

# Saanich Agriculture & Food Security Plan

The purpose of today's open house is to provide you with the opportunity to:

- Learn more about Saanich's Agriculture & Food Security Plan project;
- Share your input on potential action that can enhance agriculture and improve food security in our community; and
- Identify your priorities to improve the sustainability of Saanich food systems.

## How to provide feedback

1. Complete a comment sheet at the open house.
2. Share your comments and ideas at one of the discussion tables here today.
3. Add your input on one of the interactive display boards.
4. Email your comments to [planning@saanich.ca](mailto:planning@saanich.ca).

Copies of the open house display boards will be available online at [www.Saanich.ca/food](http://www.Saanich.ca/food)

## Definitions:

**Sustainable agriculture** enhances environmental quality and the resource base on which it depends; provides for basic human food and fiber needs; is economically viable; and enhances the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole over the long term.

**Food security** exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.



# Objectives & Process

## Objectives of the Plan

1. To develop a plan that Saanich can follow to enhance the viability and long term sustainability of Saanich agriculture and food systems.
2. To set clear priorities for future action; and
3. To seek opportunities to:
  - establish partnerships in the community;
  - encourage agriculture practices that enhance connections with natural ecology;
  - enhance food production in urban areas;
  - improve access to affordable, nutritious food for all people; and
  - strengthen the economic sustainability of the farming community.

## Planning Process

The project began in February 2016 and is expected to be completed in mid 2017. A Task Force of community experts will serve as a touchstone throughout the project. Key points of community engagement are related to:

1. Identifying issues and opportunities (May-July 2016),
2. Review of potential actions and priorities (September 2016 - February 2017), and
3. Review of the draft Plan (Spring 2017).

## Project Timeline

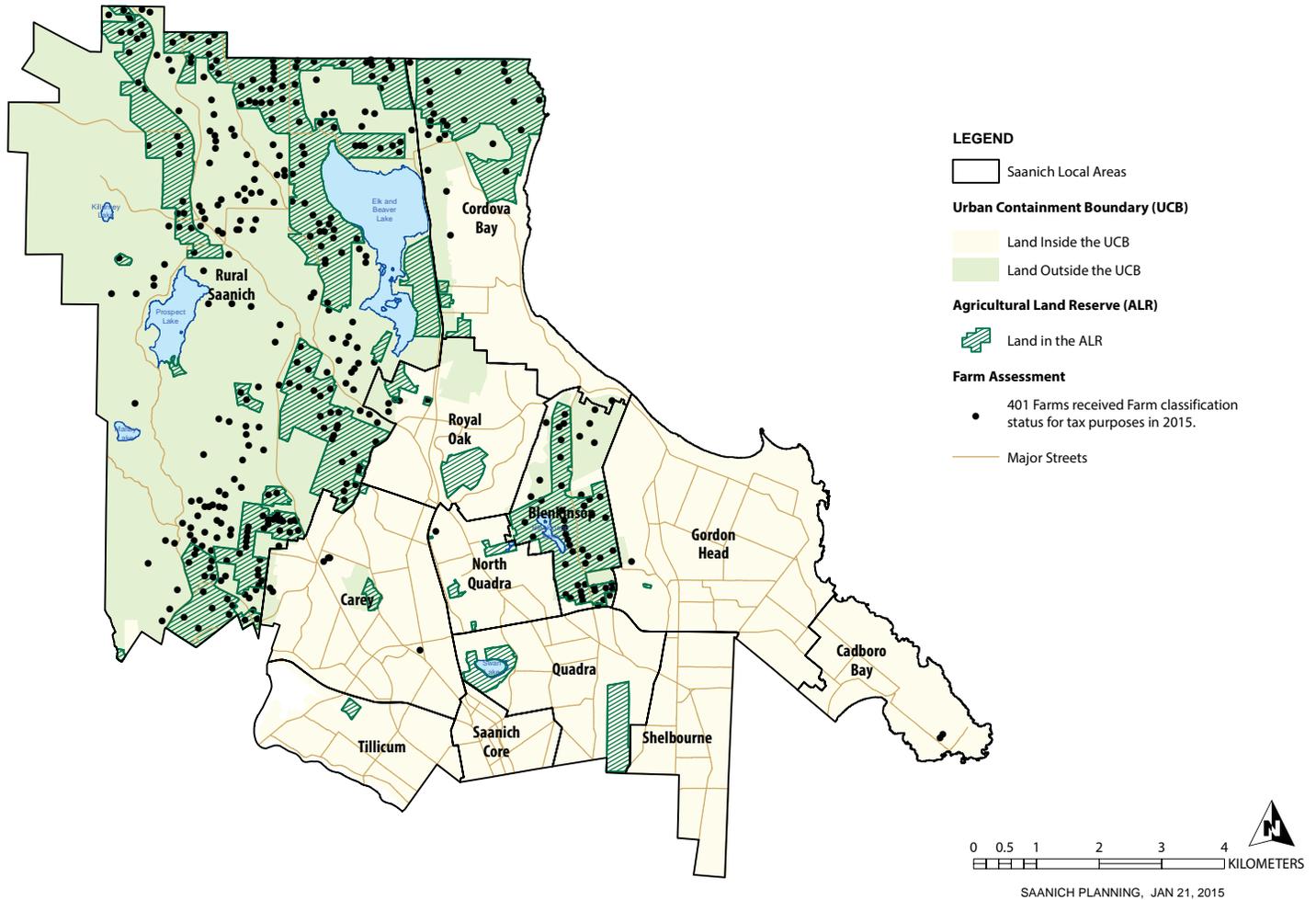


# Saanich Context - Agriculture

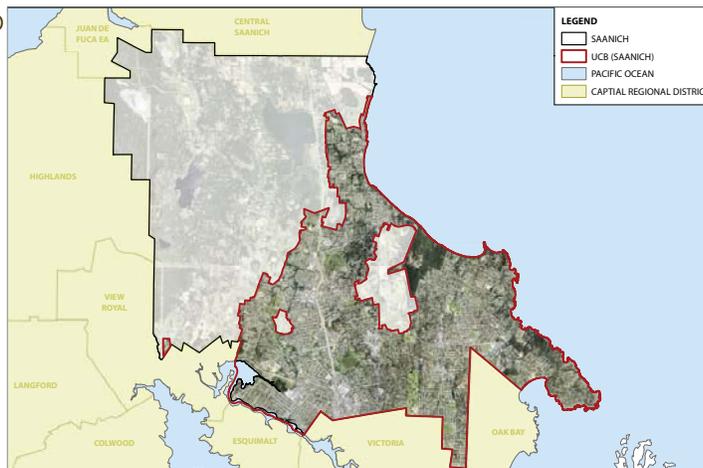
Saanich is the largest municipality in the Capital Regional District and has the unique characteristic of being roughly half rural and half urban.

Two key tools have helped preserve farmland and protect rural lands from development pressure:

- The **Urban Containment Boundary**, introduced in 1964, restricts development densities outside urban areas and also limits the provision of sewer and water service.
- The **Agricultural Land Reserve**, introduced in 1974, is a Provincial land designation that restricts any non-farm use on properties with a high agricultural value.



Regional Map



# Saanich Context - Food Security

Food Security exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.

## Did you know?

- There are four community gardens operating in Saanich (Capital City Allotment Association Gardens, Agnes Street Gardens, Gorge Park Community Gardens, and Uvic Community Garden).
- There are 2 community kitchen programs that support those who require help to access healthy food, Saanich Neighbourhood Place and Shelbourne Community Kitchen.
- There are garden organizations in Saanich that have set up to grow food to supply people in need and local food banks. e.g. Serenity Farms and Royal Oak Community Garden.



Two local schools participate in the 'Farm to School Program' to provide healthy food at lunch.

There are several farms that run "community-supported agriculture" (CSA) food box programs supplying residents with fresh produce on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

# Role of Government

*Improving agriculture and food security in Saanich will involve collaboration between all levels of government, farmers, non-profit organizations, residents and businesses.*

## Role of Government

Agriculture and food are regulated by several levels of government. As a result, local producers may be subject to municipal, regional, provincial and federal government policies.

## Municipal Government Role

The Agriculture and Food Security Plan will focus on items that the local government (District of Saanich) can influence. The local government has a role enabling agriculture and food security through:

- Policies set out in the Official Community Plan and the Area Plans;
- Land use regulations described in the Zoning Bylaw; and
- Other initiative such as the Climate Action Plan, the Climate Adaptation Plan, and the proposed Agriculture & Food Security Plan.

A local government may also consider providing support, assistance or partnership with local non-governmental organizations in an effort to ensure that goals and objectives around agriculture and food security are met.

**The purpose of this phase of the project is to identify actions that Saanich can take to improve agriculture and food security in our community.**



# Public Engagement Results

## Issues & Opportunities

A variety of public engagement tools were used to solicit **feedback on issues and opportunities** in the Spring and Summer of 2016. Engagement tools included:

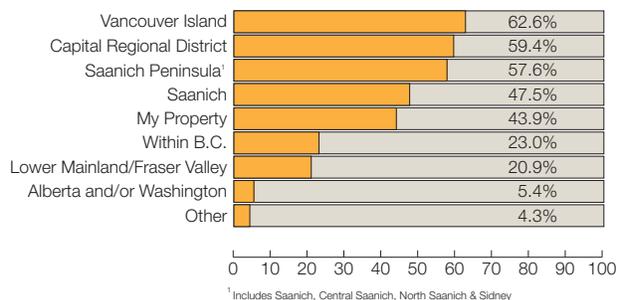
- Community survey that received 289 responses;
- Open house on May 26, 2016 attended by 40 individuals;
- Mobile community displays at Strawberry Festival, Red Barn Market and The Root Cellar;
- Task Force meetings;
- Meetings with stakeholders involved in agriculture and food security, and
- Phone calls and e-mail from community members.

A full public engagement record is available online at [www.saanich.ca/food](http://www.saanich.ca/food) or here at the open house.

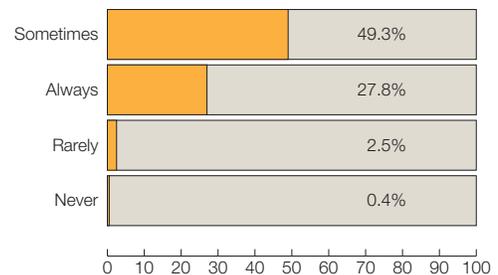
### What we heard:

Here are some highlights from the 2016 community survey.

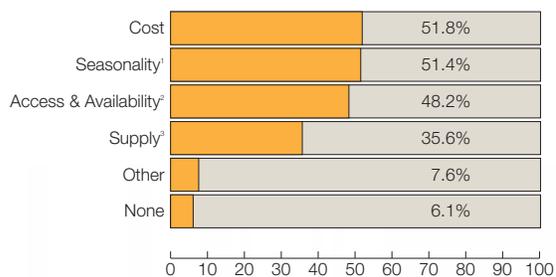
**What is Local?** (Indicate all that apply)



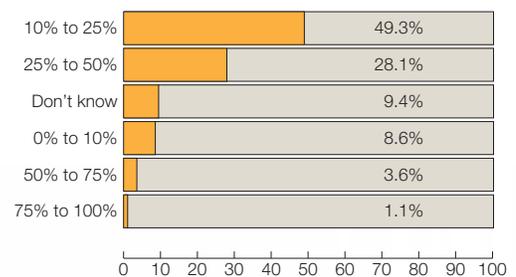
**Do You Purchase Locally Grown Items?**



**What Prevents You Buying Local?**



**% Household Income Spent on Food**



# Public Engagement Results

## Issues & Opportunities

From April to August 2016, comments were received from Saanich residents and farmers identified a number of key issues, opportunities and themes. Five key themes identified following public engagement are presented below with a sample of comments we received.

### What we heard:

#### Theme 1. Connecting Gaps in the Local Food System to Improve Food Self-Sufficiency

*Cost of land is a barrier to farming.*

*Consider connecting with distributors and farmers to discuss crop planning in the future.*

*What about policies or programs pertaining to food waste reduction?*

*There is limited supporting infrastructure for agriculture, including processing, cold storage and distribution facilities.*

#### Theme 2. Strengthening Awareness of the Local Food System

*Increase consumer education around agriculture.*

*Need more opportunities to buy local product.*

*Food system collective can make an impact working together.*

*Increase interest and opportunities in urban agriculture.*

*Establish a "buy local value" in public institution purchasing.*

#### Theme 3. Improving the Interconnection between Food Production and the Environment

*Connect food production with community organizations and schools.*

*Reduce rates for soil made from Saanich curb-side pick-up.*

*Encourage environmentally sound farming practices.*

*Work to restore Indigenous food systems.*



# Public Engagement Results

## Issues & Opportunities

### What we heard:

#### Theme 4. Managing Land Use to Support Farmland

*Industrial lands are limited causing people to look to rural lands.*

*Some types of non-farm use in the Agriculture Land Reserve reflect non-compliance with the Agriculture Land Commission Act.*

*Improve access to land and water.*

*Review bylaws to support urban farming.*

#### Theme 5. Supporting Multi-Generational Farmers and Emerging Farmers.

*Grow food on Panama Flats.*

*Preserve ALR farmland.*

*Succession planning on farms to ensure that production continues.*

*Encourage owners of farmland to use or lease the land for growing.*

*Support farmer access to land.*

*There is a need for farm worker housing.*

**Today's session is organized around brainstorming actions and priorities to address each of the five themes.**

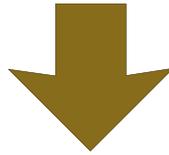


# From Vision to Action

## Vision Statement for the Plan

*In Saanich, food security starts in our backyard.*

*By 2030, Saanich is home to a thriving, accessible, and environmentally responsible food system, which is renowned for its vibrancy and resiliency. Our food is celebrated and recognized for its role in nourishing people, livelihoods, and relationships. Saanich is seen as a leader in advancing food security, including initiatives toward greater food self-sufficiency on the South Island, as well as dignified access to affordable, healthy food for all people. Ecosystems flourish as a result of responsible land and water stewardship on both urban and rural agricultural lands, which form the centre of our community. We protect and support our farmland and are proud to provide a vibrant agricultural legacy to future generations.*



## Key Themes

The draft themes reflect both the vision statement and the feedback received during engagement events and are focused on issues that a local government is able to address.

1. Connecting Gaps in the Local Food System to Improve Food Self-Sufficiency
2. Strengthening Awareness of the Local Food System
3. Improving the Interconnection between Food Production and the Environment
4. Managing Land Use to Support Farmland
5. Supporting Multi-Generational Farmers and Emerging Farmers.



## Potential Action Items

The focus of today's session is to develop potential actions that the District of Saanich could take to address agriculture and food security.

### We need your input on potential actions and priorities

- Participate at one of our discussion tables;
- Provide your input on the following display boards;
- Fill out one of the comment sheets provided or online at [www.saanich.ca/food](http://www.saanich.ca/food).

Comment sheets and a draft list of action items are available at the welcome table for this open house.



# Theme #1 Connecting Gaps in the Local Food System to Improve Food Self-Sufficiency

Provide comments and identify what you think are the top 3 priorities for the future.

| Potential Actions  | Comments / Suggestions | Top Priority |
|--|------------------------|--------------|
| Perform a regular review of the OCP and Zoning Bylaw to ensure that a commitment to agriculture and local food system is embedded and reflected in these key documents.  |                        |              |
| Integrate food system terminology into Municipal plans and policies. "Food systems" may include aquaculture, gleanng, foraging and wildcrafting as well as traditional farming.  |                        |              |
| Participate in (or host) annual meeting(s) with government, First Nations, NGOs, and farmers to discuss plans, bylaws, and initiatives.  |                        |              |
| Conduct an inventory of urban food production opportunities. This may include: community gardens, public parklands, institutional areas, rooftops and boulevards. This could involve looking at underutilized space for community gardens. |                        |              |
| Support the CRD's Regional Food Strategy and participate in the Regional Agriculture and Food Security Task Force.   |                        |              |
| Shorten the local food supply chain by enhancing connections between producers, small businesses, NGOs, Small Scale Food Producers Association, storage opportunities, and distributors.   |                        |              |
| Update the District of Saanich Community Grants Policy to create an Operating Grant category and Project Grant category that specifically supports initiatives that focus on the local food system.  |                        |              |
| Support the visions of other local organizations who are working in the areas of food security, food access, and food self-sufficiency.  |                        |              |
| Create a Food System Coordinator staff position for the District of Saanich.   |                        |              |
| Establish a Food Policy Council with volunteer and/or elected members to assist in directing and implementing food system actions.   |                        |              |
| Support First Nations efforts to re-establish an indigenous food system.   |                        |              |
| Seek ways to expand on existing programs with the local school boards to support food production on school grounds and take it to the next level (e.g. greenhouses, orchards, honey).  |                        |              |
| Support the work of local NGOs and the CRD to establish a community food hub to connect food access organizations i.e food banks in the Region connecting people with fresh food.  |                        |              |
| Explore policies and programs with the CRD that could result in food waste reduction across the community and region.  |                        |              |

Other suggestions?



# Theme #2 Strengthening Awareness of the Local Food System

Provide comments and identify what you think are the top 3 priorities for the future.

| Potential Actions  | Comments / Suggestions | Top Priority |
|--|------------------------|--------------|
| Showcase local farms, food businesses, food organizations both online and in print. (e.g. Maps of restaurants, farms, farm gate sales, and retailers could be linked to the District website.)   |                        |              |
| Undertake mapping projects with local First Nations to explore traditional food uses in the District of Saanich.   |                        |              |
| Assist and support review of a local branding for food and products from Saanich or the region with interested producers.  |                        |              |
| Join the CRD in exploring opportunities and interest for an agri-tourism strategy. This could include clarity around agri-tourism accommodation regulations.   |                        |              |
| Support efforts to introduce farms to the general public, such as Circle Farm Tours or other self-guided tours.  |                        |              |
| Develop appropriate regulations and guidelines for agri-tourism activities in consultation with farmers and other stakeholders.  |                        |              |
| Consider development of interpretive signs on trails on/near farmland. This could include parts of the Galloping Goose trail.  |                        |              |
| Continue to assist with the promotion of agricultural events, festivals, and celebrations, such as the Saanich Fair.   |                        |              |
| Explore bylaw changes that could allow for a variety of opportunities to sell local food in the community.   |                        |              |
| Install roadside signage to indicate farming areas, slow moving farm vehicles, and showcasing specific farms and specific crops.   |                        |              |
| Seek ways to engage First Nations communities (whose traditional territory is within the District of Saanich) to share information and hear about their challenges and barriers regarding the harvesting of food from traditional lands. |                        |              |
| Include native plants, forest ecosystem restoration and traditional food systems, as part of the curriculum used to provide food education in Saanich-based schools.   |                        |              |
| Support the work of local NGOs and the CRD to establish a community food hub to connect food access organizations i.e food banks in the Region and connect people with fresh food.   |                        |              |
| Explore policies and programs with the CRD that could result in food waste reduction across the community and region.  |                        |              |

Other suggestions?



# Theme #3 Improving the Interconnection between Food Production and the Environment

Provide comments and identify what you think are the top 3 priorities for the future.

| Potential Actions  | Comments / Suggestions | Top Priority |
|--|------------------------|--------------|
| Work with the Capital Region Invasive Species Program (CRISP) to promote proper management and disposal of invasive species in agricultural areas on a regional scale.   |                        |              |
| Develop public education materials to assist residents to comply with the Noxious Weeds Bylaw to minimize noxious weeds in agricultural areas.   |                        |              |
| Participate in CRD initiatives to reduce deer and waterfowl damage to crops. The CRD is exploring this as a possible new service area for local/regional governments.  |                        |              |
| Continue to enhance agriculture and food content in Saanich's Climate Adaptation Plan.   |                        |              |
| Encourage farmers to participate in the province's Environmental Farm Plan program. Promote tours of existing EFP farms and their best practices.  |                        |              |
| Develop a strategy to balance drainage for agriculture with fish and wildlife habitat in floodplain areas such as Panama Flats, Tod Creek, etc.  |                        |              |
| Continue to support a special water rate for agriculture.  |                        |              |
| Support efforts of farm operators and other agencies to enhance farmland and increase crop yield, by improving water supply and undertaking drainage improvements and improving soil capabilities, while considering environmental impact. |                        |              |
| Establish a partnership with a foundation or NGO that could develop Ecosystem Services Initiatives for agriculture in Saanich.   |                        |              |
| Expand the oil tank replacement program to farms and farm buildings.   |                        |              |
| Consider the needs of farmers and food safety when managing public health issues (mosquito control, etc).  |                        |              |
| Encourage gardeners and small-scale urban farmers to participate in composting, rainwater harvesting, and other actions to minimize the impact of food production on the environment.  |                        |              |
| Ensure that all development permits works to improve the overall integrity of farming areas.   |                        |              |
| Recognize the foreshore environment as having an important role to play in healthy aquaculture operations and that the quality of freshwater coming from our watersheds can impact the quality of the foreshore.                           |                        |              |
| Identify areas with the potential for traditional First Nations shellfish and other ocean based food harvest for consideration for future protection and/or restoration to reinstate this food system.                                     |                        |              |

Other suggestions?



# Theme #4 Managing Land Use to Support Farmland

Provide comments and identify what you think are the top 3 priorities for the future.

| Potential Actions   | Comments / Suggestions | Top Priority |
|---|------------------------|--------------|
| Encourage and support landowners of underutilized farmland to develop farm plans, in order to increase the amount of food production currently occurring within the ALR.  |                        |              |
| Review bylaw enforcement strategies to improve the enforcement process regarding bylaw infractions on agriculture land.   |                        |              |
| Work with the Agriculture Land Commission to develop a compliance and enforcement strategy for the Agriculture Land Reserve to address ongoing issues over the longer term.   |                        |              |
| Review business licence requirements for all agriculture zoned land.  |                        |              |
| Require Agricultural Impact Assessments, performed by a Professional Agrologist, to be accompanied by landowners along with ALR non-farm use, exclusion, and/or subdivision applications.   |                        |              |
| Support the use of the dispute resolution process established in the "Farm Practices Protection Act" to resolve concerns and complaints about agricultural practices that may be inconsistent with normal farm practice.  |                        |              |
| Work with the Real Estate industry to develop a "good neighbour" policy to encourage farmers and non-farm neighbours to reduce conflicts.   |                        |              |
| Consider adopting a Development Permit Area that could act as a buffer strategy to reinforce the urban growth boundary and protect farmland.  |                        |              |
| Buffer rural and agricultural lands from adjacent urban residential development as part of redevelopment and subdivision proposals, where appropriate.  |                        |              |
| Update the 1986 Soil Removal Bylaw to ensure that it reflects current industry best practices. Consider tying it to the 2008 Deposit of Fill Bylaw and identifying priority areas, such as the ALR, whereby soil removal and deposit will be severely restricted.                                 |                        |              |
| Encourage the Agricultural Land Commission to review current deposit of fill practices on ALR lands, in order to preserve the agricultural capability of ALR lands and discourage the deposit of fill on rural and ALR lands that results in the soil's agricultural capability being diminished. |                        |              |
| Create communications tool that would allow concerned citizens to report infractions to zoning bylaws, such as an anonymous tip line.   |                        |              |
| Maintain a minimum parcel area of 2.0 ha for the A-1 (Rural) zone and 4.0 ha for the A-4 (Rural) zone.  |                        |              |
| Support the development and operation of specialty crop farms to diversify farm production, increase economic development, increase local food production, and improve farm income.   |                        |              |
| Support the development and operation of specialty crop farms to diversify farm production, increase economic development, increase local food production, and improve farm income.   |                        |              |

Other suggestions?



# Theme #5 Supporting Multi-Generational Farmers and Emerging Farmers

Provide comments and identify what you think are the top 3 priorities for the future.

| Potential Actions   | Comments / Suggestions | Top Priority |
|---|------------------------|--------------|
| Partner with academic and/or non-governmental organizations to investigate how farmers and/or food producers wish to expand their businesses. |                        |              |
| Provide links/access to reports and information on alternative business models (stratas, co-ops, corporations) and alternative tenure models. |                        |              |
| Identify current on-farm or near-farm housing options for farmworkers and use this info to update/create farmworker housing policies.         |                        |              |
| Support the CRD in efforts to initiate a process to establish a regional food and farmland trust.   |                        |              |
| Promote and support land-linking and mentorship program(s) that match land with people who want to farm.                                      |                        |              |
| Support infrastructure for processors within Saanich to extend the seasonal availability of local foods.                                      |                        |              |

Other suggestions?



# Next Steps

Your input on key themes, potential action and priorities will inform the draft Agriculture & Food Security Plan including the action items and implementation plan. The complete draft Plan will then be presented for public review and feedback and ultimately will require Saanich Council's approval.

**Thanks you for attending our Saanich Agriculture and Food Security open house. Your input is important.**

**A virtual open house is available at [saanich.ca/food](http://saanich.ca/food)**

## **Additional Comments or Questions**

Please contact Jane Evans: [jane.evans@saanich.ca](mailto:jane.evans@saanich.ca) or 250-475-5494 ex.3401

