intro](http://resgmt/fpps/refguide/intro).  
des many of British Columbia's  
adices in general terms. It  
eader to existing government  
y guidelines and other sources  
ted to farm practices in British

led to be used by people seeking  
t to issues and concerns raised  
es (e.g., farmers, peer advisors  
governments, neighbours living  
The guide may also be used by  
Review Board, the statutory body  
the Farm Practices Protection  
to hear formal complaints about



Cowichan Valley Regional District Regional  
Agricultural Advisory Commission (RAAC)

#### MISSION:

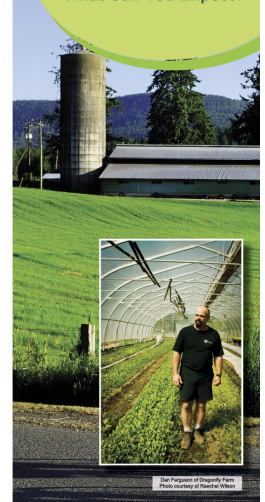
To develop an economically vibrant and diverse  
agricultural industry in the Cowichan Region which  
provides a healthy, high quality diet for the people  
who live and visit, and preserves or enhances the  
character, environment and the quality of  
life of the community.

**cowichan**  
REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMISSION



FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO:  
[www.discovercowichan.com](http://www.discovercowichan.com)

So, You Want to Move  
to the Countryside.....  
What Can You Expect?



Don Ferguson of Doggery Farm  
Photo courtesy of Don Ferguson



# Government Regulations

## Land Title Act

The *Land Title Act* gives approving officers the power to assess impacts of new subdivisions on farmland. The approving officer may require buffering of farmland from the subdivision and/or the removal of unnecessary roads to reduce the impact of subdivision on adjacent farmlands.

## Local Government Act

The *Local Government Act* provides the legislative framework for local governments. There are provisions in the act that address agriculture including community planning, zoning, nuisance regulations, the removal and deposit of soil, weed and pest control and water use and drainage. Publications are available to assist local government in addressing these issues within their local policies and bylaws.

## BC Assessment

The *Assessment Act*, administered by BC Assessment, provides for preferred property taxation on lands that qualify as farmland. BC Regulation 411/95 (Standards for the Classification of Land as a Farm) of the *Assessment Act* defines a farm as all or part of a parcel of land used for:

- ⇒ primary agricultural production;
- ⇒ a farmer's dwelling; or
- ⇒ the training and boarding of horses when operated in conjunction with horse rearing

All farm structures including the farmer's dwelling will be classified as residential.

There are minimum income requirements to qualify for farm classification as follows:

- ⇒ \$10,000 on land less than 8000 m<sup>2</sup> (2 acres)
- ⇒ \$2,500 on land between 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> (2 acres) and 4 ha (10 acres)
- ⇒ On land larger than four ha (10 acres), \$2,500 plus 5% of the actual value of any farm land in excess of four ha.

Land rented to a "bona fide" farmer may also qualify if there is a written lease in place. Landowners must submit an application for Farm Classification to BC Assessment. Full details on farmland classification in BC are available at the BC Assessment website: [www.bccassessment.bc.ca](http://www.bccassessment.bc.ca).



# Government Regulations

## **Natural Products Marketing (BC) Act - Supply Management**

The *Natural Products Marketing (BC) Act* is the enabling legislation for various marketing boards and commissions in BC. It provides a system that allows individual commodities to promote, control and regulate production, transportation, packing, storage and marketing of natural products in the province.

In the Cowichan Valley, producers of the following products are affected by the regulations and policies that have evolved from this act: dairy, chicken, eggs, turkeys, cranberries, and some vegetables.

## **Meat Inspection Regulation – Food Safety Act**

In September 2004, the Province of BC enacted a new *Meat Inspection Regulation* under the *Food Safety Act*. All BC abattoirs that produce meat for human consumption must be licensed either provincially or federally. Only meat from livestock slaughtered in a licensed abattoir can be sold for food. The regulation allowed a two-year transition period to give abattoir operators, livestock farmers and other stakeholders time to adapt.

Prior to enactment of this regulation, abattoirs in designated “Meat Inspection Areas” in BC had to be licensed (except farmers slaughtering their own animals on their own farm). Outside of the meat inspection areas, abattoirs had the choice of being either licensed, or approved by the Regional Health Authorities. Only animals slaughtered in licensed facilities were inspected.

The Cowichan Valley was not in a meat inspection area; the Capital Regional District was in a meat inspection area.

The Meat Inspection Regulation has resulted in reduced availability of custom slaughter services for red meat producers in the Cowichan Valley Regional District. There are two licensed red meat plants, one transitional red meat plant and one licensed poultry plant. One of the red meat plants is also licensed for poultry.





# Marketing and Distribution

Thanks to the concept of the 100 Mile Diet, more and more consumers are looking for local food. The reason that locally grown food is healthier, fresher and does not have the same environmental impact as food that comes from great distances.

## Direct Marketing

There are a number of direct marketing opportunities including farm gate sales, direct sales and farmers markets. There are six farmers markets in the Cowichan Region:

- ⇒ South Cowichan Farmers Market
- ⇒ Ladysmith Farmers Market
- ⇒ Chemainus Wednesday Market
- ⇒ May Bill Farmers Market
- ⇒ Duncan Farmers Market
- ⇒ Honeymoon Bay Outdoor Market
- ⇒ Crofton Farmers Market
- ⇒ Cedar Farmers Market



## Grocery Stores

There are a number of grocery stores in the Cowichan Region who will work with local farmers to purchase and sell local produce. There are also agencies that will work with farmers to help them gain access to grocery stores and wholesalers. For more information, contact the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission at 604-542-9734.

## CSA Programs

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a form of direct marketing of fresh vegetables and fruits based on an agreement between farmers and consumers who pay in advance for a regular share of produce through the growing season.



# Resources

## Environmental Farm Plans

A number of Provincial and Federal regulations and policies affect agriculture. The Canada – BC Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program, launched in 2003, provides a process for individual farmers to evaluate how their operation impacts the environment and plan changes that will and enhance their environmental stewardship. Developing an EFP will help to ensure that farmers are aware of the relevant environmental policies and regulations.

The plan covers environmental issues and concerns related to:

⇒ farm waste, fertilizers, fuel, wood waste, composting, energy use, on farm processing, livestock areas (indoors and out), manure handling, mortality disposal, crop production, pest management, buffers, riparian areas, soil management, water quality and quantity, drainage, irrigation, runoff/leachate, air quality including gas emissions, dust and particulate, odours, burning, and biodiversity among others.

## Cowichan Brand

The Cowichan brand has been developed to assist the local agricultural industry in product recognition and marketing. The brand is available to any business in the Cowichan Region and is free of charge, but we do ask that you agree and comply with some simple rules of usage.

1. The brand may only be used by farms and businesses located in the Cowichan Region.
2. The brand may not be altered in any way including shape, colour, minimum size or wording.
3. The brand can only be used for food products that are grown or manufactured in the Cowichan Region.
4. If the brand's intended use is on a manufactured food product, at least 50% of the ingredients must originate from the Cowichan Region.
5. If the brand's intended use is to promote the local ingredients in prepared meals, at least 50% of the ingredients must originate from the Cowichan Region.
6. The brand cannot be used for any product outside the intended use as described in this agreement without consent from Economic Development Cowichan.



**Celebrate food.  
Celebrate life.**





For more information, contact  
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