

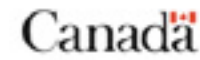
growing connections

a handbook for purchasers + farmers in the cowichan region



funder

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partner

This project was hosted by the Cowichan Green Community (CGC) in Duncan, BC between November 2012 and May 2013.

CGC is a non-profit organization that has been focusing on environmental sustainability in the Cowichan Region for over eleven years. For the last six years CGC's mandate has revolved mainly around improving food security by developing strong relationships with local food producers and increasing urban and rural food production.



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sharing

This handbook is licensed under the Creative Commons. In the spirit of co-operation, sharing, and connecting, this form of licensing allows creators to retain copyright while allowing others to copy, distribute, and make use of this work. As the goal of this handbook is to improve the connection between Cowichan Region farmers and purchasers, we encourage the sharing of the information contained herein. Go ahead and share!

thank you

We would like to thank the *Growing Connections* advisory committee, who gave their time, expertise, and constructive feedback. Their commitment to local agriculture is an inspiration, and guided the project from its inception to completion. This committee was made up of Wayne Haddow, Regional Agrologist; James McClellan, Chef at Shawnigan Lake School and Secretary of the Islands Chefs Collaborative; Ingrid Lehwald and Frédéric Desbien, owners/operators of Saison Market Vineyard; Brock McLeod, owner/farmer of Makaria Farm; and Dr. Nicole Vaugeois, BC Regional Innovation Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development.

Thank you to all those who contributed writing to this book, including Rupert Adams and Craig Evans.

This project was made successful by all of the community members who gave their time and input. In particular, we would like to thank all of the Cowichan Region farmers who were interviewed. Their time is valuable, yet not a single farmer turned the researchers down! We had many wonderful and informative on-site farm interviews and are grateful for each one.

We also wish to thank the purchasers who participated in interviews: chefs, cafe owners, restaurant operators, grocery store purchasers, wholesale purchasers, agency representatives, and distributors. Each and every one of these purchasers is part of a busy operation, but took time to sit and answer numerous and sometimes pointed questions.

Finally, thank you out to everyone who filled out the online market surveys, and to all the participants of the farmer and consumer focus groups.

-The Research Team
(Audra Stacey, Tessa Stiven, and Niki Strutynski)

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introduction

growing connections

The agricultural landscape in the Cowichan Region is a colourful patchwork of inspiring and dedicated farmers and purchasers using diverse means to meet the common goal of achieving a vibrant, sustainable local food economy. *Growing Connections* is a collection of the knowledge, experience, and stories of farmers and purchasers in the Region, and was created to be a tool to help farmers and purchasers work together for a stronger local food economy.

context

Food security initiatives often focus on ways of increasing local food production. *Growing Connections* takes a different approach to building food security by stimulating connections between farmers and purchasers.

Growing Connections was written in response to a need for “improved capacity and profitability in the local agriculture industry” as identified by the Cowichan Region Area Agriculture Plan (2010) and the Regional Area Agriculture Commission. More candidly, this project was formed in response to some local farmers stating that they can grow and raise more food than they can market, and on the flip side, purchasers stating that there is more demand for local food than can be satisfied from the supply. *Growing Connections* was designed to focus on this disconnect in the local food supply chain and to provide tools to help reconnect farmers and purchasers in the Cowichan Region.

how to use this handbook

This handbook is designed to be used by both farmers and purchasers. Purchasers include chefs and retail purchasers. Retail purchasers encompass agencies, distributors, wholesalers, grocery stores and harvest box programs.

understanding the purchaser – this chapter is designed for farmers, but some parts are also pertinent for purchasers (such as the “working with consumers” section). It details the requirements and preferences of different types of purchasers and provides information to help farmers build business relationships with purchasers. This section includes directories of retail purchasers, agencies, and chef organizations.

understanding the farmer – this section is designed for purchasers. It details how to best form business relationships with farmers, and discusses ways to profit from switching to local purchasing. This section includes a seasonality chart of Cowichan Region products.

understanding the policy – this section provides a comprehensive review of food safety policy for all farm products, and regulations affecting supply managed products. This section includes a directory of abattoirs in the region.

understanding the potential – this section is designed to inspire both farms and purchasers! It details stories of farmers and purchasers working together to transform traditional supply chains into value chains.

“in the field” – these sections are interspersed throughout the handbook and are a collection of exemplary farmers and purchasers in the region creating and capitalizing on niche opportunities.





handbook highlights

- find out what's influencing purchaser and consumer food choices (in "working with consumers")
- find a purchaser that matches your farm's production in the purchaser directory (in "working with retail purchasers")
- understand the local possibilities for your grocery shelf and restaurant menus with the seasonality chart (in "understanding the farmer")
- become motivated to capitalize on niche markets with inspiring stories of farmers and purchasers in "in the field" (throughout!)
- understand how and where you can sell and buy farm products according to food safety regulations (in "understanding the policy")
- understand the quota systems and learn how to get started in supply managed sectors (in "understanding the policy")
- become inspired to collaborate along the supply chain to create better value for your products (in "understanding the potential")

background

Growing Connections was developed through the Cowichan Agriculture Market Project (CAMP), a six month research project (Nov. 2012 - Apr. 2013) hosted by the Cowichan Green Community (CGC). CAMP's goal was to provide tools to stimulate connections between farmers and purchasers in the Cowichan Region.

To achieve this goal, CAMP sought to answer the following questions for both farmers and purchasers:

- How are farmers and purchasers currently selling/buying agricultural products, and how satisfied are they with these selling/buying methods?
- What are the requirements and values guiding these selling/buying practices?
- What are the barriers to selling/purchasing local Cowichan Region products?
- What tools and information would help farmers and purchasers overcome these barriers?

scope

Research of agricultural production was limited to the Cowichan Region. To cover major markets, such as Victoria and Nanaimo, the research encompassed purchasers from beyond the Cowichan Region. The project participants included agricultural producers, secondary food producers, and purchasers such as chefs, retail purchasers, distributors, agencies, wholesalers, and consumers.

research team

The CAMP research team consisted of three researchers; Audra Stacey, Niki Strutynski, and Tessa Stiven, and Project Supervisor Vanessa Goodall. Between them, they brought a range of experience to the project; from research design to food security coordination, farmer advocacy, community organization, and agricultural production and marketing.

in the field: the research process

To answer the research questions, CAMP employed a mixed-methodology by incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Multiple sets of data allowed the results of this study to be triangulated for commonalities and similar themes, and were intended to ensure the validity and reliability of this project's findings.

Primary data was collected through three online surveys using FluidSurvey; one for consumers, one for purchasers, and one for farmers. The surveys were promoted using the CGC newsletter list-serve, Facebook page, and web-site. They were also advertised in the Cowichan Newsleader Pictorial, the Cowichan Valley Voice Magazine, and promoted by CGC staff at events such as the 2013 Maple Syrup Festival and the 2013 Islands Agricultural Show. The consumer survey received 89 responses, the farmer survey 41 responses, and the purchaser survey 23 responses.

In conjunction with the surveys, CAMP conducted one-on-one interviews with seven Cowichan Region farms, and eighteen purchasers from both the Cowichan Region and Victoria area.

Lastly, two focus groups were held: one for local farmers and one for local consumers, attended respectively by four and five participants.



understanding the purchaser



working with chefs

know the restaurant

There is a wide range of chefs and restaurants in the Cowichan Region and surrounding areas. Some are small and prefer to purchase smaller quantities of unique items, while others have large dining rooms and require a regular supply of staples.

For farmers, it is important to know the restaurant that they are supplying, both in terms of the type of food being served and the image that the restaurant portrays to the public. For example, if the restaurant is a “vegan raw cafe”, market to them healthful greens and items that are good for eating raw.

Do your own market research. Go check out the restaurant’s website and pay them a visit. Eat there and try out their menu. Look at what menu items they sell and see how your products can add value and enhance their menu. Take samples to the restaurant or invite the chef out to your farm to show them what you can offer.

It is important to let the restaurant know how you, as the farmer, can help them further their business goals and promote their image.

know the chef

Every chef has their own preferred method of ordering. Some like to use email, others like a phone call or text message. Discuss with the chef their preferred ordering method and schedule.

Review with the chef how they like to receive orders. For example, ask if they want produce washed or if some dirt is ok! Do they like orders packed in a certain size or type of box? Each chef has various preferences and it is important to understand their needs and be able to customize orders to help meet these needs.

Finally, know what types of products the chef likes to use. With an understanding of the chef’s preferences, you will be better able to recommend new product as they come into season or substitutes for products that are no longer in season.

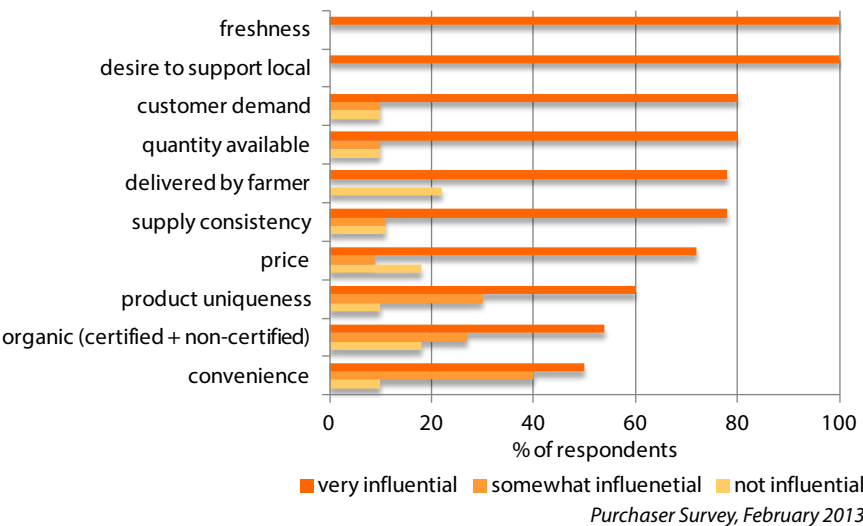
food for thought:

100% of the restaurants surveyed listed “freshness” as very important when selecting what ingredients to purchase. Let chefs know how fresh your product is, even give them a sample.

Hand-cut fries featuring Cowichan Region grown sweet potatoes and blue potatoes. Prepared at the Warmland kitchen.



figure 1: factors that influence chef purchasing decisions



commitment and consistency

Commitment to the restaurant and supply consistency are critical to building a relationship with a chef or restaurant.

Start with communicating reliably. Call or email to take orders at a regular, agreed upon time each week (usually a weekday afternoon between the lunch and dinner rush is a good time). Set up a delivery time that also works for both you and the restaurant and deliver at this time each week.

Once a relationship has been established, always do your best to fulfill your obligation even if it means supplementing your order with produce from another farm. If you are simply unable to fill an order, let the restaurant know as soon as possible so they can make other arrangements for finding or substituting an ingredient. If the quality of the product is lower than expected, let the chef know and offer a discount. Never send dirty or low quality product as part of an order.

tasty idea:

Another group of potential purchasers are food processors. Small-scale food processors are like chefs and often want local ingredients, but they will take large quantities at times of bounty, such as blueberries in August to make jam.

know your products

As farmers, of course you know your product. However, it’s important to know how to communicate this information to chefs. For example, be prepared to describe to chefs the particular qualities of an item at a certain time of year (e.g. is the arugula peppery or mild). Or if a product has run out, be able to suggest a substitute of a similar product.

Also, it is important to communicate when products are coming into season or slowing down. Doing so will give chefs ample time to adjust their menus.

Tea Farm, a Cowichan Region company that makes teas with local ingredients, forged a relationship with Bona Dea Café by offering a tasting and sample. Today Tea Farm and the cafe have a strong relationship built on commitment and consistency.



extend your season

Farm production is usually slower in the winter, depending on the product, but so is the restaurant business. That said, restaurants do not usually shut down entirely in the winter and if you are able to continue supplying them year-round, then they are less likely to go and find another supplier.

However, farmers need breaks too. So if you do take time off in the winter, clearly articulate when and for how long you are taking a break and then give the restaurant at least two to three weeks notice before you start-up again.

work with more than one restaurant

Because the restaurant business is variable, it is risky to depend on just one restaurant to purchase all of your product. Diversity is a more resilient marketing strategy and having various outlets or restaurants to sell to is an important way of maintaining profitability.

It is always helpful to have some peripheral relationships with a few restaurants as “back-ups”; perhaps you don’t sell to them weekly, but you are able to call them a few times throughout the season when there is a glut of a certain product.

One way to communicate with multiple restaurants what you have available is to send out a weekly “fresh sheet”. Fresh sheets are a listing of all the products a farmer has available and the associated prices. In addition, there is general order information, such as order deadlines, and delivery or pick-up details.

discussing price

It is important to maintain a positive attitude when discussing prices with restaurants. Focusing on the challenges or downside of farming does not help to sell your product. The restaurant business also has narrow profit margins and some chefs do not feel like they can afford to pay top price. Rather than trying to convince chefs that you deserve a high price, show them how your product is of the highest quality. For example, freshly harvest produce will last much longer than imported produce which is already days old. With fresh, local food there is less waste in the kitchen.

Show the restaurant how working with your produce can help them to promote their image and even garner a higher price for some of



Some farms send out a weekly “fresh sheet” by email to all the chefs they work with. This is a list of all the products they have available that week, as well as the prices and instructions for how to place an order.



Salad greens and spinach can be grown over winter inside poly tunnels and with an extra layer of row cover. This system allows Dragonfly Farm, in Glenora, to supply their restaurant clients with local greens year-round.

their dishes. Customers value the story behind their food and they will often pay more for a dish if they know the ingredients came from a local farm.

Being willing to negotiate on price is also important. Consider giving discounts to restaurants if they order over a certain amount. Sometimes it is worth it to sell a higher volume at a slightly lower price, then a low volume at a higher price.

make it worth your time

Some farmers do not want to sell to restaurants because they think chefs only order small quantities, and some farmers feel harvesting small orders is not a good use of their time. Make it worth your time by setting minimum orders (e.g. orders must be at least worth \$100). As well, if you sell to more than one restaurant, organize harvests, and then deliveries, to all your restaurant customers on the same days.

invoicing

Prior to delivery discuss how payment will be arranged. Some restaurants will pay cash or cheque on delivery, while others prefer to establish accounts and make monthly payments. If you are able to accept credit card payments let them know.

building a relationship

Some times it can take years to develop a strong relationship with a restaurant. Start early and start small. It’s often difficult to assume what a chef is looking for in terms of product, so start by meeting them to discuss this. A good time to meet is in the winter, before you’ve done crop planning or made changes to your production plans. Also start small by setting up a standing order for one or two items, or offering just a few crops regularly. For example, if the chef wants salad greens, offer a regular supply of this item. Over time the chef may start to add other products to their order.

At its heart, a strong relationship between a farmer and a chef depends on good mutual communication and loyalty. Communication leads to an understanding of each other’s needs and loyalty is a commitment to help meet those needs. In the end, a strong farmer-chef relationship should benefit both businesses: farm and restaurant.

key ingredients:

On each invoice be sure to include the following:

- date
- unique invoice number
- items sold, quantity, and price
- any additional fees or credits
- order total
- payment instructions
- date payment is due by (usually 30 days is given to make a payment)

table 1: chef directories

If you’re thinking of selling to restaurants, but unsure where to start or which restaurants to approach, the following organizations provide updated listings of their membership, with location, and contact information.

organization	description	website
BC Food and Restaurant Association (BCFRA)	The BCFRA is the largest association of restaurants in BC. While not every member restaurant may be looking for local products, farmers can search the directory by location, key word, or cuisine.	bcrfa.com/company/directory
Canadian Culinary Federation of Cooks and Chefs, Victoria Branch (CCFCC)	The CCFCC is dedicated to maintaining and improving culinary standards. The Victoria Branch website lists their member chefs and associated restaurants.	ccfccvictoria.ca
Island Chefs Collaborative (ICC)	The ICC is a collective of chefs on Vancouver land who are dedicated to supporting local sustainable agriculture. Their website lists all their member chefs and restaurants.	www.iccbc.ca
Small Scale Food Processors Association (SSFPA)	Many members of the SSFPA use local ingredients. Their website lists processors who might be looking for bulk ingredients to make processed foods. Producers can also create a listing for their farm, so that processors can seek them out.	www.ssfpa.net

working with retail purchasers

In general, the majority of consumers shop at grocery stores. For farmers wishing to tap into this market opportunity, they may find themselves embarking on a complicated path between processors, agencies, distributors, and wholesalers. That said, once relationships are formed along the supply chain, retail purchasers offer the ability to predictably purchase large quantities of farm product. While prices are typically lower than direct marketing prices, some farmers find that the decreased time spent marketing, packaging, and selling to retail purchasers, balances the lower prices obtained.



understand the partners

1. **processors:** purchase product and add value to the product through processing. The BC Specialty Food Directory (www.bcspecialtyfood.ca) has a listing of many processors located throughout BC and can be searched by region or product.
2. **agencies:** are also known, in some situations, as brokers. Agencies typically work as representatives of a commission, buying and selling product, but not physically handling product. The farmer packages and delivers the product, based on the orders handled by the agency. For example, Vancouver Island Farm Products is an agency of the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission. They act as a sales representative for farmers and market vegetables to grocery stores.
3. **distributors and wholesalers:** function similarly as they purchase product from producers, agencies, and other distributors, and then market and distribute product to retail and food service purchasers. In some situations, they may undertake some repackaging and storage. Many grocery stores operate their own wholesale businesses. For example, Country Grocer operates Island Independent Buying Group and Thrifty Foods operates Jace Holdings.
4. **food service distributors:** are similar to a wholesaler. However, they work primarily within the restaurant supply chain, purchasing product from producers and processors and selling it to restaurants. Some food service distributors undertake value-added operations, making products to better match chefs' needs (e.g. pre-peeling).
5. **grocery stores:** are the retail outlets selling products direct to consumers.

interested in selling to large retailers in BC?

The Ministry of Agriculture created a useful guide at:

www.al.gov.bc.ca/foodprocessing/documents/retailer/retailer_info.htm

As my business develops, I'm having more problems getting more farmers, than getting more customers that want to buy the product.

-purchaser survey respondent

It is important that I purchase from a food safe certified supplier. So if local producers were certified, it would make purchasing from them easier.

-purchaser survey respondent

suitable scale

Choosing a purchaser operating on a similar scale to your farm is perhaps more important than choosing the type of purchaser you wish to work with. For example, a small-scale distributor and small grocery store share common requirements. A large-scale processor and large-scale wholesaler share a different set of common requirements.

The scale of the retail purchaser will affect their volume requirements, food safety requirements, boxing and labelling requirements, and purchasing values.

Many farms in the Cowichan Region operate on a smaller scale than retail purchasers. There is potential for a small or mid-sized farm to scale-up operations with the support and assured market of a retail purchaser. In interviews, a few local retail purchaser stated that they would be willing to start a business relationship with a smaller farm if they have a feasible business plan for scaling-up their volume of production.

Other farmers have chosen to work together to be able to meet the volume requirements of retail purchasers. For example, Saanich Organics is a collective of three farms, which cooperate to meet the requirements of retail and restaurant purchasers.

meeting the non-negotiables

For some retail purchasers, their food safety requirements are non-negotiable. In those instances, agencies will not considering building a relationship with fruit and vegetable growers until the farmer has secured a Good Agriculture Practices certification. See the policy section of this handbook for more information on food safety requirements on page 92.

in the field: saanich organics

history

Saanich Organics is a partnership between three small-scale organic farms on the Saanich Peninsula: Robin Tunnicliffe of Sea Bluff Farm, Rachel Fisher of Three Oaks Farm, and Heather Stretch of Northbrook Farm. They came together in 2002 to market their produce collectively, and today they sell their produce through a home delivery vegetable box program, weekly restaurant and grocery deliveries, and by attending farmers' markets as a group.

success through cooperation

This model allows each farmer to sell more of her own produce, while spending less time on marketing. For example, the partners take turns going to the farmers' market, so each farmer only has to give-up every third Saturday at market, giving them more time to get work done back on their farms.

Pooling produce from their three small farms also allows them to fulfill larger orders on a regular basis. Volume and consistency are important criteria for restaurants and grocery stores. By working together the farmers of Saanich Organics can provide a wider variety of produce as well as larger volumes of popular items, such as carrots or salad greens. This also allows the farmers to sell-off small amounts of product that might not have sold otherwise. Restaurants and grocery stores are not usually interested in purchasing just small amounts of one or two items, but combined with a larger order these small quantities often sell too.

niche

Through providing a consistent supply of high quality products, Saanich Organics has built strong relationships with many restaurants and grocery stores in the Victoria area. The scale of their business matches well with the scale and number of businesses they supply - but they are growing.

Their business has become so successful that they also now market produce from other small farms on Southern Vancouver Island, supporting past apprentices and new farmers as they start their own businesses. In the end, this cooperative relationship increases the volume of produce and, in turn, the number of restaurants and grocery stores that they are able to supply.



Robin Tunnicliffe packing cabbage in Saanich Organics' shared workshop.

Mike Shelton and Talyn Martin, two of the farmers at 8 1/2 Acres.



building a relationship

All purchasers interviewed stated the importance of building relationships between farmers and purchasers. Those who had existing relationships with farmers, spoke with loyalty and pride about the long-term relationships they have had with some of their farmer suppliers. Because purchasers are known to be very busy (and not saying farms are not very busy too!), this relationship is more often initiated by the farmer as they seek out new market opportunities. In spite of busyness, purchasers tend to prefer face-to-face meetings where personal relationships can be formed.

Come prepared to your first face-to-face meeting. Build knowledge of the business' values and marketing strategies through background research. Understand how your product fits within the business' goals, and plan how you can sell your product based on the values it offers, rather than the price-point. Bring samples to your meeting with purchasers. Taste is a big selling feature for local products, and retail purchasers expect to be able to see, hold, and taste your products. Come prepared with questions for the purchaser, as well as potential answers to their questions.

After relationships are formed, it takes effort to maintain them. Here are some tips:

- Strive for consistency in communication, delivery, and invoicing
- Be reliable on product quality
- Keep the buyer current on your product availability, production level, and practices
- Ask questions—show an interest in their business
- Keep the relationship friendly and personal
- Call back to check on levels of quality satisfaction

for more details on how to build relationship with retail purchasers, check out:

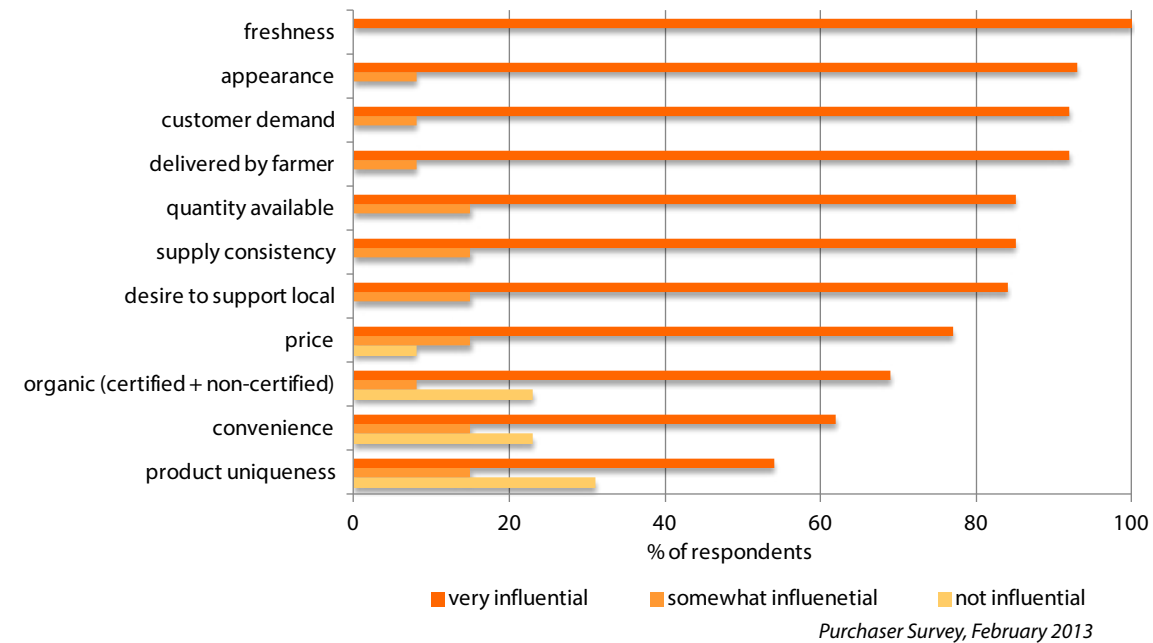
“Selling Directly to Restaurants and Retailers”

Published by the University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.
Available at: www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/sfs/files/selldirect.pdf

freshness comes first

Cowichan Region purchasers were asked what factors most influence their purchasing decisions; 100% of survey and interview respondents reported freshness as very influential. While it is important to share with retail purchasers the many values embedded in your product, remember the importance retail purchasers place on freshness. Communicate that local also means fresh, and take the opportunity to discuss the increased shelf-life of your freshly harvested product.

figure 2: factors that influence retail purchaser decisions

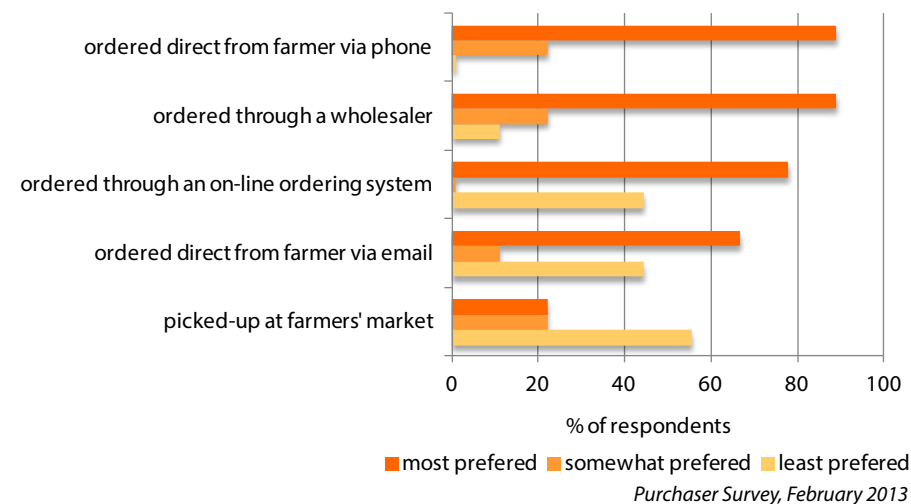


ordering options

Results from the purchaser survey revealed that 89% of local retail purchasers prefer placing orders over the phone directly to farmers. Second to this, they prefer to order local product through wholesalers.

There is significant interest within the farming and purchasing communities to use an on-line market tool where farmers can post products and prices, and purchasers can order multiple products from multiple farms. In the past few years, many for-profit and non-profit groups have been developing on-line marketplaces in North America. Some of these on-line marketplaces have been very successful and well subscribed by farmers and purchasers, such as FarmersWeb (www.farmersweb.com). CGC is looking into the feasibility of implementing an on-line market place for farm products in the Cowichan Region and encourages public feedback.

figure 3: preferred method of ordering for retail purchasers



delivery expectations

83% of retail purchasers surveyed and interviewed stated that farmer's ability to deliver products is very influential in their purchasing decisions. The main exception to this was processors and small-scale distributors which had product pick-up capabilities. Depending on the purchaser's situation some deliveries are made directly to a store, while others are made to a central warehouse. Some purchasers have specific delivery requirements, such as using a refrigerated vehicle for deliveries for temperature sensitive products. For farms that do not have the capacity to meet such requirements, they can use delivery services, such as Cold Star Freight Systems.

67% of purchasers surveyed and interviewed prefer a twenty-four hour turn-around-time between product ordering and delivery, but purchasers can be open to longer turn around times. If you require more time between taking orders and the final delivery, communicate this to the purchaser. Often a consistent turn around time is more important than just a fast turn around.

Delivery can be costly and time consuming for farmers. Purchasers are aware of this, and thus typically recognize that a minimum order size needs to be met to make delivery for the farmer feasible. Determine a minimum order size that makes economic sense for the farm, and communicate this with purchasers.



cases, bins, boxes, pallets

Boxing requirements vary significantly between small and large-scale retail purchasers.

Small-scale retail purchaser are often moving boxes by hand, and therefore prefer reusable, stacking boxes that are not too heavy (usually no more than 40 lb). In contrast, large-scale purchasers require non-reusable boxes (due to food safety protocol), stacked on pallets which can be moved with forklifts.

While small and large-scale purchasers vary in box requirements, there are commonly used standard box sizes for produce. Table 2 lists the standard box sizes for one Vancouver Island-based purchaser. If a purchaser orders an item by the case, double-check and ask exactly how many pounds or bunches they expect in the case.



table 2: standard case sizes for one vancouver island purchaser

The information contained in this table is an example of some standard case sizes for medium-scale purchasers. It is meant as a guide, but always double-check with a new purchaser what standard case sizes they prefer.

crop	quantity	unit
apples (often sold by the count - the number of apples that fits in a standard apple box. Usually weighs around 40 lb)	40	lb
beets	25	lb
broccoli	20	lb
cabbage	50	lb
carrots	50	lb
cauliflower	9-12	each
cucumbers (also sold by the pound in 20 lb cases)	12	each
garlic	5	lb
kale (usually in 0.5 lb bunches)	24	bunch
leek (usually in 1 - 1.5 lb bunches)	12	bunch
lettuce (by head)	12 or 24	each
onions	50	lb
peppers	25	lb
spinach (usually in 0.5 lb bunches)	12 or 24	bunch
summer squash	22	lb
tomatoes	10	lb
turnips	25	lb
winter squash	35	lb

packaging the product

Packaging of individual products should be discussed with purchasers. For example, one chain grocery store interviewed stated they like products in plastic clam shell containers for ease of stacking and product appearance, while a permanent produce market interviewed stated that they favour products in pint baskets as they appear more “country farm” style.

According to a 2012 survey conducted by the BC Vegetables Marketing Commission, one of the top three purchasing trends is an

increase in demand for packaged products.¹ Similarly, the purchaser survey showed that 75% of retail purchasers would like to see an increased availability of local packaged products, such as bagged and washed salad greens.

On the flip side, some processors, distributors, and wholesalers prefer to purchase minimally packaged products, for a reduced price. This allows them to do their own packaging. Offer options to the purchaser so that farm product can be packaged in a way that best aligns with the purchaser's needs and image.

As a wholesale business, I'm forced to purchase most packaged products from the US or further afield due to a lack of supply.

-purchaser survey respondent

The sale of pre-packaged produce is increasing. Attractive packaging is enticing to customers, particularly with salad greens, sprouts, grapes, and tomatoes.

-purchaser survey respondent



labelling

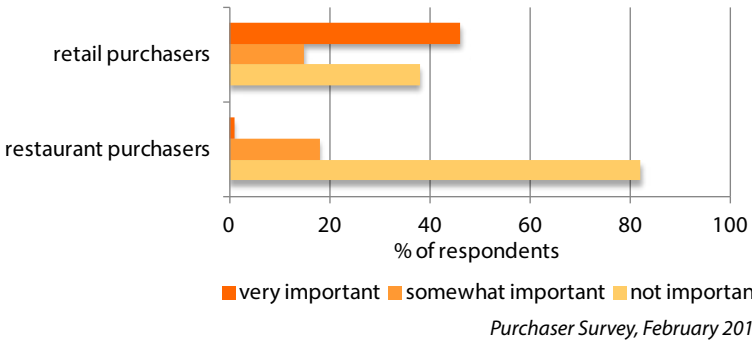
Labelling requirements vary with the scale of each retail purchaser and are important for product traceability. Traceability is a priority for larger operations with more need for accountability; at minimum, purchasers typically require farm name and product name to be on all boxes.

Larger-scale purchasers have additional requirements. Purchasers may require a Price Look Up (PLU) number on bulk items and a Universal Product Code (UPC) on packaged products. PLU codes can be found at www.plucodes.com. Businesses can apply for a UPC through the Electronic Commerce Council of Canada (www.gs1ca.org).

organic certification

Organic certification is very important to some retail purchasers. In particular, grocery stores and organic box program purchasers value certification. These purchasers will only pay the organic price premium if the product is certified organic.

figure 4: importance of organic certification to retail + restaurant purchasers



invoice options

Discuss with the retail purchaser how they would like to arrange payment. Based on the survey results, 80% of purchasers surveyed and interviewed stated that they would prefer to receive invoices upon delivery, and 20% prefer to use established accounts with monthly payments. If you are able to accept credit card payments let them know.

working with the seasons

In interviews, retail purchasers expressed that working with inconsistent product availability throughout the year was challenging. One interviewee stated that “seasonal products don’t make repeat customers.” That said, some purchasers interviewed also saw opportunity in showcasing seasonal products to attract customers. They identified products such as strawberries and corn as being a strong customer pull during the local season. It appears that with staple products customers expect to have steady availability throughout the year, yet with more speciality products customers are more flexible. Thus, in working with grocers, farmers may have more success selling well-known seasonal crops, such as blueberries, rather than trying to provide a staple crop, such as broccoli.

Regardless, selling seasonal products to retail purchasers requires excellent communication. If purchasers are knowledgeable about product seasonality, they can plan to source from multiple suppliers as availability changes. As well, they can better communicate and advertise seasonal products to customers.

Discuss seasonality with purchasers at the beginning of the year. Remind purchasers two weeks before the start or end of a crop’s season, so they can phase in or out of their purchasing from wholesalers. Also discuss how the quantity of a product will change throughout its season.

Seasonality of products can be lengthened with season extension growing and storing methods. Retail purchasers do not have large warehouses to store products long-term. For example, they will not buy large amount of winter squash in the fall with the plan of storing them to sell through winter months. Rather, they rely on farmers to store and sell products on a regular basis.

Through the use of cold-frames in winter and heat-tolerant varieties in summer, spinach is one crop which can be grown year-round in the Cowichan Region.



some general tips for increasing shelf-life:

1. Grow varieties that are selected for their shelf-life and storage attributes.
2. Grow varieties that are hardy enough to withstand being packed and stored in cases.
3. Harvest in cool weather. Cloudy days, early mornings, and evenings are the best.
4. Use clean, sharp knives for harvesting.
5. Use clean, dry containers for packing.
6. Handle gently. Bruises may not appear right away, but will significantly decrease shelf-life, and a bruised area invites increased decay.
7. Keep containers of harvested material in the shade as you fill them.
8. Process and store appropriately, according to the type of crop.

price premiums

According to the purchaser survey, retail purchasers are willing to pay between 10-15% more for a local product than a non-local product of similar quality.

That said, marketing your product as simply a local comparison to a non-local product, ignores much of the value embodied in local products and will not maximize the potential price premium. Larger price premiums come from a value-based marketing approach, where a farmer builds a personal relationship with the purchaser, shares the unique story of their farm, and helps purchasers communicate the values of the product to consumers.

shelf-life sensibilities

When working with retail purchasers, it may take several days between when a product is harvested to when it is eaten by a consumer. For example, vegetables harvested and delivered to a box program on Tuesday might not be picked up by the customers until Thursday, and then not eaten for a number of days. Therefore, shelf-life is very important to consider when working with retail purchasers.

Post-harvest management and harvest techniques for extended shelf-life are crop specific. Understand the unique harvest needs of each crop.

in the field: trigo foods

history

Trigo Foods is a small distributor in Victoria that focuses on supplying local restaurants and independent grocery stores with high quality, local, organic food. When the business (originally called Ambrosia Wholesale) came for sale in 2012, Chef Bruno Trigo decided to take action before losing such an important link in the farm-to-table movement. He purchased the business, changed the name to Trigo Foods, and continued to build the business' reputation of supplying high quality and specialty ingredients.

The main local products he supplies are organic and naturally grown vegetables, as well as some eggs and poultry. Working with over ten different farms on Southern Vancouver Island, his business is an important resource to farmers, many of whom would not otherwise have the time to market directly to individual restaurants and grocers.

success through staying small

Trigo Foods is able to compete with larger suppliers by keeping their own costs down. It is a small company with only a few employees and one delivery driver. Furthermore, Trigo Foods is able to connect with restaurants based on Bruno's understanding of what it means to be a chef and the many considerations that go into ordering fresh, local food for a commercial kitchen.

niche

When it comes to working with farmers, Trigo Foods has an understanding of the considerations around harvest times, bounty, and seasonality. Bruno has experience working on farms, and because he is a chef, he is able to communicate effectively with other chefs. For example, he can recommend products that are bountiful or particularly tasty at a time of year, or he can sell-off seconds that are good for processing - products that a farmer might have difficulty selling otherwise.

Each week farmers let Bruno know what they have available and then he offers the produce to chefs and grocers. Farmers deliver produce to the Trigo Foods warehouse in Saanich early in the week and then Bruno organizes delivery to the customers.

Bruno has sought out most of the farms that Trigo Foods works with, but he is always open to new farms approaching him. He is looking for high quality, organic products and specialty items. See the purchaser directory on 44 for contact information for Trigo Foods.



table 3: directory of retail purchasers

The following directory is a sample of different purchasers in or near the Cowichan Region. They are organized by type of purchaser, into box programs, grocery stores, produce markets, and distributors and wholesalers.

	business	description	location	purchasing values
box programs	Sustainable Urban Produce Delivery (SPUD)	Home delivery service for local, organic, quality produce, dairy, bakery, freezer case and more, via internet store.	Victoria	Supports organic, and transitioning to organic, farmers.
	Share Organics	Home delivery service for local, organic products distributed in Greater Victoria.	Victoria	Products must be organically grown following COABC standards, but certification is not required. Supports new farmers and farms transitioning to certified organic. Hosts annual crop planning meeting with farmers and sets up loose purchasing agreements.
	GoBox Organics	Online shopping service and free delivery of local and organic produce and groceries.	Victoria	Products must be certified organic at this point, but as they grow they will be adding transitional and/or organic practices farming.
	Green Earth Organics	Organic grocery home delivery service. Free delivery.	Victoria	Products must be certified organic.

purchasing requirements	specific products	contact
Food Safety Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Compliance with a “clean ingredients” list.Disclosure of any/all pest control, weed control methods, soil amendments, etc. Delivery Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Receives deliveries weekly: Tuesday to Friday.	None specified.	Produce Buyer: Nova Kodaly nova@spud.ca Grocery Buyer: Calvin Straathof calvin@spud.ca 250-383-7967 www.spud.ca.
Volume Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Between 250 - 300 units of an item. Delivery Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Weekly delivery to Victoria on Monday or Tuesday.	Interested in all fruit and vegetables (especially raspberries). Interested in locally processed items.	Susan Tychie info@shareorganics.bc.ca 250-595-6729 www.shareorganics.bc.ca
Food Safety Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Product should be clean. Delivery Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Deliveries Monday to Thursday .Periodically available to pick-up orders.	“Love it all! We supply recipes with our box ingredients to encourage our customers to be adventurous!”	Megan Parris-Stephens meganparris@shaw.ca 250-265-6644
Volume Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Small volumes preferred for better rotation, as they currently have a small, but growing customer base. Delivery Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Deliveries on Monday or early Tuesday morning.	Looking for many products.	Aaron Purser 250-590-5494 victoria.greenearthorganics.com

table 3: directory of retail purchasers continued

	business	description	location	purchasing values
grocery stores	The Community Farm Store	An organic health and whole food market with a huge selection of organic produce. Planet friendly shopping for all your grocery, health, household and personal requirements. Staffed by over 30 organic enthusiasts who believe we can change the world through food, gardening and conscious consuming.	Duncan	Products must be organic in accordance with the rules set forth by the COABC. Specifically, we wish to assure that our produce has not been in contact with round-up or GMO products. Strong preference for certified organic. They host an annual growers meeting with farmers to help coordinate supply of local farm products.
	Island Natural Markets	A locally owned Natural Food Market specializing in organic, local and sustainable products including grocery, bulk, produce, dairy and quality vitamins and supplements.	Nanaimo	First preference: local certified organic. Second preference: local and grown sustainable (no pesticides, fungicides, herbicides).
	Market on Millstream	Vibrant, upbeat independent grocery store with a focus on organic and healthy eating .	Millstream (one of two Market Stores - the other is located in Victoria).	Values high quality, fresh products. Organic products must be certified.
	49th Parallel Grocer	Retail sales including fresh produce, meat, deli, and bakery.	Duncan, Chemanius, Ladysmith, and Cedar. Purchasers and warehouse at each location.	Organic Product must be certified. Communication with farmers is important.
	County Grocer	"Your Vancouver Island and Salt Spring Island Grocery Store since 1984!"	Purchasing for Country Grocer is done through Island Independent Buyers Group in Chemanius.	Providing quality product to customers. Supporting local farmers. Prefers purchasing through Vancouver Island Farm Products.
	Thrifty Foods	Founded on Vancouver Island, Thrifty Foods is committed to providing quality food products at competitive prices with friendly, helpful staff in clean, well-stocked stores.	Many Vancouver Island and mainland locations. Grocery warehouse located in Saanich. Produce warehouse located in Surrey.	"We pick BC first."

purchasing requirements	specific products	contact
Food Safety Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">In accordance with the organic specifications set forward by the COABC. Packaging and Delivery Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Each vegetable and fruit has specific requirements with regard to packaging. We work with each farmer on an individual basis to establish these parameters.	Interested in all fresh, organic and heirloom produce grown from open pollinated seed. For our café we are sourcing supplies of sun dried tomatoes and roasted red peppers. In the interest of food security, we encourage more growth of winter storage and root crops.	Nicolette or Fiona thecommunityfarmstore@shaw.ca 250-748-6227 Call to arrange a time to meet with our produce department or to bring us produce samples.
Volume Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">A consistent supply based on growing conditions and seasonal demands. Packaging and Delivery Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Prefers products clean and some items such as kale, spinach, chard, parsley, bundled in adequate sized bunches.Deliver consistently 1 to 2 times weekly.	Carrots, kale, varieties of winter squash, and fruit.	Al White or Rhonda Lambert islandnatural@shaw.ca 250-390-1955 www.islandnatural.ca
Volume Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Willing to work with small volumes.	None specified	Brian Stansfield 250-391-1110 bstansfield@themarketstores.com www.themarketstores.com
None specified.	Interested in all types of fresh produce.	Larry Tuson 250-245-3221 www.the49th.com
Food Safety Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Products should be CanadaGAP certified.	None specified.	Rob Johnson, Purchaser for Island Independent Buying Group 250-246-1828 www.countrygrocer.com
Food Safety Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Products should be CanadaGAP certified. Volume Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Must have a large enough volume to satisfy a few stores at minimum.	Specifically looking for conventional storage carrots, storage onions, broccoli crowns, stored squash, celery, cauliflower, asparagus, late season cherries, and lettuce.	Don Meadows 250-483-1684 www.thriftyfoods.com

table 3: directory of retail purchasers continued

	business	description	location	purchasing values
produce markets	The Old Farm Market	"The home of local produce".	Duncan	Seeking local products that are good quality and reasonably priced.
	Russel Farm Market and Garden Center	"Year round farmers market selling our own grown as well as local produce."	Chemanius	None specified.
distributors + wholesalers	Trigo Foods	A small business focused on promoting the local food movement by delivering fresh, organic and/or naturally grown food to restaurants and small grocers.	Victoria	High quality, unique product. Supporting local organic farmers.
	Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild (TUCG)	Sources, coordinates and delivers foods to the Tofino/Ucluelet community from Vancouver Island food producers.	Tofino and Ucluelet	Desire to work collaboratively with farmers. Flexible purchasing allows for working at times of crop surplus.
	Our Local Markets	An online farmers market and delivery service that acts as the marketing and distribution arm for local farmers and artisan food producers.	Alberni Valley and Central Vancouver Island	Products must be organically grown but do not require certification.

Two other distributors that purchase some local products on Vancouver Island are Islands West Produce and Sysco. For more information about these purchasers visit their websites:

Islands West Produce: www.islandswest.com

Sysco: www.syscovictoria.com

purchasing requirements	specific products	contact
Volume Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Large volumes of staple products. Smaller volumes of specialty products accepted. Packaging Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Stackable boxes, preferably cardboard.	Corn and non-regulated vegetables.	Trevor Paterson 250-748-7141 www.oldfarmmarket.ca
None specified	None specified.	Fiona or Mitch 250-246-4924 www.russellfarmsmarket.ca
Volume Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Willing to work with small volumes and seconds for processing.	Specifically interested in working with specialty crops, heirloom varieties, baby vegetables.	Bruno Trigo bruno@trigofoods.ca 778-350-5335 trigofoods.ca
Volume Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Willing to purchase larger quantities to help farmers sell at times of surplus. Delivery Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Willing to arrange delivery for farmers.	None specified.	Bobby Lax info@tucg.ca 250-266-6665
Food Safety Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Must comply with VIHA.	Locally-milled grain products and other locally-grown and/or produced food.	Susan Roth ourlocalmarkets@gmail.com www.ourlocalmarkets.com

working with institutions

Building Local Food Systems: Institutional Purchasing on Vancouver Island
is available on-line at:

mapping.uvic.ca/vicra/sites/mapping.uvic.ca/vicra/files/Institutional%20Purchasing%20Final.pdf

benefits of institutional procurement

The UVIC report cited the benefits of institutional procurement of local food to not only the institution and local farmers, but also to rural economies, the public, and the environment. “One benefit of institutions taking a lead in local and sustainable food procurement is the positive reaction from those studying, working in, or purchasing from the institution... an increase in consumer or worker pride can create multiple benefits for the institutions themselves.”⁴

In a 2010 University of Victoria (UVIC) report, "Building Local Food Systems: Institutional Purchasing on Vancouver Island", it is stated that "institutions can provide large-scale sustainable markets and can also influence food service companies and distributors to shift their purchases to incorporate more local food."² Their report focused on various purchasers at post-secondary institutions in the Victoria area, however, the results and recommendations are applicable to institutions Island wide. In the Cowichan Region, these would include municipalities, Vancouver Island University (VIU), schools, care homes, and hospitals.

Some of these institutions have rigorous standards for food safety, quality, and price. As a result of these requirements, they partake in large purchasing agreements which provide price protections and guarantee a year-round supply of products. This does not mean that local food cannot make it into the system, as one of the key ways to increase institutional access to local food is for farmers to supply local distributors, agencies, or wholesalers. This group of purchasers has their own requirements (covered in the policy section on page 92), but they can and do actively support local producers in scaling-up.

One of the lessons learned by UVIC was that food managers and chefs determine purchasing at institutions. For example, one of the chefs interviewed, from an assisted living centre in the Cowichan Region, has full autonomy over the menu as it is not regulated by VIHA. Assisted living food programs may be severely limited by budget, as with subsidized assisted living, but they do have the option of sourcing local.

For institutions, the barriers to purchasing local food, previously identified by the 2010 Cowichan Food Security Plan, remain today.³ The Cowichan Campus of VIU had hoped to model food purchasing after UVIC's sourcing of local food. However, the competitive pricing and food safety regulations have been identified barriers. Food supplied to students must be government certified; therefore, growing food for the cafeteria from a campus garden plot is not currently permitted. The barriers identified for the region's hospital were funding and dependency on pre-processed and frozen foods approved by the health authority.

Overall, consumer demand, combined with lobbying institutions, will in time facilitate a shift to local purchasing policies. In the meantime, more local farmers working with distributors, agencies, and wholesalers will result in local food being purchased by institutions.

in the field: farm to school

For the past five years, schools across British Columbia have been planting the seeds for a Farm to School movement.

Aided by funding from the Public Health Association of BC, committed community champions have developed a diversity of Farm to School models. From hot lunch programs to salad bars, school gardens to farm field trips, farm to school programs aim to increase access to local, healthy, sustainable foods. As well, Farm to School programs are committed to improving market opportunities to farmers, and educating students on their local food system - often through hands-on experience.

As the movement grows, it has spread to other institutions, and become known as Farm to Cafeteria. Funding continues to be available for program capital as well as research.

CGC championed a farm to school program at Quamichan Middle School from 2010 to 2011. The program purchased food from twenty

Cowichan Region Farmers and served a weekly hot lunch program. Students and staff at Quamichan were enthused about the program, and have had some discussion about finding ways to restart the program after it ended due to a completion of funding.

Farm to School programs are initiated and coordinated by people in diverse positions: parents, farmers, community nutritionists, non-profit organizations, and teachers. Funding and support are available. For more information check out: www.phabc.org/farmtoschool



working with vegetable agencies

for more information, contact:

BC Vegetable Marketing Commission
604-542-9734
www.bcveg.com

Vegetable farmers seeking help with the marketing of large volumes of their products have the option of selling their products through an agency. Agencies work as sales representatives for farms by organizing the marketing, ordering, and invoicing of farm product. Agencies liaise between farmers and purchasers, communicating product information to purchasers and order information to farmers. Agencies do not work directly with the farm product; farmers are responsible for packaging and delivering the product to the purchaser.

Grocery stores, wholesalers, and processors often prefer working with agencies because they can order several products from many farms with a single phone call and receive only one invoice.

table 4: agency directory

agency	products	# of growers represented	location	contact
Island Vegetable Cooperative Association	Regulated and non-regulated vegetables	6	Saanich	Phone: 250-544-1242
Vancouver Island Farm Products	Regulated and non-regulated vegetables Interested in adding other non-vegetable farm products	9	Nanaimo	Email: jaymiecollins@shaw.ca Phone: 250-871-5926
Vancouver Island Produce	Regulated vegetables	3	Qualicum	Website: www.vancouverislandproduce.com Phone: 250-334-7198

Agencies help farmers enter harder to access markets, such as grocery stores and wholesalers. Agencies coordinate the collective marketing of farms, increasing their ability to meet the volume demand and consistency often required by larger purchasers.

Agencies charge a fee to farmers for their services, typically as a commission fee per case of product sold. Agencies are producer-owned and governed, and agency fees in excess of expenses are returned to producers. While farmers typically receive a lower price through an agency than direct farm marketing, they are able to sell significantly larger volumes with less time commitment from the farmer.

Currently, the agencies on Vancouver Island market only vegetables. However, they are not limited to these crops and one of three agencies interviewed has expressed interest in working with other farm products.

Agencies are integral in the marketing of regulated vegetable crops. For more information on regulated vegetables and agencies see page 90 in the *understanding the policy* section.

Agencies will only accept produce from farms with food safety certification from CanadaGAP (Good Agriculture Practices). For more information about food safety certification see page 94 in the *understanding the policy* section.

There are three licensed agencies operating on Vancouver Island, as outlined in the table 4. Although these agencies are not actively seeking-out farmers, they expressed interest in increasing the number of farms they work with and encourage farmers to contact them to discuss options.

Potatoes are one of the vegetables regulated by the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission.

working with consumers

Consumers drive trends with their purchasing power. Whether a producer uses direct marketing to sell to the consumer, or sells to a purchaser such as a restaurant or grocery store, consumer preferences drive the sale of products. Increased understanding of the consumer, will aid both farmers, chefs, and retail purchasers in increasing local food sales.

consumer survey context

Eighty-nine consumers responded to the consumer survey. 95% of these respondents stated that they currently purchase Cowichan Region products, and the remaining 5% stated that they were unsure if they currently purchaser Cowichan Region products. Therefore, the results from the consumer survey are largely specific to consumer who already value local food purchasing, and are not representative of the average consumer in the Cowichan Region. Comparing the survey results to data in the CVRD's 2010 Area Agriculture Plan further illuminates the bias in consumer survey respondents toward local food purchasing. This Plan states that only 3.4% of Cowichan Region consumers' expenditure on food and drink consumption is spent at direct farm markets (farm gate, farmers' markets, and CSA programs).⁵



consumer survey results

where consumers shop

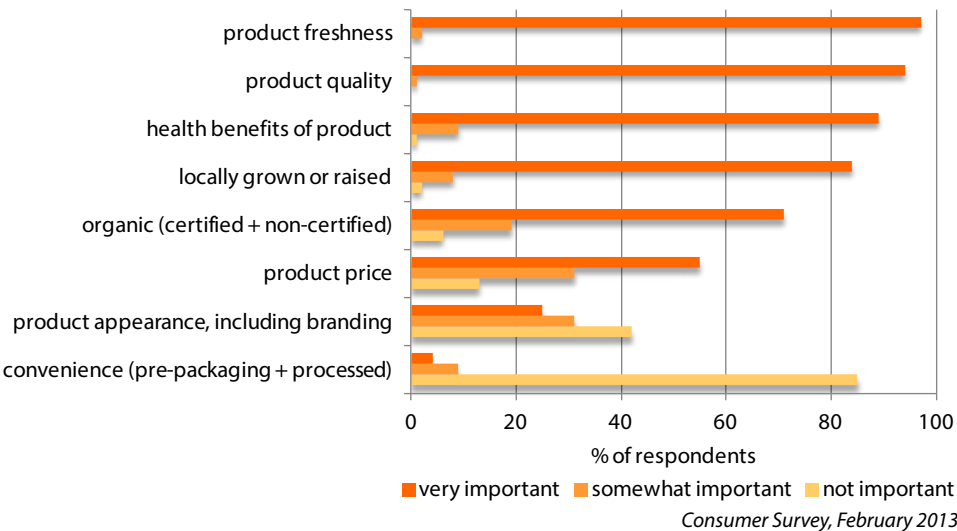
The top three most influential factors affecting where consumer survey respondents shop were, in rank order: 1. quality of products available, 2. local product availability, 3. organic product availability.

The top three most common locations for shopping of survey respondents were, in rank order: 1. chain grocery stores, 2. independent grocery stores, 3. farmers' markets.

what consumers buy

Product freshness, quality, and health benefits were the top three factors influencing product choice of the consumers surveyed. The least influential factors were convenience (such as pre-packaging or preprocessing), and product appearance.

figure 5: factors that influence consumer purchasing decisions



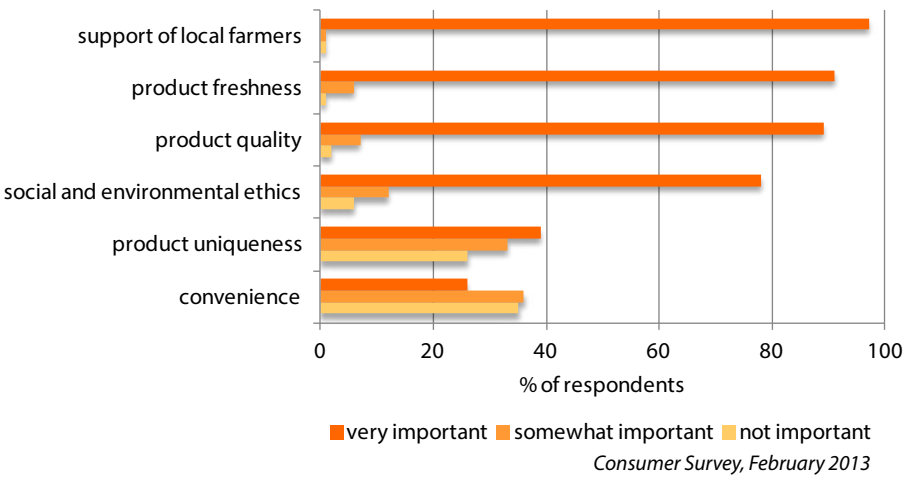
how consumers define local

52% of consumers surveyed define local as being Vancouver Island, 30% define local as being Cowichan Region, and 18% define local as British Columbia.

what motivates consumers to buy local products

Consumers surveyed state that the most important reason they buy local product is their desire to support local farmers.

figure 6: reasons why consumers choose to buy local food



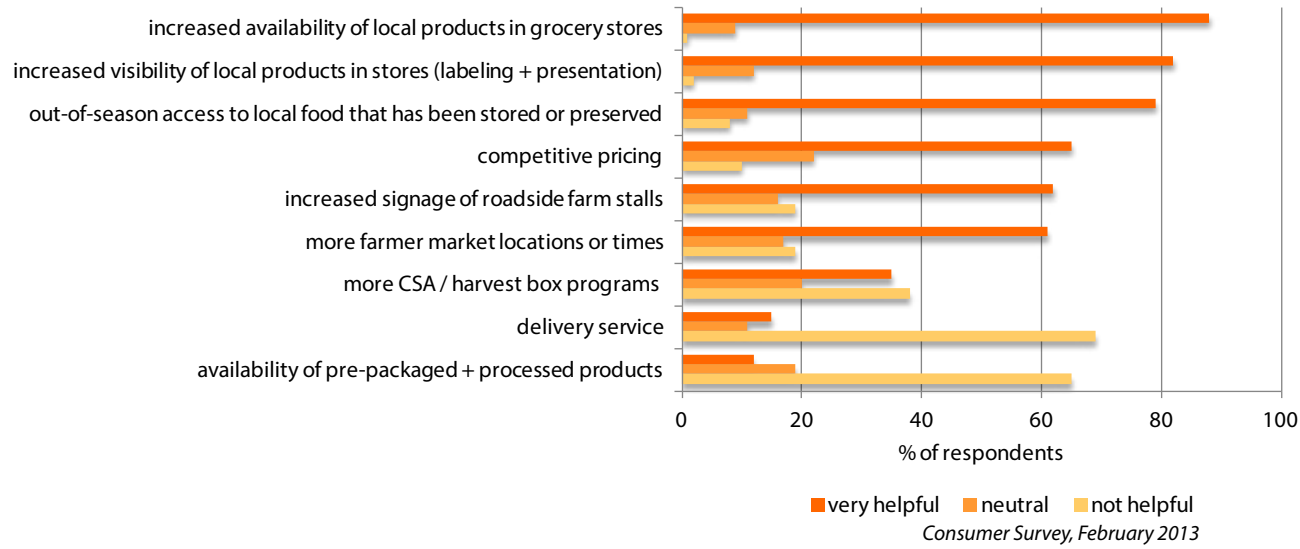
The produce stand at Alderlea Farm, ready for “CSA” members. CSA stands for “Community Supported Agriculture” and represents a way community members can support local farmers.

what would help consumers purchaser more local product

Consumers surveyed would like to see more local products in grocery stores, and to have these products better featured with improved labelling and signs.

Also ranking high in the consumer survey, out of season access to local food. Consumers would like to be able to purchase local storage crops, such as onions, carrots, and potatoes in the winter months, and to have access to other crops such as greens grown with season extension methods.

figure 7: factors that would support consumers’ ability to purchase more local food



I would love to see a co-op set up so that producers could store and sell out-of-season produce. I would be thrilled to buy as much of my vegetables as I can out of season from local producers.

-consumer survey respondent

For specific fruit and vegetables, consumers’ top choices were:

- 1 winter fruit and vegetables
- 2 greens
- 3 apples
- 4 strawberries
- 5 blueberries
- 6 peppers
- 7 tomatoes
- 8 carrots
- 9 garlic
- 10 mushrooms



Growing cool-weather crops, such as peas, in a high tunnel in late winter gives the farm a head-start on the season.

crop-ortunities!

The consumer survey asked respondents to list three Cowichan Region products they wish they could purchase, or purchase more of. Here are the results agglomerated, ranked according to the frequency of occurrence.

- 1 field vegetables ¹
- 2 dairy (including milk, cheese, butter, etc.)
- 3 fruit ²
- 4 beef
- 5 berries
- 6 grain and bread products
- 7 winter fruit and vegetables ³
- 8 greenhouse vegetables ⁴
- 9 nuts
- 10 poultry

¹Field Vegetables’ includes all entries that listed either vegetables in general or specific vegetables such as carrots, beets, greens, potatoes, onions, and garlic.

²Fruit’ includes all fruit, except berries.

³‘Winter fruit and vegetables’ includes all entries requesting winter vegetables or fruit, year-round vegetables or fruit, and crops designed for storage.

⁴Greenhouse vegetables’ includes peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers.

reaching the consumer

fetching farm gates

In the farmer survey, farmers were asked at which three markets they would most prefer to increase their sales. Farm gate sales ranked first, with 68% of respondents to that question identifying farm gate sales. Farm gate sales were discussed within a focus group of consumers who shop local as part of their personal philosophy. Here is their collective feedback: tips for what attracts them to a farm gate, or what deters them from stopping.

Customers stop at farm gates when:

- products in the stand are visible from the road and the stand is clearly open for business
- there is space to safely pull off of the road
- the stand is located near to the road (and not up a long driveway)
- the stand is nicely cared for
- customers have previously developed a relationship with the farmer

Customers do not stop at farm gates when:

- unsure if it is open
- witnessing non food-safe procedures (e.g. cooler out in the sunshine on a hot day)
- do not have correct change (one customer suggested having a special regional currency, such as “Salt Spring Dollars”
- inconvenient and lack of time
- do not have personal transportation to get to farm gates



put your farm on the map

For farmers trying to reach new markets or to sell more product, it's important to be accessible to purchasers and consumers. Ensure your farm is listed in the phone book and online. If you have a website, be sure to note your hours, season of operation, and best time to contact you. If you do not have a website (or even if you do), here are few other online and/or print listings where you can share your farm's contact information:

bc specialty food directory

Free online listing of farms, searchable by region.
www.bcspecialtyfood.ca

buy local! buy fresh! map

Annually updated print and web listing of farms in the Cowichan Region.
www.cowichangreencommunity.org

customer websites

Many restaurants and grocery stores list the farms they work with on their websites. If your farm sells to a businesses that does this, ask if your farm can be included. On the flip side, if you have a website, list the businesses you sell to on your site. Not only is this a form of mutual support, this is a way for customers to learn where they can find your products.

farm fresh directory

Annually updated print and web listing of farms on Vancouver Island.
www.islandfarmfresh.com

farmers' institutes

Local farmers' institutes or agricultural societies provide online listings of their members. In general, these groups are also good for networking and staying connected. Organizations that may be of interest to farmers in, or nearby, the Cowichan Region include:

- Cowichan Agricultural Society : www.cowichanfarmers.org
- Island Farmers' Alliance: islandfarmersalliance.org
- Nanaimo-Cedar Farmers' Institute: www.ncfarmersinst.org
- Shawnigan Cobble Hill Farmers' Institute and Agriculture Society: www.cobblehillfair.ca

getting local into grocery stores

Although farmers have stated that they would most prefer to increase farm gate sales, it cannot be ignored that a far greater portion of consumer are seeking to buy local food at grocery stores than at the farm gate. 87% of consumers surveyed identified that "increased availability of Cowichan Region products in grocery stores" would be very helpful in supporting their ability to buy local. One consumer surveyed stated "what would be perfect would be a whole centre stall in the produce section devoted to locally grown – much as organics seem to have been established in grocery stores." This concept may have merit as a "local stall" or section would allow flexibility in product volume and consistency for grocers, and allow consumers easy access to local products.

As much as I would love to buy from farm gate and farmers' markets regularly, the truth is it's much easier and far less time consuming to get all my groceries in one place so I usually end up going to a big box store and I wish they carried more local produce.

– consumer survey respondent

I would shop exclusively at a store that had a selection of more local food.

-consumer survey respondent

The Community Farm Store in Duncan features many local products year-round.



farmer survey respondents stated they would like to increase their CSA sales.

Here are some tips that came out of the consumer focus group regarding CSAs:

- have more individual product choice within a CSA, such as a 'swap bin' for items people don't like
- include more variety each week and consider adding different products such as bread and cheese
- vegetables should be washed
- educate consumers about CSA
- improve season extension for a longer running CSA
- provide u-pick options
- provide a winter CSA

community supported agriculture

What is "Community Supported Agriculture" (CSA)? CSA in its most common format is a pre-paid allotment ("share") of food from a farm, which a consumer receives weekly, for a pre-determined duration (usually the growing season). For example, a family can pay a farmer in advance of the coming season for a set amount of produce to be allotted over the course of the season, thus becoming a "shareholder" in the harvest. CSA programs take many forms, some offer home delivery, for others shareholders pick-up their produce at the farm. Some provide different share sizes and customization, but typically the contents of each week's share depends on what is in season.

The CSA economic model of local food distribution allows consumers and growers to share the risks and benefits of food production. Many CSAs are vegetable based, but the CSA concept can truly incorporate any locally produced goods: herbs, flowers, honey, maple syrup, eggs, dairy products, baked goods, meat, and fish. The Cowichan Region has its own Community Supported Fishery; a CSF providing locally harvested salmon, prawns, and octopus. Katie, of Alderlea biodynamic farm, one of the pioneers of the CSA programs in the Cowichan Region, says, "The CSA model works very well, because the farmer gets support from the community."

Some areas of North America, such as New England, USA, are hotspots for CSA programs. Burlington Vermont, with a population of 42,000, has nine CSAs (one of which has 530 members), four of which are year round programs. In the Cowichan Region there seems to be a general lack of awareness surrounding CSAs, despite years of on-going promotions by local farms. To support farms that would like more CSA customers, and farmers wanting to start a CSA, further consumer education is still needed.

in the field: alderlea farm

history

2013 is the tenth growing season for Alderlea, a biodynamic farm and café. Biodynamic agriculture is a way of farming that uses a variety of sustainable techniques, including crop rotation, composting, and interplanting. No artificial pesticides or fertilizers are used, but natural biodynamic preparations are applied to the land to nourish and revitalize the earth. Biodynamic agriculture heals the land, as Katie says the land was speaking to them, "to work it, to love it."

When John and Katie started farming they sold their produce through a CSA program. At Alderlea this means customers come to the farm once a week, spring through fall, to pick up their weekly share of produce. When they started, Katie said, "people didn't know about CSA, or food security." Thus, they sought out grants in order to conduct consumer and farmer education about CSA. Today, ten years later, they have 150 CSA members.

The farm café happened as a natural result of their growth, and has helped to build momentum. Alderlea needed a distribution centre for their CSA program, and decided to invest in a barn. Katie thought it would be nice to serve soup to people coming in to pick-up their produce. The soup caught on and when an espresso machine was donated Katie realized a dream – she had always wanted a café! The café is now a focal point for Alderlea, bringing in the greater community, and increasing people's awareness of CSA and biodynamic farming.

success through community building

Many farmers feel time constraints prevent them from marketing extensively, but for Alderlea Farm it worked. Combining CSA with community focused agri-tourism has brought community members to the farm directly. The café now draws crowds for lunch on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Alderlea also makes use of the beautiful café space by hosting their own special events such as April's Stinging Nettle Festival.

niche

Alderlea is the only biodynamic CSA in the Cowichan Region. Clients comment that eating Alderlea produce makes them "feel healthier," and have also noted that the food "tastes like it used to." The CSA provides the shareholder with fresh produce once a week for 24 weeks. Clients may choose an individual share, small family share, or large family share. The café uses as much of their own biodynamic produce as possible, another example of 'farm to table' philosophy. Alderlea, with their community-oriented values, is also very welcoming to children. The café has a children's play area, making it exceptionally unique and a big draw for parents.



table 5: cowichan region farmers’ markets

organization	location	day + time	season	contact
Cedar Farmers’ Market	2313 Yellow Point Road (at the Crow ‘N Gate), Cedar	Sundays 10:00 am - 2:00 pm	May - Oct	250-668-5783
Chemainus Wednesday Market	Waterwheel Park (in the parking lot)	Wednesdays 10:00 am - 4:00 pm	May - Sep	250-246-3944
Crofton Farmers’ Market	Ferry Terminal Park	Saturdays 8:30 am - 1:00 pm	May - Aug	250-246-8848
Duncan Farmers’ Market	City Square and Ingram Street, Duncan	Saturdays 9:00 am - 2:00 pm	Year-round	250-732-1723 www.marketinthesquare.net
Honeymoon Bay Outdoor Market	Lake Cowichan (at the Coffee Mill site in Honeymoon Bay)	Saturdays 10:00 am - 2:00 pm	May - Oct	250-749-7233 or 250-510-1113
Ladysmith Farmers’ Market	Downtown Ladysmith	Tuesdays 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm	May - Sep	250-245-2112
Mill Bay Farmers’ Market	Mill Bay Shopping Centre (2720 Mill Bay Road)	Thursdays 2:00 pm - 7:00 pm	May - Sep	250-743-5683 www.millbayfarmersmarket.com
South Cowichan Farmers’ Market	Crossroads Centre, 4485 Trans-Canada Hwy (at Koksilah Road, south of Duncan)	Sundays 10:00 am - 3:00 pm	May - Oct	250-216-5181 www.southcowichanfarmersmarket.com

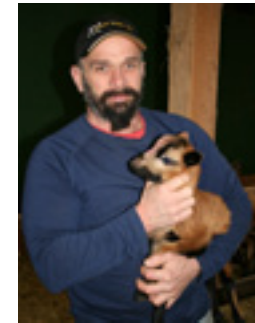
table 6: other farmers’ markets listings

There are many farmers’ markets north and south of the Cowichan Region. For up-to-date listings of farmers’ markets on Vancouver Island, check out the following websites.

organization	description	website
BC Farmers’ Markets Association	Search for a market based on city, region, product or vendor.	met.bcfarmersmarket.org/market-search
South Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association	Publishes an annual Island Farm Fresh guide to farms on Southern Vancouver Island. The website also provides a listing of farmers’ markets on the South Island.	www.islandfarmfresh.com/markets



understanding the farmer



tips for all purchasers

fresh idea:

Mobile applications (‘apps’) are available for smart-phones that list what’s in season. One example is called “Seasons”. This app identifies where you’re located and then lists what crops are in season.

Some tips for working with farmers apply to all types of purchasers, whether you’re a chef in a small restaurant or a produce manager in a large grocery store. Listed in this section below are some useful tips for all purchasers, followed by specific tips, depending on the type of purchaser.

know the farm season

In the Cowichan Region, farming is a year-round endeavour. For farmers of annual crops, like vegetables, the process of crop planning starts in the winter. For nearly all crops and agricultural products many months, if not years, of work go into production before crops make their way to a purchaser. If you are looking for a particular product or wanting to build a relationship with a local farm, it is important to meet with the farmer well in advance.

Some products, such as eggs or meat, are available year-round, but for produce it is also important to adapt with the farm season. Know when crops are in season and share this information with your customers. That way, if a customer complains that you do not have strawberries in January, you can explain why. Feature seasonal crops in times of bounty.



table 7: seasonal availability of vegetables in the cowichan

vegetables	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec
asparagus												
beans						G				G		
beets												
broccoli												
cabbage												
carrots					G	G						
cauliflower												
celery												
celeriac												
corn												
cucumbers			G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G		
chard												
garlic												
herbs												
kale												
leeks												
lettuce				G	G						G	G
onions												
parsnips												
peas												
peppers			G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G		
potatoes												
pumpkins												
radishes												
rhubarb												
salad greens	G	G	G	G								G
spinach	G	G	G	G								G
sprouting broccoli												
squash (winter)												
tomatoes			G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G		
turnips												
zucchini												

G = greenhouse grown in season

table 8: seasonal availability of fruit in the cowichan

vegetables	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec
apples												
blackberries												
blueberries												
currants												
gooseberries												
kiwi												
loganberries												
melons												
peaches												
pears												
plums												
raspberries												
saskatoon berries												
strawberries												

season

Knowing what crops are available and when they are expected to become available throughout the year is invaluable.

-purchaser survey respondent

Once you get used to working with seasonal availability it's no longer a challenge. Don't fret over availability, just be flexible.

-purchaser survey respondent

talk to the farmer

Get to know the farmer and their products. Communicate what products you are interested in. Identifying how often and how much you would like to purchase will allow the farmer to plan their production and harvest schedules to meet your needs.

Try committing to buying from a farmer on a regular basis. The more consistent you are at placing orders, the more likely the farmer will be able to fill your order (rather than selling it elsewhere).

Share your feedback with the farmer. Let them know if a product was not exactly what you were looking for, as they may be able to suggest a different item or variety.

work with farm harvest schedules

Ordering directly from a farmer is different than ordering from a distributor. Farmers do not typically have a warehouse full of inventory. In the case of fruit or vegetables, farmers need time to harvest, wash, and pack orders on a schedule that fits in with their other production and marketing work.

It is generally unrealistic to expect a one-day turn-around after an order is placed, so rather than strive for speed of delivery, strive for consistency. If you know you can place your order every Tuesday afternoon and that your order will come every Friday, then you can plan accordingly. Set-up an order and delivery schedule that works for both you and the farmer.

make it worth the farmers' time

Some farmers require a minimum order for delivery. Keep in mind that ordering only very small quantities from a farmer might not be a good use of a farmer's harvest time. If you are only able to order small quantities, then consider picking up your order at the farm or farmers' market, so the farmer can incorporate your order into a larger harvest for another market or sale.

work with multiple farmers

It may be difficult for one farmer to provide all the ingredients you would like, so working with more than one farm may be necessary to supply your restaurant regularly with a range of products. As well, if a farm has a crop failure or shortage, you might be able to substitute with product from another farm.

Most farms will only deliver once or twice per week. If you require daily or more regular deliveries, work with a few different farms and stagger their delivery days to ensure you always have a supply of fresh products.

fresh idea:

Some purchasers arrange an annual meeting with all their farmers, so they can discuss orders, the coming season, and who will be supplying what.



pay a fair price

Often local food is more expensive than the imported food on offer from the big distributors. But local food is fresher and usually of a higher quality. For example, local produce is usually picked only the day before delivery, whereas imported produce, such as greens from California, is already days old by the time it reaches your business. Fresh local produce will last longer and you will have less waste.

The higher price found for some local foods is due to the higher input and land costs that are faced by farmers on Vancouver Island. Because inputs are shipped to Vancouver Island, a local farmer's cost of production is often higher than those of mainland farmers.

Keep in mind that although local farmers might need to charge a higher price to stay in business, many customers are willing to pay a higher price for local food! By communicating to your customers that the food comes from a local farm, they are usually willing to pay more.

share the food's story

In general, more and more consumers are demanding to know where their food comes from. They want to see better labelling of local food in grocery stores and on restaurant menus. By simply adding detailed descriptions to menus or signs about where food come from, you add value to the product.

figure 8: factors that influence where farmers sell their products



Farmers also value a connection to the customer. Even if they do not get to meet the customer, it is nice to receive recognition for the food they've produced. By acknowledging the farmer in your marketing, you both address consumer demand to know where their food is coming from and the farmers' desire to connect with the customer.

In the end, for farmers, restaurants, and grocers, it all comes down to the consumer and what they are willing to pay for food. Where local food costs more, it is important to communicate to the consumer why this is.

Sharing the story of where local food is coming from helps to connect consumers to their local food system. In making this connection there is more support for local farmers and, in turn, more farming and local food!

I think that local stores need to beef up on marketing locally grown and produced food. I don't feel there's enough focus and fan-fare on Cowichan Valley products at our local grocers.

-consumer survey respondent



tips for chefs

have an adaptable menu

Having a special menu, or portion of the menu that changes with the season, allows you to work with farmers for a longer period of time, if not year round. Some restaurants will have a weekly or daily “fresh sheet”, a special feature menu that adapts with what’s in season. Or keep your menu general (such as a side of “seasonal vegetables”), so it allows you to adapt on a daily basis.



bulk up on bulk

Buying items in bulk when they are in season saves time and money later on. At the height of the season, local products are usually priced lower. Freezing and/or canning items like berries and tomatoes allows you to feature these local seasonal items on your menu year-round.

In addition, you do not have to use as much of each item because fresh, high quality ingredients have such excellent flavour that often even small amounts contribute to authentic and unique flavours in your dishes.

organize storage

Organize your cooler so you have a dedicated space for produce orders. Store produce in stack-able bins with lids to preserve delicate produce from the dehydrating effect of the cooler. Label the bins to make for more efficient storage and easy access. Storage is important because some farms only deliver once per week, so you may need enough space to store a week’s worth of the items.

making the shift

If you are accustomed to purchasing from a large distributor, making the shift to work with local farms can seem daunting. It does require changing how you order and receive a product, as well as how you prepare and store the product.

Start small and work with just one or two farms. Get used to their products, how they come, and how you process them. Sometimes, local product might require a bit more washing, or have some pest damage. Starting small allows you to learn how to deal with these challenges efficiently.

There should be more local choices on menus. Some of the higher end restaurants do that, but it should be more widespread.

-consumer survey respondent

The desire to work with local farmers has to be in the heart and head of the chef. It may be more work, but it's more rewarding work.

-ali ryan, chef
spinnakers gastro brewpub

tips for retail purchasers

feature local products

There is no doubt that consumers in the Cowichan Region are looking more and more for local food. And they're not just going to the farmers' markets to get it. They want to see it clearly labelled in their regular grocery stores.

Featuring and labelling local products can draw customers and help to sell more. Some grocery stores go so far as to put-up photos or signs with write-ups about the farm where the products come from.

For wholesalers, making available local products is important to the chefs and grocers you are supplying because their customers are also demanding local food and better labelling.

I really think that increased signage in grocery stores indicating local produce would be great. So many times one has to hunt on small labels to find where produce is grown. What would be perfect would be a whole centre stall in the produce section devoted to locally grown - much as organics seem to have been established in grocery stores. That way, one could just not bother with US or Mexico produce.

-consumer survey respondent



what does it all mean?

Some purchasers, from chefs to consumers, have expressed confusion about all the different terms used to describe production methods. The following list explains some of the more common terms.

organic

Organic agriculture is much more than just the absence of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Organic agriculture is a holistic approach to farming that sustains animal, plant, and environmental health. While this includes not using chemical or genetically modified inputs, it also means enhancing biodiversity, building living soils, raising animals with ample access to pasture, and only using Certified Organic seed and animal feed.

Certified Organic farms are annually inspected by a third party Verification Officer and must adhere to the Canadian Organic Standards and any additional standards of their regional certifying body. On Vancouver Island the main regional certifying bodies are the Island Organic Producers Association and the Pacific Agricultural Certifying Society. All certifying bodies in BC fall under the Certified Organic Association of BC (COABC). The COABC website provides a full listing of the certifying bodies in BC at: www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/cb.

There are many farms that use organic practices, but are not Certified Organic. These farms are not inspected, but can explain to the purchaser in which ways they are using organic practices.

Grocery stores require that all products be Certified Organic in order to label the product “organic” in their store.

biodynamic

Biodynamic agriculture was developed in the 1920's by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. It is a holistic approach to agriculture that views the whole farm system as an organism, each part (soil, water, plants, animals, and people) is interconnected. Specific biodynamic practices include diversity and the integration of plants and animals on the farm, as well as a number of different microbiotic preparations to feed the soil. Certified Biodynamic farms in Canada must first meet the national Certified Organic Standards and then adhere to biodynamic principles. Biodynamic farms in BC are certified by the Biodynamic Agricultural Society of British Columbia.

naturally grown

Naturally Grown generally means grown or raised without the use of chemicals pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics, or GMOs. This term is not regulated in Canada as there is no third party verification. There is a US-based non-profit organization that now certifies farms as naturally grown and some farms in BC have applied for and received this designation.

specialty

Specialty products are defined by the BC Farm Industry Review Board as agricultural products that have unique farm-based attributes that are identified, marketed, and represented as unique to the end consumer (e.g. free-range eggs or Fairburn Farm mozzarella).

free-run eggs

Free run eggs are from hens that are housed on litter and/or slotted floors where they can roam about on the barn floor.

free-range eggs

Free range eggs are from hens that are housed on litter and/or slotted floors. They can roam about on the barn floor and have access to an outdoor area with vegetation, weather permitting.

certified organic eggs

Certified Organic eggs are from hens that are raised in accordance with the Canadian Organic Standard, which sets minimum indoor and outdoor space requirements, requires access to pasture, and requires Certified Organic feed for the hens.

pasture raised

When referring to livestock, Pasture or Grass Raised means raised (and often rotated) on grass. Some animals are pasture raised and then “finished” on grain, which means they receive a grain diet just prior to slaughter (this is usually done to add more fat to the meat).

understanding the policy



supply managed sectors

In BC the production of certain agricultural sectors are regulated. Each of these sectors has a marketing board or commission that manages supply to varying degrees. In turn, the marketing boards and commissions are monitored by the British Columbia Farm Industry Review Board.

There are six sectors in which production levels are restricted through a quota system and two sectors that only require a license.

Supply managed sectors:

- broiler chickens
- hatching eggs
- table eggs
- turkeys
- cranberries
- dairy

Licensed sectors:

- hogs
- some storage and greenhouse vegetables

Together these sectors are referred to as supply managed sectors because the marketing boards control supply to meet demand. This helps to avoid surpluses and to maintain price stability.

Supply in quota managed sectors is determined by establishing the overall national market need for the product and then allocating a portion of that market need to each province. The provincial marketing boards then allocate production to the farmers through the quota system.

Quota grants producers the right, and obligation, to produce a set amount of a product within a defined period of time. When there are changes in demand at the national level there will be changes in the amount of production a province is authorized to produce. Accordingly, a change to BC's provincial allocation will then change the quota allotment to individual BC producers.

While farmers are required to have quota for producing these products, some marketing boards allow for lower levels of production without quota. Most of them also have programs for new farmers to obtain quota. Quota can also be traded among farmers. The marketing boards do not set the value of quota, rather the price of quota is regulated by those buying and selling it on the free market.

In the Cowichan Region there may be opportunities in a number of these sectors, as the production levels on Vancouver Island are much lower than the estimated consumption. In addition, increasing public interest in locally grown food has led to some marketing boards prioritizing regional markets where they hope to increase demand for their supply managed products.

Following is a brief description of the different supply managed sectors and any production allowances for small-scale farmers.

Chickens raised for meat are part of a supply managed sector, controlled by the BC Chicken Marketing Board.



for more information, contact:

BC Chicken Marketing Board
604-859-2868
bcchicken.ca

BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission
604-850-1854
www.bcbhec.com/index.asp

for more information, contact:

BC Egg Marketing Board
604-556-3348
www.bcegg.com

chicken and hatching eggs

Chickens raised for meat are regulated by the BC Chicken Marketing Board through a quota system that limits the amount of live weight (kg) a farm can produce in an eight week period. The BC Chicken Marketing Board provides entry quota for new producers and “Specialty Quota” for certified organic chicken. Producers may raise up to 200 birds for on-farm/family consumption without quota. Small-scale producers may raise up to 2,000 birds with a permit (see Table 9 on page 82).

BC chicken farmers obtain their birds from hatcheries, which in turn get fertilized eggs from hatching egg producers. A hatching egg is simply a fertilized egg that is purchased by hatcheries, where they are incubated for twenty-one days. Once hatched, the chicks are transported to a broiler chicken farm. A broiler hatching egg is never sold in retail stores and is not meant for human consumption.

The BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission regulates the production of broiler hatching eggs through a quota system. There are no allowed limits to producing hatching eggs without quota.

For more information or to learn about how to obtain quota for both chicken production and broiler hatching egg production, contact the marketing boards.

eggs

The BC Egg Marketing Board regulates the production of table eggs through a quota system that limits the number of laying hens a producer can have in a given production period.

Farmers may produce eggs without quota for direct marketing to customers, so long as they have less than ninety-nine hens. Additionally, farmers may apply for a small lot permit to raise 100-399 laying hens for certified organic, free range or free run laying hens (see Table 9).

In BC the Ministry of Agriculture also regulates egg sales by requiring all eggs, other than those directly marketed to the consumer, to be processed at a licensed egg grading facility. In the Cowichan Region there is one egg grading facility located in Westholme.

For more information about how to obtain a permit or quota for producing eggs contact the BC Egg Marketing Board.

Laying hens at Hope Farm in North Cowichan. They have a small-lot operating permit to raise up to 399 free range hens without quota.



for more information, contact:

BC Turkey Marketing Board
604-534-5644
www.bcturkey.com

turkey

The BC Turkey Marketing Board regulates the production of turkeys through a quota system. The marketing board allows for some production of turkeys on a small-scale for on-farm consumption, or in limited amounts with a permit, as summarized in the below table.

The BC Turkey Marketing Board provides entry quota for new producers, giving priority to new entrants that are planning to direct market their turkey, are certified organic, and are serving regional markets outside of the Fraser Valley.

A 2009 report, “Supply Management, Regulated Marketing and Regional Food Systems on Vancouver Island”, prepared for the Nanaimo Food Share Society, states that Vancouver Island produces less than 1/3 of the turkey consumed on the Island.⁶

For more information, or to learn about how to obtain quota, contact the BC Turkey Marketing Board.

table 9: quota exemptions and permits

marketing board	maximum allowed production without quota	permit allowance and cost
BC Chicken Marketing Board	200 birds for on farm / family consumption only	Up to 2,000 birds, \$20 / year
BC Egg Marketing Board	99 laying hens for direct marketing only	100-399 certified organic, free range or free run laying hens only, \$250 / year
BC Turkey Marketing Board	50 birds for on farm / family consumption only	Up to 300 birds*, \$50 / year

* Turkeys produced with a permit may only be marketed directly at the farm gate, through farmers’ markets, or an independent retail outlet.

cranberries

The production of cranberries is regulated by the BC Cranberry Marketing Commission (BCCMC). If a producer grows more than two acres of cranberries, they are considered a commercial producer and are required to have a license from the BCCMC.

Licensed producers must market their cranberries through a designated marketing agency or they may choose to submit an individual marketing plan for their crop.

At this time there are just two commercial cranberry producers in the Cowichan Region. For more information on cranberry production visit the BCCMC.

for more information, contact:

BC Cranberry Marketing Commission
604-897-9252
bccranberries.com

hogs

The BC Hog Marketing Commission and the BC Pork Producers Association are voluntary membership organizations. They do not set prices or limit the quantity of hogs a producer can raise. They do provide market research and development, and production support to hog farmers who are licensed members of their organizations.

for more information, contact:

BC Hog Marketing Commission
604-287-4647
bcpork.ca



Pigs raised to supply their own on-farm events at Bird's Eye Cove Farm .

dairy

Dairy can be classified as either cow dairy or specialty dairy (including dairy from all animals other than cows such as goats, sheep and water buffalo). Cow Dairy is operated as a supply managed sector using a controlled quota-based system, governed by the BC Milk Marketing Board (BCMMB). There are two types of cow dairy producers recognized by the BCMMB: Standard Dairy Operators, and those in the Cottage Industry Program (CIP). Producers in the CIP produce and process their own milk into a manufactured product other than fluid milk. Fluid milk cannot be shipped on or off farms in the CIP, and these producers are not part of the quota system.

licensing

Potential dairy producers and/or processors have their work cut out for them as it is not a simple task to start a brand new cheese, yogurt, or milk business. Many steps must be initiated simultaneously, and will differ depending on if a producer or processor wishes to work with cow's milk or specialty dairy.

For producers and processors planning on working with cow's milk, before tackling licensing, the first step is to create a business plan to present to the BCMMB.

Licensing for producers:

- All dairy producers must meet the requirements of the BC Ministry of Agriculture Milk Industry Act and Regulation. Once the requirements are met, a farm can receive a certificate stating that the farm is an approved dairy operation, and receive a license to operate dairy production.
- All dairy producers must also obtain a Dairy Plant Workers' License.
- Cow dairy producers must obtain a license from the BCMMB.

Licensing for processors:

- All dairy processors must obtain a dairy processing plant license from the BC Center of Disease Control (BCCDC).
- Cow dairy processors must also obtain a license from the BCMMB.

Cheese from The Happy Goat dairy, located in Glenora, is made using pasteurized goat's milk.



licensing in detail

dairy plant workers' license

Any person involved in the receiving, processing, manufacturing, packaging, cleaning or sanitizing, or other duties related to the production of dairy products must be licensed as a dairy plant worker by the Food Protection Services division of the BCCDC. A Dairy Plant Workers' License will be issued once a person completes a recognized dairy course, such as the two courses offered at BC Institute of Technology (FOOD 1151 + FOOD 1251).

dairy processing plant license

Cow and specialty dairy processors must have their dairy processing plant plans approved by the BC Centre for Disease Control.

This application must include a site plan as well as a building plan. More detail is provided in "Dairy Processing Plants, Plant Construction, Equipment and Operations Standards To Qualify for Licensing in British Columbia," an essential read that can be found at: www.bccdc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/41592F93-B78C-40E7-A929-44613FB16C81/0/DairyProcessingPlants.pdf

If working with cow's milk, it is important to consider where your dairy plant will be located. The BCMMB's transportation department will be able to tell potential processors what kind of roadways and access the milk trucks will require when delivering. Transportation arrangements are coordinated among multiple producers and processors and must be discussed with the BCMMB.

bc milk marketing board license

If producing and/or processing cow's milk a person must obtain a licence from the BCMMB. Please note that a Class D license allows a farmer to produce and process their own cow's dairy, on-site without quota through the Cottage Industry Program.

a tip from health canada:

Raw milk cheese is made from unpasteurized milk. While raw milk is not allowed to be sold in Canada, raw milk cheese is allowed for sale. This is because the way raw milk cheese is manufactured and produced helps eliminate harmful bacteria that may be present in raw milk.

in the field: fairburn farm

history

Fairburn Farm was originally purchased by Jack and Mollie Archer in 1955 and run as a horse rental business and children's summer camp. In 1980 Darrel Archer and his wife Anthea shifted the farming operations to focus on mixed farming and a guest house. In 2000 they realized a dream by importing their herd of River Water Buffalo from Denmark. In 2005 they chose to focus on their dairy and leased their farmhouse to Chef Mara Jernigan, who for six years operated it as Fairburn Farm Culinary Retreat and Guesthouse. In 2011, two of Darrel and Anthea's children, Maryann and Richard, returned to become the third generation to operate the farm.

SUCCESS

Fairburn Farm developed a relationship with Natural Pastures Cheese Company, a cheese producer willing to tackle a new product - Mozzarella di Bufala. One hundred percent of Fairburn Farms' water buffalo milk is sold under contract to Natural Pastures. Through this relationship, Fairburn has a guaranteed buyer and Natural Pastures has a guaranteed supplier. The farm operation as a whole is diversified by incorporating a successful Bed and Breakfast, and the property is rented for events and weddings. They are fully booked for weddings for the summer of 2013! Agri-tourism has been a mainstay of the farm for three generations including summer camps, guest house, culinary retreat, and now the B&B.

niche

Why Water Buffalo? Darrel and Anthea ran a mixed farming operation for several years, before deciding to chase their dream of having a dairy herd. Their decision to purchase water buffalo was inspired by a visit to water buffalo dairies in the UK.

Water Buffalo have several advantages:

- They do not fall under milk quota regulations, same as sheep and goats
- They are known for being healthy, disease resistant animals
- The milk has 58% more calcium, 40% more protein, and less cholesterol than cow's milk

There is so much demand for this specialty dairy, Fairburn receives requests at an on-going basis for their milk. Since they are happy with their contractual arrangement with Natural Pastures Cheese Company, Fairburn has no plans to diversify their milk operation. There are two new water buffalo dairies coming to Vancouver Island, one of which is slated to begin adding to Natural Pasture's supply. Fairburn welcomes these additions, recognizing that more water buffalo milk supply will lead to possible future markets for products including milk, yogurt, and ice cream. As Maryann puts it "The more water buffalo the better!"



table 10: dairy licensing summary

class	vendor / producer	products	milk	notes / example
A	Vendor license	Fluid milk and manu- factured products	Receives milk each and every day from board	Gort's Gouda, Salmon Arm: Produces, processes and sells their own milk, Bulgarian yogurt, cream, quark, and a variety of gouda cheeses.
B	Vendor license	Manufactured milk products	Receives milk each and every day from Board	Hilary's Cheese, Cowichan Bay.
C	Producer license	Produces quota for BC Milk Marketing Board	All milk produced is sold through Board	Dairies supplying Island Farms.
D	Producer/vendor license	Manufactured milk products; does not market fluid milk	Processes only milk produced by their own cows.	Class D is a producer/vendor who is a current and subsisting participant in the Cottage Industry Program.
E	Producer/vendor	Consumer-ready fluid and manufac- tured milk products processed by that diary.	Processes only milk produced by their own cows.	Class E is a producer vendor whose dairy farm is situated in a secluded area that is not serviced by road or by ferry with vehicle access. Class E pro- ducers market products via farm gate, or local retailers/wholesalers within aforesaid secluded area.



regulated vegetables

Growing large quantities of some types of vegetables in BC is regulated by the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission (BCVMC). In general storage crops, processing crops, and greenhouse vegetables are regulated by the Commission, and farmers growing large volumes of these crops are required to have a license through the BCVMC.

The BC Vegetable Marketing Commission was established for the promotion and regulation in the province of the production, transportation, packing, storage, and marketing of the regulated product. The Commission administers the licensing to producers, agencies, wholesalers, processors, and shippers, permitting them to grow, buy, process, or sell regulated vegetables. In addition to obtaining a license to sell these crops, growers must also adhere to the marketing regulations of the BCVMC. Marketing regulations state that regulated crops must be marketed through a designated agency of the BCVMC (such as Vancouver Island Farm Products or the Island Vegetable Co-op Association), or sold directly to consumers at farmers' markets or farm gates. In other words, registered growers are not permitted to sell regulated vegetables directly to wholesalers or grocery stores. Growers producing organic regulated products still require licensing under the BCVMC, but are not required to follow marketing regulations.

Many farms in the Cowichan Region grow vegetables that are technically regulated, yet few farmers are licensed producers of regulated vegetables. This is because most farmers of regulated vegetables have small enough operations that they do not require a license. A

table 11: regulated vegetables in bc

storage crops	greenhouse crops	processing crops
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beets (tops off)• Green Cabbage and Red Cabbage• Carrots (tops off)• Parsnips• Rutabagas• White (purple top) Turnips• Yellow Onions• Potatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cucumbers (all types)• Tomatoes (all types)• Peppers (all types)• Butter Lettuce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peas• Beans• Corn• Broccoli• Brussels sprouts• Cauliflower• Potatoes (all types and varieties)• Strawberries (when the end use is manufacture/processing)

farmer requires a license to sell regulated vegetables in any of the following situations:

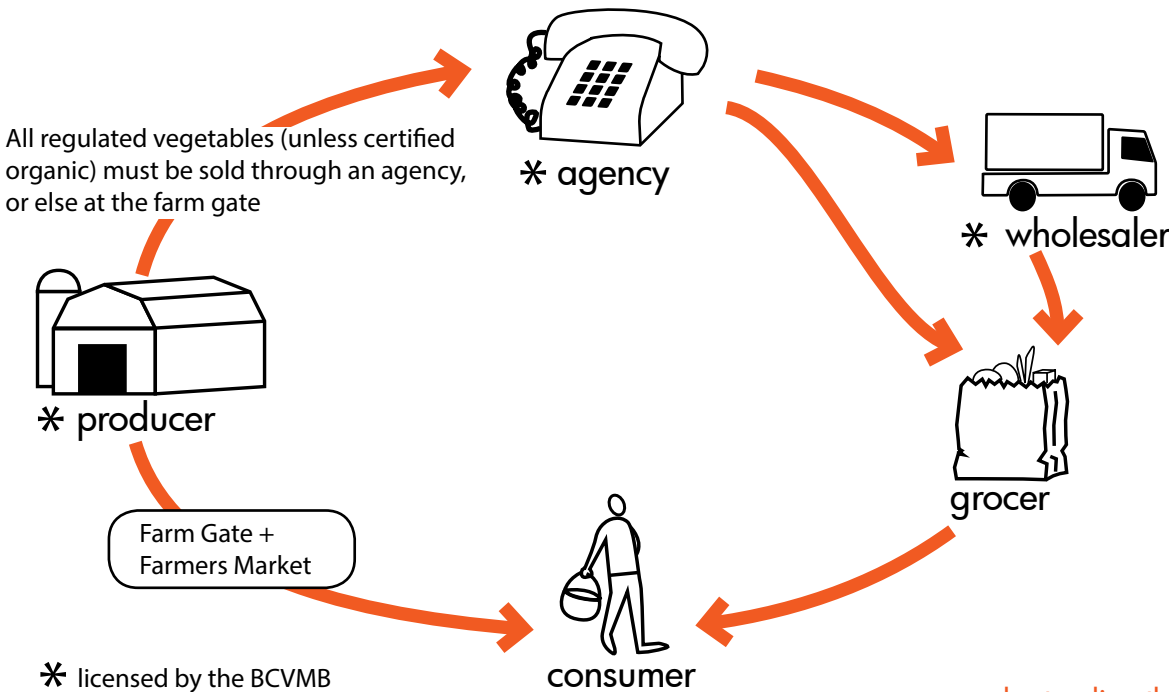
1. A farmer sells more than one tonne (2,200 lb) of a regulated vegetable per year
2. A farmer has more than 5,000 m² greenhouse space devoted to growing regulated vegetables
3. A farmer has an established relationship with a customer who is purchasing more than 300 lb of regulated vegetables per transaction
4. A farmer sells more than \$1,000 of regulated produce to an agency per year

If you grow regulated vegetables and are considering marketing through agencies, the agencies will require that you become a licensed grower through the BCVMC.

for more information, go to:

BC Vegetable Marketing Commission
bcveg.com

The BCVMC General Order outlines requirements in detail at:
www.bcveg.com/orders.asp



food safety for marketing

food safety for selling fruit + vegetables

selling fruit + vegetables at the farm gate

No specific food safety regulations apply to fruit and vegetables sold at the farm gate. It is assumed that customers shopping at farm gates are able to judge the farm conditions and make their own common sense decisions about the safety of the food.

The Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) recommends all farmers selling food to the public have FoodSafe and/or MarketSafe Certification. These certifications are obtained through a day-long course. For more information go to: www.foodsafe.ca

selling fruit + vegetables at farmers' markets

All fruit and vegetables sold at farmers' market are subject to VIHA guidelines for the sale of food at temporary markets, which is available through the VIHA website (www.viha.ca/mho/food).

VIHA designates food as either low risk or high risk. Low risk foods can be prepared in a home kitchen, without need for any certifications or permits, and sold at farmers' markets. High risk foods must be prepared in a VIHA approved, commercial food premise. Vendors selling high risk foods must have a VIHA letter of confirmation or VIHA Permit to Operate, and a FoodSafe level one certificate present at all markets.

Processed food such as jams, jellies, and salsas are deemed to be high or low risk foods depending on the product's pH (acid) level. The pH level of products can be determined by sending products to a lab, such as MB Laboratories in Saanich (www.mblabs.com). If selling jams, jellies, or salsas, you are required to have lab results present at the market to show a market manager or VIHA inspector that your products are low risk.

low risk foods include:

- fresh fruit and vegetables
- dried fruit
- high acidity jams and jellies, pickled vegetables and relishes

high risk foods include:

- low acidity salsas, sauces, and spreads
- fruit and vegetable juice
- sprouts



for more information

For more information about health and safety regulations for the selling of food on Vancouver Island, visit the Vancouver Island Health Authority website:

www.viha.ca/mho/food

Specifically, look for the report “Guidelines for the Sale of Foods at Temporary Food Markets”.

VIHA’s regulations and permits are administered by VIHA Environmental Health Officers (EHO). To contact an EHO for Duncan call:

250-737-2010

To contact a laboratory to measure the pH of processed fruit and vegetables contact MB Laboratories in Saanich at:

www.mblabs.com

For more information about safety regulations for fruit and vegetable production visit CanadaGAP website:

www.canadagap.ca

selling fruit + vegetables to restaurants

Restaurants are responsible for meeting the VIHA Food Safety requirements for permitted commercial food establishments. When selling fresh fruit and vegetables directly to chefs, there are no specific food safety regulations, aside from basic best practices. For example, a VIHA representative inspecting a kitchen would ensure that fruits and vegetables purchased directly from farmers are clean and are properly stored in boxes labeled with farm name for traceability requirements.

Unlike selling at farmers’ markets, farmers wishing to sell low risk processed foods, such as jams or jellies, to chefs must obtain a VIHA permit to operate a food service and use a VIHA permitted kitchen to make products.

selling fruit + vegetables to retail

Many grocery store, wholesale, and agency purchasers have a strong preference for working with farmers that have food safe certification for their farm. While certifying a farm can be an arduous and expensive process, it can open up larger markets for farmers.

Good Agriculture Practices (Canada GAP) is a national program of food safety standards and a certification system for the safe production and handling of fruits and vegetables in Canada. It is a non-profit organization designed to provide information and support to farmers seeking food safe certification. CanadaGAP works with a few certification bodies to provide a third-party audit of farms and administer certifications. CanadaGAP offers free (very extensive) manuals to farmers seeking certification. These manuals are available online at: www.canadagap.ca

BC Agriculture Research and Development Corporations (Ardcorp) has offered programs to help fund farms seeking food safety certification. To see if they have current programs available visit their website at: www.bcac.bc.ca/ardcorp

food safety for selling dairy

All raw milk must be sold to a licensed processor. If it is cow’s milk, this is done through the BC Milk Marketing Board (BCMMB). If it is specialty dairy (such as sheep, goat, water buffalo, etc.), a producer must find a licensed processor to sell the milk to. Thus, raw milk from any animal can not be sold via farm gate for human consumption.

Fluid milk may be sold at farm gate, farmers’ market, to restaurants, grocery stores, agencies, and wholesalers by processors with a Class A Vendor License, or a Class E License.

Manufactured cow’s milk products (cheese, yogurt, ice cream, etc.) can be sold via the farm gate, farmers’ market, to restaurants, grocery stores, agencies, and wholesalers by Class A, B, D, or E License from the BCBMB.

Specialty dairy products, not from cow’s milk, may be sold at farm gates, farmers’ markets, restaurants, grocery stores, etc. as long as they are processed/manufactured in a licensed facility. Raw milk cheeses may be sold as long as they are aged for a minimum of sixty days.

food safety for selling eggs

selling eggs at the farm gate

Ungraded eggs may be legally sold at the farm gate. The Shell Egg Grading Regulation (developed by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (BCMAL)), prohibits the selling of ungraded eggs. However, the regulation specifically states that the act “does not apply to a producer who produces and sells eggs direct to a consumer at the producer’s farm or place of residence.”⁷

selling eggs at farmers markets

Regulations about selling ungraded eggs at farmers’ markets appear contradictory. According to the Shell Egg Grading Regulation of the Agriculture Produce Grading Act, it is illegal to sell ungraded eggs at farmers’ markets. However, the BCMAL has no field staff enforcing these regulations. As well, no charges are listed under the list of offences for non-compliance with the regulation.

To some degree, regulation enforcement responsibilities are passed down to local health authorities, such as VIHA. Health authorities are only interested in regulating point of sale, and not farm or grading practices. Therefore, health authorities do not enforce the regulation to the letter, and judge eggs only by outward appearance. Specifically health authorities are checking that:

- Shells are sound and not cracked/leaking
- Shells are clean and free of any fecal material or feathers
- Eggs are maintained at an internal temperature of 4°C during transportation and storage/display at the market
- Cartons used to contain the eggs are clean and maintained in a sanitary manner
- The minimum information on cartons should indicate the name of farm/producer and the packaging or sale date

Non-compliance with VIHA regulations could result in VIHA confiscating eggs. At times, VIHA may inform the BCMAL to let them know about the presence of ungraded eggs. Many farmers read between the lines on the regulations, and currently sell eggs at farmers’ markets without hassle.

selling eggs to restaurants + small grocers

Similar regulations apply to selling eggs to restaurants and small grocery stores, as apply to selling eggs at farmers markets. Chefs will be looking to purchase eggs that meet the VIHA requirements, and not the BCMAL grading requirements. VIHA inspectors of kitchens will only confiscate eggs if they do not meet VIHA standards, graded and ungraded alike. At times, VIHA may inform the BCMAL to let them know about the presence of ungraded eggs in kitchen facilities; however, no further action is taken against restaurants using ungraded eggs.

selling eggs to retail

Large grocery stores typically purchase graded eggs. Island Eggs, located in Westholme, Duncan, is the only federally licensed egg grading facility on Vancouver Island. This grading station accepts eggs from various egg producers across Vancouver Island. There are smaller grading stations associated with specific farms, such as the egg grading station at Farmer Ben’s Eggs. Egg grading stations follow Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) standards for food safety, sizing, and grading.

Eggs are a supply managed sector, supervised and regulated by the BC Egg Marketing Board (BCEMB). Therefore, egg producers selling to grading stations are required to have production quota issued by the BCEMB and must sell to grading stations according to the BCEMB requirements. For more information on egg supply management see page 80.

food for thought:

Want to learn more out the politics of egg grading and a spotlight on the Salt Spring Egg Wars? Check out this masters thesis:

An inquiry into the pecking order: the British Columbia egg scheme and the yoking of sustainable egg producers

Available at: dspace.library.uvic.ca:8080/handle/1828/2469

for more information

For more information about health and safety regulations for the selling of eggs on Vancouver Island visit the Vancouver Island Health Authority website:

www.viha.ca/mho/food

VIHA’s regulations and permits are administered by VIHA Environmental Health Officers (EHO). To contact an EHO for Duncan call:

250-737-2010

For more information about grading stations and quota visit the BC Egg marketing Board at:

www.bcegg.com



food safety for selling meat

selling meat at the farm gate

Producers can sell their meat products at the farm gate, so long as the meat has been slaughtered and processed in a licensed facility (or with a Class E license), and they meet the requirements of the BC Food Premises Regulation. For information about selling meat at the farm gate, contact your local Environmental Health Officer (EHO).

To contact an EHO for Cowichan Region call: 250-737-2010.

selling meat at farmers' markets

All raw meat products sold at farmers' market are subject to VIHA *Guidelines for the Sale of Food at Temporary Markets*. In short, VIHA allows for the sale of raw meat at farmers' markets so long as the producer has submitted an application to sell raw meat at the farmers' market at least thirty days prior to the market. Products must be properly labeled, pre-packaged, and frozen at an approved food premise, and remain frozen for the duration of the market. Also, meat must have been slaughtered and processed in a licensed facility.

For more detail refer to Appendix III, page 11 of the VIHA *Guidelines for the Sale of Food at Temporary Markets* available at:

www.viha.ca/mho/food

selling meat to restaurants and retail

All meat sold to restaurants and retail stores must be slaughtered and processed in a licensed facility and cannot be from animals slaughtered with a Class E license.

in the field: bird's eye cove

history

Bird's Eye Cove farm is a 300 acre farm on Genoa Bay Road in North Cowichan. Sara and her mother Heather run the operation, after taking over ownership from Sara's grandparents - making Sara a third generation farmer. Sara and Heather have spent the last seven years returning the farm to productivity, building their herd of highland cattle. Their beef, as well as farm fresh eggs and a small amount of produce, are sold exclusively by farm gate.

After years of requests for weddings in their old barn, they invested in a timber-framed barn, complete with commercial kitchen in 2011. This beautiful barn sparked a shift into agri-tourism, a change that has made Bird's Eye Cove a destination farm.

success through social media

After the first wedding was held in the new barn, Bird's Eye Cove posted the photos on their Facebook page. The photos were a hit – the barn was booked for the rest of the year. As of April 2013, the barn is booked into the 2014 season. In addition to weddings, the farm organizes, promotes, and holds their own day-time and evening events throughout the year. This has meant that demand for their in-house catering is high and they are now processing more cattle. For the first time ever, they have bought their own bull, an asset which will help to maintain herd numbers. They are expanding farm production to include some produce, and have recently acquired twelve young pigs – eight of which are already ear-marked for future pig roasts.

niche

Bird's Eye Cove Farm is the only supplier of pasture raised highland beef in the Cowichan Region. The farm capitalizes on their target market of people who truly care about ethically raised beef, by selling cuts and value-added beef products, such as ready to cook Shepherds Pie, at their farm gate.

As an event venue, Bird's Eye Cove makes the most of their stunning yet functional farm property. The farm-to-table philosophy means that clients get fresh, delicious food. What they do not currently produce, their chef sources from other local farms.



The farm stand at Bird's Eye Cove

meat inspection regulation

In 2004, the BC Ministry of Health implemented the Meat Inspection Regulation (MIR) that lays out the requirements for all provincially licensed slaughter facilities in BC.

All meat that is sold for human consumption in BC must be slaughtered and processed in a licensed facility. The only exception is for on-farm slaughter of animals for personal consumption.

In or near the Cowichan Region there are six Class A licensed abattoirs, outlined in Table 12. Class A facilities are licensed to both slaughter and process animals, while Class B facilities are only licensed to slaughter animals.

In rural areas where there are no licensed facilities (within a two hour driving distance), producers can apply for a Class D or E license to do on-farm slaughter and processing of animals for sale. BC has designated ten regional districts in BC as being rural and eligible to apply for these licenses. The Cowichan Region, however, is not one of these designated areas. Despite this, producers in the Cowichan Region

table 12: meat plant class summary

class a A license permitting slaughter and processing (e.g. cut-and-wrap).	class d allows on-farm slaughter of a larger number of animals (1-25 animal units) for direct sale to consumers or retail sales to secondary food establishments (e.g. restaurants and meat shops) within the boundaries of the regional district where the meat was produced. Class D license holders may slaughter their own or other peoples' animals.	class e allows on-farm slaughter of a small number of animals annually (1-10 animal units) for direct sale to consumers. Sales are restricted to the regional district in which the meat was produced, and operators are only permitted to slaughter their own animals.
class b A license permitting slaughter only.		
class c A temporary license enabling slaughter facilities to operate without inspection until upgrades to full licensing are completed. No Class C licenses have been issued since June 1, 2010.		

may still be able to apply for a Class E license if the producer demonstrates a clear need for additional slaughter capacity, or requires services that are not available through an existing Class A, B, or C facility (e.g. species-specific slaughter or specialty slaughter services such as certified organic, halal, or kosher).

The Class E license allows on-farm slaughter of a small number of animals for direct sale to consumers. Sales are restricted to the regional district in which the meat was produced and all sales must be direct to customers (e.g. meat slaughtered with a Class E license cannot be sold to restaurants and or retail stores). Producers are only permitted to slaughter their own animals with a Class E license.

To apply for a Class E license the producer must first complete a Class E feasibility study. If the feasibility study is approved, the producer is then eligible to apply for a license. An approved feasibility study does not guarantee that a license will be granted.

for more information

To read more on the Meat Inspection Regulation, go to:

www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/meat-regulation

For more information about the Class E feasibility study and license application, go to:

www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/meat-regulation/apply-d-e-license.html

For an updated listing of all currently licensed abattoirs in the Cowichan Region go to:

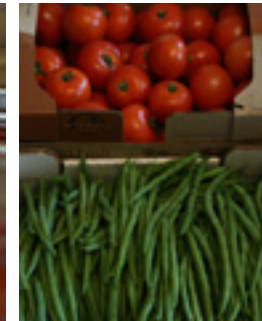
www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/meat-regulation/abattoir-profiles.html

table 13: abattoirs in or near the cowichan region

abattoir	class	address	contact	services
Braun's Custom Butcher	A	3901 Rowe Rd Duncan, BC V9L 6T1	Phone: 250-746-6507 Owner/ Operator: Alfred Braun	Custom slaughter and processing (cut and wrap).
Hidden Valley Processing	A	6010 Old Cowichan Lake Rd Duncan, BC V9L 6H7	Phone: 250-746-7235 Owner/ Operator: Mark Cardin	Custom slaughter and processing, including cut and wrap, curing, smoking, and sausages.
Island Farmhouse Poultry	A	1615 Koksilah Rd Cowichan Bay, BC V0R 1N1	Phone: 250-746-6163 Email: info@farmhousepoultry.ca Owner/ Operator: Lyle Young	Custom slaughter and processing (cut and wrap).
Maplewood Farm/Village Butcher	A	755 Winfall Rd Metchosin, BC V9B 5B4	Phone: 250-598-1115 Owner/ Operator: Mike Windle	Custom slaughter and processing, including cut and wrap and freeze. Do not smoke or cure on premise, but can arrange connection with a local butcher.
Rod Plecas Livestock Service	A	2100 Plecas Rd Nanaimo, BC V9X 1R9	Phone: 250-754-6838 or 754-2238 Owner/ Operator: Rod Plecas	Custom slaughter and processing (cut and wrap).
Valleyview Farms	A	2322 Gomerich Rd Nanaimo, BC V9X 1R9	Phone: 250-753-1753 or 619-5113 Owner/ Operator: George Gomerich	Custom slaughter and processing (cut and wrap).

animals	requirements	delivery	booking
Beef Pork Bison	Contact well in advance to determine capacity, timing, and instruction for drop off.	Not available	Variable throughout year, but busiest in fall. For fall bookings contact 2-3 months in advance.
Beef Lamb Pork	Requests that animals be dropped off the day before slaughter.	Hauling available	Winter: book approx. 2 weeks in advance. Summer - Fall: book 1-2 months in advance.
Chicken Turkey (No water fowl)	Requests that chickens are no more than 7 lb each and turkeys are no more than 30 lb each. Poultry must in an appropriate humane transport container and appropriate feed and water withdrawal times are observed.	Not available	Busy year round. Book chickens 2 months in advance. Book turkeys more than 2 months in advance, especially before the holiday seasons.
Lamb Goat	Contact well in advance to determine capacity, timing, and instruction for drop off.	Not available	Winter (Dec. - May): generally space available. Summer - Fall: book 4 - 6 weeks in advance.
Beef Lamb Goat Pork Deer Bison Emu Rabbit	Contact well in advance to determine capacity, timing, and instruction for drop off.	Available	Winter: book 1 week in advance. Fall: book 1 month in advance.
Beef Lamb Goat Pork Rabbit	Contact well in advance to determine capacity, timing, and instruction for drop off.	Not available	Always book 2-3 weeks in advance.

understanding the potential



strengthening links in the value chain

The term supply chain is often used to describe how products move through the food system. From the field to the fork, the supply chain refers to all of the people, organizations, technology, and resources involved in moving the product.

Conventional food systems often favour a linear supply chain where large volumes of low cost foods are moved through distribution and wholesale companies and little interaction occurs between levels of the supply chain aside from business transactions. Relationships between levels of the supply chain are often seen as competitive, where each company seeks to buy as cheaply and sell as expensively as possible. This established system seems uncomplicated and effective for the large partners of the supply chain; however for small and mid-scale farmers, entrance into the supply chain can be prohibitive.

To shift this paradigm in the favour of small and mid-scale farmers, the concept of value chains, or value-based supply chains, is becoming increasingly common in discussions around building sustainable local food supply chains. Food value chains are defined as “collaborative business networks comprising of food producers, processors, distributors, marketers, and buyers who jointly plan and coordinate their activities to achieve common financial goals while advancing an agreed-upon set of social or environmental values.”⁸ Value chains are designed to enhance small and mid-sale farmers’ financial viability by capturing price premiums in the marketplace. This is done by communicating the environmental and social values embedded in the products.⁹

The following examples characterize four of the main tenets of successful value chains.¹⁰

1. strategic alliances

Value chains are strategic alliances in which growers are treated as strategic partners, versus input suppliers, and participate fully in developing the supply chain.

grocers working to develop the local food value chain

Often local products end up on grocery store shelves because farmers have sought out grocery stores and initiated the building of a relationship with these stores. The City Market grocery store, run by the Onion River Co-op in Vermont is an example of a grocery store that actively seeks out farmers to fill gaps in their locally sourced products. Available through their website is a list of local products they seek, as well as a list of local products that they already have enough producers supplying. By providing this market information to farmers, the grocery store invites farmers to be strategic partners. The Onion River Co-op achieves this level of communication and partnership with farmers despite being a large grocery store (in 2012, the Co-op averaged close to a million dollars of local product sales per month).

check-out this example at:

www.citymarket.coop/local-products-gap

The Onion River Co-op In Burlington, Vermont is an excellent example of how a large grocery store can work with multiple local farms and feature local products.



for more information

For more information on Meet Your Maker visit:

www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca/events/meet-your-maker-3

For more information about the Farmer-Chef Connection visit:

eatbettermovemore.org/SA/enact/workplace/Building_Local_Food_Networks_Toolkit.pdf

meet your maker

Meet Your Maker is a networking event organized by Farm Folk - City Folk and has been held in Vancouver, the Okanagan, and, for the first time in 2013, on Vancouver Island. Meet Your Maker, modeled after Portland, Oregon's very successful Farmer-Chef Connection, is a networking event designed for all businesses that are involved in the local system, from producers, wild harvesters and fishers to distributors, retailer and chefs. Meet Your Maker is part trade-show, part workshop, part "speed-dating" for farmers and purchasers, and part luncheon for local foodies.

Meet Your Maker is typically held in late winter, enabling farmers and purchasers to develop strategic relationships before the start of the growing season. This way, farmers can plan their crops to meet purchaser needs, and purchasers can plan their businesses based on what the farmer has available.

Saanich Organics Farmers at the Vancouver Island Meet Your Maker, 2013.



in the field: local seed production

Seed producers are another important link in the value chain, as the seed is the start of all agricultural production. From the grain that is grown to feed livestock, to the vegetable seeds sown for market, seeds are an integral component of our food system. On Vancouver Island we have seen a resurgence in both the production and sale of locally adapted seeds. The growth in Seedy Saturday events across BC is a testament to the importance that gardeners and farmers place on local seeds.

However, in light of this positive trend, how often do we ask how or if farmers are able to access locally produced bulk seed? While the upsurge in local seed production has been marketed widely to gardeners – which is an integral step in increasing our regions' seed security – it's necessary to address the bulk seed market for farmers.

Survey results revealed that 73% of Cowichan Region farmers would like to access locally produced seed. Meanwhile, 69% of farmers indicated that they do not purchase any local seeds for their farm. The same farmers surveyed indicated that both access to bulk seed and to an online and/or print order catalogue for local bulk seed would be very influential in increasing their capacity to purchase locally produced seed.

As it stands now, the structure of the local seed system is not targeted towards producing bulk quantities of seeds for farmers. More support needs to be directed towards helping local seed growers scale-up the production of local seed – either through access to infrastructure, to training, or to tools to facilitate the distribution and/or aggregation of bulk seed stocks.

The Bauta Family Initiative for Canadian Seed Security (BFICSS), a new directive working nationally alongside the Unitarian Service of Canada and Seeds of Diversity Canada, has its main focus to do exactly this. The overall goal of BFICSS is to increase the availability of locally grown, ecological seed. BFICSS hopes to achieve this goal through offering workshops and courses on producing, cleaning, storing, and marketing seed; growing a national network of seed growers, seed savers, and seed banks; and making available loans and grants to existing and potential seed producers.

Here in BC, BFICSS coordinators Heather Pritchard and Rupert Adams are working with Farm Folk City Folk and its off-shoot, BC Seeds, to help grow an already healthy and vibrant seed producing community. They aim to provide help with the development of a BC Seed Co-op, and funding and academic support for participatory seed growing and breeding programs. Through these efforts, they hope to not only scale-up overall seed production in BC, but to look at and develop varieties that thrive in our unique climate.

For more information, contact either of the BFICSS coordinators for BC at:

rupert@farmfolkcityfolk.ca

heather@farmfolkcityfolk.ca



the Cowichan Region has several of the key elements needed for a successful food hub:

1. High density of small-medium scale farms and good collaboration between farmers
2. Proven market demand in the region
3. Strong local community development initiatives
4. Municipal support

for more information:

Two interesting reports on food hubs from the USDA can be found at:

www.ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs

2. aggregated + differentiated

Value chains are strategic alliances in which significant volumes of aggregated, high-quality, differentiated food products are involved and growers control their own brand identity.

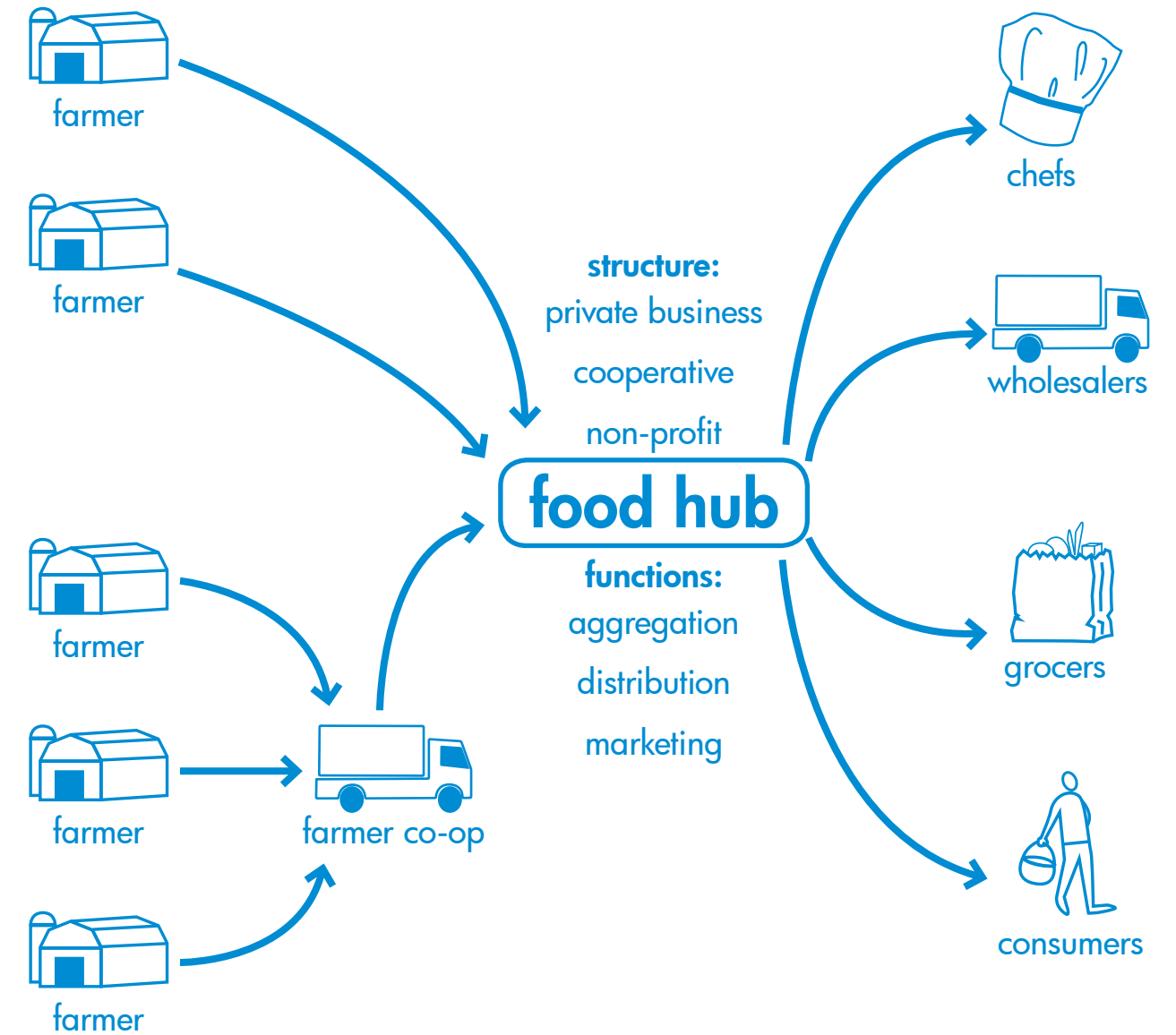
food hubs

Food Hubs are a great example of value chain-based business models. While Food Hubs vary in their structure and operations (they can be organized as a non-profit, cooperative, or a private enterprise), they share some defining characteristics that are exemplary of value chains. Food Hubs:

- Carry out or coordinate the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of primarily locally/regionally produced foods from multiple producers to multiple markets.
- Consider producers as valued business partners instead of interchangeable suppliers and are committed to buying from small to mid-sized local producers whenever possible.
- They work closely with their producers to build their capacity to meet wholesale buyer requirements.
- Use product differentiation strategies (such as communicating variety information or production practices), to ensure that producers get a premium price in the market place.
- Aim to be financially viable while also having positive economic, social, and environmental impacts within their communities, as demonstrated by carrying out certain production, community, or environmental services and activities.¹¹

The need for a Food Hub in the Cowichan Region was commonly identified by survey and interview respondents. Currently, the BC Cooperative Association is initiating research for the creation of a Cowichan Region food hub.

Some Food Hubs are located on-line, rather than a physical location. "Our Local Markets" is an example of a virtual Food Hub in a neighboring region. Our Local Markets is starting its operations in the Port Alberni Valley in the spring of 2013. Visit www.ourlocalmarkets.com for more information.



hungry for more?

The team at Farmship is open to inquiries. Reach them at: farmshipcoop@gmail.com

Growing Opportunities can be conacted at: growingopportunities@gmail.com

For more general information about co-ops, look to the BC Co-operative Association for information: www.bcca.coop

One of the guiding principles of co-operatives is that co-ops work in solidarity with other co-ops to strengthen the co-operative movement. Therefore, it is encouraged for developing co-ops to seek support from existing co-ops.

farmer co-op

While food hubs are strategic alliances across the food supply chains, farmer co-ops are strategic alliances within the supply end of the food chain.

There are two inspiring growers co-ops located in North Cowichan: Growing Opportunities Farm Community Cooperative and Farmship Growers Cooperative. The two co-ops work together to offer a wide range of opportunities to members.

Growing Opportunities is designed to be an “on-ramp” for people wishing to explore a potential future in agriculture. Members of Growing Opportunities develop skills and experience farming, and share in the harvest, without taking on large risks such as land ownership or extensive time commitments. Growing Opportunities works with Nanaimo Food Share and CGC to help build local capacity and food security in our communities.

Farmship Growers Cooperative is designed for members who wish to earn a portion of their income from agricultural activities, and accordingly make a larger commitment to developing the skills necessary for a career in agriculture. The two co-ops operate together with a memorandum of understanding governing their partnership.

Both co-ops are based on a passionate philosophy about the bounty that comes from a family-like agriculture structure. Craig Evans, a founding member of Growing Opportunities and Farmship, puts it simply, “when we all work together, there is so much food here.” Looking at the bigger picture, Craig states that agriculture is “the environment brought right to our plates. If we honour the process from growing to plate as a sharing process, we will ensure the future of community agriculture.”



The team at Growing Opportunities Farm Community Co-operative

Over the past several months the BC Cooperative Association has been researching food hubs in the region. From our research it's clear that there is a huge opportunity for small-medium scale farmers to work together to overcome some of the challenges they face. The food hub model provides a way for farmers to work together cooperatively to reduce their costs and also expand their markets.

- Carol Murray, Director of Co-op Development, BC Cooperative Association

group branding

Not all consumers get the opportunity to talk with the farmers growing their food, nor do all consumers have the knowledge required to judge the health of a farmer's growing practices. Organic certification is an important label for helping to communicate the rigor of organic farm practices to consumers. With organic certification, growers often have the opportunity to capture a price premium because they have communicated the values embedded in their product.

As locally sourced food is increasingly becoming a priority for consumers, the organic certification label is sometimes not enough to communicate the value of the product. Consumers are often first looking for local, and second looking for organic, and third looking for certified organic.

A group of certified organic growers in the Comox Valley addressed this issue by developing a brand that communicates both local and certified organic values. Showing the consumer that they do not need to choose between local and organic, rather they can have both values met with one product. Consumers can be assured that they are purchasing a product from a certified organic farm, as the brand's logo includes information about the farm's organic certifying body.

The new brand "Produced Organically in the Comox Valley" was launched in the September 2012 and has already received enthusiastic reviews from consumers and organic growers in other regions of Vancouver Island. This new brand is focused at a regional level, giving growers direct control over branding, while still making use of the more internationally recognized brand of "certified organic."

The regional logo developed by certified organic farmers in the Comox Valley, used to identify their products as both local and organic.



3. sharing risk + reward

Value chains are strategic alliances in which risks, rewards, and responsibilities are distributed equitably across the supply chain.

island chef collaborative micro-loans

Despite the capital-intensive needs of farming, small and medium-sized farms typically find it difficult to access capital. This lack of capital at the farm level has ripple effects along the entire supply chain. Financial support from other levels of the supply chain can help support the financial capital burden which is often limiting farmers' abilities. Value-chains promote a sharing of the financial responsibility, as well as the rewards of innovation, along the supply chain.

The Islands Chefs' Collaborative (ICC), in partnership with Vancity and Farm Folk-City Folk, offer a good example of a group of chefs investing in farmers with the goal of improving all levels of the local food system. The ICC's zero-interest micro loans aim to make capital available to farmers through a simplified process, without attaching the typical strings of the financial world, such as interest, credit history, and the need for collateral. Loans are available in amounts between \$1,000 and \$10,000 for two year terms. The loans are specifically to help farmers afford capital (equipment or materials) that will increase local food production. Fifteen farms on Vancouver Island have made use of these loans to date.

forward contracts

Forward contracts is a tool used between farmers and purchasers to help distribute the risks and rewards equitably across the supply chain. A forward contract is an agreement between a farmer and purchaser, where a farmer agrees to supply specific products, and a purchaser agrees to purchase these products at a set price and quantity. The contract is agreed upon before planting begins, allowing the farmer to plan crops accordingly.

Details within forward contracts include:

- Varietal or type of product
- Quantity
- Form of payment
- Termination of contract
- Packaging materials
- Price
- Quality standards
- Duration of contract
- Warranties/ guarantees
- Transport need

for more information on the Islands Chefs' Collaborative visit:

www.iccbc.ca



forward contracts have many benefits. In addition to sharing the risks and rewards between the farm and the purchaser, they:

- provide a tool for building trust between farmer and purchasers
- ensure that both parties understand what was agreed upon
- give peace of mind
- ensure that the relationship will continue even if the individuals change

The grain cleaner at Hope Farm. Other farmers are welcome to rent this piece of equipment.



in the field: hope farm

history

Hope Farm Healing Center is a 36 acre farm and addictions recovery center in the Cowichan Region. While the farm is used as a means to help individuals with addiction recovery, it is also a well established, working farm. Hope Farm raises livestock (layer and broiler poultry, lambs, hogs, and cattle), and grows fruit, vegetable, grain, and hay crops. Hope Farm is a Ministry of the Mustard Seed Street Church in Victoria, and some of the food produced at the farm supplies the Mustard Seed Food Bank. For instance, some cuts of Hope Farm's hogs are sold to high end restaurants, and other cuts are turned into ground pork to serve the food bank's needs. Hope Farm believes in the importance of making local organic food available to people from a range of socio-economic levels.

success through innovation

Starting three years ago, Hope Farm switched some of their acreage of hay production to rye and wheat production.

Hope Farm was keen to experiment with niche grain crops as it had the potential to increase farm revenue. The straw from the grain would fetch the same price per acre as the hay previously grown - the value of the grain would be additional profit. After discussions with True Grain Bread, an organic bakery and grain mill located in Cowichan Bay, BC, Hope Farm felt assured that there was a potential local market for their grain production and now consumers can purchase locally grown and milled grain from True Grain Bread!

Hope Farm was also motivated to grow grain, as they felt that grain, as opposed to hay, added more to the overall food security of the region. Additionally, Hope Farm felt that revitalizing grain production in the Cowichan Region would help reconnect the community to our agricultural history and remind us of a time when Vancouver Island was self-sufficient in grain production.

The first three years of grain production at Hope Farm has proved successful (yielding on average a tonne of grain per acre), they are able to earn more per acre of grain than they did from hay.

niche

Hope Farm was able to explore this niche market with little initial capital investment as they had the necessary production equipment and cleaned the grain by hand for the first two seasons.

As they developed their niche, they received support from other partners in the local food supply chain. Hope Farm rented the use of a grain combine from a local farm, and True Grain Bread offered them assured demand in the market.

True Grain is dedicated to working with local farmers to help increase the supply of Vancouver Island grown grain. While True Grain prefers to purchase organic grain, they recognize that providing market demand for non-certified organic wheat is a necessary step in helping increase grain production in the region.

Now at a stage where grain production has proved successful, this year Hope Farm purchased a mechanical grain cleaner. This investment will help them be more efficient in their operations, and will allow them to support other farmers wishing to also produce grain in the region by offering the cleaner for rent.



4. sharing the food’s story

Value chains are strategic alliances in which the product’s value includes the story of the people and the business practices.

Simply labelling a product as local, does not take full advantage of the potential value people will feel about the product, and ultimately the price they will be willing to pay for the product. In successful value chains, products are distinguished by the story that is communicated along the chain, and ultimately told to the consumer. Sharing the farm story can be as simple as labelling a product with a farm name as opposed to marketing it ambiguously as local. Other value chain partners capture more of the story, such as City Market Co-op which organizes farm tours for its grocery store customers.

Sharing the story to communicate the value of the product helps prevent “local-washing”, a newly coined phrase to describe unsubstantiated marketing claims that make products and businesses appear more local than they are. The term “local-washing” originates from the more commonly used term “green-washing”, denoting the false environmental claims of businesses. Some of the farmers and chefs interviewed expressed concern about “local-washing” de-legitimizing the local food movement. “Local-washing” can be countered by purchasers providing more information about a product beyond its classification as local.

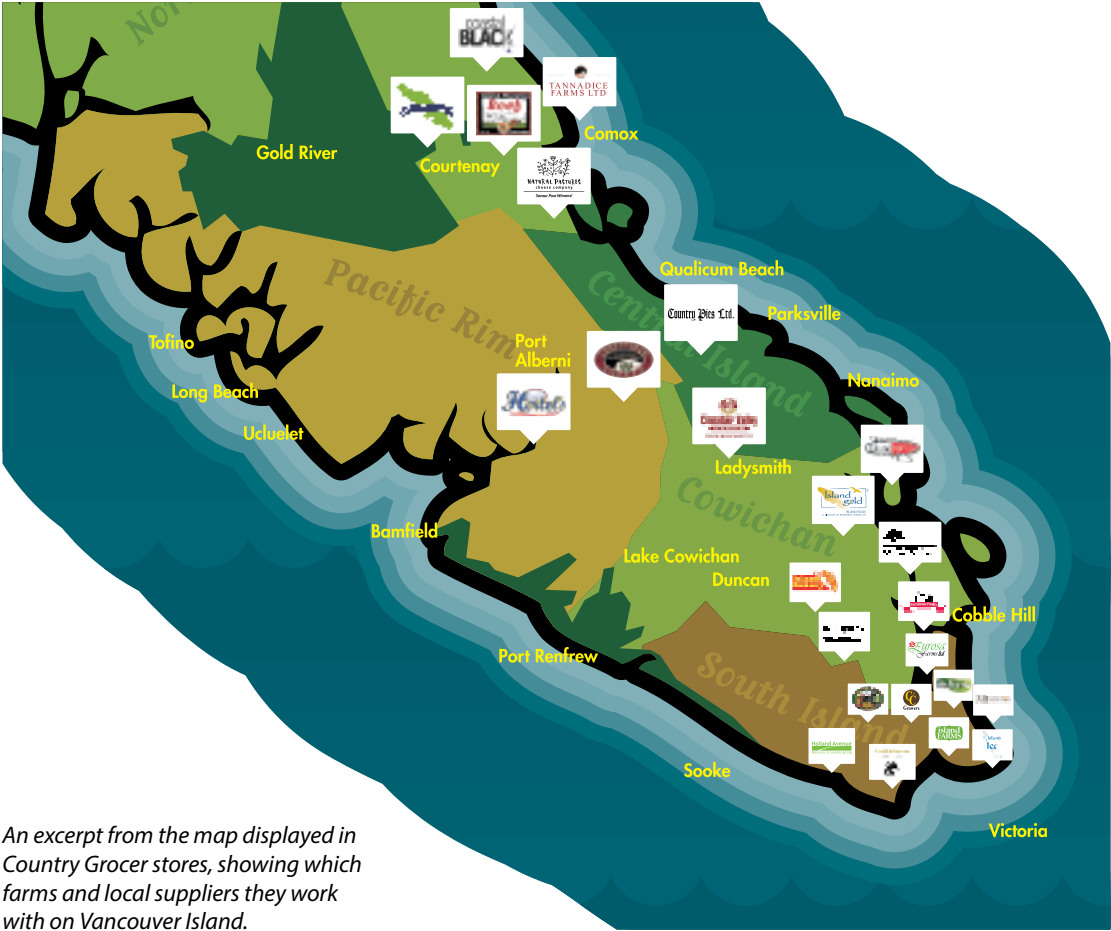
detailed menus

Spinnakers, a restaurant and brewpub in Victoria, uses its menu to help communicate the story of the products it serves. Its menu details the ingredients in their dishes, and the farm name where the ingredients come from.

field to plate salads	
whenever possible all of our salads are made from hand picked greens from Duncan, Saanich & Metcheson	
island grown greens	half 6 full 12
roasted oldfield farm's squash & saanich grown beets, salt spring island sprouting beans, spinnakers barley wine vinaigrette.	
goat cheese & beet salad	half 7 full 14
dragonfly farm's spinach, roasted saanich grown beets, happy days goat cheese, spiced wilbury farm's hazelnuts, spinnakers barley wine vinaigrette.	
smoked tuna loin salad	half 7 full 14
house smoked, soy marinated albacore tuna, seasonal greens, salt spring grown pea shoots, sesame seed, baked bamfield kelp, wasabi vinaigrette.	
grilled flank steak salad	full 16
ethically raised, pasture fed beef, roasted oldfield farm's squash, happy day's goat cheese, seasonal greens, spinnakers barley wine vinaigrette, barley wine gastrie.	
locally grown kale 'caesar' salad	half 7 full 14
heretel bacon bits, kootenay alpine cheese co.'s nostrala cheese, spinnakers focaccia croutons, house made caesar dressing.	

country grocer map

Country Grocer communicates the story of its local products through a large printed map displayed in the store. The map identifies the exact locations of the farms they work with. Country Grocer also shared the story of the farmers they purchase from in a recent television commercial which is comprised of a series of images showing the farms, farmers, and products which are shelved in Country Grocer stores.



An excerpt from the map displayed in Country Grocer stores, showing which farms and local suppliers they work with on Vancouver Island.



value chain vs value added

While value chains focus on creating value through collaboration between players along the supply chain, value can also be added by finding ways to process raw farm products. Value-added agriculture transforms raw farm products through many means such as packaging, processing, cooling, drying, and extracting. Value-added can be a simple process such as braiding garlic bulbs together, or more complex such as transforming milk into cheese. The investment placed into adding value is potentially returned through obtaining a high market price, having access to market opportunities, extending the marketing season of a product, and/or creating more brand and farm recognition.

sweet idea

A lot of excess or over-ripe food just goes to waste, but if you turn it into jam or jelly for sale, not only do you make a profit on your fruit, you get the mark-up of value added.

If you do not have time to make jam in the summer, simply freeze your fruit and make it during the winter for the next season's farmers' markets.

If you're just not a jam maker, find someone else to make the jam for you. Include their wage in your mark-up or work out a trade (e.g. in exchange for their labour they get to keep some of the jam).

Here is a quick example. Say you have a surplus of berries, seconds, or very ripe berries, you can freeze them to make jam later:

costs	
60 lb berries (bought from yourself at \$4/lb)	\$ 240
sugar + pectin	\$ 30
jars	\$ 80
total costs (not including your time)	\$ 350
yield (250 ml jam/jar)	160 jars
revenue (\$6/jar x 160 jars)	\$ 960
profit (\$960 - \$350)	\$ 610

in the field: the happy goat

history

The Happy Goat is a micro goat dairy in Glenora. Proprietors Cory and Kirsten pasture 75 goats, on seven acres of leased land. Entering the third year of production, Cory works the farm full-time and their long-term goal is for both Cory and Kirsten to be full-time farmers. The Happy Goat previously supplied a cheese producer with goat milk, but Cory realized that the road to his financial sustainability was through his own value added product: goat cheese!

success through value added

Cory studied cheese making in France, and is quickly earning a name for himself with his delicious Tomme de Vallee aged goat cheese. Since it is an aged cheese it legally could be made from raw milk (see page 95 for dairy policy), however, for a consistent product Cory pasteurizes his milk.

Farm diversity plays a role at The Happy Goat: Cory also sells pasture raised chicken, which are SPCA certified. Cory values raising animals with the utmost love and care, feeding them 100% organic feed and not using hormones or antibiotics.

Perhaps most important, Cory builds relationships with purchasers the old fashioned way - face to face. Everyone who has his Tomme de Vallee at their restaurant or cafe has said "he just showed up one day, WITH samples!" This may be the secret to success – winning customers one bite at a time.

niche

Consumer demand for specialty dairy is on the rise. The Cowichan Region has a limited specialty dairy sector, so Cory is part of a market that has high demand and low supply. In the consumer survey, consumers were asked to list three Cowichan Region products they wish they could purchase, or purchase more of. The top response was milk and cheese.



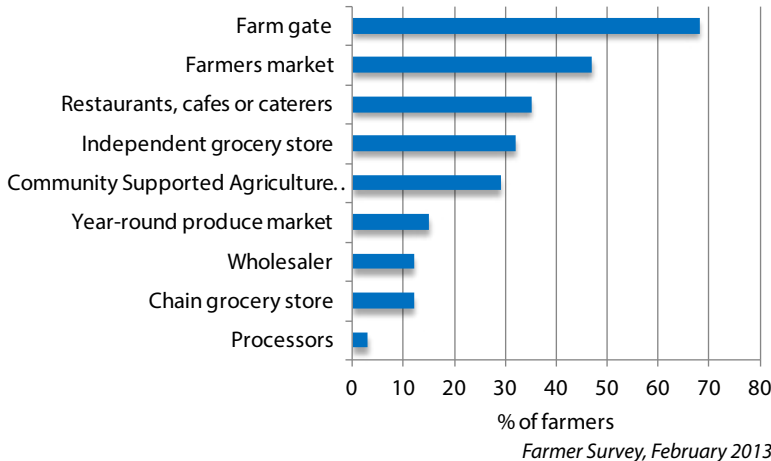
export + food security

The BC Ministry of Agriculture’s 2011 Export Highlights identifies the top agri-foods exported in a one to twenty five ranking by monetary value of the export. Many of the products listed are grown or produced in the Cowichan Region, including blueberries, baked goods, pork, tomatoes, peppers, chocolate and cocoa preparations, cattle, cherries, coffee and tea, and poultry. The top five BC export markets in 2011 were the United States, Japan, China, Hong Kong, and South Korea. Over 80% of farms in the Cowichan Region are considered small to medium scale (less than 28 hectares), of which nearly half are less than 4 hectares.¹² The scale of production in the Cowichan Region at this time is such that producers cannot access these markets, and are in fact focused on improving their access to local markets.

survey results

Of the 39 farmers who participated in the online survey, seventeen have farms smaller than five acres, nine have between five and nine acres, nine have ten to sixty-nine acres, and four have greater than 130 acres. 64% cited proximity to their farm as being a very influential factor of where they sell their products. 67% cited the connection to customers as being a very influential factor of where they sell their products. When asked at which three markets they would most prefer to increase sales, the top three results were farm gate, farmers’ market, and restaurants.

figure 9: markets farmers would most prefer to increase sales at



When these results are viewed as a whole, it correlates to the regional trend of small to medium scale farming, with a continued strong focus on selling at local markets, strengthening the local economy.

economic development cowichan

According to Economic Development Cowichan (EDC), export of agricultural products from the Cowichan Region is limited, and is currently focused on the export of secondary products. The EDC takes an active role in promoting regional products, by providing access to larger markets across Vancouver Island, the mainland, other provinces, the U.S., and abroad. It is recognized that for most producers, there is a lot of room for growth within regional markets.

For any producer or processor looking to expand into the export market, the first step is to contact Kathy Lachman, the Business Development Officer at EDC. Kathy can guide producers through the steps that can be taken to access broader markets, from having Cowichan products displayed by the EDC at trade shows, to networking with BC in-market representatives in Asia.

food security

Since the advent of the 2007 Cowichan Food Security Plan, food security in the Cowichan Region has become a stronger community focus. The development of this plan initiated the formation in 2008 of a Cowichan Food Security Coalition, whose mandate is to monitor the status of food security in the Cowichan Region, and to implement the Food Security Plan’s recommendations.

By 2009, the Cowichan Food Security Plan’s steering committee created and updated The Cowichan Food Charter, which is a statement of values and principles that guide decision making and orient council policy towards food security. Signing the Charter is a statement of support to the development of a sustainable and socially just local food system. All local levels of government signed on and adopted the Charter including: Member of Parliament for Nanaimo-

for more information contact:

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Business Development Officer
phone: 250-746-7880 ext 248
email: atklachman@cprd.bc.ca

actions recommended by the Cowichan Food Security Plan:

- 1. Develop and promote the Cowichan Food Charter
- 2. Organize educational opportunities for the residents of Cowichan to kick-start household-level food production and processing
- 3. Encourage gardening and other food production activities at the individual, household, and community levels
- 4. Establish a food security research program to identify ways of increasing food security
- 5. Advocate for policies that enhance food security, and lobby against policies that undermine it
- 6. Develop a plan to support local farmers

Cowichan, Minister of the Legislative Assembly for Cowichan Valley, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, The Municipality of North Cowichan, The City of Duncan, the Town of Ladysmith, and The Town of Lake Cowichan. Other notable signatories include: the Cowichan Valley Regional District Economic Development Commission, the Cowichan Valley Regional District Environment Commission, Transition Cowichan and Malahat First Nation.

In 2010 the Cowichan Agriculture Plan identified a food security and food self sufficiency strategic direction, “To develop the local agricultural industry to the point that it can produce 45% of the food consumed within the Cowichan Valley Regional District but to do so in a manner that does not diminish the character and environment of the community.”¹³

The 45% target was based on a 2006 BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands study, which determined 0.524 hectares are required to produce a healthy diet for one person. Given the 2006 population of the Cowichan Region, only 44.5% of the required agricultural land is available (28.6% was being farmed as of 2006; the rest would have to be brought back into farming production). With these numbers, it becomes clear that it may not be feasible to increase exports as one objective would have to be sacrificed. Either the community aims for food self-sufficiency, or our community would import food and export our locally grown products.

The 2012 Report by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food made significant statements regarding Canadian food security. “A thriving small-scale farming sector is essential to local food systems, which food policy councils and localities throughout Canada now seek to strengthen. Local food systems can deliver considerable health and ecological benefits by increasing access to fresh and nutritious foods to children in schools, underserved urban and Northern remote communities, and older persons living in long-term care homes, among others. Local food systems benefit local farmers, with strong multiplier effects on the local economy.”¹⁴

This positive response to local food self-sufficiency was juxtaposed with ongoing “concerns about the general direction of agricultural policies. Since the 1950s, Canada has been moving to large-scale, input-intensive modes of production, leading to increasingly unsustainable farming practices and higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions, soil contamination, and erosion of biodiversity...Export-

led policies in agriculture have resulted in increased concentration, vertical integration, and buyer consolidation in the agri-foods sector. Between 1988 and 2007, the number of farms decreased by 25%.”¹⁵

looking outward

The Cowichan Region is an example of a developing local food system benefiting farmers, consumers, and the regional economy. As producers scale-up to meet demand, more Cowichan Products will make it to the larger markets in Victoria, Nanaimo, and to the mainland. Some producers, both primary and secondary, already access these markets, but have plenty of room for growth within these markets. For Cowichan Region Producers, the EDC is a great place to start in seeking support to access broader markets.



a path forward

As production and demand for local food rises in the Cowichan Region, there is an increasing need for connections between farmers and purchasers. *Growing Connections* is a starting point; however, larger projects are also happening right now, and many more are on the horizon.

Food Hubs are emerging as success stories of rebuilt regional food systems across North America, and now there is discussion, research, and planning for the creation of a food hub in the Cowichan Region. *Imagine a facility where farmers can store, aggregate, and process their products, and purchasers can have easy access to local food year-round.*

On-line marketplaces have been sprouting up in many communities, making buying and selling in the local food market more convenient. CGC continues investigating the feasibility of an on-line marketplace for the Cowichan Region. *Imagine a website where farmers can post product information, and purchasers can browse and place orders from multiple farms.*

Farmers' co-ops have grown to be a successful solution to increasing local food in the marketplace, and in 2013, a new farmers' co-op, Farmship Growers Co-operative, was formed in the Cowichan Region. *Imagine farmers sharing resources and skills to increase the economic viability of small-scale farming and bring community values back into the food system.*

Farmers' Market Coupon programs provide low income families and seniors with financial support to shop at farmers' markets, and educational support to develop cooking skills. CGC and the Duncan City Square Market Society are working together to deliver this program to Cowichan Region residents. *Imagine a local food system that helps all people participate in the local food supply chain regardless of income.*

Health organizations are allocating funding to help build our local food system, as demonstrated by the Vancouver Island Health Authority, who provides funding to regional organizations to operate food security programs and activities. *Imagine a national health strategy that recognizes that the health of the community starts in the farmers' fields.*

The *Growing Connections* research team would like to give a heartfelt thank you to everyone that made this publication possible. *Growing Connections* is a testament to the dedication of many farmers, chef, purchasers, and consumers wishing to see the Cowichan Region food system flourish. Thank you to all that shared their time and knowledge in surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Thank you for your willingness to share your hard-learned insights, and your commitment to building collaboration across the food supply chain.

We have a lot to celebrate in this abundant "Warmland" and we look forward to the realization of the vision of the Cowichan Food Charter: a thriving local food culture that celebrates eating locally and eating together that will support us in living healthier, happier, and richer lives - connected to the land, to growers, and to each other.



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