

Is our Farmland Growing Estates or Food in BC's Capital Region?

The high cost of land is a significant barrier to the economic viability of farming in the BC's Capital Region. With the average cost of land at more than \$100,000 per acre, it is increasingly difficult for people who want to farm to enter the industry, or for existing farmers to access more land to expand their operations. In addition, farmers who are reaching retirement or want to exit the industry are facing the difficult task of farm succession planning. What can we do to make farm land more affordable and accessible? How do we ensure farmland will be used for growing our food (not estates) today and in the future?

This question will be explored at the **“Our Farmlands, Our Foodlands, Our Future”, Forum** to be held in Sidney on November 27, 2008, at the Mary Winspear Center. The forum is designed to gather intelligence, and promote constructive solution based dialogue and action. The conference will bring together representatives from a wide range of community groups, government, academics, and industry.

The sessions on the day include:

Session 1: Creative Partnerships: Emerging Models for Farmland Access

Session 2: Focus on Farmland Trusts: The What- Why- How

Session 3: Leasing and Land Sharing Agreements: Models for Land Access

Session 4: Carrot and Stick: A look at Farm Status and Assessment Tools

Session 5: Our Regional Food Basket: Going Beyond “Farmland”

Session 6: From Ideas to Action: Farmers and Eaters taking action on Farmland issues

Session 7: Tools and Strategies for Governments

The conference closing and call to action will be led by MLA Corky Evans.

The learnings from the forum will be taken forward by participants, to the public through local media, as well as by way of presentations, toolkits, and reports to related authorities and organizations.

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Conference Registration: Karen Platt kdplatt@shaw.ca

This forum is part of the **Farmlands Project** of LifeCycles and partner groups the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable, and the Land Conservancy. It is supported by the Islands AgriFood Trust of the Agri-Food Futures Fund.

The objective of the Farmlands Project is to identify economically viable options for new and existing farmers in the Capital Regional District (CRD) to access land for agricultural production. Through information sharing and discussion, our goal is to spark collaborative actions in order to improve this access to farmland for farming within the CRD. The project has three elements:

1. Key Players Regional Meeting: On April 24, 2008 a gathering was held at Sea Cider Farm in Saanich; the *Key Players Meeting: Working Together to Tackle Farmland Issues in BC's*



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Capital Region. It brought together 30 people from government, industry, and community groups working on farmland affordability and accessibility issues in the CRD to network and share information. From this meeting we created a listserve and gleaned the following tools:

Chart 1: Resource Listing of Agencies working on Farmland Accessibility

Chart 2: Identified Strategies being employed in the CRD

Chart 3: Available Tools, Reports, and Acts of Interest

2. Farmlands and Foodlands Forum – November 27, 2008

A Forum will be held in Sidney, at the Mary Winspear Center to bring together representatives from a wide range of community groups, government, academics, and industry. The goal for the Conference is to gather intelligence, and promote dialogue and action around farmland accessibility and productivity in the CRD. In a variety of workshops, we will explore a broad range of potential approaches and solutions. Participants should leave with concrete tools and strategies for galvanizing support for local farming, improving access to our farmlands and addressing the issues affecting local food production. MLA Corky Evans, agriculture critic and a vocal advocate for BC Farmlands, will close the conference.

3. Communicating Learnings: Our Farmlands, Our Foodlands Report: A report will summarize the issues and outline the findings of the project work. This will include a description of existing and potential strategies and tools, and recommendations for actions on farmlands. This report will be disseminated to participants, relevant agencies in all sectors and interested community members through the media. As well, it will be presented to the following agencies:

- ❖ Peninsula Agriculture Commission
- ❖ CRD Board of Directors
- ❖ Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
- ❖ Agriculture Land Commission
- ❖ BC Assessment Authority
- ❖ Municipal Governments in the CRD
- ❖ Network of Food and Agriculture Researchers and Office of Community Based Research at University of Victoria
- ❖ Vancouver Island Health Authority Food Security Coordinator

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