

Saanich Agriculture & Food Security Plan

Review of Survey Results

Two hundred eighty nine (289) responses to the Agriculture & Food Security Survey were received between May to July 2016. The survey was available online and at many community events this past spring and summer. The self-selection online survey was just one tool used in collecting input from the community on the strengths and weaknesses in agriculture and food security in Saanich. The results from the survey give an indication of Saanich residents' local food consumption and an understanding of residents' knowledge on local agriculture and food security.

Local Food:



What is "local"?

63% of the respondents think of Vancouver Island when they "think local." 21% also think that local extends to the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley and a further 23% believe that "local" means "within BC." A very low percentage of respondents consider "local" to mean food coming from outside the province or Washington State.

Buying Local

A significant 48% of residents responding to the Agriculture & Food Security Survey stated that they "always" buy locally grown items when they have the option! 49% state that they "sometimes" buy locally grown items.

Locally Grown Items	
Sometimes	49.3%
Always	47.8%
Rarely	2.5%
Never	0.4%

More than 60% of respondents are willing to pay a higher price in order to support local farms.

What prevents you from buying local?

When it comes to reasons that prevent respondents from buying locally grown food the three main reasons are identified as the cost (51%), products are not locally in season (51%), and difficulty in accessing local food (48%).

Other comments:

- I do not eat foods out of season...with few exceptions.
- Prevented from buying local because ... farmers markets and direct sales residential growing are not allowed.

Crops that respondents considered to be the most difficult to find from a local source:

- Tree fruits
- Nuts
- Flour / Grains



Climate Change

66% believe that climate change will have a mix of positive and negative impacts on growing food in Saanich. 20 % feel that the impacts will be negative and about 7% feel that the impacts could be positive.

Food Security:

Cost of Food:

Approximately 49% of the respondents determined that they spend from 10% to 25% of their household income on food. 28% believe that they spend 25% to 50% of their household income on food.

Approximately 4% state that they access food banks weekly, monthly or occasionally for their food needs.

% Household Income Spent on Food	
10% - 25%	49.3%
25% - 50%	28.1%
Don't know	9.4%
0% - 10%	8.6%
50% - 75%	3.6%
75% - 100%	1.1%

Over 80% find that are able to afford healthy food “most of the time” or “always.”

Strengths of Saanich farming and food production currently:

The top strengths for Saanich farming that people in the survey include:

- Saanich’s climate, soil and water;
- A local market that is large enough to support farm businesses;
- A strong farming history;
- Local farmers support one another;
- Strong protection of farmland; and
- Fair water pricing.

Comments received:

- The wetlands in Saanich, such as Swan Lake, are important for replenishing the soil in the fall through spring.
- Large residential lots provide for opportunities for growing food.
- Food and grower groups are strong and vocal.
- People want to access local fresh healthy produce.
- Food prices are reasonable for average Saanich residents.
- Lots of potential

Challenges affecting farming and food production:

The top challenges for farming in Saanich were identified as:

- Competing non-farm uses on farmland
- Difficulties accessing land for farming due to high costs and capital inputs
- Lack of education and misconceptions about food amongst the public
- Lack of succession planning as the age of farmers increases;
- Lack of regulatory support for farmers at the provincial and federal levels;
- Wildlife threats to livestock and crops.



Comments received included concerns for the lack of protection of ALR land and concerns that farmland is sitting empty and unproductive. The challenge of weak farm support was identified such as a lack of reliable labour, processing infrastructure, institutional purchasing of local food, and a lack of control of wildlife. Concerns for contamination of beaches from runoff were noted and may allude to the degradation of seafood and shellfish quality on the beaches and waterways.

- Lack of protection of ALR.
- Lack of processing infrastructure.
- Productive farm land sitting empty.
- Lack of reliable labour. Lack of support at municipal level.
- Need urban farm stand.
- Public institutions should have a buy local value when purchasing.
- Cost and pricing of the produce.
- Beach contamination and agriculture run off (hurts seafood and shellfish industry).
- Farmers must farm the land.
- Deer and geese need to be controlled to protect crops/more support in all areas for farmers needed to ensure food production is maintained.

Other ideas:

- I'd love to see Saanich encourage (with funding and by advertising) a growers association for micro farmers/food producers.
- Where do indigenous food systems fit in here?

Opportunities to improve farming and food production:

The survey identified that respondents feel that in order to improve farming and food production, efforts should be placed on continued production on existing farms with initiatives that support the farm business and educating the public on agriculture and food production.

- Succession planning on farms to ensure that production continues.
- Regulations at the local level including urban and rural growth policies, land use regulations, etc. and regulations at the provincial level.
- Supporting infrastructure such as processing facilities, cold storage, abattoir, distribution, etc.
- Access to land and water.
- Encourage environmentally sound farming practices.
- Public education on agriculture issues.

Top strengths for food security:

- Increased the interest and opportunities in urban farming.
- Good climate, soil and water.
- Access to healthy affordable local food at locations close to the population.
- Growing and selling food provides a source of income.



Challenges for food security:

- Low wages.
- Lack of education amongst the public.
- Lack of opportunity for urban farming.
- Lack of access to healthy affordable food.

Other comments:

- Why do we pay more for watering fruits and vegetables? (urban watering rates)
- Homelessness.
- No municipal interest in successful small-scale farm operations.
- Help for farmers from the government.
- Not enough farmers' markets.
- Too much agriculture land not being used for food production.
- Food (is) waste(d) from local distributors and grocers.
- No food growing in parks.
- Cost of operation (seeds, soil, compost, fertilizer) is inhibiting.
- Local food is not affordable.

Opportunities to improve food security:

When asked what opportunities there are to improve food security in Saanich respondents identified a variety of ideas including encouraging urban farming; support for farmers; preservation of farmland; increasing consumer education; encourage more groceries / markets; and initiatives for public land and policy.

- Increase urban agriculture.
- Reduce rate of soil made from Saanich curb side pick-up.
- Connect food production with community organizations and schools.
- Review bylaws to support urban farming.
- Encourage small farms ... in a suburb.
- Support farmers' access to land.
- Encourage owners of farmland to use the land or lease the land for growing.
- Food system collective can make an impact working together.
- Increase consumer education around agriculture.
- Work with school district to support local food use in schools.
- Grow food on Panama Flats.
- Preserve ALR farmland.
- The District could change its own purchasing policies – local should be served at events and open houses.

Other comments:

- Reclaim golf courses and return to food production.
- Need more grocery stores.

