



Putting Food And Food Policy On The Table

*A joint project of the
Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable and the
Healthy Communities Sub-Committee of the CRD Roundtable on the Environment*

CAPITAL REGION FOOD AND HEALTH ACTION PLAN (2007-2010) REPORT

May 24, 2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR) and the Capital Region Roundtable on the Environment Healthy Community Subcommittee (CRD HCSC) partnered to undertake the Putting Food and Food Policy on the Table Project 2006 and 2007. The Vision of the Project is to build greater food security in the Capital Region through broad cross-sectoral involvement in the development and implementation of a Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan.

A Regional Food and Health Action Plan is most importantly a “process in motion”, much more than a completed document signed off by an authority. The measure of its success is its ability to bring a broader sense of understanding, knowledge and capacity to regional communities and governments to create a healthier and vibrant local food system. It allows us to better utilize our local assets and expertise, bring together appropriate resources and partners, and create positive solutions to regional challenges that often cross sectors. It will also provide a framework and way for local decision makers to shape their decisions, policies, strategies, and regulations to support regional objectives for a healthy food system.

Our overarching goal is to build greater food security in the region through use of a food systems approach. The Food and Health Action Plan for the Region is grounded in this approach. This entails looking at our regional food system from seed to plate to waste, and understanding that actions to strengthen this system are interconnected. For example, when we look at strategies that build greater access to food, they must also consider ways to strengthen local agriculture. Another important foundation of our work is that we consider our progress towards food security within a development continuum, from relief and support activities (i.e. emergency food distribution), to capacity building (i.e. community kitchens), to policy development (i.e. municipal urban agriculture strategy), to building food resources and economic development (i.e. neighborhood markets and community gardens). Developing our food system is not necessarily a linear process but one that requires strategic planning, energy and investment along the continuum.

Our Process to develop a Food and Health Action Plan

- Development of a Food Charter to provide an overarching vision for food security in the region
- Two public forums to determine regional assets, challenges and opportunities
- Phase 1 Report of Findings and identification of key strategies
- Eight Working Groups to further develop the key strategies
- Draft the Regional Food and Health Action Plan
- Hold Food Matters Forum for community review and further development of actions, revise plan and final review by key partners and stakeholders
- Explore and define opportunities for the development of a Food Policy Council to steward plan implementation
- Finalization of a Regional Food and Health Action Plan 2007-2010

- Ongoing Review and monitoring through the Capital Region Food Security Assessment

We have identified three main objectives, each with key strategies and actions for the Food and Health Action Plan 2007/2010, which are in varying stages of implementation.

Recommendations for Main Objectives and Key Strategies:

1. **Maintain and expand food producing lands, farming and infrastructure in the CRD**
 - Strengthen Local Agriculture: Farmlands and Farming
 - Support Urban Agriculture
 - Build Food Processing Resources and Infrastructure
2. **Ensure equal access to healthy, culturally appropriate diets for everyone in the CRD**
 - Ensure Food Access through Building Food Resources
 - Develop Local Purchasing Policies
 - Expand Local Neighborhood Markets
3. **Develop and support education and stewardship to build food security in the CRD**
 - Support Food Agriculture and Health Education and Training
 - Develop a Regional Food Policy Council

The lead organizations in the Development of the Food and Health Action Plan:
 Lee Fuge and Greg Awai (Co-Chairs) Mike Romaine (Chair)
 Capital Region Food and Agriculture CRD Roundtable on the Environment
 Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR) Healthy Communities Subcommittee

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Food Security, Food Charter and a Food and Health Action Plan

A community enjoys food security when all people, at all times, have access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable and culturally appropriate foods, produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just.

We define food security as a situation in which:

1. Everyone has assured access to adequate, appropriate and personally acceptable food in a way that does not damage self respect;

2. People are able to earn a living wage by growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing and serving food;
3. The quality of land, air and water are maintained and enhanced for future generations; and
4. Food is celebrated as central to community and cultural integrity
As defined by the BC Food Systems Network

Local citizens, public health professionals, community organizations, and governments are facing working together to address food security in the Capital Regional District (CRD).

The Facts:

- There is only a three-day supply of fresh food in our food stores
- Significant fuel and environmental costs and losing nutritional value
- Economic pressures are forcing arable land in the region out of agricultural production and we are losing our food resources
- The average age of farmers is 58, they are leaving farming faster than they are being replaced.
- Global warming creates a great deal of uncertainty for food production worldwide due to a rise in sea levels, droughts, and changing rainfall patterns and water availability.
- Our food system is energy intensive, our ability to produce, process, and distribute food is limited by quantity, availability, and price of various energy sources
- 50,000 people in Capital Region are living in poverty and of these 1 in 6 are children, low income is the greatest contributing factor to household food insecurity and since 2002 we have seen nearly 30-50% rise in use of city food banks
- Not only has Health Canada released figures that close to 40% of adults are either overweight or obese (attributed directly to diet and lifestyle), the incidence of Childhood overweight and obesity in British Columbia is an issue nearing crisis proportions affecting 30% of teen-aged boys and girls. A previously unheard of six percent of Canadian children under the age of six are now classified as obese. Overweight or obese between the ages 6-to-11 and 12-to-17 have more than doubled over the last 25 years.

At the same time this region has an abundance of regional assets

- There is excellent potential to grow food due to available and protected land, excellent climate, and a good supply of quality water. As well we have a vibrant and talented farming community, as well as young people who want to farm, and considerable training and support programs for new farmers.
- We have an active Island Chef Collaborative that supports local agriculture and food processors and works actively to educate its consumer base
- We have seen a growing interest in, and expansion of small neighborhood markets bring fresh local food into neighborhoods
- There is a growing recognition and support for urban agriculture and the many benefits it brings communities beyond providing food. The City of Victoria and

Township of Esquimalt have passed resolutions supporting urban agriculture and the Municipality of Saanich has Community Gardens Policy

- Interest in local food is growing due to health, environmental, and cultural interest, as well as culinary tourism.
- There is a growing awareness around the link between our diets and health and many educational and training programs to support more learning
- Vancouver Island Health Authority Community Food Action Initiative funds and supports food planning and food security
- We have a broad range of emergency food provision and food resources in our community

Just as transportation, housing and health services are important planning issues, to have a healthy community, vibrant economy and quality of life in the region; we need a plan around food that works for today and for the future. To address these challenges and to better coordinate and build on our local assets; a broad range of groups, individuals, organizations, businesses, health, education and government representatives have participated in the development of a regional vision, framework and plan of action to advance food security and healthy living in the Capital Region.

The initiative is called Putting Food and Food Policy on the Table, and is being led by The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and the Round Table on the Environment Healthy Communities Subcommittee (RTE HCSC). This project is focusing on the adoption of a **Regional Food Charter**, the development of a **Regional Food and Health Action Plan** as well as the establishment of a formal **Food Policy Council** as a coordinating body. This work is an evolutionary participative planning process that works on building key interconnected strategies. The effort is focused on “planning and learning” but is accompanied by “doing and action”.

Foundations for Collaborative action:

A Food Charter provides a vision and set of principles to guide and inform strategic planning, policy and program development and implementation efforts toward food security and community development. In 1976 Canada signed the United Nations Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, which includes “the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger”. This national commitment to food security led to the gradual development of Food Charters in a variety of jurisdictions (e.g. municipalities and provinces) across the country.

A Regional Food and Health Action Plan is a “roadmap” to help us work together in a coordinated way as individuals, communities, organizations, government staff and elected officials, public institutions, and the private sector taking actions and decisions that work towards our vision for regional food security set out in the Food Charter.

A Regional Food and Health Action Plan is most importantly a “process in motion”, much more than a completed document signed off by an authority. The measure of its success is its ability to bring a broader sense of understanding, knowledge and capacity to regional communities and governments to create a healthier and vibrant local food system. It allows us to better utilize our local assets and expertise, bring together

appropriate resources and partners, and create positive solutions to regional challenges that often cross sectors. It will also provide a framework and way for local decision makers to shape their decisions, policies, strategies, and regulations to support regional objectives for a healthy food system.

Our overarching goal is to build greater food security in the region through use of a food systems approach. The Food and Health Action Plan for the Region is grounded in this approach. This entails looking at our regional food system from seed to plate to waste, and understanding that actions to strengthen this system are interconnected. For example, when we look at strategies that build greater access to food, they must also consider ways to strengthen local agriculture. Another important foundation of our work is that we consider our progress towards food security within a development continuum, from relief and support activities (i.e. emergency food distribution), to capacity building (i.e. community kitchens), to policy development (i.e. municipal urban agriculture strategy), to building food resources and economic development (i.e. neighborhood markets and community gardens). Developing our food system is not necessarily a linear process but one that requires strategic planning, energy and investment along the continuum.

The achievement of local food security cannot be done solely with a focus on food and agriculture. It is integrally linked to the advancement of other social, environment, and economic goals of sustainability such as healthy people, environmental protection, social equity, recognition of traditional and cultural values, viable local economies, livable incomes, and community cohesion and empowerment. For this reason the knowledge, experience and participation from diverse sectors is integral to the process.

1.2 Foundations and Building the Charter and Food and Health Action Plan

We have been working on a 10-point plan to build and implement a food and health action Plan:

- ❑ Development of a Food Charter to provide an overarching vision for food security in the region
- ❑ Two public forums to determine regional assets, challenges and opportunities
- ❑ Phase 1 Report of Findings and identification of key strategies
- ❑ Eight Working Groups to further develop the key strategies
- ❑ Draft the Regional Food and Health Action Plan
- ❑ Hold Food Matters Forum for community review and further development of actions, revise plan and final review by key partners and stakeholders
- ❑ Explore and define opportunities for the development of a Food Policy Council to steward plan implementation
- ❑ Finalization of a Regional Food and Health Action Plan 2007-2010
- ❑ Planning for Ongoing Review and monitoring (possibly through the Capital Region Food Security Assessment)

This current draft document of the plan is not exhaustive, and incomplete. It is a starting point from which we can take stock of our learning and planning to date and move forward getting clearer on strategies, actions, and targets we want to achieve, on many levels.

Background on the Initiative

The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR) has been working for the past decade in the Capital Region. It is a roundtable made up of a broad cross section of interests in a healthy food system (from seed to plate). CRFAIR's mission is to increase knowledge about and bring about positive change in the food and agriculture system within the Capital Region by expanding awareness and communication, bringing people together, supporting program initiatives, and actively advocating for change.

CRFAIR has worked over the last year two years to build an understanding and support for a Local Food Charter. This Food Charter for the Capital Region is meant to be both a vision for Food Security in our region and a guiding framework for what we as individuals, institutions, businesses, and local government need to do and support in order to achieve Food Security in our Region. CRFAIR continues to work through public forums and meetings with local groups and committees to build understanding around the need for a Food Charter and also to get input into what our Food Charter will say.

Another piece of our work is to establish a baseline in terms of "Where are we at" in terms of Food Security for the region. CRFAIR conducted a study and published the Baseline Food Security Assessment for the Capital Region in 2004. The idea was to use this report and indicators within it to measure our progress towards (or away from) greater food security for the Capital Region. This year CRFAIR is doing a follow up study to expand the information and get an update on the indicators. This information will be a backdrop to the current initiatives.

It was identified in the process that of critical importance was for this planning work to be linked to regional health, municipal and regional decisionmaking, policy, programs, and practices. It was serendipitous that the CRD Roundtable on the Environment had established a Healthy Communities Subcommittee to look at the possibilities for establishing a Healthy Communities Framework for decisionmaking in the CRD. A partnership was forged with the intent on focusing on food security within the framework of decisionmaking for healthy communities.

What has evolved is a coordinated and collaborative process working together to establish a Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan. To this aim, they have engaged knowledge, experience and participation from diverse sectors in a project called Putting Food and Food Policy on the Table.

Putting Food and Food Policy on the Table Project

As part of the Community Food Action initiative sponsored by the Vancouver Island Health Authority, 2005/2006, *Putting Food and Food Policy on the Table (phase 1)* set out to:

- ❑ Better link community needs and initiatives with local decision making and build supportive governance frameworks
- ❑ Bring a wider circle of community members and decision makers into the process
- ❑ Identify the key action planning areas and related action planning goals that would be the "Base" from which to begin a Food and Health Action Plan for the Capital Region in 2006

As part of this process two working sessions were held on March 6, and March 13, 2006 to discuss building food security in the Capital Region and identify key actions that could be taken both at the community level and by governments. These two meetings were designed to build on a history of community collaboration and work and be the preliminary planning meetings that would build the foundations of a Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan developed jointly by community and local governments in 2006 (phase 2). The involvement of the CRD Roundtable on the Environments Healthy Communities Subcommittee, in particular, brought the process closer to local government as well as involved a greater number of local government decision makers in the dialogue.

At the same time many other very valuable activities unfolded in our region. The vision is to ensure that these processes are connected and integrated as we move forward.

Phase 2 of the project was launched in 2006. It moved to take the learnings from phase 1 and conduct an evolving participatory process to create the Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan

The Goal of the process: To facilitate the creation of a Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan and to work with a broad range of community groups, governments and other stake holders to support the development and implementation of this plan.

Objectives:

- ❑ To continue to build a wider circle of community voices and decision makers into all aspects of the process of developing a regional Food and Health Action Plan.
- ❑ To support related community based initiatives through the process
- ❑ To better link community needs and initiatives with local decision making and build supportive governance frameworks

In order for a plan to resonate with and meet the needs of diverse sectors as well as consider our food system holistically, it was, and still is, paramount to involve a broad range of stakeholders working together and independently in a multifaceted yet integrated process. Many voices have been little heard at the table to date and attention is being put to this as we move forward.

In addition it was heard clearly that people do not want just “talk” about the issues but to “get going”, so the focus of the work has been on fleshing out the ideas, getting the right people at the table and getting activities underway.

The next phase of the process involved taking the learnings and priorities identified in phase one and naming **Main Objectives** with **Key Strategies** for each objective. It was also important to identify **Key Actions** in each of the strategy areas.

The “Working Group” Approach

Our process was to take each Key Strategy and identify the leadership necessary to move the dialogue further. In each of these areas a Champion was named as well as a liaison from CRFAIR or the HCSC. Through reaching out to the community for leadership we garnered a greater pool of knowledge and participation. Through continued involvement and checking in between the liaisons we focused on the interconnections between the working groups. Each of the Champions working with the project advisory and Liaisons developed a series of working group sessions where they brought key people and organizations together to boil down the opportunities and challenges and put together a list of priorities, actions, possible pilots and identify who would need to be involved.

The findings of the eight working session follow in Section 1 and form the bulk of the First Draft of a Food and Health Action Plan for the Region. Our next steps will be to take these findings to a Community Forum, which invites core partners and stakeholders to review the plan as presented and provide additional input. This input will be integrated including more specific information on targets and monitoring into a Food and Health Plan for the Region 2007 to 2010 and put forward for final review.

The plan will not then sit on a shelf. In phase three of the project, with support already in place from CRFAIR, CRD RTE, Vancouver Foundation and Victoria Foundation, we will be conducting an education and implementation phase to “take action” based on the recommendations put forward in the plan-on many levels. Part of this process will be to continue to build a vehicle, buy-in and resources necessary for ongoing stewardship of the plan and food security work in the Capital Region.

Section 2 OUR VISION

2.1 Food Charter Process

What is a food charter for the CRD?

The Capital Region Food Charter presents a community vision for a just and sustainable food system. It provides principles and guides to action that could become part of a coordinated regional and municipal food policy. It seeks to engage local government in understanding our region’s food system, acknowledging and supporting agriculture and food in municipal planning, and participating in creation of a regional food council.

The fulfillment of a Capital Region Food Charter relies on citizens and food system sectors participating directly in and finding creative solutions to some of the local urban

food challenges, promoting food security measures in their homes, their work places and their community, and in this process strengthening community awareness and involvement. Citizen action, supported by local government decision making and policies that reflect a commitment to a Regional Food Charter, will move us closer to achieving regional food security.

Why develop a food charter?

Food charters are most commonly created and pursued, by food policy councils or other groups that represent different sectors of the community's food system, to plan for agriculture and food and to find creative solutions to urban food challenges. CR-FAIR's 2004 report "A Baseline Assessment of Food Security in British Columbia's Capital Region" provides a snapshot of our regional food system that notes increasing consumer demand for local products from farms, farmers' markets and local stores and restaurants, and significant interest e.g. from schools in supporting healthy eating. Yet we experience significant food system challenges. It's time to take joint action to plan for and achieve a just and sustainable food system in our region.

2.2 Capital Region Food Charter (Draft 16)

Our vision is a sustainable and secure local food and agriculture system that provides safe, sufficient, culturally accepted, nutritious food accessible to everyone in the Capital Region through dignified means.

Principles We Share for Food and Health in the Capital Region:

Food is a Building Block of Health:

- A healthy population requires healthy food which in turn requires a healthy food system
- Safe, nutritious food is a basic right, and everyone must have access to sufficient nutritious foods in every neighborhood in the Capital Region.

Localized Food Systems Support a Vibrant Local Economy

- Food is an integral part of the economy of the Capital Region and surrounding area and a localized food system brings the maximum of benefits to the region
- Farmers are an integral part of our food system and need fair compensation for their vital role in producing food, stewarding the land, and for contributing to rural character and viewsapes.

Planning For Seven Generations

- Local farmland is a precious resource that must be protected to ensure long-term food production capacity (this includes foodlands, watersheds, wildlife and green space).
- Food must be produced and distributed in a way that is environmentally sustainable and socially just, looking to produce the majority of our food products close to home
- We must respect and protect the right of communities to share traditional knowledge and genetic diversity (seeds) as they are cornerstones to our ability to feed ourselves.

Healthy Food Systems are Integral to a Resilient Community

- Food security contributes to the physical, mental, cultural, spiritual and emotional wellbeing of our region's residents.
- Food brings people together in the celebration of family and community, it also strengthens links between diverse cultures and communities.
- Domestic and local ownership in our food supply is critical for the region's future
- Healthy local food systems involve the active stewardship of all sectors of the community (public, private, and voluntary).

Working towards these principles is the responsibility of individuals, organizations, business and community associations, institutions, authorities, and local and regional governments in the Capital Region. We are doing this by working together on a Food and Health Action Plan that will work to:

- 1. Maintain and expand food producing lands, farming and infrastructure in the CRD**
- 2. Ensure equal access to healthy, culturally appropriate diets for everyone in the CRD**
- 3. Develop and support education and stewardship to build food security in the CRD**

In the Capital Region we honor Canada's commitments to global and local food security. **This includes the *United Nations Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights* specifying the right of everyone to adequate food, and *Canada's Action Plan for Food Security*. The Action Plan states: "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" and "food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."**

Therefore, to develop and promote food security in the Capital Regional we will:

- Promote and support the right of all residents to Healthy food.
- Advocate for income, employment, housing, and transportation policies that support access to food.
- Promote eating locally grown food as a way to increase consumption of fresh foods, reduce "food miles" and increase local economic stability.
- Protect productive farmland in our Region.
- Ensure appropriate quality and supply of water for agricultural and home use.
- Promote convenient access to healthy and affordable foods in neighborhoods.
- Work with member municipalities, the Vancouver Island Health Authority, and others to promote healthy food purchasing practices that support local farm and food businesses.
- Promote partnerships and programs that support rural-urban food links through farmers' markets, the Fresh Fruit and Veggie Box and other rural-urban initiatives.
- Support incentives for agriculture to enhance environmental values.
- Support and encourage urban agriculture through community gardens, backyard and rooftop gardens, and city fruit trees.
- Support strategies for regional waste disposal and composting systems that recycle nutrients for regional food production.
- Support training and income-generating programs that promote food security within a community economic development model.
- Support health and nutrition promotion strategies that work to encourage and increase the health status of all members of the population.

- Work proactively to support the Regional Food and Health Action Plan as well as support regular community food security assessment on the Capital Region's progress towards food security.

Everyone in the Capital Region has a role in creating a healthy local food system.

These actions will be achieved by the choices of individuals and the actions both alone and through working together of local and regional governments, community-based organizations, community associations, farm organizations, Aboriginal peoples, resident groups, business organizations, trade unions, educational and health institutions and other levels of government.

Sign-on

The Vision of this Charter will live and breathe through individual and collaborative support and action.

On behalf of _____ ,
 _____ support the vision of the Regional Food Charter
 and will commit to the attached plan to support the Food Charter Principles.
 Signed this _____ day, _____ month _____ year.

This proposal for a Capital Region Food Charter was developed through the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable with the involvement of the following groups: BC Government and Service Employees' Union; Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria; GroundWorks Learning Centre; Island Farmers' Alliance; LifeCycles Project Society; Ministry of Agriculture & Lands; Small Scale Food Processor Association; The Land Conservancy; Vancouver Island Health Authority, and Canadian Cancer Society.

For more information, and to be involved in this exciting initiative, contact CR-FAIR via (250) 383-6166 or email info@communitycouncil.ca.

From our 2004 Baseline Assessment of Food Security in British Columbia's Capital Region (see www.communitycouncil.ca), we offer the following definitions:

Food security: In a food secure community, the growing, processing and distribution of healthy, safe food is economically viable, socially just, environmentally friendly and regionally based.

Food system: The food system is the path of food from field to plate, including production, distribution, marketing, preparation, consumption and disposal.

Section 3 F OOD AND HEALTH ACTION PLAN

Our Goal is to build and maintain food security in the Capital Region. The vision and principles behind this goal is outlined in the Regional Food Charter.

The way that we intend to do this is through three Main Objectives:

- 1. Maintain and expand food producing lands, farming and infrastructure in the CRD**
- 2. Ensure equal access to healthy, culturally appropriate diets for everyone in the CRD**
- 3. Develop and support education and stewardship to build food security in the CRD**

In each of these areas there are strategies and actions that will be taken in some cases by individuals, others by decision and policy makers and still others that will require the participation of a wide range of actors. Some actions will be in the form of direct support, others through building capacity, through policy development and also economic and food resource development. Below we have outlined our priority action strategies for each objective.

3.2 PRIORITY ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Maintain and expand food producing lands, farming and infrastructure in the CRD

- Strengthen Local Agriculture: Farmlands and Farming
- Support Urban Agriculture
- Build Food Processing Resources and Infrastructure

2. Ensure equal access to healthy, culturally appropriate diets for everyone in the CRD

- Ensure Food Access through Building Food Resources
- Develop Local Purchasing Policies
- Expand Local Neighborhood Markets

3. Develop and support education and stewardship to build food security in the CRD

- Support Food Agriculture and Health Education and Training
- Develop a Regional Food Policy Council

The following information is a 2 page summary of these Strategies and the Key Actions that were identified in phase 1 by the Champions and working groups. Following this is a one or two page summary of the findings of each Strategic Area and the recommendations put forward by the working session participants. Finally, attached in Appendix C is the full report submitted by the leaders in each area that outlines the Issue, Key Priorities, Opportunities for Action as well as suggestions for pilot projects.

3.3 Summary Chart of Main Objectives, Strategies and Key Actions

1. Maintain and expand food producing lands, farming and infrastructure in the CRD

1.1 Strengthen Local Agriculture: Farmlands and Farming

1. Secure farmland and long-term support for agriculture through land use planning tools (i.e., Regional Growth Strategy, Official Community Plans, Agricultural Area Plans, edge planning, restrict exclusions from the ALR, tax reforms and alternative financing, ownership and governance for 'community farms'; work with land trust tools and succession, estate planning, and covenants)
2. Put bylaws, zoning and policies in place that encourage local marketing (adequate signage, facilities, and business license policies to enable direct farm sales, pocket markets and farmers markets)
3. Research and revise practices and zoning bylaws to increase farm viability – attract new, trained farmers; diversify farming/processing practices (housing for farmers, transportation, farm buildings, farm-related value-added processing); and improve access to farm labour.

1.2 Support Urban Agriculture

1. Develop supportive Municipal policy and practice for Urban Agriculture (Municipal strategies, land access, zoning for markets and supportive bylaws for growing, processing and marketing food in cities, linkages to social/economic/environmental planning)
2. Build awareness and capacity in communities and individuals to practice and expand Urban Agriculture through education, programs

1.3 Build Food Processing and Distribution Infrastructure

1. Bring together small and medium scale food processors to create a regional group and discuss opportunities, challenges, and ways to pool resources to develop and access essential facilities and services (e.g. shared transportation, mobile abattoirs, shared kitchens)
2. Bring together local processors with retailers, distributors and large food purchase institutions (such as universities and colleges) to discuss practical ways of increasing supply volumes and addressing distribution issues
3. Launch a general information campaign to raise awareness about and identify local food processors to increase access to their products

2. Ensure equal access to healthy culturally appropriate diets for everyone in the CRD

2.1 Build Access to Healthy Food

1. Build knowledge, understanding and action around food access issues and food resource assets at neighborhood, community, and regional levels through activities such as neighborhood based food action planning and regional forums
2. Undertake planning and policy development that encourages food access, healthy food distribution, urban agriculture, traditional food gathering practices, housing affordability, and community economic development related to food resources
3. Forge links with local food producers through direct purchases by relief food distribution agencies and also the development of distribution networks and neighborhood markets across the CRD

2.2 Develop Local Food Purchasing Policies and Practices

1. Identify the wholesalers/distributors and contractors who provide prepared meals and determine current purchasing practices and quantity/types of local food
2. Host meetings with wholesalers/distributors, food service providers and farmers as well as other institutional purchasers to inspire, discuss issues and solve problems
3. Research and produce model food purchasing policies and possible resolutions that could be used by politicians/boards to influence food purchasing policies

2.3 Expand Local Markets

1. Support neighborhood/community groups to develop markets and link market development to food action planning in neighborhoods

2. Continue liaison and work with Municipalities and VIHA to provide supportive policy and bylaws in terms of locations, business licenses and health and safety issues to support market development

3. Develop and support education and stewardship to build food security in the CRD

3.1 Strengthen Food and Health Education and Training

1. Engage a wide range of social marketing, educational campaigns and programs to raise the awareness of the relationship between locally produced food and food security and health, and undertake a collaborative campaign with consistent key messages.
2. Continue comprehensive mapping of regional education and training assets and make this information widely available and link to and complement other data bases (VIHA) share information resources/ listings with local, regional and provincial government bodies
3. Coordinate and support collaborative Education and/or Training Initiatives

3.2 Development of a Coordinating Body

1. Build support, understanding and dialogue around the role and mandate for a coordinating body
2. Determine the best structure, role and home for a "Food Policy" or "Food Systems" Council
3. Develop legitimacy and support in the form of resources and commitment

3.3 Action Strategy Summaries

I. Strengthen Local Agriculture: Farmland and Farmers

Champions: Kevin Brown, Ramona Scott, Liaison Paula Hesje

Background

Maintaining a productive, sustainable land base and farm economy are critical to enhancing local food security. The external factors influencing local agriculture are complex and difficult to influence locally or regionally. These factors include regional population growth and the increasing demand for developable land, provincial and federal farm policy (e.g., the quota system), global economic forces, and the general aging of the Canadian population. Factors affecting local agriculture range from environmental (climate, soils, water availability and its effect on farm production) to social and economic.

That said, in developing a Regional Food and Health Action Plan, we think it important to focus on agriculture-related issues that can be addressed locally. In preparing suggestions for priority strategies and actions we reviewed existing agriculture planning documents and consulted the Peninsula Agricultural Commission, members of the Direct Farm Marketing Association, Farm Folk/City Folk, and other farmers in the CRD.

Priority Strategies

- Undertake education- and awareness-building activities around the benefits and contributions of local agriculture to encourage “buying local” and to help minimize conflict between farmers and non-farmer neighbors.
- Increase understanding/appreciation of local agriculture by local planners and municipal decision makers and build their consistent commitment to help make agriculture work.
- Develop local Agricultural Area Plans (AAPs) and ensure consistency of Official Community Plans (OCPs) and bylaws with the revised ALC Act (passed in 2002)
- Strengthen references to agriculture in updating the Regional Growth Strategy.
- Support strategies that support affordable land access for entry-level farmers to operate economically viable farm businesses.
- Increase understanding of the land’s current agricultural suitability, and the measures that could be taken to increase productivity; undertake strategies that increase food production and farm viability (i.e., farmer training programs, long-term tenures for farm businesses, development of infrastructure to support local food production, ‘buy local’ education campaigns, and neighborhood market development).

Key Actions/Opportunities Identified

- Secure farmland and long-term support for agriculture through land use planning tools (i.e., revise Official Community Plans (OCPs), develop Agricultural Area Plans (AAPs), apply edge planning techniques, strengthen vision of agriculture in revised Regional Growth Strategy, restrict exclusions from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), lobby for tax reforms and alternative financing, ownership and governance for ‘community farms’, work with land trust tools such as succession & estate planning, bequests, and covenants.).
- Support community farm tenure alternatives: cooperative models, leases, low-footprint housing for farmers, land trusts to secure farmland, long-term protection tools such as conservation covenants, stewardship agreements, and whole farm planning.
- Put bylaws, zoning and policies in place that encourage local marketing (i.e., ensure bylaws allow adequate signage, facilities, and business license policies to enable pocket markets and farmers markets).
- Revise zoning bylaws to support on-farm labour and diversifying farm related value added business (enable buildings and housing, food processing facilities).
- Explore enhancement of public transit (BC Transit) at key times for transporting local farm labour.
- Encourage agri-tourism but ensure it is tied to and does not diminish agricultural production.
- Recycle treated effluent and food waste; look to maximize utilization of bio-solids from planned sewage treatment facilities to increase availability of organic matter for farm soils.
- Minimize costs of CRD water for agriculture; determine aquifer carrying-capacity
- Re-evaluate system of water distribution for agriculture.
- Explore opportunities to pay farmers for ecological goods and services.

Actions Taken

- Increased understanding, information-sharing and relationship-building between food and agriculture organizations
- Deeper analysis of the issues and discussion of possible strategies and actions

Possible Pilot Projects

We did not conceive a specific pilot project that could test all or most of the recommendations that arose from this exercise. Some of the actions suggested have already been implemented in different situations. Community Farms Alliance (FarmFolk City Folk, *TLC*The Land Conservancy, and eco-farm housing developers) are currently researching existing and potential alternatives to farmland protection, farmer tenures, small-scale and cooperative community farm business models. This information will be made available to the agriculture and food communities on the Internet as soon as it is available.

II. Support Urban Agriculture

Champion Sonya Chandler, Liaison Linda Geggie

Background

Urban Agriculture (UA) encompasses a wide range of activities involving the production, processing, marketing and distribution of food in urban areas. Promoting and supporting UA has been identified as a core strategy in building food security in the region. Not only can UA contribute significantly to food production and distribution, it has a host of social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits. UA has been identified as a strategy to enhance food security for the working poor, homeless and others who have limited access to adequate nutrition in their diets. UA can contribute to economic development, support poverty alleviation, improve social inclusion, increase biodiversity and habitat, recycle organic matter, reduce waste, recycle and absorb grey water and precipitation, be a venue for recreation, opportunity for education and learning, encourage cultural exchange, and play a role in crime prevention and creating safer neighborhoods, as well as improving emergency preparedness.

Key Priorities

- Better understand current and possible contributions of UA to regional food security
- Raise awareness about, and create a supportive environment for UA (policy and planning, public perception)
- Develop supportive municipal policy and practice to support UA (municipal strategies, land access, zoning for markets and supportive bi-laws for growing, processing and marketing food in cities, linkages to social/economic/environmental planning)
- Build capacity in communities and individuals to practice and expand UA through education, programs, and ensuring a dedicated land base and related infrastructure

Key Actions/Opportunities Identified

- Facilitate collaborative development of UA strategies with identified achievable goals for municipalities looking at the City of Victoria as a pilot and share with other municipalities
- Build Urban Agriculture Advisory Group
- Create student research support in partnership with the University of Victoria and Office of Community Based Research on UA
- Conduct Research (land inventories and analysis, policy review, planning process opportunities identification and recommendations)
- Build interest, awareness and buy-in for UA on all levels through education programs and presentations

Actions to Date

- Background paper prepared on the benefits of UA and outline overview of UA in the City of Victoria
- Presentations to City of Victoria Staff and Councilors
- UA Resolution passed by City of Victoria and strategy developed for moving from Resolution to action
- Model resolution taken to Municipality of Esquimalt and passed

Possible Pilot Projects

A pilot project has been identified and is in the initial stages of planning for the City of Victoria which includes creating an Ad Hoc advisory, to work in partnership to establish student positions to support the project, conduct land and UA asset inventories, review existing policies and planning opportunities and ultimately develop an UA strategy to support their Resolution on Urban Agriculture.

III. Build Food Processing

Champion Pat Reichert, Liaison Linda Geggie/Mike Romaine

Background

Adding value to foods through processing is an important part of a vibrant, sustainable and secure local food system. Local food processing provides the link between primary production and market-ready products. For example, butchering chickens is food processing, removing honey from hives and jarring it is food processing. Turning milk into cheese, drying herbs for teas, turning apples into apple cider are all done by food processors. In short, the products that BC food processors are producing are wide ranging from breads, sauces, salad mixtures, jams and jellies, to coffees, flours and cereals, meats, cheeses and ice creams.

Some food processors are also primary producers who grow most or all of their inputs. Others are separate businesses that use ingredients they purchase locally, regionally or beyond.

While some food processing businesses in BC are multi-million dollar ventures, the vast majority in the Capital Region would be considered small-scale enterprises, designed to serve primarily a local and regional market.

Challenges

Although food processing is vital to our local food system and food security, the challenges this sector faces are mostly invisible to the general public. Following is a summary of some of the key challenges.

1. Food processors in the Capital Region are subject to federal, provincial and local government rules and regulations for the production and marketing of their products. These regulations are designed primarily for large scale production, for export marketing and to meet the requirements of international trade agreements. These regulations create many different kinds of barriers for small scale processors and local food systems.
2. New meat slaughtering regulations, which come into effect this fall, have significantly reduced small scale meat production in this region. They have created financial hardship for many growers, processors and communities. They have had the effect of reducing access to locally grown meat.
3. The scale of production of most food processors in the region is too small to meet the growing demand for local food. Most local food producers and processors do not have the capital and skilled workers required to gear up for larger scale production.
4. Food wholesale, distribution and trucking businesses within our current food system are designed for large scale production. For the most part, small scale producers and processors cannot afford the cost of using this distribution system. As a result, at the present time, small scale processors have no choice but to do their own distribution. This is time consuming. It limits their access to potential local markets and it limits community access to their products.
5. Food processors in BC, generally, and the Capital Region specifically, are a diverse and disparate group of businesses. As a result they have a diverse range of infrastructure needs including access to capital, to bar codes, to certified commercial kitchen facilities. At present, affordable, effective and scale-appropriate infrastructure does not exist within our local food system.

Key Strategic Priorities

- Develop food policies and an effective infrastructure that supports small scale food processing.
- Adapt and adjust government regulations and requirements to be more local-food system friendly.
- Build consumer/eater recognition and support of locally processed foods.

Key Actions/Opportunities Identified

- Bring together small and medium scale food processors to create a regional group that can identify and discuss local challenges, opportunities and supportive actions. This could possibly be done with the help of the Small Scale Food Processor Association.
- Bring together local processors with retailers, distributors and large food purchase institutions (such as universities and colleges) to discuss practical ways of increasing supply volumes and addressing distribution issues.

- Find ways for small scale producers/processors to pool their resources to develop and access essential facilities and services (e.g. shared transportation, mobile abattoirs, shared kitchens).
- Launch a general information campaign to raise awareness of local food processors and to increase access to their products. The web-based BC Specialty Food Directory, operated by the Small Scale Food Processors Association, may be an effective vehicle for doing this.

Possible Pilot Projects

The proposal is to provide a venue/process that would bring together a few local food processors and one or more food service institutions to discuss the supply relationship. We could begin with forming relationships between institutions that are already interested in expanding their access to local product, and producers and processors who have an interest and potential to increase capacity. The purpose of the meeting would be to move the conversation beyond what the barriers are on both ends to a conversation focused on working through the challenges. The project could serve as a demonstration of what works to meet the needs of both the processors and the institutional buyers.

IV. Ensure Food Access through Building Food Resources **Champion Kezia Cowtan Liaison Linda Geggie**

Background

Adequate access to a nutritious diet by everyone in the Capital Region must be a cornerstone strategy to a Regional Food and Health Action Plan. Currently over 50,000 people in the Capital Region live in poverty, with one in six being children. Along with income levels, the high cost of housing in the region is significantly impacting resident's ability to access adequate diets. In the last five years we have seen a 30-50% rise in the use of food banks. It is clear that our ability to better access and distribute food resources for individuals and families is critical, however these efforts must be accompanied by supportive housing, social, health and economic strategies and initiatives. While emergency food relief will always be necessary and an aim in this strategy area is to get healthier foods into these outlets, the primary focus needs to be on strategies that help individuals, families, and neighborhoods build food resources and capacity.

The Community Food Resources Data Collection Survey (CRFAIR 2006) revealed that we have a broad range of Food Resources (174 sources) in the Capital Region including emergency food services (49), such as food banks, food cupboards, food voucher, and non-emergency meal and food services (47) such as Meals on Wheels, and a broad range of food programs (32) such as Best Babies, community kitchens, backyard gardens, community gardens (15), food markets (15), food distribution programs such as gleaning and the Lifecycles Fruit Tree Project. Other types of food resources are food buying clubs and good food box programs¹.

¹ *Food Resources In Greater Victoria: Building Toward a Food Security Assessment for BC's Capital Region* (CRFAIR/May 2006-research and written by Stephanie Gabel)

Neighborhood Food Action Planning is being undertaken as a strategy to support neighborhoods to identify and build local food resources. There is much opportunity to look at building neighborhood food resources as an integrated strategy in building stronger food distribution networks, markets and supporting local growers.

Key Strategic Priorities

- Decrease hunger and increase individual and community health through building food resources that are accessible, affordable, contribute to a healthy diet and support local agriculture
- Build our understanding and knowledge of food access issues and solutions in the region as well as knowledge of food resource assets and gaps at neighborhood, community, and regional levels
- Support food action planning in neighborhoods and communities across the Capital Region to identify and mobilize around building food resources
- Undertake regional networking, information sharing and planning around food access with participation for diverse sectors
- Work with all levels of government on policy, programming and practice that support initiatives that build household and community food security

Key Actions/Opportunities Identified

- Recognize neighborhood houses, churches, bands, community associations etc. as key actors in food action planning and provision of food resources and encourage their participation in CR-FAIR and in planning processes
- Continue to collect data and build database (in partnership with VIHA)
- Establish a forum for representatives from community food resource providers to explore their roles and relationships in service provisioning, food security and food systems planning in the region
- Support Food Action Planning Processes in neighborhoods and communities in the Capital Region
- Develop a series of one-page fact sheets that provide information on our community food resources and strategies for action to targeted audiences
- Strengthen opportunities to increase links with local food producers and farmers through direct purchases and the development of distribution networks and markets
- Support planning and policy that encourages urban agriculture, housing affordability, traditional food gathering practices, community economic development related to food resources, development permits that include areas for gardening and edible landscaping
- Look at the role of food recovery in promoting healthier food systems and better access

Actions To Date

- Food Resources In Greater Victoria: Building Toward a Food Security Assessment for BC's Capital Region CRFAIR-research project researched and written by Stephanie Gabel, research data incorporated into VIHA database
- Food Action Planning in three communities (Tsarlip, Vic West, Fernwood), shared stories and learnings on neighborhood Food Action Planning

Possible Pilot Projects

1. Food Action Planning Mentorship Initiative between neighborhoods and communities. Link neighborhoods interested with neighborhoods that have or are going through the process to increase the number of neighborhoods building their capacity and planning around food resources.
2. Regional Food Access Forum to explore roles and relationships in service provisioning, food security and food systems planning in the region. Further identify collaborative actions that can be taken, and develop indicators and monitoring around decreasing hunger and increasing individual and community health.

V. Develop Local Food Purchasing Policies

Champion Jane Sterk, Liaison Janelle Hatch

Background

In purchasing local foods we support our local food and farm economy, create employment and have the potential to provide healthier food that has traveled a shorter distance. Local governments, schools, and institutions that purchase and provide large quantities of food have the potential to create multiple benefits through their purchasing choices.

Over the last six months we looked at local purchasing policies, what are the benefits? What are the barriers? What could a local purchasing policy look like? This process was designed to bring institutions, government representatives, private sector partners, farmers and processors together to discuss the potential for developing and implementing local procurement policies. The session was also designed to support individuals to look at the implementation of local purchasing policies in their respective institutions.

The committee learned about the current food procurement policies/practices of local institutions and we were pleasantly surprised that local food procurement is on the agenda/radar of institutions and that wholesalers do procure some locally produced food. Despite that, we discovered that long-term contracts by institutions and a lack of requiring local production do limit current procurement. To shift this, we would need to have easy ways to implement and compelling requests of institutions and purchasing officers well before new contracts are tendered. Engaging the participation of wholesalers, prepared meal contractors and institutional purchasers will be critical in moving this work forward.

Key Strategic Priorities

- Increase education and awareness of how buying locally contributes to food security and regional economic, social and environmental health
- Increase understanding of issues/opportunities around purchasing relationships by engaging institutions, wholesalers/distributors, food service providers, farmers and processors
- Research current purchasing policies and identify areas for further inquiry

Key Actions/Opportunities Identified

- Host meetings with wholesalers/distributors, food service providers, farmers and institutional purchasers to inspire, discuss issues and solve problems.
- Research good purchasing policies that already exist for both prepared meal service providers and institutions that purchase and prepare their own food.
- Produce model food purchasing policies and possible resolutions that could be used by politicians/boards to influence food purchasing policies.
- Develop a model agreement between farmer or processor- and distributor, which provides mutual guarantees.
- Determine if there are restrictions on specifying locally produced food in RFPs and contracts and how they might be challenged if they exist (ie. TILMA, April 2007).
- Determine current purchasing practices of institutions and wholesalers/distributors. Compile actual numbers for current purchases of locally produced food so there is a baseline from which to work and increase the numbers.
- Develop an interactive, easy-to-use and robust Internet-based database where farmers/processors could list products and distributors could identify long-term or seasonal needs.

Actions to Date

- Identified current purchasing policies or practices for Township of Esquimalt, VIHA, School District 61 and University of Victoria.
- The Corporation of the Township of Esquimalt, Food Services offered to participate as a pilot site.

Possible Pilot Projects

Because it seems that most institutions do purchase some locally/BC produced food, the committee suggests three strategies with potential pilot sites: 1) increasing the purchase of locally grown/produced food and developing marketing to highlight purchasing practices; 2) highlighting the environmental practices of local food producers; and 3) asking institutions to specify both the preference for locally produced food and for food produced with high environmental standards in food purchasing policies.

Esquimalt Food Services will serve as our confirmed pilot site for a small institution. The Township already purchases some local food. Therefore, the Township can be a pilot site with little change in its purchasing practices initially. The biggest change will be publicizing the priority of locally produced food and marketing that practice. In addition, we want to find out the environmental practices of the current local producers so those can also be part of a marketing plan – hopefully a win-win situation for the farmers/producers and the municipality. We would attempt to get the municipality to expand its current local emphasis to other foods like cheese and potentially meat as well as local beers, wines and ciders. If successful, the model might be transferable to similar small institutions. It is critical that the pilot project not result in undue staff time and resources on the part of the municipality.

VII. Expand Local Markets

Champion Lee Fuge, Liaison Linda Geggie

Background

In terms of developing greater food security in the region, the support and proliferation neighborhood markets is seen both as a way of improving neighborhood access to fresh local food and also as a way to provide a flexible marketing structure for local growers (and in particular new growers) to distribute their product. Education about our local farm and food system, product seasonality, and healthy eating are other added values that are afforded by the markets.

A market concept that is being piloted and explored in the Capital Region, coined the "Pocket Market", is a smaller and predominantly food oriented, neighborhood based market. A Coop-called FoodRoots has been initiated as a piece of infrastructure that is supporting market start up and continuation. FoodRoots buys from growers and markets products collectively in one stand. FoodRoots works with local community groups or organizations that are looking to establish a fresh, predominantly local food outlet. The combination of interest in accessing healthier local foods and having FoodRoots to support market start up is enabling the proliferation of pocket markets at an astounding rate, growing from the first market in Vic West two years ago, to over nine markets currently in neighborhoods and locations across Greater Victoria.

FoodRoots and LifeCycles have been working to champion this effort. A workshop was held in January to discuss the concept and bring people together who were interested in creating pocket markets in their neighborhood or community, as well as identify what types of support they would need to do so.

Key Strategic Priorities

- Support for neighborhood/community groups to develop markets
- Continued liaison and work with municipalities and VIHA to provide supportive policy and bi-laws in terms of locations, business licenses, and health and safety issues to support market development
- Support development enabling infrastructure for distribution of local food to markets/local food outlets (such as FoodRoots Coop)
- Link market development to food action planning in neighborhoods

Key Actions/Opportunities Identified

- Continued liaison and work with municipalities and VIHA to provide supportive policy and bi-laws in terms of locations, business licenses and health and safety issues to support market development
- Development of pocket market tool kit to support new markets
- Development of infrastructure, setting out financial projections, acquiring needed infrastructure (i.e. FoodRoots Coop)
- Secure funding for education and support around markets
- Feasibility study as to markets in community centers

Possible Pilot Projects

- Development of pocket market tool kits and support for markets development

- Feasibility study of diverse sites/outlets (Community Centers, Government Buildings)

VII. Support Food and Health, Education and Training

Facilitators Tara Taggart and Tina Fraser Liaison Linda Geggie

Background

Building regional food security is reliant on a broad understanding by local residents and decision makers of our local food system. Support for a localized food system is galvanized when people not only understand how food is produced, processed, distributed and sold but can also see the cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits of a vibrant localized food system. Another area that has been identified is our ability to form a closer connection between the food we eat and our personal and community health. Access to information about healthy eating and preparing healthier diets was also identified as necessary tool for building individual capacity and health. Continuing to invest in education and training of those who grow, market and prepare food was also seen as a priority in the region, with a particular focus on new farmers.

Key Strategic Priorities

- Use a wide range of social marketing, educational campaigns and programs to raise the awareness of the relationship between locally produced food and food security and health. Educational programs could emphasize the relationship between local food and climate change to capitalize on increased interest in global warming and environmental issues.
- To support and build a wide range of capacity building and business development programs and services for producers, processors, retailers and chefs
- To know and understand our regional assets for food, agriculture, and health education and training, as well as gaps
- To properly resource, maintain and build these assets
- To promote linkages and collaboration and better utilize our education and training resources

Key Actions/Opportunities Identified

- Comprehensive mapping of regional education and training assets
- Make this information widely available and link to/compliment other data bases (VIHA) as well as share information resources/listings with government bodies
- Sharing of information and resources between educators and trainers
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive directory
- Support collaborative education or training initiatives
- Create investment in education and training initiatives
- Support on-farm experiential opportunities and volunteerism
- Increase collaboration between community based and institutional based academic programming

Key Actions to Date

- Initiated information gathering on education and training resources in the Region
- Meeting of key trainers and educators to share their work
- Initiation of a Resource Directory for the Region with 20 education or training initiatives listed

Possible Pilot Projects

- Capital Region Education and Training Mapping and Database development and information sharing—linked to Regional Food Assessment process and VIHA database
- Collaborative event facilitated by diverse educators and trainers

VII. Developing a Food Policy Council

Champions Mike Romaine and Paula Hesje

Background

Food, like water, transportation, and housing is a key component of daily life. Having a thoughtful coordinated approach to meeting these fundamental needs creates a better quality of life for all residents in the region, for today and generations to come. Currently there is no formal body or plan that weaves and coordinates a local food system in a way that strengthens the agri-food sector or builds greater food security for the Capital Region. There are many challenges that need to be met and opportunities for action that could be taken with a better-coordinated approach.

At present, Capital Region food system work is being done by a host of organizations, businesses and individuals working within their own sphere and in cooperation with other organizations. A good network between many of these participants exists. There is strength in such diverse and innovative approaches, but there is also the need to work towards a common vision and goals in order to ensure that all critical components of the food system are advancing in a timely manner so that food supplies meet food demand in quantity, quality and prices that are fair and predictable to everyone including the producers, processors, distributors, retailers and consumers.

An evolving regional coordinating structure is an informal partnership between the community and NGO-based CR-FAIR, the CRD Roundtable on the Environment, Healthy Communities Subcommittee (HCSC) and VIHA. This partnership is serving the needs for grassroots involvement, networking, information sharing, creating a window into government, integrating a health perspective and launching and successfully completing a number of collaborative food security projects. Central to this initiative is the creation of a Food and Health Action Plan for the Region. A key piece of this plan is to establish a formal and recognized body to steward such a plan and integrate it with Regional and Municipal government policy and planning as well as work to coordinate with and between government, public institutions (such as our School Boards and Health Authorities), private sector, community organizations and residents.

Key Strategic Priorities

- Building support and understanding for the role and mandate of a coordinating body
- Determining the best structure, role and home for a “Food Policy” or “Food Systems” Council (FPC)
- Develop support in the form of resources and commitment

Key Actions/Opportunities Identified

- Modify the ‘FPC Discussion Paper’ for different audiences and meet with decision makers in VIHA, CRD, and Municipalities to broaden understanding, get input and move forward
- Continue to meet across sectors to develop the Food and Health Action Plan and garner support, input and participation in the development of a FPC
- Continue relationships with Food Policy Network and Canadian FPCs
- Access decision makers for understanding, support and endorsement of actions to implement an FPC for BC’s Capital Region

Possible Pilot Projects

Pilot the FPC in one municipality, i.e. City of Victoria. A FPC could function for 1 year to exhibit what role this body could play. One difficulty is that a FPC is meant to examine the entire food system and if the geographical boundary is the City of Victoria, it may be challenging to display the integration and comprehensive role a FPC can have. This idea should be pursued further with discussions with CR-FAIR and City of Victoria staff and councilors.

Exhibit the success of FPC in one aspect of the Food System. Although FPCs have the role to advise and improve upon the entire food system, it may be beneficial to the discussion to exhibit the success of FPCs in one aspect of the food system. The Connecticut FPC has been successful in work on farmland protection and they have partnered with the American Farmland Trust to achieve these goals. This link could be examined as it could be paralleled with a Capital Region FPC and The Land Conservancy (TLC). TLC has many of the same capabilities that the American Farmland Trust has, thus this could be a unique demonstration of the work that can be accomplished.

Section 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION BY SECTOR

Actions Identified Per Sector:

A review of the action items identified put forward in the planning process reveals that the implementation of a Food and Health Action Plan is a complex multi-party project. Although there is a host of actions citizens can take to support food security in the region it is evident that many actions were identified that fall into the purview of specific levels of government, of the Regional Health Authority, of academic institutions, community associations, and the private sector. The following is a break down of actions recommended per sector.

CRD

CRD Board has approved the workplan of the CRD-RTE-HCSC, thus in principle the Board supports the work being done to promote food security. Action Item 2.2 (5) of the Regional Growth Strategy (p. 11) states that "The CRD, the Vancouver Island Health Authority, and member municipalities agree to jointly undertake, within five years of the adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy, a review of long term strategic resource needs in the Capital Region -- including food, (paying specific attention to local food production), energy, water, and aggregate materials. This project will investigate long term demand, security of supply, potential impacts of factors such as long term climate change and fossil fuel depletion, and make policy and program recommendations to ensure that future needs are successfully anticipated and met." In concert with the State of the Region Report, the Strategic Resource Needs Study is intended to inform the five-year comprehensive review of the RGS. Given the large scope of such a study, we welcome additional partners. This is an excellent entry point and opportunity to incorporate the policy statements and recommendations put forward in the Food and Health action Plan

In addition specific actions that have been suggested are:

- Regional Districts are responsible for making **regional growth strategies** (RGSs). These strategies act as planning tools for managing growth within the region and, among other things, aim to preserve the integrity of a secure and productive resource base, including the ALR. The influence these strategies have over municipal planning, allows member municipalities to commit to agricultural land protection and policies that support agriculture. The CRD needs to go to bat to encourage the implementation of these strategies at the Municipal level.
- **Educate** CRD Board, Staff and in particular planners to better understand sustaining local agriculture and increasing food security in the region and their role in this
- Consider the proposals coming forward to participate, support a **Regional Food Policy Council** as an advisory and coordinating body.
- **Create, implement procurement policies that support local, fair trade food and agriculture products**
- **Maintain and encourage food production on available lands:** need to secure food-growing lands for the future, embed this concept in the RGS and maintain the current lands in the ALR. Consider preservation of Agriculture land proposals such as parks acquisition that supports retention of food producing lands with compatible recreative and wildlife benefits. CRD residents could pay a tax for funding agricultural land as they have for other parks land – for purchasing covenants and paying for ecological goods and services (there are problems in deciding what services, how much payment, and who pays; also the intended message can be distorted). Gellatley Nut Farm, Colony Farm are examples of this type of park in the GVRD. The district has entered into a management and operation agreement with a Society to operate the park.

- **Through planning, water distribution and rates, ensure quality, supply, and cost of water that supports local agriculture.** Growth and development can cause inadequate drainage that can restrict access to land and result in flooding and crop losses. We need to ensure that increased development does not result in increased flooding/contamination of remaining farmlands. Needs to be a re-evaluation of water distribution for agriculture as it is a limitation to agriculture and other infrastructure (processing and abattoirs).
- **CRD needs to continue to consider innovative ways to deal with waste streams and agriculture.** The recycling of treated effluent and food waste; look to maximize utilization of bio-solids from planned sewage treatment facilities (However, need baseline or science about dealing with waste and organic matter recycling and pathogens) There is a market cost of disposing bio-solids and an economic opportunity to use farmland; valuation on that service to society; and money is starting to be available for this discussion.
- **Climate Change and Emergency Preparedness Strategies:** The CRD should look to promotion of food resources that are close to home to decrease “foodmiles” and educate about the impacts of climate change. The CRD should also look at the impacts of climate change on local agriculture, as well as see promotion of local agriculture as part of emergency preparedness strategies.

Municipalities and Electoral Districts

The CRD is made up of 13 municipalities and three electoral districts. Each Municipality is unique and therefore has a specialized role to play in developing a sustainable regional food system.

Some of the roles for Municipal government and actions that can be taken follow:

- **Food Policy Council** could be piloted in one municipality, i.e. City of Victoria. A FPC could function for 1 year to exhibit what role this body could play. One difficulty is that a FPC is meant to examine the entire food system and if the geographical boundary is the City of Victoria, it may be challenging to display the integration and comprehensive role a FPC can have. This idea should be pursued further with discussions with CR-FAIR and City of Victoria staff and councilors.
- Review options to support the work of the Food Policy Council over the long term. Support could be in the form of stable long term funding that would allow the hiring of staff. Partnerships of such groups as Parks & Recreation Department could also provide resources necessary to participate in some of the identified actions.
- **Need for education** to create a better appreciation of local agriculture by local planners and municipal decision makers and a consistent commitment to help make agriculture work.
- **Create, implement procurement policies that support local, fair trade food and agriculture products**

- **Utilize planning tools to preserve food growing lands and farming**
 - Support local agriculture land Revise official community plans (OCPs) to explicitly recognize agriculture within land use planning and ensure consistency with ALR regulations
 - Develop Agricultural Area Plans
 - Incorporate edge planning recommendations into OCPs and zoning bylaws
 - Revise zoning bylaws to ensure building locations and footprints do not constrain farming
- Limit exclusions from the ALR and more detailed land use planning needed within ALR. Local governments have direct powers under the ALC Act to influence the fate of agricultural land. Local governments have the authority not to forward the application to the Commission where a proposal is contrary to local policy. The [*Agricultural Land Commission Act*](#) provides that if an application applies to land that is zoned for agricultural or farm use or requires an amendment to a plan or bylaw, the application may not proceed unless it is authorized by the local government. Currently, under the ALC Act, local governments may be delegated commission powers to decide non-farm use applications.
- Explore enhancing public transit (BC Transit) at key times for local farm labour
- Increase flexibility to provide temporary housing for farm labour and higher density low footprint housing for farmers to live on farmland – consider new models of cluster eco-housing
- Encourage agri-tourism, but ensure it is tied to agricultural production
- **Encourage more direct marketing**- ensure bylaws to allow adequate signage and facilities, with supportive zoning and business license practices
- **Recycle treated effluent and food waste**; look to maximize utilization of bio-solids
- **Needs to be a re-evaluation of water distribution** for agriculture as it is a limitation to agriculture and other infrastructure (processing and abattoirs)
- **Support Urban Agriculture**: Use Municipal lands for urban agriculture
 - **Conduct land inventory** -what city lands are currently vacant and have the potential for long term or provisional (short/defined term) urban agriculture uses. Analysis of these lands for their suitability to different forms of urban agriculture. Look to the Diggable cities project in Portland as a possible model for conducting the inventory.
 - **Conduct Asset Inventory**: Alongside of potential land assets it would be valuable to study and map current urban agriculture and urban agriculture resources/assets in the city as well as additional opportunities for urban agriculture, this could be done in partnership with UVic, LifeCycles and Common Ground Mapping. Another identified research piece could be to determine if a study has been conducted as to the potential for food production in the City of Victoria (–Sean Cosgrove Masters Thesis 1990’s?)
 - **Review of existing policies**, strategies, bi-laws, practices as to their ability to enable to support or possibly discourage urban agriculture. Make recommendations for changes to create more supportive language.

Important to review the Parks Master Plan, Development Guidelines including the Green building strategy.

- **Review of planning opportunities** and schedules (Neighborhood plans, OCP) to determine possibilities for providing input in these processes, possibilities for amending OCP and neighborhood plans. Noted that Neighborhood plans have no mandate while the OCP does. Develop a strategy to support density bonusing for projects including urban agriculture and garden components (e.g. roof-top gardens). Amend the Multi-family Development Permit Area guidelines to include opportunities for developing urban food producing gardens in the required landscape areas for new multi-family projects.
- **Develop an Urban Agriculture Strategy** based on the information collected and the considerations of the Advisory, which would include City Staff, Community based organizations and members, Regional Health Authority etc.
- Parks and boulevards incorporate food plants and gardens
- Need to promote other viable food production areas
- Require a percentage of all new housing to be affordable and include food producing areas, and support for roof-top and parking lot gardens through permitting and development permit application, provide amenity credits for urban garden space in housing developments
 - Created Community Gardens Policy
 - Recognizes community gardens as a legitimate activity in Parks
 - Supports and partners in the development of community gardens
 - Educate councillors and Parks staff to increase understanding of urban agriculture, permaculture, sustainable, edible gardening, wasting water, gardens (including food gardens), understanding what we can do in a small garden plot- how much food can be produced
- **Create a Department of Sustainability** with Staff at the municipal level
- **Municipal support for community food action plans and activities** in neighborhoods and Local Area Plans.
- **Look at food in emergency preparedness planning and the importance of local agriculture**
 - Supportive bi-laws for raising Urban Poultry
- **Need city food security policy = commitment**

Example Municipal Pilot Projects

Local Purchasing: Esquimalt Food Services will serve as our confirmed pilot site for a small institution. The Township already purchases some local food (see attached list of food purchased). Therefore, the Township can be a pilot site with little change in its purchasing practices initially making it easier to participate. The biggest change will be publicizing the priority of locally produced food and marketing that practice. In addition, we want to find out the environmental practices of the current local producers so those can also be part of a marketing plan – hopefully a win-win situation for the farmers/producers and the municipality. We would attempt to get the municipality to expand its current local emphasis to other foods like cheese and potentially meat as well as local beers, wines and ciders. If successful, the model might be transferable to similar

small institutions. It is critical that the pilot project not result in undue staff time and resources on the part of the

VIHA

VIHA

VIHA has a unique role to play in terms of promoting regional food security and their potential role has been identified in many aspects of the Food and Health Action Plan). It is recognized that VIHA is already engaged in a multitude of initiatives throughout its departments that are building capacity and meeting needs in terms of food security. Although VIHA's purview is geographically larger than this plan covers, the Capital Region is a large part of its constituency.

A presentation was made to the Board of Directors of the Vancouver Island Health Authority last year regarding the Regional Food and Health Action Planning Process. We put forward some of the recommendations that have come forward through the process. We agreed to report back to them when the Draft of the plan was completed this year for their consideration and feedback.

Our first steps in terms of this review process will be to work with the Food Security Coordinator. It will be important to determine how VIHA can utilize this participatory planning process to inform their work as well as to identify how CRFAIR and other agencies can engage with VIHA to move the identified actions forward where appropriate.

The following recommendations were put forward through the planning process:

- **Policy Harmonization:** Determine where current policies and practices can be aligned with Regional Food and Health Action Plan
- **Consider their involvement in a Regional Food Policy Council** as an advisory and coordinating body. (FPCs include officials from government agencies responsible for policy decisions affecting a regional food system e.g. Department of Health - food inspection; Social Services - food assistance; and Education - school food purchasing. Experience shows that outside an FPC convening, these officials have little incentive or opportunity to talk with others to coordinate delivery of related programs).
- **Maintain support for a liaison with community around Food Security (Currently this is the Food Security Coordinator)** with a mandate to use a food systems approach that understands the importance and role of local agriculture
- **Procurement Policies:** Create; implement institutional/department/program procurement policies that support local, fair trade food and agriculture products
- **Review all health promotion programs and materials** to provide additional messaging supporting local agriculture and provide list of available food resources in the Capital Region that utilize local products

- **Food Safety and Local Agriculture:** seek input and provide supportive policy for health and safety issues in regards to local markets
- **Undertake collaborative research and build data,** make available to public, support data collection on the broad range of education and training resources around food, agriculture and health in the Capital Region, and integrate the data/material to VIHA. Databases, making it available to public and decisionmakers
- **Participate in pilot projects** such as to provide food vouchers through Best Babies Program that are redeemable at local markets
- **Research opportunities to establish social enterprise strategies** that would improve food security and contribute to the social determinants of health

School Boards

- Consider the proposals coming forward to participate, support a **Regional Food Policy Council** as an advisory and coordinating body. FPCs include officials from government agencies responsible for policy decisions affecting a regional food system e.g. Department of Health - food inspection; Social Services - food assistance; and Education - school food purchasing. Experience shows that outside an FPC convening, these officials have little incentive or opportunity to talk with others to coordinate delivery of related programs
- **Encourage every school to develop its own food policy and charter**
- Develop **local food procurement policies** connecting farms and institutional kitchens, local buying policy would have a tremendous impact on local farms
- **Participate in the pilot Fruit and Veggie Program** to have kids eat fruits and vegetables in school – how to get fruits and vegetables into schools from local farms
- **Support a food garden in every school** with related programming, including links to meal preparation and programs, lobby Ministry of Education so that every school can have its own garden
- **Consider curriculum enhancements** to focus on local agriculture and food
- **Review opportunities for surplus lands** to be added to agricultural programs such as community and backyard gardens
- **Integrate edible landscapes into school landscape plans.**

University/Academic institutions

- Consider the proposals coming forward to participate, support a **Regional Food Policy Council** as an advisory and coordinating body. FPCs include officials from government agencies responsible for policy decisions affecting a regional food system e.g. Department of Health - food inspection; Social Services - food assistance; and Education - school food purchasing. Experience shows that outside an FPC convening, these officials have little incentive or opportunity to talk with others to coordinate delivery of related programs
- **Encourage development of food policy and charter for the institution**
- **Develop local food procurement policies** connecting farms and institutional kitchens and food outlets, local buying policy would have a tremendous impact on local farms
- **Bridge the division** between community based and institutional based academic programming and research (good examples UVIC Martha McMahon, Camosun Organic Farming Business Development Programming)

Possible Research/Project Partnerships identified:

- good purchasing policies that already exist for both prepared meal service providers and institutions that purchase and prepare their own food, what's working and why it's working. Produce model food purchasing policies for each and possible resolutions that could be used by politicians/boards to influence food purchasing policies.
- Develop a model agreement between farmer and distributor, which provides mutual guarantees. Where appropriate, similar agreements could be developed with the processors.
- Develop interactive, easy-to-use and robust net-based databases where farmers could list products and distributors could identify long-term or seasonal needs.
- Tie the new interest in and commitment to acting on climate change with the demonstrated emissions lowering measures provided by land use and reduced transportation related to locally produced food
- Research on production capacity of regional agriculture lands and also for urban food production

CRFAIR/HCSC

- Continue to build education and training resource data collection and publicly available listing (coordinate with VIHA database)
- Share information resources/ listings of assets (ed and training) with local, regional and provincial government bodies
- Support the development of a Food Policy Council and the continued development and implementation of a Food and Health Action Plan
- Further discussion has to occur with CR-FAIR and the Community Council as the FPC discussion could alter CR-FAIR's role and change the relationship with the

latter. A meeting must be held to determine the gaps in CR-FAIR's work and how a FPC could function to improve upon those areas. There must be a clear distinction and outline of the role's of both the FPC and CR-FAIR. Ideally, they would complement each other and ensure a sustainable, comprehensive and effective means of improving and maintaining the Capital Region's food system

- Must clearly decide the role of the FPC and how this affects CR-FAIR
- Continue to work with the Peninsula Agricultural Commission
- Use social marketing and educational campaigns to raise the awareness of the relationship between locally produced food and food security and health.
- Research good purchasing policies that already exist for both prepared meal service providers and institutions that purchase and prepare their own food, what's working and why it's working. Produce model food purchasing policies for each and possible resolutions that could be used by politicians/boards to influence food purchasing policies.
- Host a meeting with wholesalers/distributors, food service providers and farmers as well as institutional purchasers to discuss issues and solve problems.

Community Associations/Neighborhoods

- Consider the proposals coming forward to participate, support a **Regional Food Policy Council** as an advisory and coordinating body. FPCs include officials from government agencies responsible for policy decisions affecting a regional food system e.g. Department of Health - food inspection; Social Services - food assistance; and Education - school food purchasing. Experience shows that outside an FPC convening, these officials have little incentive or opportunity to talk with others to coordinate delivery of related programs
-
- Support the development of a Food Action Plan in your neighborhood
- Support the development of pocket markets in your neighborhood
- Developing neighbourhood "Sharing Backyards" and Gleaning such as the Fruit Tree Project, (i.e.: on the LC website)
- Building knowledge of local and how to prepare foods
- Develop neighbourhood food networks
- Community feast (connected to shared backyards and building community)
- Mentoring through workshops i.e.: composting, gardening

- Need expressed for (Regional) learning and networking opportunities around food action planning, and ability to look at joint initiatives that build value, better coordination and better utilize or access resources, mentorship between neighborhoods or initiatives

Community Organizations:

- Consider the proposals coming forward to participate, support a **Regional Food Policy Council** as an advisory and coordinating body. FPCs include officials from government agencies responsible for policy decisions affecting a regional food system e.g. Department of Health - food inspection; Social Services - food assistance; and Education - school food purchasing. Experience shows that outside an FPC convening, these officials have little incentive or opportunity to talk with others to coordinate delivery of related programs
- Opportunity to sponsor a collaborative educational event where groups and institutions can participate and co-promote
- Interest in supporting on-farm experiential opportunities-volunteers
- Review of 'FPC Discussion Paper', by key decision makers in VIHA, CRD, Municipalities and interested NGOs (including CR-FAIR) and follow up with individual meetings to discuss function, organizational structure, ideas and next steps. Need for buy-in from groups that CR-FAIR has been working with on development of FPC
- Support land tenure alternatives: cooperative models; leasing; farmer housing; land trusts to increase availability of farmland, long-term protection, conservation covenants, planning and stewardship

Private Sector

- Consider the proposals coming forward to participate, support a **Regional Food Policy Council** as an advisory and coordinating body. FPCs include officials from government agencies responsible for policy decisions affecting a regional food system e.g. Department of Health - food inspection; Social Services - food assistance; and Education - school food purchasing. Experience shows that outside an FPC convening, these officials have little incentive or opportunity to talk with others to coordinate delivery of related programs
- Wholesalers/distributors buy locally produced and processed foods where possible
- Service providers that provide prepared meals to institutions under contract, purchase locally produced foods where possible
- Build relationships with and utilize island processors and growers

- Utilize networks, resources and knowledge to support local food security initiatives
- Small and medium producers find ways to cooperate and coordinate resources around transportation, storage, distribution

Section 6 TARGETS EVALUATION AND MONITORING

It is very important to be able to measure our progress as we move forward. But how do you measure something as interconnected and complex as Food Security? It would be very good to be able to set outcomes like “reduce hunger in the CRD” and “increase consumption of locally produced and processed foods”. However, we must be realistic in terms of choosing outcomes or “targets” and indicators that we have the ability and resources to measure. In 2004 the Baseline Assessment for Food Security in the Capital Region was published. This document was the first attempt at establishing some desired outcomes and indicators for moving towards greater food security in the Capital Region. This report will be considered and incorporated in the development of outcomes and indicators for the Food and Health Action Plan. Through the public forum Food Matters and second round of input into this plan we will be establishing clearer outcomes, targets and indicators of success associated with each of our Action Strategy areas. We are also in the process of developing a way to monitor, measure and communicate our progress towards these targets along the way.