



## The Corporation of the District of Saanich

# Report

**To:** Mayor and Council  
**From:** Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning  
**Date:** May 5, 2023  
**Subject:** Update on Implementation of the Agriculture and Food Security Plan  
**File:** 2110-55 • Agriculture and Food Security

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### RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this progress Report on the implementation of the Agriculture and Food Security Plan for information.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with a five-year progress Report on the implementation of the District of Saanich's Agriculture and Food Security Plan and to advise on upcoming initiatives.

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

At the Council meeting on September 17, 2018, Council endorsed the District of Saanich's Agriculture and Food Security Plan (AFSP). The Plan lays out clear actions for Saanich to enhance local agriculture and food security over the next 10 to 15 years. The AFSP is action-oriented and organizes actions into Priority 1, Priority 2, Priority 3, and Ongoing actions. The AFSP's monitoring and evaluation strategy measures how plan implementation has strengthened food security and supported agriculture within the District of Saanich. A full account of implementation activities and evaluation is included in subsequent sections of this Report.

#### Agriculture and Food Security Plan Implementation Resource

As part of adoption of the AFSP, Council provided funding for a half-time temporary Agriculture and Food Security Planner (AFS Planner). The first AFS Planner was hired on a part-time contract in June 2019. The 2019 AFS Planner position was vacated in May 2022 and a new AFS Planner was hired in January 2023, with a temporary 16-month contract until May 2024. The current AFS Planner position is part-time (17.5 hours/week). Additional funding has been provided by Council on two separate occasions to increase the hours of the AFS Planner position to 25 hours/week, which is currently where the AFS Planner position stands.

Key Roles of the AFS Planner Position are:

- Represent the District of Saanich in agriculture and food security initiatives;
- Implement priorities laid out in Saanich's Agriculture and Food Security Plan;
- Provide support to internal departments seeking referrals and guidance on agriculture and food security matters;
- Respond to community inquiries related to agriculture and food security;
- Sit on the Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission (PAAC);
- Liaise with the CRD, Ministry of Agriculture, and Agricultural Land Commission;
- Build community connections and share knowledge with local farmers, non-profits, and relevant stakeholders; and
- Stay up to date on agriculture and food security initiatives, policies and regulations throughout the region.

## **AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS**

### **Progress on Implementation Actions**

Since endorsement of the Agriculture and Food Security Plan (AFSP), work has been undertaken in accordance with priorities laid out in the AFSP. Most of the Phase 1 priority actions identified in the AFSP have been completed or are currently in progress. It is also important to note that the AFSP includes 52 Ongoing Actions. These Ongoing Actions are underway and provide principled direction to guide future decision-making. While these Ongoing Actions may not have a concrete deliverable, they are important to support agriculture and food security initiatives and inform Council, stakeholders, and the community of priorities and preferred courses of action.

Table 1 (below) displays implementation of progress towards Phase 1 priority actions. Additionally, Phase 2 priority action 7.6, that has been initiated due to Council direction, is included on Table 1.

**Table 1: Progress on Phase 1 Priority Actions from the AFSP**

#	PRIORITY ACTION	PROGRESS	NOTE
1.1	Provide staff resources to take a leadership role in the implementation of the Agriculture & Food Security Plan.	Completed	Agriculture & Food Security Planner hired (June 17, 2019).
1.2	Establish a Saanich Agriculture & Food Security Advisory Committee or delegate an existing committee to assist in the implementation of the Plan.	Completed	Regular liaising with PAAC.
1.9	Implement the Council-approved concept plan for Panama Flats to stimulate food production and bring new farmers onto the land.	In Progress	Staff will be checking in with the community on the concept plan.
2.2	Explore regulatory changes that support establishment of farmers markets within the District of Saanich.	In Progress	Report coming forward in 2023. Temporary Use Permit used for past farmers markets.
2.4	Through the Local Area Plan review process explore opportunities to increase access to local food in close proximity to residential areas.	Completed	Agriculture and food security actions inserted in Uptown-Douglas Plan, Cadboro Bay LAP and Cordova Bay LAP.
3.14	Review the Zoning Bylaw to ensure that new regulations within the Agricultural Land Commission Act regarding agri-tourism are addressed.	In Progress	Zoning Bylaw assessed regularly to evaluate potential changes to align with ALC regulations.
4.17	Support development of a local program that educates and encourages the reduction of household food waste.	Completed	Multi-year Love Food Hate Waste communications campaign developed.
4.3	Develop educational resources to assist residents in the protection of urban crops from damage by wildlife.	In Progress	Working with CRD on developing materials.
5.10	Develop residential footprint policies as per the BC Ministry of Agriculture's Bylaw Standards including a maximum residential footprint size, building setbacks and total floor area of dwelling units.	In Progress	Report coming forward in Q2 2023.
5.14	Work with the CRD and the Ministry of Agriculture to conduct an Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) and associated Agricultural Water Demand Model (AWDM).	In Progress	CRD has consultant developing AWDM; ALUI underway
5.2	Explore opportunities to enhance business license bylaw requirements to support the protection of agriculture lands.	Completed	Explored opportunities to regulate farmgate sales through business licensing.
5.4	Investigate the issue of non-farm use on agriculture lands and develop options to address the protection of farmland.	In Progress	Exploring issues related to residence house size and residential footprint in agricultural zones.
6.10	Support the CRD in efforts to establish a regional food and farmland trust.	Completed	Extensive process with CRD and community partners completed to establish a food and farmland trust model.
6.8	Develop a policy for farmworker housing.	Completed	Temporary Farm Worker Housing Policy adopted by Council (November 21, 2022).
7.3	Update the approved plant list referred to in the Boulevard Management Bylaw	Completed	<a href="#">Boulevard guidelines</a> updated to include guidance for food producing plants
7.6	Explore regulatory changes to broaden opportunities for small-scale urban agriculture that will enhance access to local healthy food, including farm gate sales in urban areas.	Completed	Temporary Use Permit Bylaw to permit farm gate sales; Additional report to Council to allow for accessory produce sales in urban zones

## **Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators**

Table 2 (below) presents the AFSP Indicator and Evaluation Table, which demonstrates progress on each of the seven themes in the AFSP's Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (pages 62-64 of the AFSP). This table provides a five-year update on each indicators' progress since 2018. Up-to-date data is provided for each indicator with a comparison to its baseline and the desired trend is indicated. An overview of progress within each theme is also discussed below.

### Theme 1: Provide a Foundation to Take Action on Agriculture and Food Security

There are two Indicators in theme 1: one related to overall progress on AFSP actions and the other that relates to plans, bylaws, and policies that have incorporated AFSP objectives. Both are generally trending positively. All Phase 1 actions have been completed or initiated. The District of Saanich has successfully updated various plans, Bylaws, and policies to support and incorporate AFSP priorities including Local Area Plans and the District's Climate Plan.

### Themes 2 and 3: Improve Self-Sufficiency and Strengthen Awareness

Indicators in themes 2 and 3 are generally following their desired trend. Although COVID-19 limited the opportunity for food events, festivals, and in-person business opportunities within the community, there is still indication of progress within these themes. For example, there is a notable increase in the number of farms with community sponsored agriculture food box programs. As the impacts of the pandemic lessen there will be even more opportunities for growth, especially in the areas of food education programs, food events/festivals and networking opportunities.

### Themes 4 and 5: Connect Food Production and the Environment and Manage Land Use to Support Farmland

Indicators in themes 4 and 5 have generally stayed the same. There have been no lands lost within the ALR and a slight increase in the numbers of farms qualifying for farm tax status. The District of Saanich is working with the CRD to implement a district-wide Agricultural Land-Use Inventory.

### Theme 6: Support Multi-Generational and New Farmers

Indicators in theme 6 have generally not followed their desired trend. We have seen a decrease in the "average profit rate for farms" and the "number of farms" within the District of Saanich. We have also seen a slight increase in the "average age of farmer[s]". It is believed that as more of the AFSP priority actions are achieved, the local agriculture and food system in the District of Saanich will strengthen and consequently support these indicators in following their desired trend. For example, the CRD's Farm and Food lands Trust will provide more opportunities for agriculture within the District, create an avenue to support new and emerging farmers and provide farmers with more affordable land.

### Theme 7: Expand Opportunities for Urban Agriculture

Indicators in theme 7 have generally not followed their desired trend. The number of community gardens and number of garden plots have decreased. When the AFSP was developed in 2018, temporary community gardens were included in these metrics. These numbers have been adjusted to better reflect long-established community gardens which are likely to continue their operations year after year. The District of Saanich's one farmer's market ceased operation. Staff are actively exploring regulatory changes that support the establishment of farmers markets in the District of Saanich and are looking for opportunities and locations to increase the number of community gardens. With these initiatives in progress, the indicators in this theme are likely on track to follow their desired trends.

**Table 2: AFSP Indicator and Evaluation Table**

THEME	INDICATOR	BASELINE	RECENT VALUE	TREND
1: Provide a foundation to take action	Number of AFSP priority actions implemented	n/a	Phase 1: 8/15 completed; 7/15 in progress Phase 2: 1/15 completed	
	Number of Plans, Bylaws or Policies updated to incorporate AFSP objectives	n/a	5	
2: Improve self-sufficiency	Number of business licenses for local food retailers	33 (est)	26	n/a
	Number of agriculture and food education and/or networking programs in the District of Saanich	9	10	
	Organics diverted from waste stream to composting	24,367 t	Recent value currently unavailable	n/a
	Number of farms with Community Sponsored Agriculture food box programs (CSA)	6	11	
3: Strengthen awareness	Number of local (and regional) food related festivals/ events	5	5	=
	% Farms report using farm gate sales, stands, kiosks, U-pick	90%	74%	
4: Connect food production and the environment	Number of organic farms in the District of Saanich	3	3	=
	Hectares of land in ALR with environmental covenants	16.07 ha	16.80 ha	
5: Manage land use to support farm land	Hectares of land in the District of Saanich within the ALR	1,843.2 ha	1,843.2 ha	=
	An Agricultural Land Use Inventory has been completed	n/a	In progress	n/a
	Number of properties qualifying for Farm tax status	401	408	
6: Support multi-generational and new farmers	Average age of farmer	57.3	57.8	
	Average profit rate for farms (2016)	20.97%	17.90%	
	Number of farms	285	221	
	Number of farm operators	380	320	
	Number of farms with succession planning	n/a	47	n/a
7: Expand opportunities for urban agriculture	Number of community gardens	6	3 (updated method used)	n/a
	Number of garden plots (size ranges 100 sqft to 1,000 sqft)	n/a	105	n/a
	Number of opportunities to sell produce in urban areas (e.g. farm stands, food trucks, farm markets)	n/a	2	n/a
	Number of Farmers Markets in the District of Saanich	1	0	

## CURRENT AND UPCOMING PRIORITIES

### Current Priorities

Included below are highlights of workplan priorities that are currently underway.

1. Food and Farmland Trust and Agriculture at Panama Flats

The District of Saanich has been working with the CRD to explore potential locations for a regional Food and Farmland Trust. Planning staff have begun the process of assessing potential Regional Food and Farmland Trust sites in the District of Saanich. The AFS Planner will continue to support the CRD through this initiative, including working to establish an initial regional site that can be used as a model to expand the trust throughout the CRD.

Panama Flats has been identified as a potential location but is currently being re-examined as part of an update of the Panama Flats Concept Plan. The AFS Planner developed a "Panama Flats Agricultural Viability Report" to support the Parks department in identifying the future role of agriculture in Panama Flats. The AFS Planner will continue to support the Parks department through the land use planning concept for Panama Flats.

2. Temporary Farm Worker Housing

Council adopted the Temporary Farm Worker Housing (TFWH) Policy on November 21, 2022. Since adoption, Planning staff have received inquiries and applications which are currently in progress. To simplify the application process, the AFS Planner has been developing materials for Temporary Farm Worker Housing Temporary Use Permit applications. The AFS Planner will be responsible for reviewing applications and providing advice on potential agricultural impacts.

3. Exploring Ways to Align with Ministry of Agriculture and ALC Regulations

In response to changes and recommendations from the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), staff has been exploring opportunities for the District of Saanich to align with certain Ministry of Agriculture and ALC regulations. These regulations include limiting house size and location on properties zoned for agriculture, evaluating the potential to develop a farm residential footprint policy as per the BC Ministry of Agriculture's Bylaw standards, and reviewing zoning Bylaws to reflect new ALC regulations regarding agri-tourism. In response to the change in the Agricultural Land Commission's ALR exclusion application process on September 30, 2020, the AFS Planner has been exploring ways to enable cost recovery on ALR exclusion applications within the District of Saanich.

4. Increase Opportunities for Urban Agriculture

The AFS Planner has been exploring regulatory changes to support the establishment of farmgate sales, food stands, and farmers markets within urban and rural zones. A Council Report that explores potential Bylaw changes to support farmgate sales in urban and rural zones will be presented to Council in Q2 2023. These regulatory changes are intended to provide a complement to the current Farm Gate Temporary Use Permit process to allow sales of produce grown in urban areas.

The AFS Planner will continue exploring opportunities to allow edible landscapes and pollinator gardens in boulevards and develop educational resources for community members. Work is being done with the CRD to provide the public with educational materials on protecting gardens from wildlife damage.

5. Agricultural Economic Development

The District of Saanich's Economic Development Officer is leading a Food Hub feasibility study. Planning staff are part of the steering committee for that study which is exploring opportunities to establish a processing food hub in the District of Saanich. A local food hub can strengthen food production by providing a facility for farmers to locally process food items and get their products to the market more efficiently.

Additionally, agriculture will be an important part of the under-development Economic Development Strategy. The AFS Planner sat on the agriculture and food security economic development focus group for this initiative and is anticipated to be a key resource in Economic Development Strategy development.

**Phase 2 and Phase 3 Priorities**

The AFS Planner position is the primary resource responsible for plan implementation. Council provided funding for a half-time two-year AFS Planner as part of adopting the AFSD and subsequently provided additional funding to extend the position by an additional two years. Funding for this position is set to run out sometime in 2024. Without funding and a dedicated AFS Planner, implementation of the AFSP will not be successful.

As Phase 1 initiatives are completed and wind down, implementation of Phase 2 priorities will be reviewed, resourced, and initiated. Staff will work to address pressing issues and capitalize on any opportunities that arise. Should Council wish to elevate any of the Phase 2 or Phase 3 priorities, Staff would prioritize those items for implementation. A full list of Phase 2 and Phase 3 priorities can be found on page 50-53 of the AFSP.

**CONCLUSION**

The Agriculture and Food Security Plan provides a clear framework for action to improve agriculture and food security outcomes in the District of Saanich. Since Council endorsed the Agriculture and Food Security Plan, Staff have successfully completed or initiated all the Phase 1 Priority Actions. As Phase 1 priorities are on track to be completed soon, implementation of Phase 2 priorities will be initiated as opportunities are identified and resources become available. Should at any point Council wish to elevate any of the Phase 2 or Phase 3 priorities, Staff would prioritize those items for implementation.

Analysis of the Agriculture and Food Security Plan Indicator and Evaluation Table (Table 2) shows that many indicators are following their desired trend, generally demonstrating improved food security and agriculture outcomes within the District of Saanich. Indicators that are not following their desired trends are likely to be improved as more initiatives from the Agriculture and Food Security Plan are implemented.

The Agriculture and Food Security Planner supports plan implementation and initiates priority actions as opportunities arise and resources become available. Funding for the AFS Planner position is set to run out sometime in 2024.

Prepared by:



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**ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS:**

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Planning.

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Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer