

## Farm-land as Food-land

Submitted by Zeb King

The gentrification of farmland threatens our food supply. Housing on farmland increases the valuation of the land, and increasingly larger estate homes are being constructed.

People wanting land for farming and not for housing face few choices and must buy an already existing house on farmland as well as the farm, which may make the investment too costly. How can someone who is already farming but needs a bit more acreage purchase yet another home when they may only need the farmland.

Only wealthy people are able to purchase pasture or cropland in this case, forcing farmers to lease land from the “landed class” rather than buy it. This also raises troubling questions about land maintenance. Arguably, someone who leases land has less incentive to replenish soils and ensure long-term maintenance.

Rising land values are threatening the viability of farming, but only because we allow this scenario to take place. Communities have the choice to protect their interests in the food supply or not.

*The Land Conservancy of BC* has done great work providing suggestions to help Central Saanich improve the viability of farming. The leasing of municipal land for farming is one suggestion. Newman Heritage Farm provides an example where the non-heritage area could be leased as a “demonstration farm” education centre for the community. Haliburton Community Organic Farm in Saanich already does this. In that case, land is owned by the District of Saanich and is leased to the Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society, which opens the farm to public involvement.

Farmland is food-land and to protect our food source we must go beyond marketing campaigns and start to address the higher valuations on land for residential estate and other non-farm uses.

Zeb King

Councillor with the District of Central Saanich

*Zeb King can be found at JJ's Café in Brentwood Bay on Fridays at 7:00PM for general open discussions with citizens.*

In an effort to address these issues, Central Saanich convened a Central Saanich Farmland Economic Viability Review Committee this spring. This committee consisted of Central Saanich Staff, Councillors, local farmers, the Peninsula Agriculture Commission, the Land Conservancy, CR-FAIR, and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The main goal of the committee was to create, under the auspices of updating the Official Community Plan (OCP), a nurturing environment for supporting sustainable agriculture in Central Saanich. The Committee worked together to create a report that provided suggested recommendations and policy revisions to OCP. It also included a Central Saanich Agriculture toolkit created by the TLC to be considered for input into the OCP and ultimately feed in to the creation of an Agriculture Area Plan.

The report was accepted by Central Saanich Council and will now be utilized in the OCP review process.

[Click here to read the full report and recommendations...](#)